TWO SOLITUDES INTERTWINED
Building Trusting Relationships Between DIAND and Aboriginal People in the Northwest Territories: Practical Steps to Improve And Foster Relationships at The Front Line.

By

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We accept this thesis as conforming
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CHAPTER ONE - STUDY BACKGROUND

Issues and Opportunities in Building Trusting Relationships

> *During a recent "think tank" on partnership involving Aboriginal people and officials from the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, one of the chiefs commented that before the two sides looked at "partnership," they had to look at their "relationship." Many participants were confused; wasn't that what they were there to do? The Chief went on to explain that they were focusing on formal partnership arrangements – when what they needed to focus on was the personal relationships with each other. That's where true partnership will begin, he said.*

The words of the chief struck a chord with me. I had often heard people say that, while the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) and Aboriginal communities were working toward building effective partnerships, the success was a result of the respectful relationships that were nurtured and developed on an interpersonal basis - often at the "front line" where employees worked regularly and directly with Aboriginal clients. Yet, as front line people worked to build relationships, what I also heard repeatedly was that the essential ingredient of trust was often missing. At the organizational level, Aboriginal people do not trust DIAND. This distrust has made it challenging for DIAND and Aboriginal people to develop good working relationships and partnerships. And this, in turn, is threatening the vision of DIAND in the North, which is to foster relationships that build economic, political, social and educational structures representative of the cultures, values and beliefs of Northerners.

The central research question explored was: **How do we create a trusting relationship between the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Aboriginal people in the NWT Region – with a focus on the practical steps DIAND can take to improve the relationship at the front line?**

It's important to note that, although the study looks at the relationship between two parties, at this time, I only address what DIAND can do to improve the relationship at the front line. A recommendation for further research is to explore more fully the interactive relationship between the two, and what Aboriginal communities can do to build a relationship.

The Background

With the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, the Government of Canada opened the door of inquiry into the relationship between Aboriginal Canadians and the federal government. The Commission had one over-riding question: *What are the foundations of a fair and honourable relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people of Canada?* After extensive public consultation and research its conclusion, simply put, was that, "The main policy direction, pursued for more than 150 years, first by colonial then by Canadian governments, has been wrong." The Commission wrote, "Successive governments have tried - sometimes intentionally, sometimes in ignorance - to absorb Aboriginal people into Canadian society, thus eliminating them as distinct peoples. Policies pursued over the decades have undermined - and almost erased - Aboriginal cultures and identities." (RCAP Report, Highlights, 1996, p.1)

The RCAP Report outlined four principles as the basis of a renewed relationship:

1. Recognition

The principle of mutual recognition calls on non-Aboriginal Canadians to recognize that Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants and caretakers of this land and have distinctive rights and responsibilities flowing from that status. It calls on Aboriginal people to accept that non-Aboriginal people are also of this land now, by birth and adoption, with strong ties of love and loyalty. It requires both sides to acknowledge and relate to one another as partners, respecting each other's laws and institutions and co-operating for mutual benefit.

2. Respect

The principle of respect calls on all Canadians to create a climate of positive mutual regard between and among peoples. Respect provides a bulwark against attempts by one partner to dominate or rule over another. Respect for the unique rights and status of First Peoples, and for each Aboriginal person as an individual with a valuable culture and heritage, needs to become part of Canada's national character.

3. Sharing

The principle of sharing calls for the giving and receiving of benefits in fair measure. It is the basis on which Canada was founded, for if Aboriginal peoples had been unwilling to share what they had and what they knew of the land, many of the newcomers would not have lived to prosper. The principle of sharing is central to the treaties and central to the possibility of real equality among the peoples of Canada in the future.

4. Responsibility

Responsibility is the hallmark of a mature relationship. Partners in such a relationship must be accountable for the promises they have made, accountable for behaving honourably, and accountable for the impact of their actions on the well-being of the other. Because we do and always will share the land, the best interests of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people will be served if we act with the highest standards of responsibility, honesty and good faith toward one another. (RCAP Report, Highlights, 1996, p.13)

With Canada's response to RCAP, Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan (1996), the Government of Canada has stepped through the door and made a promise to Aboriginal people. The promise is that the federal government, primarily through DIAND as the lead department, will embark on fundamental structural reform of all major programs and develop a new partnership with Aboriginal people. The promise is to work in equal partnership toward a shared vision of strong Aboriginal governance. This is a monumental promise. Many people within DIAND, as well as Aboriginal people, believe it is a promise that will be difficult to fulfil. Phil Fontaine, Grand Chief, Assembly of First Nations has said,

> *"There are some people with a very strong view – and have expressed this in no uncertain terms – that they just don't trust the government, that our commitment to this new relationship will just weaken us, and that in the end, we will be bought off."* (Joint Canada-AFN Think Tank on Partnership)

DIAND, while looking at renewed partnerships, is set on a course of trying to fundamentally change the relationship it has built with Aboriginal people over the past 125 years. DIAND is shifting from a "service administrator" role to an "advisor" role, meaning essentially that program and service delivery is being devolved to Aboriginal governments. DIAND is also trying to change the nature and meaning of the relationship, from one that has generally been based on paternalism and assimilation, to a relationship built on equality, trust and respect.

An essential component of this partnership renewal is the Strengthening the Front-line Operations Initiative. Its key objectives are: to invest in the ongoing development and support of individuals involved in providing support to First Nation and Inuit communities in a manner that is reflective of *Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan* and the Department's approach to Leadership; and to seek First Nations' views, via Band Councils and staff, on the kinds of support, services and skills from DIAND which they consider to be important. This initiative will focus on preparing front line employees so they can better support and serve Aboriginal people as they move toward self-government.

Strengthening the Front-line Operations, although originally aimed at improving service delivery, is key in building relationships. Front line employees of DIAND – those who work directly with Aboriginal partners on a regular basis – are in the most practical positions to work on existing relationships. Yet, there are many issues that front line employees must struggle to overcome. They generally have not been exposed to the "big picture" of what DIAND is trying to

accomplish. The very employees who work closely with Aboriginal people generally have little knowledge that DIAND is working to renew partnerships, or if they are aware of this, they're not entirely sure what that means for them. At a National Managers session, a key theme that emerged was that "front line workers need information, clarification of their role, empowerment and support from managers" in order to do their jobs. (Strengthening Front Line Operations: An Analysis of the Workouts from DIAND's National Manager's Meeting, May 1999).

It is time for DIAND to look at how it can begin to work toward renewed and improved relationships. Now is the opportunity to facilitate change in the best possible way in order to build healthy and strong Aboriginal communities and to lay the foundation to create effective Aboriginal governance. It is the chance to heal a long and bitter history and to begin to work on honourable and just relationships. Perhaps, more importantly, if fundamental change is not forthcoming - if the promise is not fulfilled - there is the serious potential to regress and to lose the ground already made. This project explores how two potentially disparate and conflicting partners can come to the table in an environment of trust, reconciliation and renewal to work on creating a meaningful relationship. DIAND officials and Aboriginal people alike have recognized that for effective and equal partnership to occur, both sides will need to work on the fundamental relationship.

> *"I sense a genuine feeling of excitement — a genuine feeling that together, all of us are entering a new kind of relationship. A relationship that begins with a shared vision for this territory and which finds strength in a shared desire to work together to turn the vision into reality. A relationship that is built on a solid foundation of respect, trust, and mutual responsibility. A relationship that will grow and contribute to a stronger Canada."* Minister Robert Nault, Speech to the NWT Legislative Assembly, January 20, 2000

The Organization

Several years ago, departmental employees defined the department's essential mission as "Working together to make Canada a better place for First Nations and Northern peoples." While this is still the overarching mission, DIAND's key goal is to continue to support the efforts by First Nations, Inuit and Northerners to achieve self-determination and self-government, and to attain their rightful place as full partners in Canada.

In the Northwest Territories, DIAND is seeing a major platform for change with the reality of two newly created territories, Nunavut and Northwest Territories. Unlike southern Canada, the Northwest Territories is non-reserve based. The proportion of Aboriginal people is 50 percent. The Government of the Northwest Territories delivers a variety of social and community programs to Northern people, including Aboriginal people, that in the south are funded by Canada for First Nation delivery on reserves, and by provinces for all people off reserves. Further, the sub-arctic climate, the wilderness environment, the sparse population dotted over a huge geographic area (roughly 38% of the landmass of Canada) is a distinctive setting for creating

meaningful relationships. Although huge in size, there is an intimacy and connection among the people and communities.

DIAND enjoys a unique role and set of responsibilities in the Northwest Territories that demands progressive, dynamic public service delivery approaches unlike any other jurisdiction in Canada. The DIAND Regional office functions as the lead federal agency in the NWT, placing extraordinary responsibilities on its employees in their role as public service providers. In many respects, DIAND functions as a multi-mandated (often conflicting) federal body with many jurisdictions and complex legislation that affects all northerners. In recent years, enormous public service expectations have necessitated that the Region foster innovative business approaches/solutions and a strong leadership and learning philosophy leading a comprehensive federal strategy for the North, centred on engaging northerners in intergovernmental discussions on devolution, resource revenue sharing and economic development.

The key priorities for DIAND in the Northwest Territories are:

- Governance: completion of land claims and self-government agreements;
- Devolution: transferring responsibilities to appropriate territorial and Aboriginal governments;
- Building the economy: restoring aboriginal and regional economic development;
- Managing the environment: shared northern environmental stewardship; and
- Building strong relationship and partnership: planned Intergovernmental Forum (institutionalized government to government to government process.) (from, Northwest Territories, Gameplan, SPC Presentation, February, 2000)

As the NWT Region focuses on these key priorities, developing partnerships built on trusting and respectful relationships will be critical. The success of the department will be measured on how well DIAND can deliver on the commitments to strengthen communities and build new partnerships with First Nations and Northerners.

Further information about DIAND can be found on the Department's web site at http://www.inac.gc.ca

The Historical Relationship

> *"Our history hasn't been the most productive nor the most honourable."* Phil Fontaine, Grand Chief, Assembly of First Nations
>
> *"Studying the past tells us who we are and where we came from. It often reveals a cache of secrets that some people are striving to keep hidden and other are striving to tell. In this case, it helps explain how the tensions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people came to be, and why they are so hard to resolve."* RCAP Report, Highlights, 1996.

In order to understand the nature of the relationship between Aboriginal people and the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development today, we need to review the past relationship. As the government of Canada, through DIAND, attempts to build a relationship we need to recognize the "ghosts of the past." And, as the Department's front line employees undertake their daily interactions with Aboriginal people, they need to understand how these ghosts continue to haunt the relationship.

Here we will briefly explore the original relationship and the degree of trust that existed, the attitudes that have evolved, and a brief review of the origins of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

The RCAP Report outlines four stages that evolved in the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal:

1. Separate Worlds: a time when Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people lived on separate continents and knew nothing of each other;

2. Nation-to-Nation Relations: following the years of first contact, fragile relations of peace, friendship and rough equality were given the force of law in treaties;

3. Respect Gives Way to Domination: power tilted toward non-Aboriginal people and governments. They moved Aboriginal people off their land and took steps to 'civilize' and teach them European ways; and

4. Renewal and Renegotiation: a time of recovery for Aboriginal people and cultures, a time for critical review of our relationship, and a time for its renegotiation and renewal.

This review will focus primarily on stages 2 and 3, the shift from rough equality to policies of domination and assimilation.

It is important to briefly note that before the arrival of Europeans in Canada, First Nations and Inuit had been practising their own forms of government for thousands of years. The RCAP Report Highlights (1996) notes that "on both sides of the Atlantic, independent peoples with evolving systems of government... flourished and grew." (p.4) Aboriginal societies in the Americas had strong cultures, societies, governments and a close relationship with the land. The RCAP Report notes, "The Americas were not, as the Europeans told themselves when they arrived, *terra nullius* - empty land." (p.5)

The second stage, approximately from 1500 to 1700, is one the RCAP commissioners call "cautious co-operation". Generally, the relationship was one of "nation to nation" with Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people seeing the other as separate, distinct and independent. The term "rough equality" has also been used to describe the relationship. How the commissioners differentiate "rough" equality from "genuine" or "true" equality is not clear, yet it seems that there is a recognition that any equality that existed was on tenuous ground.

The RCAP commissioners write that cooperation between the colonialist and Aboriginal people in the beginning was formalized in two ways, through the treaties and in the Royal Proclamation of 1763. A.C. Hamilton, in his 1995 report on partnerships to then DIAND Minister Ron Irwin, notes that the treaty generally represents the "first confirmation of the relationship between Canada and the Aboriginal people involved" and "the first attempt to set out and to agree upon the rights and responsibilities of each party." (Hamilton, 1995, p.93)

Aboriginal nations had been using treaties among their own societies as agreements to establish peace, regulate trade, share use of lands and resources, and arrange mutual defence. The treaties for them were sacred oaths. In their dealings with the British, Aboriginal people saw the treaties in the same light - as agreements of peace and friendship. The treaties were not viewed as involving either surrender of land or the renunciation of timeless Aboriginal rights.

Rene Fumoleau (1973), an Oblate priest who documented the treaty process in the Northwest Territories, writes:

> They saw the white man's treaty as his way of offering them his help and friendship. They were willing to share their land with him in the manner prescribed by their tradition and culture. The two races would live side by side in the North, embarking on a common future. (p.211)

A key element of the treaties was the fiduciary or "special" relationship that Aboriginal people had with the colonial government. Simply put, they believed they would be treated fairly. Hamilton (1995) notes that, in theory, every fiduciary relationship embodies a moral imperative and an obligation of equity. He writes: "...one party has an obligation to act for the benefit of another, and that obligation carries with it a discretionary power, the party thus empowered becomes a fiduciary power. Equity will then supervise the relationship by holding him to the fiduciary's strict standard of conduct." (p. 95.)

The obligation, Hamilton notes, "arose from foreign governments assuming jurisdiction and wishing to exercise authority over land and resources in the possession of Indigenous peoples. When the Europeans came to the Americas, the land was already occupied." (p. 93) Hamilton writes:

> Where there is a fiduciary obligation, there is a relation in which the principal's interest can be affected by, and are therefore, dependent on, the manner in which the fiduciary uses the discretion which has been delegated to him. The fiduciary obligation is the law's blunt tool for the control of this discretion. (p. 95)

Yet, for the British, the treaties and the fiduciary obligation was viewed in a different light. For them, it was a means to acquire lands and to assert imperial supremacy: "The British colonial government's approach to the treaties was schizophrenic. By signing, British authorities appeared to recognize the nationhood of Aboriginal peoples and their equality as nations. But they also expected First Nations to acknowledge the authority of the monarch and increasingly, to cede large tracts of land to British control - for settlement and to protect it from seizure by other European powers or by the United States." (RCAP Report, Highlights,1996, p. 6)

The intent of the British colonialists when negotiating treaties was never made clear to Aboriginal people:

> Whatever the government intended to do, cession of land, extinguishing of title of monetary settlement of Aboriginal rights, was not explained to the chiefs who signed the Treaty. The Indians accepted the Treaty without understanding all of its terms and implications...The Indian did not see himself as owner of land, nor as empowered to bestow ownership on another. He considered that the land and its animals, the water and its fishes, were for his use. He would never refuse to share them, compelled by conviction to do so. (Fumoleau, 1973, p.306)

Much has been said of the honourable intention of the Royal Proclamation of 1763. It is considered a "defining document" in the relationship between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people in North America. It summarized the rules that were to govern British dealings with Aboriginal people, especially in relation to the key question of land. The key intent was to recognize and protect Aboriginal rights to the land and to ensure that all dealings were fair. (RCAP Report, Highlights,1996, p. 7)

The text reads "...no private Person do presume to make any Purchase from the said Indians of any Lands reserved to the said Indians, within those parts of our Colonies where, We have thought proper to allow Settlement; but that, if at any Time any of the said Indians should be inclined to dispose of the said Lands, the same shall be Purchased only for Us, in our Name, at some public Meeting or Assembly of the said Indians." (*Revised statutes of Canada, 1985, Appendix II, (Constitutional Acts and Documents)* in Hamilton, 1995, p.93)

Considering how history unfolded regarding Aboriginal rights and justice, the Royal Proclamation of 1763 does indeed seem a defining and honourable work. Yet, the text clearly shows an imperialist attitude which would begin to influence imperialist practices. The colonial government was already referring to the land as "our colonies." In theory, they may have recognized Aboriginal ownership of land, by virtue of them being there first, but the British were doing what they had been doing for years - overtaking indigenous people and lands, claiming unconquered lands in the name of mother England. Further, the Proclamation says, "We have thought proper to allow Settlement..." This illustrates that the British had awarded themselves caretaker of the land. They would allow settlers to settle the land, without consultation with Indigenous people. They would protect indigenous land as they saw fit. They quickly established themselves the good fathers and the just benefactors.

The third stage, which began roughly in the 1800's, saw the relationship shift from "respectful coexistence" to "domination by non-Aboriginal laws and institutions." The balance of power shifted with more settlers streaming into Canada and more demand for land. In addition, disease and poverty diminished Aboriginal nations. The economic partnership that had existed between Aboriginal people and colonists was dying along with the fur trade. And with peace established with neighbours south of the border, Canada had no further need for Aboriginal nations as military allies. More and more, Aboriginal people were seen as impediments to progress instead of valued partners.

And a final, perhaps more insidious reason for the shift to a dominating relationship, was the ideology proclaiming European superiority over all other peoples of the earth that was taking hold. Titley (1986) notes that the "intolerant ethnocentrism of the Anglo-Canadian elite, which was closely linked to prevailing notions of racial superiority, precluded the possibility of co-existence of culturally diverse peoples within the same political entity." (p.201) He writes: "Tolerance, after all, would have implied a residue of self-doubt, and in the heyday of an empire upon which the sun supposedly never set, there was little likelihood of such ambivalence." (p.201) This "racial superiority" provided a rationale for policies of domination and assimilation, which slowly replaced partnership in the North American colonies. The RCAP Report notes, " the policies increased in number and had a bitter effect on Aboriginal people over many years and several generations." (p. 8)

Ironically, this shift in power began with the main instruments of the original (roughly equal) partnership: the treaties and the Royal Proclamation of 1763:

> "These documents offered Aboriginal people not only peace and friendship, respect and rough equality, but also protection. Protection was the leading edge of domination. At first, it meant preservation of Aboriginal lands and cultural integrity from encroachment of settlers. Later, it meant 'assistance', a code word implying encouragement to stop being Aboriginal and merge into a settler society." (RCAP, 1996, p. 8)

This protection or fiduciary obligation took the form of "compulsory education, economic adjustment programs, social and political control by federal agents." The RCAP Commission notes that "these policies, combined with missionary efforts to civilize and convert Indigenous people, tore wide holes in Aboriginal cultures, autonomy and feelings of self-worth." (p.8)

Titley (1986) also writes that the idea of protectionism was a way to justify the actions: "...the lingering guilt arising from conquest and expropriation was assuaged by the myth of duty and the delusion of paternal responsibility." (p.201)

The colonial government's instrument to carry out the policies of domination and assimilation was the newly formed Indian Department. In the 1700's, the nucleus of the Indian Department appeared and Indian commissioners were appointed to the Thirteen Colonies of the new North America. The first Indian Department in Canada dates back to 1755. The British Crown established it as a branch of the military in British North America, to cultivate military alliances with First Nations. (Titley, 1986, p.12)

As the fundamental nature of the relationship changed, so too did the purpose of the Indian Department. No longer focussed on military alliance with Aboriginal nations, it was rapidly becoming a large and powerful bureaucracy with the mandate to deal with, what was becoming known as, the "Indian problem."

In 1880, the Indian Branch became a full-fledged department, the Department of Indian Affairs. The Minister of the Interior continued to serve in the top post as Superintendent General of Indian Affairs. However, Titley (1986) notes, "Indian administration was usually regarded as a minor component of that minister's portfolio, and, in practice, effective decision-making lay in the hands of the Deputy Superintendent General, the head of the department" (p. 11) and the Deputy Superintendent General given "virtually a free hand in running his department." Key to running the department and dealing with the "Indian problem" was a complex bureaucracy made up of Indian agents and agency inspectors who's job was to implement the policies of assimilation in every corner of Canada. Titley writes: "As administration was extending its boundaries, it was also intensifying its control over its charges." (p. 12-13)

The "outside service" was the largest component of the department with 460 employees in 1890 in the field working directly with Indigenous people. Indian Agents had the most power and control over Indian people, with extensive responsibilities and authorization. Titley notes that their powers were considerably increased when an amendment to the *Indian Act* made them justices of the peace. An amendment to the *Indian Act* in 1920 illustrates the attitude of the senior bureaucracy of the Indian Department. Bill 44 allowed for the enfranchisement of an Aboriginal person against his will (following a report by a person appointed by the superintendent on his suitability). Duncan Campbell Scott, a top bureaucrat who had prepared the bill, defended the amendment at a public hearing to review the Bill:

> I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that this country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand alone. That is my whole point. Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department and that is the whole object of this Bill. (Titley, 1986, p. 50)

A few examples documented by Titley (1986) serve to illustrate the work of the Indian Department and the power it held:

- There were a number of amendments to the *Indian Act* which "increased the power of the department while concomitantly weakening the autonomy of the Indians." For example, in 1924, an amendment prevents lawyers and agitators collecting money from Indians for the pursuit of claims against the government without departmental approval. Government said it was to protect Indians from exploitation yet it was a "weapon in the hands of government in its efforts to control these activities."

- The *Act for the Gradual Civilization of the Indian Tribes in the Canadas* in 1857 was the beginning of assimilation policies that "would solve the "Indian" problem.." This Act saw the introduction of permanent settlement in villages, English language instruction, Christianity and European agricultural methods.

- In 1876, the *Indian Act* consolidated existing legislation across country. Indians were placed in distinct category as minors and special wards of the federal government, deprived of privileges of full citizenship.

Titley shows that when Aboriginal people did try to present an organized opposition the government would seek additional powers under the *Indian Act*. He writes, "Clauses of a draconian nature were introduced to give the department's officials greater control of their charges. Existing clauses that had proven ineffective were amended so that they could not longer be circumvented or ignored." (p. 202)

Summary

It is clear that from the outset, power and control was firmly in the hands of colonialist government, with no equal bargaining power, no independent representation, and no awareness of all relevant facts. The relationship, from a European point of view, was first based on a much needed Aboriginal alliance in war, as well as assistance in exploring, land skills, and further economic development through the fur trade. When this assistance was no longer necessary, the relationship quickly turned into a desire to see the "Indian problem" dealt with by civilizing and assimilating them. The colonialists, by their very nature, were not interested in building trusting relationships; they were interested in securing land for the crown. While Aboriginal people may have trusted Europeans landing on their shores, Europeans quickly dishonoured that trust.

The Department of Indian Affairs was the all-controlling, all-powerful bureaucracy. The Government of Canada wanted the Department to quickly bring about the assimilation of Aboriginal people, yet it saw the issue as a minor annoyance. Therefore, the bureaucracy was, by and large, given much control in policy creation and implementation. It seems there was little attempt to build any kind of relationship, other than oppressor over oppressed. Over the last 300 years, DIAND continued to evolve as a powerful arm of government, with a strong and entrenched corporate culture, based on inequity, power imbalance and control. This legacy is the foundation upon which modern-day relationships sit.

CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW

Review of Organization Documents

This study concerns the relationship between Aboriginal people of the Northwest Territories and the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, with a focus on the front line relationship. Research began with a study of the current situation, the desire for a new relationship and the history of the relationship. I drew on documentation from DIAND, as well as material that addressed the relationship such as the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People.

The following documents and information sources were reviewed for this project:

1. Royal Commission on Aboriginal People Report. Although not a DIAND document per se, this report is the guiding light for the changing relationship between Aboriginal people and the Government of Canada and its citizens. The commission undertook extensive research, hearing from Aboriginal people across Canada. Reviewing this report gave me insight into the history, the relationship, and what may be needed in the future.

2. Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan. This is Canada's response to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People Report. It is the framework within which each employee at DIAND works. The key theme of Gathering Strength is reconciliation and renewal: promoting a new relationship between governments, Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people to develop solutions to long-standing problems.

3. Building Effective Partnerships: A Framework and Plan for Action for CAAP (Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan)1998

4. Strengthening the Front Line Operations (various materials). A number of front line materials were reviewed in order to gain understanding of the goal and scope of the Strengthening the Front Line initiative. These included:
   a) Strengthening the Front Line, Presentation Deck;
   b) General Report, DIAND's National Managers' Meeting, Montreal, 1999 (focusing on Front Line and Partnership workouts);
   c) Strengthening the Front Line Operations, An Analysis of the Workout from DIAND's National Managers' Meeting, Montreal, 1999; and
   d) Report, Focus Group Session held in the NWT Region with Associate Deputy Minister.

5. Report, Assembly of First Nations – Canada Joint Think Tank on Partnership, Montebello, Quebec, 1999

6. Report, Open Space, NWT Region. DIAND, NWT Region held an all-employee Open Space Conference in October 1998, where the questions was asked, "How do we strengthen partnerships in the NWT Region?" The report illustrated the perceptions of existing partnerships in the NWT Region.

7. Canada and Aboriginal Peoples, A New Partnership. Report of Hon. A.C. Hamilton, for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1995. This report, although commissioned by the Department, presents a balanced view of the history of the partnership.

8. General Report, DIAND's National Managers' Meeting, Montreal, 1999. A section of this report highlighted the results of discussion concerning Front Line Operations and Partnership.

9. The Implementation of Quality Services in DIAND, Progress Report, 1998

Review of the Literature

Trust - A Moral Duty

A review of the literature shows that defining trust is a challenging task. Many authors have struggled with the nebulous concept of trust. Yet, there is some agreement among researchers about the need for trust in creating healthy societies. Lewis and Weigert (1985), Zucker (1986), Das and Teng (1998) and Shaw (1997) all believe that trust is indispensable in social relationships and vital for the maintenance of cooperation in society and necessary as grounds for even the most routine, everyday interactions. Further, Das and Teng (1998) note that "a certain minimum level of interfirm trust is indispensable for any strategic alliance to be formed and to function." (p. 4)

While most agree on the importance of trust in maintaining healthy societies and relationships, identifying a universal definition has proven more difficult. While a current review of the literature does not provide agreement on a single definition for trust, yet again, there is widespread agreement in one area: that implicit in the definition of trust is a *moral duty*, an obligation to do no harm. The terms which define this moral duty range from "goodwill" to "ethical imperative," but the message is the same, that a trusting relationship is one where the interests of the trusting person are placed before those of the trusted person.

In his extensive review of definitions of trust, Hosmer (1995) notes that most researchers agree that trust "seems to be based upon an underlying assumption of moral duty with a strong ethical component owed by the trusted person to the trusting individuals." Hosmer has explored the various definitions of trust and finds that it amount to this: "trust is the result of "right," "just," and "fair" behaviour - that is morally correct decisions and actions based upon the ethical principles analysis - that recognizes and protects the rights and interests of others within society." (p.17).

Along with moral duty, implicit in trust are also the elements of vulnerability and dependence. Hosmer and Das and Tang believe that the expectations of behaviour are usually under conditions of vulnerability, that to trust essentially means to take risks and leave oneself vulnerable to the actions of trusted others. Trust "implies reliance on, or confidence in, some event, process or person" now dependent on the actions of others. And, finally, "interpersonal trust (was) an expectancy held by an individual or a group that the word, promise, verbal or written statement of another individual or group could be relied upon." (Hosmer, 1995, p.4)

While the moral imperative may be the spirit of trusting relationship, there are some fundamental elements that must be present in a trusting relationship. MacGuire (1999) for instance, adds the element of predictability to the mix, noting that trust arises when behaviour is believed to be predictable. In other words, we trust others regardless of whether goodwill is involved or not, when we expect them to act in a particular way in a particular circumstance. Similarly, Shaw's (1997) working definition is that trust is the "belief that those on whom we depend will meet out expectations of them." (p.21)

Hosmer also believes that competency is also required in a trusting relationship. He writes, "We expect that our trustor will do no harm and will be competent." (p.4) For a trusting relationship one expects just and fair treatment, but also has the right to expect results and consistent behaviour. This element of competence is also raised by Shaw, who implies that simply having a moral duty for goodwill toward others, while a foundation for relations, may not be enough, especially in difficult relationships. In addition to "demonstrating concern or respecting the well-being of others," Shaw's two additional trust imperatives support the need for competence: achieving results or following through on business commitments; and acting with integrity or behaving in a consistent manner.(p. 18) The key, according to Shaw, is the congruence between actions and words, how we portray values and beliefs.

A defining element for Hardy, Phillips and Lawrence (1998) is communication. The authors believe that trust can be achieved only when trust rests on "reciprocal communication" which leads to shared understanding and meaning. They write: "In an inter-organizational relationship, trust grows out of a communication process in which shared meanings develop to provide the necessary foundations for non-opportunistic behaviour." (Hardy et al, 1998, p. 69)

In addition to the above-noted practical elements of trust, researchers seem unanimous in their view that a key defining factor in a trusting relationship is the absence of controls:

> Trust involves a positive attitude about others' motivations. Conceptually, it is not about influencing and affecting others' behaviour but is about believing that others will perform whatever serves the trustor's best interests, even in the absence of control. (Das & Teng, 1998, p. 6)

People enter into a trusting relationship based on goodwill, moral duty and expectation that the trusted person will do no harm and that there will be no need for controls to ensure this occurs. If the trust is there, the need for controls is absent. Control comes into play only when adequate trust is not present.

Institutional-based trust, the kind most often found in corporations, governments and businesses, write Das and Teng (1998), usually relies on controls and enforcement. Hosmer (1995) defines trust in "institution-based" settings as tied to formal mechanisms such as professionalism or third party insurance. He notes that because of the nature of institutions, it's difficult to regulate trust:

> Trust is generally difficult to enforce. Except for the contexts of individual actions and interpersonal relationships where loss of control is frankly acknowledged...Market contracts, hierarchical controls, legal requirements, and "embedded" obligations are all considered, recommended, yet ultimately found wanting...contracts and controls are expensive substitutes for trust and have the undesirable side effect of reducing innovative and cooperative behaviours. (p.10)

In fact, some authors don't believe that institution-based trust is possible. Shapiro believes that real trust cannot be institution based. She writes: "Who guards the guardians? In complex societies in which agency relationships are indispensable, opportunities for agent abuse sometimes irresistible, and the ability to specify and enforce substantive norms governing the outcomes of agency action nearly impossible, a spiralling evolution of procedural norms, structural constraints, and insurance-like arrangements seems inevitable." (Shapiro, p. 649 in Hosmer, 1995, p. 9)

Hardy, Phillips and Lawrence (1998) note that because trust is a "risky investment," partners often choose to use power to achieve the necessary co-ordination. Using power, dominant players can ensure co-operation and collaboration and even dictate its terms. They caution that illusory trust often resembles the real thing and it's critical to define trusting relationship in a way that takes into account power relations.

What seems to emerge in the writings of Hosmer (1995), Shaw (1997) and MacGuire (1999) is that trust is more achievable between individuals, and further, that its chances are greater between people with similarities, shared background expectations, and a common cultural system.

Yet, the generation of trust in an untrustworthy environment is a challenge. MacGuire notes, "We know remarkably little about how trust is generated, particularly when parties are separated by conflicting goals, backgrounds and experiences." (p. 2) And, given the tenets of a trusting relationship - the deeply fundamental and interpersonal nature of trust - it is easy to see why regaining lost trust may be difficult:

> Once lost, trust is not easily regained. In cultures of distrust, people take note of any behaviour or event that confirms their suspicions. Their suspicions thus become self-perpetuating and highly resistant to change. In such cultures, people are also likely to ignore or discount any information that indicates that it is safe to let go of their distrust. (Shaw, 1995, p. 181)

Shaw (1997) notes that those seeking to overcome mistrust face a daunting task: "They are forced to take action far beyond what would be necessary in healthier situations. Common approaches to enhancing trust are simply insufficient; bold actions are required." High levels of mistrust "requires a break from past organizational practices. A disruption of business as usual signals that the organization is committed to moving forward...Specifically, make it clear that the old way of operating is being replaced by a more collaborative approach." This could take a change in leadership or in the structure, or it could be more informal, for instance, the leadership being direct and honest for the first time in years. While a complete break with the past is impossible and in most cases, undesirable, bold actions are needed to restore trust. The key to regaining lost trust is to "break the structural frame, remove historical boundaries, eliminate practices that erode trust / replace with practices and systems that reinforce collaboration, stress team work and capitalize on collective wins." (p.p.184-198)

THE MACHINE MODEL: POWER AND CONTROL

> *The mechanistic image of the world is a very deep image, planted at subterranean depths in most of us. But it doesn't help us any longer...Organizations are living systems. They too are intelligent, creative, adaptive, self-organizing, meaning-seeking.* Margaret Wheatley, A Simpler Way.

What is the prevailing current-day organizational model and does it support building trusting relationships and environments? Many authors have written about the "machine-like" nature of modern-day organizations and the militaristic model upon which these organizations are based (Block 1987, 1993, Morgan 1997, Boulding 1989, Senge 1990). This model is notable for its rigid controls and chains of command, imbalance of power, central authority and unquestioning followership. This machine model has greatly influenced our thinking today that what makes a successful organization is planning, command and tight controls.

Morgan (1997) notes that employees who work in these mechanistic systems are expected to behave as if they were parts of machines: "The whole thrust of classical management theory...is to suggest that organizations can or should be rational systems that operate in as efficient a manner as possible. While many will endorse this as an ideal, it is easier said than done, because we are dealing with people, not inanimate cogs and wheels." (p.21)

Both Morgan (1997) and Schein (1992) have written extensively on the kinds of corporate cultures that evolve and exist within these organizations. This culture can be seen through the organization's shared values, shared beliefs, shared meaning and shared understanding - resulting in the pattern of shared assumptions. These shared assumptions guide behaviour and tell group members how to perceive, think about and feel about things. Knowing these "rules" enable employees to fit in and to belong. As culture evolves over many years, it is deeply embedded into the structure, and acts as a stabilizing force for the organization. Organizational culture is not always explicit, yet in most cases people operating within the culture have learned the shared assumptions and behaviours.

Within the corporate culture is an important power dimension that is not always clear. Morgan writes that "when we talk about organizations as bureaucracies...we are characterizing the organization in terms of a particular style of political rule." (p.156) In a bureaucracy, power and accountability are intimately connected with an employee's knowledge and use of the rules:

> The more hierarchical an organization, the less the power of individuals within it as we go down the hierarchy from the top. Persons at each level sacrifice personal power to persons at levels of the hierarchy above, especially those immediately above. (Boulding, 1989, p.153)

Block (1987) agrees that the "patriarchal contract," the fundamental contract between an employee and the organization, undermines the potential for employee autonomy and empowerment: "The traditional contract is patriarchal in its emphasis on a top-down, high-control orientation. It stems from the success that the military and the church have historically had with centralized control and clarity of roles, levels of authority, and the need for discipline and self-control." (p.22)

What does all of this mean in the context of relationship building? Given the existing bureaucratic structures and internal power issues, the forging of partnerships may prove difficult and untenable. The military model upon which current day organizations are modeled, writes Boulding (1989), embodies "threat power" in that the only way a culture can justify its function is when there is a need for an enemy. (p. 152) Wheatley (1992) also writes of our need for organizational structures that are built strong and complex in order to "hold back the dark forces that are out to destroy us...It's a hostile world out there, and organizations, or we who create them, survive only because we build crafty and smart..." (p. 16)

Charles Pascal's (1991) work on government-citizen relationship has relevance here. He notes that government's old style "power" approach to politics is no longer viable because it "excludes, rather than includes, builds walls instead of tearing them down, alienates rather than involves." (p.3) Pascal notes that even though government is trying to shift to a more partnership approach with improved consultation, the basic power relationship remains.

> Partnership is a much broader process based on different assumptions about the distribution of power. It's more than "consultation," it involves "collaboration" and "co-determination". It involves those with power voluntarily agreeing to share that power with those who may not be as powerful, but who may bring to the table something just as valuable in the form of insight and experience. (Pascal, 1991, p.7)

With government-Aboriginal relations, the imbalance of power may be even more pronounced, making relationship all the more difficult. Taiaike Alfred (1999) echoes Pascal, saying that although governments claim to be forging historic new relationships with Aboriginal people built on mutual respect, sharing, sovereignty, and inherent rights, in reality, the same power-based relationship remains:

> Under colonization, hundreds of Indigenous nations that were previously autonomous and self-governing suffered a loss of freedom. Even today, the lives of their people are controlled by others. The problems faced by social workers, political scientists, physicians, and teachers can all be traced to this power relationship, to the control of Native lives by a foreign power. In the midst of western societies that pride themselves on their respect for freedom, the freedom of indigenous people to realize their own goals has been extinguished by the state in law and to a great degree in practice. (p. 47)

A final important point Alfred makes is that Aboriginal governments and communities have modelled their own governance on the machine model. His main argument is that Aboriginal people must reclaim their own traditions and identity and leadership in order to advance:

> The problem is that at present Native politics is still understood and practised in the context of the law as structured by the state. Within this context the state has nothing to fear from Native leaders, for even if they succeed in achieving the goal of self-government, the basic power structure remains intact. (p. 47.)

Given the views of Alfred and the nature of this study, it is helpful to review the work of Paulo Friere (1970), who has written extensively on oppression and dehumanization. Both Alfred and Friere write that, in order to have freedom from oppression and control, people need to understand their plight, and work themselves to overcome it through reflection and action. Friere's main point is that for the oppressed to be free of oppression they first have be aware that they are oppressed; they must critically recognize its causes and transform the situation in which they live. Placing the struggle firmly in the hands of the oppressed, who are the only ones who can make changes, he writes that they must begin to transform the reality or the concrete situation which begets oppression. He calls for "critical intervention," the oppressor must confront reality critically, simultaneously objectifying and acting upon that reality. (p.32-34)

Friere notes that the individual oppressor who discovers himself or herself to be an oppressor may feel anguish, but it may not lead to non-oppression: "Rationalizing his guilt through paternalistic treatment of the oppressed, all the while holding them fast in a position of dependence, will not do." (p.31) Yet, even after gaining awareness of oppression, to confront the reality is challenging: "Herein lies one of the reasons for the prohibitions and the difficulties designed to dissuade people from critical intervention in reality. The oppressor knows full well that this intervention would not be to his interest." (p. 34)

It is critical to look at how Friere's model of awareness, reflection and action affects relationship building. In this review of the machine model, it has become clear how many organizational systems are based on rigidity, power and control, leading to the oppression of its employees. While for some, it may seem a leap to suggest that people in the corporate work force are victims of oppression, others will agree that given the earlier points raised that speak to the mechanistic, militaristic bureaucracy and the inherent power imbalance within, a reasonable argument can be made that oppression does indeed exist in the workforce.

Employees working in this environment, as "parts" in the machine, are likely to use a similar approach when dealing with external parties. In the case of Aboriginal-government relations, where historically the relationship has been, and continues to be, one of oppressor (government) and oppressed (Aboriginal people), it is all too easy for government employees to continue to take on the role of oppressors.

In keeping with Friere's theory, as the external oppressed parties gain awareness of their oppression and begin to reflect on their situation, they then start to push against the machine model to counteract the oppression. At this stage the relationship takes on a new dimension. It begins to shift from a predictable oppressor-oppressed dynamic to an uncomfortable and perhaps volatile relationship as the oppressor struggles for equality and both sides push against each other. During this pushing and counter-pushing, there may be little possibility for a good relationship unless both sides - the oppressor as well as the oppressed - are aware of the situation and begin to act. This means that if organizations with entrenched corporate cultures based on power and control want to build trusting relationships with external parties, they need to look within and become aware of how their culture, structures and operations are preventing true relationship.

This will be challenging for employees in the system. They are not often aware of their own oppression and, therefore, generally don't push against the system within which they work. The strong entrenched corporate culture leads most employees to believe the machine model is the norm. As Morgan (1997) notes, the corporate culture "creates a form of blindness and ethnocentricism. In providing taken-for-granted codes of action that we recognize as "normal," it leads us to see activities that do not conform with these codes as abnormal." (p.129) In addition, organizations have those deeply rooted authoritative and militaristic systems which are so challenging to go against, particularly when it's linked to a person's livelihood.

LEADERSHIP, EMPOWERMENT and AUTONOMY

> *"Our continued habit of linking leadership with position signals our inability to grasp how organizations are changing. Leaders are to be found in the ranks. They cannot be found looking at titles on organizational charts."* Sally Helgesen in "The Leader of the Future"

Ideas of what leadership means have changed over the years. Lambert (1995) writes that, traditionally, leaders have been considered as "great" men and women, born with certain preferred leadership traits. They are also viewed as "people in charge" who typically do things for others. The action is hierarchical and uni-directional: it's a top-down process applied to a group of followers who may work as individuals or as members of a team.

We need a new view of leadership, one which recognizes that anybody can be a leader. One which addresses the need for empowerment at all levels, particularly on the front line. In any organization which is intent on relationship building, empowerment and leadership at all levels may be the way to nurture positive external relationships.

Lambert (1995) has introduced a theory of constructivist leadership which gives fresh insight to how we think about leadership. The basis of constructivist leadership is its relational nature and its assertion that all can be leaders. Although her work focusses is on the educational system, her theory of constructivist leadership is relevant to all organizations.

A key component in Lambert's work is that all people can be leaders in a community of leaders. This is a departure from the hierarchical assumption that only those in positions of power are leaders: "Leadership is defined as a concept transcending individuals, roles, and behaviours...anyone in the educational community - teachers, administrators, parents, students - can engage in leadership actions." (Lambert, 1995, p. 29)

Again, even though Lambert's focus is on the education system, this view serves to illustrate a progressive and fresh understanding of leadership that is applicable in any organizational setting. She writes, "Leadership, like energy, is not finite, not restricted by formal authority and power; it permeates a healthy educational culture and is undertaken by whoever sees a need or opportunity...Leadership is different from an act of leadership, for it can be omnipresent among and within all participants." (p.33)

Max DePree (1989) introduced the idea of a "roving leader" as "the indispensable people in our lives who are there when we need them." (p.45-51) All people can be leaders, depending on the situation. Kouzes and Posner (1996) share this view: "Leadership is not the private reserve of a few charismatic men and women. It is a process that ordinary people use when they are bringing forth the best from themselves and others. When we liberate the leader in everyone, extraordinary things happen." (p. 110)

Wheatley (1992) too notes:

> When we speak of leadership we describe...the capacity of the organization to create the leadership that best suits its needs at the time. We may fail to honour these leaders more formally trapped as we are in a hierarchical structure that is non-adaptive; but at the level of the living, where people are, we know who the leader is and why he or she needs to be there. (p.22)

Although the military is not usually used as a paragon of exemplary progressive leadership practices, it is beneficial here to review Katzenbach's (1999) study of the US Marine Corp, with a focus on the front line marines. Katzenbach's main finding was that the Marine Corp has also embraced the notion that all can be leaders:

> The Marines don't distinguish between followers and potential leaders, they believe every member of the Corps must be able to lead...the policy of training every frontline person to lead has a powerful impact on morale. The organization's belief that everyone can and must be a leader creates enormous collective pride and builds mutual trust. (p.111)

In theory, the idea that all can be leaders and that leadership is relational and community-based is fairly nebulous. How does one attain a state of constructivist leadership? Much of the literature speaks to the need for empowerment, autonomy, authority - and ultimately trust. Katzenbach believes that the front line is the key to success of an organization, with opportunities for relationship building. And as such, organizations need to prepare the ground by making sure that front line people are empowered, given the necessary authority and responsibility. For this to occur requires that some basic elements are in place. Employees need clear delegation, preparation, and knowledge of the issues, the client, the goals. Employees are much more likely to be trusted if their manager knows they have been adequately prepared, know the issues and know the direction. Key to the success of the Marine Corp program, writes Katzenbach, is that front line people must know the goals and responsibilities, and expectations and have the altruistic notion that they work for a greater cause. Also critical is the need for training and support: "Trust and confidence are bolstered when people know what is expected of them and their colleagues." (p.115)

Yet, Katzenbach notes that a major attitude adjustment is needed to be successful in this approach: "Too often managers assume that 'leadership' is an intrinsic quality that somehow emerges on its own...Changing this approach is far from easy..." (p. 113). Wheatley (1992) has the same view:

> This new world is also asking us to develop a different understanding of autonomy. To many managers, autonomy is just one small step away from anarchy...Yet everywhere in nature, order is maintained in the midst of change because autonomy exists at local levels. Sub-units absorb change, responding, adapting. What emerges from the constant flux is that wonderful state of *global* stability. (p. 145).

However, given the existing structure, being autonomous and empowered is fraught with difficulty and many employees are not willing to take the risk. Empowerment may not work unless people are willing and able to meet the demands placed on them. Block (1987) points out how the bureaucracy doesn't provide a culture or environment where people are apt to be autonomous and take some risks. He frames it as "caution versus courage" and says that in organizations employees are continuously watched for the mistakes they may make. Therefore, employees choose to be cautious, not courageous. The lack of internal trust may also be an issue. Block (1993) writes:

> Stewardship begins with the willingness to be accountable for some larger body than ourselves - an organization, a community. Stewardship springs from a set of beliefs about reforming organizations that affirms our choice for service over the pursuit of self-interest. When we choose service over self-interest we say we are willing to be deeply accountable without choosing to control the world around us. It requires a level of trust that we are not used to holding. (p. 6)

AN IDEAL WORKING RELATIONSHIP

> *Each of us, all by ourselves, can do an enormous amount to improve the quality of a working relationship.* Fisher & Brown, Getting Together, Building Relationships As We Negotiate

In this project, which deals with building relationship, it is important to get a sense of what an ideal relationship may look like. Here, the work of Roger Fisher and Scott Brown, of the Harvard Negotiation Project, will be used as a model.

Fisher and Brown (1988) first outline the general foundation needed when building relationships. They speak to the need for:

1. A goal: to pursue a working relationship that can deal with differences;
2. A first step: to disentangle relationship issues from substantive ones (separate the people from the problem); and
3. A strategy: to be unconditionally constructive (to do those things that are good for the relationship).

They then outline basic elements or steps needed when pursuing a working relationship. The elements are:

- Rationality: balance emotions with reason;
- Understanding: learn how the opposite side sees things;
- Communication: always consult before deciding and listen;
- Reliability: be wholly trustworthy, but not wholly trusting;
- Persuasion, not coercion: negotiate side by side; and
- Acceptance: deal seriously with those with whom we differ.

These will be reviewed in greater depth following a review of the general foundation.

Deal with differences

Fisher and Brown define a good relationship as "having what we need to get what we want." They note that in any relationship, good substantive outcomes or results such as well-being, progress, or profit are necessary. However the authors point out that, equally important for those in a relationship is "inner peace", in other words, people want an interaction that leaves them feeling positive. Also fundamental to any relationship is the need to deal with differences, including different perceptions and values. "These differing wants, perceptions, and values, and the changes in them that take place over time, provide the endless grist for every relationship." (p. 7-8). In the face of differences and conflicts, parties still need to find ways to work together to achieve results. A key statement of Fisher and Brown is that, "If we want a relationship that can deal with serious differences, we have to improve the process itself, independent of the particular substantive problems involved." (p.xiv)

Separate the people from the problem

The first step to achieving a good relationship is to separate the people from the problem. Those in a working relationship will be able to more readily disentangle relationship issues from substantive ones. But, in any relationship it is critical to deal with the process, that is, "how" we deal with each other, independent of all substantive differences. They stress that those in a relationship need to deal with the people problems and the substantive problem but should not link the two. They advise parties to focus on the results themselves and on the kind of process that will yield those results. The overriding question, they say, is, "What does a 'well-managed relationship' look like and how can we develop one." (p.17)

The authors point to two key reasons why relationships fail. The first is the attitude or "partisan perceptions" of the parties involved. People see things differently, through their own "mental filter," or as the old adage goes, "where you stand depends on where you sit." If partners see reality differently, they will have a hard time coming to common understanding. The second reason relationships fail is relying on reciprocity. Parties "try to build a relationship by expecting others to follow our lead or by following theirs." (p. 24). They note that although the principle of reciprocity is typical in negotiations (you scratch my back, I'll scratch your back), they point out that it is risky to depend on reciprocity because it can quickly take on a hostile flavour, as in "an eye for an eye:" I will treat you as badly as you have been treating me." (p.31)

Be unconditionally constructive

Fisher and Brown advise that even in the face of disagreement and faulty perceptions there are strategies that can build working relationships. They call for a "prescriptive approach" which is to be unconditionally constructive at all times. They advise creating guidelines to follow which are good for the relationship and good for both sides, whether or not each partner follows the same guidelines. The guiding principle is "do only those things that are both good for the relationship and good for us, whether or not they reciprocate." (p. 38)

The authors note that, even though the more functional guidelines help form effective relations, there is a high moral intent as well. To be unconditionally constructive means behaving in an ethical manner. The key to any relationship is the human factor - two people interact with each other. This speaks to the desire of wanting a good relationship and being willing to take the high road and build something worthwhile. Parties need the right attitude, a willingness to change, and a desire to put the relationship ahead of their own needs.

Basic elements of a working relationship

In the pursuit of a healthy working relationship, some basic elements or steps must be established that allow the parties to achieve the goal of building relationships: "The working relationship we seek, whether as individuals or nations, is a process for dealing with differences. It is a process involving reason, understanding, communication, reliability, non-coercive means of influence of acceptance." (p. 21).

The elements outlined by Fisher and Brown are:

- Rationality: balance emotions with reason;
- Understanding: learn how the opposite side see things;
- Communication: always consult before deciding and listen;
- Reliability: be wholly trustworthy, but not wholly trusting;
- Persuasion, not coercion: negotiate side by side; and
- Acceptance: deal seriously with those with whom we differ.

While all elements are critical in building working relationships, for the purpose of this project with the focus on trusting relationships, the elements of reliability, understanding and acceptance will be reviewed. These elements seem to speak more directly to the issue of trust and relationship. However, that is not to say the other elements of rationality, communication and persuasion are not equally important in building good relationships. Fisher and Brown note that "the elements that affect the performance of a working relationship make up an interdependent system. A weakness in any single element damages the performance of the whole." (p. 173)

Understanding

Fisher and Brown point out that in order to solve differences, there needs to be understanding of what the differences are. Further, parties need to understand each others interests, desires and history: "The greater the extent to which we comprehend each other's perceptions, concerns, and values - both in general and in particular - the greater our ability to work together." (p. 64)

The authors note some of the barriers to understanding are miscommunication, unawareness of how little we understand in the first place, fear that we are wrong, and an inability to develop better understanding. The key is to explore the thinking of each side to learn more about the people and their motives. They advise parties to always assume a need to learn more and start by asking "what do they care about?" And they note that this is an approach that will take time: "An investment in understanding usually pays off. As we increase our level of understanding, our ability to avoid some problems and resolve other will improve and become more consistent." (p.69)

Unlearning is a key feature in the element of understanding. When trying to build a better relationship between groups that have a history and may have a confrontational relationship, coming to understand the way each other sees things will usually require the parties to unlearn some preconceptions: "Unlearning may be uncomfortable. As I change my views, I may have to question some of my past decisions, and others - I may fear - will question my wisdom. This process is especially uncomfortable when it concerns ideas we hold strongly. We are emotionally committed to these beliefs, and we tend to avoid or ignore information that would contradict them." (p. 73)

A further important element in understanding those in a relationship is to "learn their story". Fisher and Brown write:

> A story should cover the events that brought another person into a relationship with me. And it should include a plot - the connections that brought these events together...Learning someone else's story helps overcome my self-centeredness and reveals facts, perceptions, and values that I would otherwise miss. (p.78)

Reliability

Fisher and Brown note that trust is often seen as the single most important element of a good working relationship: "A high level of trust may permit me to accept your statements without question and rely on your promises." (p.107) Our conduct - how we act with each other - lays the foundation for trust; distrust may be caused by unreliable conduct. The authors caution that if the goal is to increase the level of trust, the reliability of conduct must be improved.

The authors point to a number of behavioural actions that undermine trust: unpredictable and erratic conduct, careless communication, promising commitment with no intentions to commit, treating clear promises lightly, being deceptive or dishonest. All of these can lead to the perception of unreliability and mistrust.

An important point Fisher and Brown make is that the systems in which we operate may discourage reliability: "In some instances the distrust that may pervade a relationship stems not from the behaviour of one party or the perception of another, but from the nature of the incentives imposed on behaviour by a social or economic system." (p.129) While two parties may genuinely want a solid trusting relationship, the system may not allow it.

Acceptance

"No amount of rational thinking, clear understanding, accurate communication, trustworthy behaviour, or persuasive influence will build a working relationship if each side rejects the other as unworthy of dialogue." (p.149) Fisher and Brown write that rejection of the other party causes "physical and psychological obstacles to problem solving" and undermine the ability of the two sides to work together. There may be obstacles to physically sitting down to negotiate or there may be psychological barriers in that one side may sit down but reject the views as worthless.

The use of jargon in the bureaucratic world is often received as an "exclusionary message: I am in the inner circle; you have not been admitted." Also, hearing a message repeatedly makes people feel less than equal and are not accepted as equal negotiating partners. The authors use the examples of South African blacks being told they are inferior. (p.152)

Fisher and Brown write:

> Nonacceptance, whether expressed or implied, sends the message that I am right and you are wrong, that I have nothing to learn from you, and that you have little value. Receiving that message is likely to reduce any interest you might otherwise have in communicating with me, in understanding how I see things, in trusting me, or in working with me. In effect, I have announced that I have made up my mind about you, that you don't matter to me, and that I will not be influenced by anything you say. There are few more powerful ways for me to sabotage our ability to deal with differences. (p. 152)

The authors offer these guidelines to foster acceptance:

- Accept unconditionally: we need not accept their values, their perceptions, nor approve their conduct. But, we do need a willingness to deal with the real person, to hear views and to accord his interests due process;

- Deal with respect: look behind the stereotype, get to know the person;

- Give their interests the weight they deserve: acknowledge their right to have interests, apply due process and fair hearing; and

- Treat them as equals, in basic respects: each partner should accept the other as equally human, equally caught up in the situation, equally entitled to have rights, and equally entitled to have any interests and views taken into account. (p. 152-160)

As already noted, the success of building a good working relationships is the congruency of all the elements. Fisher and Brown's practical checklist to assess the effectiveness of a relationship provides an excellent summary. The key with this model is its emphasis on our own actions. It is outlined on the following page.

How good is the relationship?

GOAL: Is there an attempt to win the relationship or improve it? How are differences resolved? How is the process improved for working together over the long term?

GENERAL STRATEGY: Do serious substantive issue disrupt ability to work together? Is there retaliation by doing things that weaken ability to deal with each other in the future? Are problems ignored rather than dealt with?

Balance of EMOTION and RATIONALITY: Awareness: what emotions are affecting transactions? Effect: how are emotions helping or hurting decision-making?

Degree of UNDERSTANDING: Is there empathic understanding of perceptions, interests, values, motivation? Can they be stated to partner's understanding?

How effective is two-way COMMUNICATION: Is there regular consultation before making decisions? Are important subjects discussed? Is there extensive and frequent communication, including listening?

RELIABILITY: How much confidence in future conduct? Is there a focus on how to be more reliable? Is there a focus on how to be more trustworthy? What risks are involved in relying on each other?

PERSUASION or COERCION: Is persuasion based on merits? Are threats, warnings, and commitment tactics avoided?

Degree of mutual ACCEPTANCE: Is there full acceptance as someone with whom to deal? Is there serious attention given to interests and views? Is the potential long-term quality of the relationship recognized?

SERVICE: PROVIDING QUALITY SERVICE IN A PARTNERSHIP CULTURE

> *DIAND is moving beyond the devolution of programs into a true partnership with First Nations...as First Nations assume greater responsibility for the management of government programs, the nature of the "service" relationship has also evolved.* The Implementation of Quality Services within DIAND – Progress Report, 1998

Governments are taking a hard look at the quality of their service to the public. In the public sector, the term "public servant" is under the microscope, with the aim to see how government can better serve its citizens. Kernaghan and Langford (1990) see "service" as the essence of what a public servant does. "This duty of service to the public, implicit and largely unspoken or ignored for so long, has emerged in recent years as a central preoccupation of the shapers of public sector management values." (p. 111)

Many government departments are moving to come up with codes, values, and principles that will offer some guidelines on what it means to provide service. Competency, efficiency, courteousness, accessibility are surfacing as key values/principles. The federal government's Task Force on Services to the Public produced 10 principles, which address areas such as consumer oriented service, timeliness, sensitivity to the public's needs and equity – all the while optimizing the responsible use of available resources. (Kernaghan & Langford, 1990, p.113)

Yet, putting the "service" back in public service may not be an easy task. Kernaghan and Langford point out that as governments strive to improve service, they're not entirely sure what exactly "better service" means. For instance, they note that it's not that simple to define the allocation of responsibility in decision-making, a key element in service provision. Who is responsible for decision making may range from a client-driven approach to patriarchy to fiduciary and everything in between. (p.113)

In their study of the front-line service Carroll and Siegel (1999) found that decision-making and having "policy discretion" – the ability of the administrator to make a decision without consultation or approval of a hierarchical superior - was an important component of good service. (p.74) The authors discovered that there was often a high level of policy discretion with front-line employees and that it was "exercised discretely and thoughtfully." They note that, "These civil servants are neither the dysfunctional robots nor the loose cannons that field level people have been described as being." (p.78)

Osborne and Gaebler (1992) note that while "democratic governments exist to serve their citizens" and "businesses exist to make profits," it is businesses that treat their customers well. In fact, the authors believe that fundamentally there is an "arrogance of the bureaucracy," government workers generally have no desire to serve its citizens. As diversity increases and needs change, governments continue to offer a "one-size fits all" service. Most of the customers are captive – they have few alternatives to the services their governments provide. (p.167)

Charles Handy (1998) supports the argument of government arrogance. His view is that government should be by nature "servant governments" and are there to work for its citizens, with their consent and agreement. He writes:

> While it may often be necessary to remind people that rights entail obligations, it is also pertinent to remind our rulers, who should be our servants, that obligations need to be balanced by rights, because it is rights that buttress dignity. (p.246)

In keeping with the "servant government" theme, Stringer (1996) writes that government must take into account the impact of program development and services on the people they serve. "Programs are evaluated not only according to their technical or functional worth, but also according to their impacts on people's social and emotional lives." He stresses that governments need to look at a whole range of elements when providing service, including pride, feelings of self-worth, dignity, autonomy, independence, identity, control and responsibility. (p. 20)

As governments strive toward better service, many authors believe there are age-old attitudes and structures that will impede progress. There is the challenge of shifting staid old bureaucracies to "client-driven organization." Governments may simply be too ponderous to change. (Kernaghan and Langford, 1990, p.116) Kernaghan and Langford may strike at the heart of the matter when they write that the very nature of bureaucratic organization is at odds with concept of service to public. (p. 121) Public servants serve two masters: the crown and the public and they may not be able to do either very well. "In effect, we are dealing here with a duty, the internal components of which may often be both misunderstood and at war with each other." (p.112)

In addition to the serving of two masters, is what Carroll and Siegel call the "Great Divide," or the fractured organizational reality. In their work with field staff, they found that the staff was keenly aware of the gulf between their organizational reality and that of headquarters. They spoke of a division in perspective between people in field offices and headquarters, resulting in a fractured organizational reality, and hence two solitudes. (p.133) This is important when looking at service because, as the authors point out, a unified organizational culture is critical to motivate staff, which will likely provide better service.

Carroll and Siegel go on to note that government departments have two roles: one is to serve the needs of the minister and the second role is to deliver services to the public. While public servants usually don't play an overtly political role, the authors note that it is clear that they have an obligation to be loyal servants of their political masters and assist them in carrying out their duties. While these roles may seem complimentary - that providing good programs and services will naturally make the Minister look good - Carroll found that in the world of politics, it wasn't that simple. (p.5)

While service may seem an uncomplicated concept, this review has shown that it's not as simple as one might think. Defining what service means is important, as is looking at issues of attitudes, values, power and control. As well, other variables play a part in providing quality service such as the existing organizational culture and structure.

SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

As we explore the potential for building trusting relationships by looking at trust, leadership, organizational models, relationship models and service, a few elements come clear. First is the primacy of relationship in everything we do; we are all interconnected and interdependent. Second is that trust is the single most important element of a good working relationship. In any trusting relationship, there is a moral duty - to do no harm. There are also practical requirements for a trusting relationships such as predictability, knowing the expectations, being competent, and achieving results. It appears that this kind of trusting or even working relationship is best achieved at the interpersonal level.

An important point in the literature was the difficulty in regaining lost trust. There are practical, albeit radical, things that can be done. However, these things amount to a major overhaul of systems that have been in place for years. Breaking the structural frame or removing historical boundaries or even replacing leadership can be daunting tasks. Before any organization or group is going to attempt that, there needs to be an awareness of how those structures have contributed to distrust.

Before any organization can hope to build external relationships, it needs to look closely at its internal organizational structure and culture. The internal workings will most likely dictate the nature of the external relationships. We see that many organizations operate based on a mechanistic, militaristic and hierarchal structure, where elements of power and control are dominant. The corporate culture acts as the "spirit" of the model, guiding behaviour to conform with the norms and dominant rules. There is little room for empowerment or autonomy in this type of situation, as the corporate structure and culture act as a stabilizing force. Although governments are attempting to work toward partnerships, the literature suggests that much of the old inequitable power relations remain.

The kind of leadership needed to build good relationships with partners is shared relational leadership at all levels. Many organizations are exploring how to achieve a more progressive leadership style and approach. Yet, organizations will need to provide much support for employees as they begin to empower them with responsibility and authority. To give employees autonomy requires a certain level of trust on the part of the organization that the employee is prepared to represent the organization in the best possible way. In order to do this employees need to know the big picture and be ready to take on responsibility. Given the current corporate culture and structure, where those at the "bottom" of the organization are often not valued, true empowerment will be a challenge.

Another important point is that to have freedom from this mechanistic model, which fosters oppression and control, people need to be aware of their situation, and work themselves to overcome it through refection and action. As they begin to work toward freedom from oppression, they may begin to counteract the oppressive relationship, which could lead to an increasingly adversarial relationship. The oppressor must then go through the same process of awareness, reflection and action in order to change the fundamental machine model system that dictated the nature of the relationship in the first place.

The good news is that many organizations are starting to look at some of these issues, and literature on corporate health and working relationships continues to be in demand. To begin to change corporate cultures, and work toward empowerment, people need to be aware of their situation and the environment in which they work. Then they can begin to change behaviour. The service that organizations provide may act as a litmus test for this changed behaviour; it may highlight in a practical sense the kind of relationships organizations have with clients. While service may seem an uncomplicated concept, this review has shown that it is not as simple as one might think. Defining what service means is important, as is looking at issues of attitudes, values, power and control.

CHAPTER THREE - CONDUCT OF RESEARCH STUDY

Research Methods

When I began this research I felt, intuitively, that the way to understand the issue of a trusting relationship between DIAND and Aboriginal people in the Northwest Territories was through meaningful discussion. I was aware that I was about to delve into a topic that was highly emotional and had a long adversarial history. Therefore, it was very important to use methods that allowed people the freedom to discuss and express their views in a safe and trusting environment. I felt that, after five years of working with DIAND and 16 years of living and travelling in the North, people would be willing to openly share their ideas and feelings with me. I also knew that what they told me would be rich with awareness and insight.

The research design I chose for this study used a naturalistic methodology based on the principles of post-modern theory. It is a "perspective that begins with the premise that no method, theory, discourse, or genre has the right to proclaim itself the royal road to truth." (Palys, 1997, p. 422) This method was chosen in an attempt to capture the qualitative and naturalistic descriptions of the nature of "trust" in the relationships between DIAND's front line employees and Aboriginal people of the Northwest Territories. A method was needed which would give voice to participants, and give them time and space to explore and understand the context and underlying assumptions. Qualitative methods were solely used, rather than including quantitative methods such as surveys, because a qualitative approach allowed the opportunity to explore more fully the respondents' feelings and beliefs. In addition, this was an excellent opportunity to bring to light the issue of relationships and begin to discuss openly the concept of trust between the Aboriginal community and DIAND. As Stringer (1996) notes, naturalistic inquiry pursues "an interpretative task that seeks to describe the historic, cultural, and interactional complexity of social life." (p.7)

The views of Kirby and McKenna (1989) further convinced me to follow naturalistic approaches. They write, "the methodology of research from the margins is based on the commitment to advancing knowledge through research grounded in the experience of living on the margins." (p. 64) They note that methods from the margins are grounded in the following assumptions:

- Knowledge is socially constructed;
- Social interactions form the basis of social knowledge;
- Different people experience the world differently;
- Because they have different experience, people have different knowledge;
- Knowledge changes over time; and
- Differences in power have resulted in the commodification of knowledge and a monopoly on knowledge production.

In this study, it was important to hear from the margins, who I believe to be Aboriginal people and DIAND front line employees. Front line employees are defined as those DIAND employees who interact regularly and directly with Aboriginal clients. A case can easily be made that both these groups of people may be identified as "marginal." Front line employees, given their lower ranking in the hierarchical structure, may not have the opportunity to express their concerns or share their views. As for Aboriginal people, there is a disturbing history of white anthropologists/researchers coming to the North for research purposes, but not allowing Aboriginal people to tell their own stories. My aim was to facilitate the sharing of words of both DIAND front line employees and Aboriginal people in the Northwest Territories. It was important that these two groups of people had an opportunity to share their different experiences. It was also important that front line people started to think about their own power base as employees of the federal government and the effect of that on Aboriginal people.

In using qualitative methods, I was aware of the limitations of this type of research. It could be argued that at issue is the influence of bias on the design of the study, the credibility or bias of the subjects, the lack of adequate representation of the total population, researcher and/or analysis bias. However, bias is an interesting concept. Kirby & McKenna (1989) write: "certain methods have been sanctioned by the status quo as the "proper" means of producing knowledge that will be recognized as legitimate. Because of this bias, certain methods have become well-developed while others have remained underdeveloped; certain information remains unresearched and undocumented." (p.63) Therefore, one cannot say that certain methods will cancel out bias, while others will increase it.

However, when designing this study every attempt was made to minimize the bias the could affect the results. There was a conscious effort made to ensure that participants had the time to share their views and the results were transcribed and communicated in their words.

Data Gathering Tools

In order to ensure the interview process was meaningful and yielded the richest results, I borrowed an interview technique from the Appreciative Inquiry toolkit. Appreciative Inquiry (Hammond 1996) is a method that looks for what works in an organization and builds on the positive. The approach doesn't focus on the problems in the old mechanistic style of inquiry that believes there is a cause and a fix for any problem. Rather, it looks at organizations as organic and studies the whole. Appreciative Inquiry is a qualitative method of inquiry which provides an opportunity to view an organization, or relationship, with a new set of eyes. It focuses on the belief that there are often good intentions behind bad behaviours and that it is up to the researcher to help uncover the good intentions and bring them to the forefront to be celebrated. (Bushe,1995)

Although I recognized the intent and potential benefits of Appreciative Inquiry, I was not convinced it would be the best methodology for this project. This study focussed on building a relationship between two parties who have had long-standing conflict. My concern with the use of Appreciative Inquiry was that serious, genuine and negative issues might not have been acknowledged in the process.

However, I recognized the value in the AI approach and in this naturalistic inquiry, the Appreciative Inquiry interviewing techniques were an appropriate choice. Bushe (1998) writes that in an appreciative interview the purpose is to "help the person mine their experience to go beyond their current point of view" in order to generate new insights. I wanted participants to look at their situation with fresh views. In addition, I wanted to use some of the key AI interviewing techniques, such as exploring what *is* working, understanding multiple realities, valuing differences, and treating participants with dignity and respect. (Hammond, 1996)

This approach was complimentary to the "interactive" interview approach advised by Kirby and McKenna in interviewing marginalised participants. Interactive interviews are "a guided conversation whose goal is to elicit from the interviews rich, detailed materials that can be used in qualitative analysis." (Lofland and Lofland, in Kirby and McKenna, p. 66)

Two phases of interviewing were conducted. The first round was informal (not recorded) with DIAND employees and Aboriginal people. The purpose of this first phase was to "tease out" some preliminary issues. The guiding questions were:

- what does a meaningful relationship look like?
- what is current reality?
- what are the key barriers to building a trusting relationship?

From these informal interviews came a better understanding of the issues and an identification of a set of formal interview questions.

In the next phase, formal interactive interviews were held to further explore the issues. Key players were interviewed, including front line employees - both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal - and Aboriginal people. The sample included front line employees from various levels and directorates within the DIAND, NWT Regional office. Aboriginal people were interviewed, including leaders, community workers and youth. The list of Aboriginal interviewees was generated using a "snowball" technique where I asked interviewees to identify other potential interviewees.

Eight to 10 questions were asked of participants (see Appendix A). Questions ranged from the conceptual, "what does a trusting relationship mean to you?" to the practical, "what advice can you give to improve the working relationship that exists right now between DIAND front line employees and Aboriginal people?" Questions were open-ended and unstructured. Additional probing questions were used to capture a deeper description of the experience, rather than leaving it at a superficial level. Follow-up questions were asked if a participant raised an interesting issue.

My approach was to be involved and empathetic to the words of the participant. I shared my own views and feelings, tried to be intuitive and looked for periods when the participant was animated as an indicator of key issues. My goal was to attend to others, giving the interviewee my full attention, paying attention to details, emotion, and listening. I purposely tried to schedule my interviews in the mornings when I knew I would have the most energy and focus to interview appreciatively.

One focus group session was also conducted with five participants, all front line employees. The same set of eight to 10 questions were used. Participants were free to speak up at any time, although I did use certain techniques to ensure all participants had a chance to express their views. Two techniques used were "individual writing" (giving participants time to write their thoughts on paper or sticky notes) and "structured go-arounds" (giving all participants a chance to voice their ideas).

In addition to the personal interviews and the focus group sessions, my regular work as facilitator for the regional Strengthening the Front Line Operations Team afforded me the opportunity to further explore to collect data. As well as attending the regular meetings, I held a brainstorming session on key barriers facing front line employees.

Data Management and Analysis

All formal interviews and the focus group session were audio recorded. The tapes were transcribed by me and two other people. I reviewed the tapes for quality control, replaying them to ensure integrity between the print and recorded words. Once the data was collected, the process of data management and analysis began. First, I got to know the data, what Kirby and McKenna (1989) call "living with the data." This meant reading and re-reading the interview transcripts, reflecting on the words, making initial notes of key points. These notes were filed along with all transcribed interviews.

I then began to "make sense of the data", to get comfortable with what the data had to say, to get a more holistic understanding, and to begin to see patterns and arrangements. (Kirby & McKenna, 1989) It was important for me that the patterns and themes were allowed to emerge; I did not want to force the data into preconceived and rigid categories.

I re-reviewed each of the transcripts and began to make notes in the margins and came up with preliminary themes and threads of thought. I was interested in reducing the data to the key issues and points that were made by the majority of respondents, yet I wanted to make sure I captured insightful comments. Comments related to these themes were colour coded for further display and grouping. Data was naturally reduced as unrelated themes were retained but not included in the final analysis. During the data management and analysis stage, I paid special attention to Kirby & McKenna's (1989) notion of "intersubjectivity", that priority was given to the voices from the margins, that each bit of data will be given equal opportunity to speak. What emerged were roughly nine themes which fit naturally into four larger categories.

Study Conduct

In total, 22 interviews were conducted and of those, 10 were preliminary informal interviews to get a sense of the key issues. The first series of informal preliminary interviews were not taped, so as to keep a casual exploratory atmosphere. The transcripts of formal interviews were analysed and coded for references to the key domains.

Of the 10 participants in the informal interviews, four were Aboriginal front line employees, three were non-Aboriginal front line employees, one was a non-Aboriginal DIAND employee who had worked with the 'Partnership Cell' at Headquarters, and two were Aboriginal people from Yellowknife and one other community. From those informal interviews, questions were refined and a further 12 people were interviewed, using open-ended and unstructured questions - an appreciative inquiry technique of engaging interviewee. Of the12 people interviewed formally, four were regional non-Aboriginal front line employees, one was a non-Aboriginal employee who currently works in the "Partnership Cell" in Headquarters, two were Aboriginal front line employees and five were Aboriginal participants from Yellowknife and one other community.

Of the DIAND employees interviewed, the length of service varied from 1 year to 25 years. Participants were sought from each operational directorate. Through this method of selection, representation was achieved across the sectors and levels.

I conducted individual 90-minute unstructured interviews with each participant between November, 1999 and February, 2000. The interviews were held in various locations, generally what was most comfortable for the participants. Most of the DIAND employee interviews were held in the office of the researcher. At the outset of each interview, the participant was provided written consent after being informed of the study, purpose, information related to the data analysis and ethical considerations including confidentiality and that the interview was being recorded for analysis purposes only. Appendix B is a copy of the written consent obtained from each participant.

The Focus Group session was held December 1, 1999 with five front line employees two Aboriginal and three non-Aboriginal in a boardroom at the DIAND, NWT Region offices.

All formal interviews and the focus group session were recorded, so full attention could be give to the participant. Participants had the option to withdraw at any point during the study. Upon completion of the interview and focus group session, each tape was transcribed verbatim, via word processing. During the transcription, there was an attempt made to write-up the responses in the language and descriptions of the subject. When editing occurred by the researcher, it was done to provide more grammatically correct account.

As the intent of this project is to bring about change, this work is one piece of a greater complex of work being carried out in the area of relationship building, by DIAND NWT Region and by the department as a whole. Kirby & McKenna (1989) note that, "The methods appropriate for researching from the margins are grounded in a political awareness of the need for change. Information cannot be gathered without an understanding of the subsequent use of that information." (p.62)

A note on ethical considerations and confidentiality

Generally, I have found that Aboriginal people distrust the term "confidentiality". It implies secrecy, closed communication and something not quite right. The Aboriginal people who shared their words with me are open communicators who speak their minds in any setting. Many of them indicated that, what they told me they would tell anyone, in anyplace.

My sense is that front line employees were not so open. There is a general fear in the federal government, based on a rigid hierarchy and positional power, that those "above you" can hurt you - either by direct criticisms, poor job performance reviews, or generally making your life miserable. There may have been some concern about the "effective detective" phenomenon - that somehow readers will be able to detect which comment came from which person.

I explained to all subjects that I was taking a "subject-centred" approach, that ultimately I had their best interests at heart. I ensured confidentiality and anonymity, that what was said between researcher and subject would never be directly attributed to the subject. Subjects always had the option to withdraw from the study at any time.

However, in a focus group setting, strict anonymity was not possible. The beauty of focus groups is the synergy that can develop between participants and the responses can become fulsome and rich. Yet, subjects may not have been as willing to share their thoughts. Creating a safe environment and using safe methods was important. The use of sticky notes allowed people to express a sensitive issue. If participants did not feel comfortable in the focus group, they had the choice to leave, without prejudice. In addition, building trust with subjects was critical, through pre-focus group sessions, and direct and clear disclosure throughout the research.

In this research project, it was critical to be open about the research, the purpose, scope, and results. I never felt the integrity of the research would be threatened if subjects were told too much about its purpose. In fact, I wager that the research is more enhanced due to the openness about intent.

CHAPTER FOUR - RESEARCH STUDY RESULTS

Study Findings

> *There is a status quo that exists. There is a way the department views indigenous peoples or our situation, the way the department in Yellowknife views the Dene. And vice versa, we view the department in a certain way, generally, and over the years it hasn't been a healthy existence or relationship. The department has gone a certain way...for the last 150, 250 years and the structure, the financing, the whole infrastructure is designed to work the way it has the last 250 years. So, to take another angle is going to take a while.* Aboriginal leader

During the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, the commissioners directed their consultations to one main overriding question: *What are the foundations of a fair and honourable relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people of Canada?* In its findings, RCAP commissioners outlined four stages in the history of relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, three of which were reviewed in the History of the Relationship section on page 6. In the fourth stage, Renewal and Renegotiation, they recommend four principles for a renewed relationship. What I have found in my review of the study findings is that there is a natural fit between the four principles of the RCAP and the issues and ideas raised by participants in this study. Therefore, I have situated the findings within the context of the four principles.

The four principles are:

1. Recognition: The principle of mutual recognition calls on non-Aboriginal Canadians to recognize that Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants and caretakers of this land and have distinctive rights and responsibilities flowing from that status.

2. Respect: The principle of respect calls on all Canadians to create a climate of positive mutual regard between and among peoples. Respect provides a bulwark against attempts by one partner to dominate or rule over another.

3. Sharing: The principle of sharing calls for the giving and receiving of benefits in fair measure.

4. Responsibility: Partners in such a relationship must be accountable for the promises they have made, accountable for behaving honourably, and accountable for the impact of their actions on the well-being of the other.

A complete description of these principles can be found on page 6.

The Commissioners advised that to achieve a renewed relationship there needs to be a heartfelt commitment, founded in visionary principles and based in practical mechanisms to resolve disputes and regulate the daily workings of the relationship. I found these same thoughts to be prevalent in the study findings.

It is important to note that when Aboriginal respondents were asked about the nature of the relationship with DIAND, they often didn't differentiate between the federal government and the department. For many, government was government, and in some cases, the Government of the Northwest Territories was referred to as well.

RECOGNITION: Two Solitudes Intertwined

> *The whole system is based on no trust. It's like being in a river. No matter how hard you swim up the river, the river is washing you down... you're not going anywhere. Indian Affairs has created a no trust system. There is no trust. So, somehow we have to get out of the water and say, 'well, I'm going to do something different'.* Aboriginal participant

The existing relationship between DIAND and Aboriginal people is one built on a foundation of deep mistrust. In this study, all people interviewed stated there is no trust, yet the general view was that the working relationship is improving. There are many elements which are still inhibiting progress in achieving a good working relationship. "Adversarial", "unhealthy" and "deeply based on dependency" was the general way Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people described the relationship between DIAND and Aboriginal people in the North. And in this highly adversarial relationship, a common response was that there was no understanding of the culture, the issues or the people.

> What are our commonalities? That is a difficult thing because Canada and first nations, in many aspects, are at opposites, the world view is an opposite, it's almost like we see the world from a totally different point of view. Most of our people interpret the government working against us, the government is there to fight us, the government's not there on our behalf. Or, we are seen as people that are fighting the government. If you ask people what I do, they'll say I fight the government or they'll say I work for the people to get from the government what is ours. I don't want to be seen that way. I don't want to be seen as someone that's fighting the government, I want to be seen in a constructive light. *Aboriginal leader*

In the midst of an adversarial and distrusting relationship, the issue for the Aboriginal respondents was not so much about building trust, although many said that generally trust is the hallmark of a true relationship. Rather, for Aboriginal respondents the issue was about recognition of the fundamental nation to nation relationship between First Peoples and Canada, recognition that they are nations of people. As one Aboriginal leader said:

> Maybe trust is not the real question. What Canada needs to understand is that we are nations of people. They agree that we are nations. They agree that we have the inherent right to govern ourselves. They need to start treating us like nations and like governments. You don't need to trust the other government. I don't think Canadians trust Americans. I don't think Americans trust Canadians. I don't think we trust the Brits, or really anyone out there. But we trust ourselves. Otherwise we couldn't survive. So, the question really isn't trust. As long as you have respect for me and you recognize that, as a government, I can do these things, that's what's important. That's the step that's really not transpiring. We're not able to implement our powers of governance. We are not able to have our own dollars, to run our own schools. That's what we want, or to do a whole number of things that governments do - to set up a taxing regime, to generate our own dollars from resource revenue sharing. That's not being implemented. We're being seen as something else and we're being asked to trust each other. So, maybe we're taking the wrong angle...so it's a recognition of who we are that is really required. And in a way you don't have to trust me. *Aboriginal leader*

For some, even using the term "trust" implies a trustor and trustee relationship which carries with it notions of inequality, dependency or power imbalance and implies that there is a need for commitment or compassion. Historically, the government has shown no goodwill, little compassion and has defined the relationship from the outset. The Aboriginal people interviewed don't want to remain in a place of dependency, counting on the goodwill of a dominate federal government system.

The Legacy: Acknowledging the Past

> *It goes way back but some of the key people we deal with, their lives we're extremely affected by DIAND's activities, and if the first 50 years of your life are negatively affected by a department, 20 years of good work is not going to get rid of it unfortunately.* Aboriginal front line employee

The history of the relationship between the Government of Canada and Aboriginal people was raised repeatedly in this research project. It is clear that the history has defined the relationship and has left a legacy that will not be easily changed. DIAND, as the liaison between the two parties, has come under much criticism for its policies, programs, operations and how it has defined the relationship.

A majority of respondents believe that the foundation and fundamental attitudes that were formed 250 years ago have not shifted, regardless of how much DIAND talks about the goal of renewed partnerships. People said the history must be understood and addressed before they can move forward.

> I think it all goes back to knowing the history. You have to have an understanding of what the department has done in the past. There's a lot of us that grew up in an era where the Indian Agent was almost God. He could come in and by signing a document take your children away. I know there were a lot of people in our community who had that fear and that was something you lived with. I know it's easy enough to say that things have changed but when you lived it, it's a little harder to accept and that's where I think knowing the history is very important. *Aboriginal front line employee*

It is clear that the legacy is a powerful and underlying force when front line employees go into communities to do their work. Employees on the front line spoke of "feeling the brunt" of the legacy in their dealings with Aboriginal people who are still being affected by the history.

> Respect has to be earned, right, and it's based on, unfortunately, your experience, so that's why we have a big barrier, people look at us not as individuals, but look at us as DIAND and look at history of DIAND and that becomes us...Because respect is based on past experience, we're going to have a tough time. *Aboriginal front line employee*

RESPECT: Positive Mutual Regard

> *We need an understanding of what the other wants and needs and you have to respect that. If you don't have an understanding of what they want or need, primarily understanding of what they want, or what their aspirations are or their role in life, then you can't have respect.* Front line employee

The Concept of Trust

When I asked people to tell me, in a general sense, what trust meant to them, the majority of the participants answered the question in the context of the existing relationship between DIAND and Aboriginal people. There were many key themes that arose when people reflected on trust, including honesty, competence, credibility, having authority, commitment, purpose for the relationship. Yet, underlying most responses was a sense that having trust meant doing no harm.

An Aboriginal respondent summed it up this way:

> When I say I trust you, I trust you're not going to hurt me, there's not going to be any harm whatsoever. The thing with trust is that you can break my trust once and I can forgive you, you can break my trust a few times and I can forgive you. But I won't continue to trust you. There will have to come a time when you have to stop hurting me.

All responses showed this high degree of moral duty or ethical imperative. One person said that trust is based on an "honourable precept," while another spoke of the "inherent goodness of humanity" saying that "in order to trust we have to have a belief that we are essentially good. If we weren't, then we couldn't trust, wouldn't want to trust, it wouldn't enter into our thinking. So the belief is that we are essentially good."

What also arose were the cultural differences in how we show and gain trust. Aboriginal people have trust in the spoken word, with a high degree of moral imperative. Non-Aboriginal people seem to put more faith in the written word, with an emphasis on contractual agreement.

One Aboriginal respondent said,

> Our experience as Aboriginal people is that the written word doesn't mean anything. A piece of paper is not as good as your word. Anybody can take a word and change it, they can lie. There's no trust in the written word. The trust with the spoken word is that when Aboriginal say something they keep their word. There's an honour there.

Another key element of trust dealt more with the practical side. It was felt that in a trusting relationship, parties need an understanding of what the other wants and needs:

> If you don't have an understanding of what they want or need, primarily understanding of what they want, or what their aspirations are or their role in life, then you can't have respect. If you don't have respect, you don't have the even relationship between the two people. I'm not going to pay attention to your views, your values, your issues, anything. And it's basically a one-way thing, everything is going to be me, me, me. *Front line employee*

Two Solitudes: The Need for Understanding

> *We can count on one finger how many times DIAND people have been over here.*
> Aboriginal participant

The most common complaint from all respondents was lack of understanding - of people, culture, issues and decision-making processes. Many DIAND employees said they want to spend the time in NWT communities but felt there was little support from DIAND to spend the time and resources to get to know their clients. The other, more disturbing, response was a "business as usual" approach. As one employee said about spending the time in communities, "It's never been done. Why should we do it. Nobody around us does it." Generally, though, almost all recognized that to reach understanding, time is needed to build relationship. One clearly frustrated front line person said,

> When you get into communities and start to build relationships, it's dollars, everything's dollars, taking time to be there, taking time to spend the time. And it all comes down to that. If one of us says to our bosses, well, I'm going out for a two-hour meeting but I'd like to stay three days to see what's going on, there's not a chance in hell it's going to happen. Because that's dollars, you're supposed to be doing something else, and until you have that opportunity to go and say, 'how's it going chiefs? We've got some stuff going on in this area and if you've got some concerns, let's talk about them.' Probably that's more useful than two years of letter writing.

This leads to another point constantly raised by front line employees: they want to have opportunity to just talk and meet with clients on a proactive basis, not just when there's a conflict. Another front line employee said he'd like to start to build relationship through some friendly discussion:

> I'd like to say, 'I'm here to say hello, I don't want to talk to you about problems, don't want to talk to you about what we're doing, I don't want you to scream at us about what I'm doing, I'm just saying hello. Can I buy you a cup of coffee or whatever?' But the only time we go on these trips is when somebody's complaining. Maybe that's a good way to get somebody to come out there, is to complain, but wouldn't it be better if we were just able to go out there and then potentially prevent the complaint?

Many recognized that lack of understanding often leads to other problems, such as lack of trust, poor communications, and a lack of credibility. An Aboriginal leader said,

> If a person doesn't understand, you don't trust them. Another mistake that's made is the person who doesn't understand tries to give the impression that they think they understand and patronizes people. Most people in Aboriginal leadership positions, whether it's from the community level, regional level, territorial level can see through it right off the bat if the person's not competent

> and basically is bullshitting them. They can see that and when that happens, then the old statement, well, the game is on.

This quotation points to the fear many front line employees have of confrontation in Aboriginal communities. Some have bad experiences and don't want a re-match. Others have heard the stories of the battles on the front line and choose to avoid it if they can. Most just feel very uncomfortable with confrontation and "getting bashed about" or "getting beaten up really bad."

A front line employee admitted,

> I've probably done very little. I try to listen. I'm reluctant to go to public meetings because sometimes I know I'll either get very frustrated or I may come very close to saying something the department may not want me to say, but that's only because I don't like doing that sort of work.

Often a front line person who has little authority, little knowledge of issues and little support is a prime target when he or she visits a community. What was clear during the research was that Aboriginal people are very aware of this dynamic, and often will not show the front line person any mercy. One Aboriginal leader said,

> Unfortunately, the way Aboriginal politics have worked in the past is that if senior management showed up at a meeting they wouldn't get bashed around as much as someone in a junior position. One of the problems is the department sends people at such a junior level, they send that poor person to a meeting when the department should be aware there's something simmering over here. The junior person tries to pacify them and keep the peace, but not being able to resolve the issue. I've seen it happen so many times and felt so bad for some of the people who come to meeting, not being able to deal with the political stuff and becoming intimidated. And once they feel intimidated rather than one person picking on him, there's 20 people picking on him. Sometimes there should be more thought given to it, sometimes it's better to not have a meeting, if you can't have the proper person there.

SHARING ...The Wolf and the Rabbit: Imbalance of Power

> *From an Aboriginal perspective, governments have all kinds of Philadelphia lawyers working for them and the Aboriginal organizations do not, so how can you come to the table on a equal playing field if the field is not equal? I mean, it's not.* Front line employee

The concept of power imbalance was prevalent in all interviews and the focus group session. Not only did Aboriginal respondents raise the issue of DIAND's greater power and control base, DIAND employees were well aware of the inequity between Aboriginal communities the and Department. Here's how one Aboriginal respondent described the relationship:

> It's like a wolf and a rabbit. The wolf will always be a wolf and a rabbit will always be a rabbit. And the relationship between them is that the wolf is going to eat the rabbit. It will never be a partnership, based on the relationship. The wolves can get together and create partnerships because they're equal and one cannot hurt the other. So the whole issue of trust comes in too, especially with human beings. Do you think Indian Affairs with all its policies can create a partnership with Indians? I don't think it's possible. Because Indian Affairs is about trying to take the land away from Dene people and that's what their whole policies are based on. So you're the wolf and we're the rabbits. We can't have a relationship. You're going to eat us, first chance that you get. So we have to be fast runners. It's predictable, the rabbit knows the wolf is going to eat him. So he might have a relationship with him, but he's going to be really, really careful. So here we are trying to figure out a way around that nature and there's no way, unless the nature changes.

A major point that arose was the imbalance in resources. DIAND has at its disposal an abundance of human and financial resources, compared with the resources available to Aboriginal people. Further, the belief on both sides is that DIAND often doesn't need those resources, but uses them as a bargaining chip, or perhaps more nefarious, as an intimidation tactic.

> One of the frustrating things that Aboriginal people see with government, especially DIAND, is when there's a meeting where instead of two (government) people coming, you see 8 or 10. They trod in all the troops, because the boss doesn't know what he's doing so he's got to have all his people there. Sounds silly but it's something I know I was extremely negative about, going into a meeting and seeing 7 or 8 officials...That is one of the areas that helps build the mistrust, because they bring in their half dozen and it's perceived that they have all these human and financial resources behind this thing. And here they have all the resources and it's very difficult to win. *Aboriginal leader*

Another major point was that many respondents see DIAND as a sort of "game master." They see that government has established the game, created the rules, holds the score cards, acts as judge and referee, and always has the trump card. There was deep frustration expressed by Aboriginal people around this point:

> We have a long way to go with partnership. As long as DIAND has all the money and all the rules, how can you have a partnership? Does DIAND care about our rules, do they care about our resources and what we have to offer? No. The reason they know what our rules are is because they probably instituted those rules in the first place...But how can you have a partnership when you've made all the rules and the (Aboriginal) organizations' rules are really your rules. *Aboriginal participant*

A common main point that arose was that many Aboriginal people feel that there's a "catch" to the actions of government, that it is not totally honest. Aboriginal people are deeply suspicious of government and always wonder if there are hidden motives. Contributing to the issue is the belief that government doesn't feel they need to share anything or be open, even when it directly concerns Aboriginal people. One Aboriginal leader, speaking about the intergovernmental forum work that is taking place in the Northwest Territories, acknowledged that some chiefs are uncomfortable with proceedings, and are not able to go into the meetings with trust: "There's this tension that somehow there's this fear that government is going to pull one over on them or force them into a particular position that they may not want to take."

One very telling aspect of responses was the perception Aboriginal people have of the bureaucracy. There is a deep distrust of the bureaucracy of DIAND, who are often viewed as working against Aboriginal people. There is more trust as you go higher up the chain of command: the senior bureaucrats, the minister, the crown. This is due in part to the historical "special" relationship between the crown and Aboriginal people, and also because the more senior members have decision-making powers. The Aboriginal view is that the bureaucracy has little decision-making power, that their prime role is simply to control the power games and to control Aboriginal people "from womb to tomb." When asked about the key stumbling block in building relationships one Aboriginal leader had this comment about government in general:

> It's the bureaucracy. You may have more Aboriginal ministers and they're closer to you, but the bureaucracy never changed and what has happened is that you see these politicians being elected and expecting certain sympathy from them, but finding out they soon get brainwashed by the bureaucracy. So your fight is always with that bureaucracy. Ministers come and go but the bureaucracy is there.

And another Aboriginal participant said, "Middle management and even lower just don't understand what's going on up here. Don't understand the differences in culture, don't understand why and where Aboriginal people sometimes are taking positions that may sometimes seem very hard lined. From what I've noticed that's a big thing, they just don't understand it."

A final important point is that while some DIAND front line employees may understand and acknowledge the imbalance of power between the department and Aboriginal people (especially unequal resources), it's not clear that they understand the implications on their own level of power. It's not clear to what extent DIAND employees realize that they hold the power, that they have the whole weight of the federal government behind them with all the policies, rules and regulations. How much of what they do is just "taken-for-granted codes of action?" It didn't seem as if they saw themselves as having power or control over Aboriginal lives. They know Aboriginal people are somehow dependent on them, but they're not sure what that means.

I also sensed that many people, while not fully recognizing the dynamics, felt uncomfortable dealing with Aboriginal people. Aboriginal employees seemed to be more comfortable working in communities, but for many front line workers, especially on the regulatory side, it was an ongoing challenge. It seemed as if the "us - them" mentality was accepted as the norm. The regulatory and inspection front line may often hide behind their regulations and rules and don't see the need to work at building relations. They don't see how the interpersonal and regulatory can mix.

Further, some front line people are naive of the context within which they work and Aboriginal people:

> My hardest part is I want to be sensitive to Aboriginal people and their issues but what if I don't know what they are, should I be treating them differently? I want to treat people as I would treat myself. I want to be good and equal to all of them and help them to the best of my ability and not brush them off no matter what kind of cultural background they come from. There is an Aboriginal person who comes in who visibly doesn't appear to be First Nations to me, but how do you know? Are there distinguishing features that makes them Aboriginal? How do you know? *Front line employee*

RESPONSIBILITY: The Impact of Actions

Authority, Autonomy And Leadership

> *There is nothing worse than having government people meet with Aboriginal people and then say, 'oh well, I can't make a decision on that. I have to take it back.' There is nothing worse than that. I guess how you build that relationship is giving as much authority as you can to your front line people.* Aboriginal leader

One of the strongest messages from DIAND employees and Aboriginal people was that front line employees need to be competent, they need to be given responsibility for their work and they need the authority to make decisions. All agreed that these elements are key in creating trusting relationship.

> One thing that I've always felt important when trying to build relations, especially when we're talking government, is that people you're dealing with should be competent in their job and be able to make decisions. One of the most frustrating things is as far a building relationships when you go to a meeting, that person having to run back and get direction. People don't have the authority level to make decisions in many cases because it's headquartered in Ottawa, the decisions take quite awhile. *Aboriginal leader*

> Where it really hinders the individual or the senior manager who doesn't have authority, is that you lose respect real fast. If I can't deal with someone who can make a decision, right off the bat I lose respect for that individual, especially if he hasn't articulated why he doesn't have that authority. Then I say, 'well, why should I meet with you?' Give the guy some authority, give people in the region some authority. *Aboriginal leader*

Competency was seen as critical in building the relationship, and from an Aboriginal point of view it is one of the key elements lacking at present:

> Probably one of the things that is underrated is competency. Having people who are competent in their jobs, they're comfortable with their jobs, they know the level of authorities they have, they know what they can do. If they're competent, they're going to come to a meeting prepared, they've done their homework anticipating the discussion and some of the questions that are going to be asked so they done some homework. *Aboriginal leader*

While most employees agreed they needed to be competent in their jobs, the majority felt there was some risk involved in having responsibility and authority. Many felt they were not in positions to make decisions. A front line employee said,

> I don't make any decisions while I'm in the field. I'll take the concerns back and have discussions and get back to them. As for making decision, I wouldn't. Some things I find they're just out of my league. Yet, they're seeing me as a representative expecting me to make certain decisions and tell them, 'we can do this' or tell them 'we can't provide this or that for them'.

Considerable concern was expressed about the level of support given to front line employees. There was a fear of making mistakes, of not having the support of senior management and of being "left hanging" or having to "take the fall." Respondents realized that as front line people, they are the ones who make interpersonal contact. They feel the pressure of being "on the

ground" every day and having to build relationships as they do their daily work. But for some, the support from the department, colleagues and supervisors, is missing.

And if they get burned on the ground too often, they said it doesn't take them very long to avoid dealing with issues or as one person said, "there are lots of ways of dodging it..."

> If there's an issue and one of our (people) goes into a band office and deals with it and leaves an unwelcome message, we get second guessed...So, somebody has to say no. If you say no and explain why, then sometimes that works and sometimes it gets appealed and the appeal is either to the Director General or to the Minister. Increasingly so, they're apt to get told that was right and it doesn't get revisited. It wasn't that long ago that all those things got revisited again. Of course, that really undercuts frontline people. The frontline people know what the message is and if they deliver it fairly and they get second guessed, then they're not in the best situation. *Front line employee*

Conversely, employees generally felt senior management didn't trust them to do their jobs. They felt they were constantly being watched and, in some cases, expected to fail. A frustrated front line employee summed it up:

> One thing would be for our frontline people to know or have enough information to comment on things, but also know that they don't have to worry that somebody's going to jump on them for saying things or for doing things in a certain manner. It's hard to be trusting when you're always checking behind you to make sure that somebody not looking to see a crisis. Sometimes we have to be able to say, we screwed up there. Sometimes we have to say, no we didn't screw up and we don't agree with you and if you want to take us to court, take us to court. We create a crisis by trying to avoid a crisis.

Protection vs. Production: the Dual Mandate

> *I look at DIAND and it's mentioned all the time that we're Indian Affairs and Northern Development and there's no way those two components should be in the same department.* Front line employee

What I heard was that DIAND's dual mandate - it's internal dual-personality disorder - was a major cause of grief for front line people and one which undermined the trust on a regular basis. The conflicting mandate of Indian and Inuit Affairs (IIAP) - more of an advocacy position - and Northern Affairs (NAP) - promoting development - is one that causes a great deal of consternation and confusion among both DIAND employees and Aboriginal people. The challenge remains: how can DIAND build a relationship with Aboriginal people when such a dual relationship exists, with an inherent conflict of interest. The common, general view is that IIAP exists to protect the Aboriginal people and the environment, while NAP, with regulatory functions

of inspections, mineral development, land use, exists to encourage northern development and production. Even within the Northern Affairs program, adversity was clearly evident between the more regulatory and minerals functions and the environmental functions.

Respondents told me that this dualistic nature does little to foster trusting relationships. DIAND employees feel that, while they may be part of one organization, they're often working at opposite ends gives conflicting and confusing messages to clients and partners, causing distrust. As one front line person said,

> ...we say we want to work together. But you can see it in the eyes of some of the chiefs...we're saying, 'let's work together,' but at the same time there's a chief sitting there and there has just been a licence issued in his area without his approval, without his recommendation, and he's being undermined. But, we're saying, 'let's work together.' So, there is the mixed signals that are taking place.

And an Aboriginal leader had this to say,

> They're there to work on first nations issues, but at the same time they're also working with land issues. Right? So, they regulate what happens on the land, they regulate what happens with Indians. So, you have the *Indian Act* and so on and they're opposed, they're diametrically opposed. So, then the department gets schizophrenic. (People) want to work with us, but the department's issuing licences or whatever, so the sooner we get a handle on that, allow the communities and the bands and the chiefs and the councillors to exercise their own authorities, the better we're going to be off.

Land claims versus permitting is clearly an issue, with land permits issued to mining companies although land ownership is not clear. Land administration has had trouble with credibility and trust because it issues the permits - therefore, land use relationship has been more confrontational.

> It starts with a basic premise that they (Aboriginal people) have a valid claim, yet here we are giving permits on it. So, there's a contradiction there that creates a tremendous amount of, I won't say distrust, but a lot of tension, a lot of difficulty in that relationship because on the one hand we're telling people, 'come to the land claim table and we'll sit down and talk about your land, while you're doing it, we're issuing permits on your land because in fact the law says we administer that land'. *Front line employee*

Although it seemed there was a sense that Northern Affairs employees are caught between what's legally required and what may be the right thing to do, for many, there is no gray area; what's legally required is the right thing to do - period. One front line employee said, "There's the trust that has to be built through the negotiation of a land claim, but that may not be necessary or even desired for dealing with land use permits. We still got our position, we don't care, we'll

do the negotiations, but our position in this is 'this is our position'."

What I heard in some cases by DIAND regulatory employees amounted to "who needs trust when you've got legislation." And some made the argument that serving the law straight up would help build trust, because people would know the rules were being followed and it was predictable. The belief is that in a tense political climate, it is good to have just the facts and the law.

A front line employee puts it this way:

> I think from the other side, they (Aboriginal people) are more trusting of (employees) who can give a message based on the way that they see it. If the Aboriginal group, for instance, can provide some new insight then that'll be considered, but other than that it's going to be looked at in a pure mirror of the facts rather than what can be done from political suasion, and I think we're more trusted that way than the people who can be swayed through the political...I have a fiduciary obligation and how we discharge it is pretty straightforward and where the aboriginals have participated in that and come up with legitimate statements of fact, it's really been easy to facilitate our fiduciary obligation and still administer the law.

THE HOPE FOR A RENEWED RELATIONSHIP

> *I think we have a new kind of DIAND. We're promoted to go in and take some risks with people, there's lots more capacity development, we're doing consultations better, have more First Nations at DIAND... things are just changing. There are more people Aboriginal people to trust there, just through experience.* Aboriginal front-line employee

A Kinder, Gentler DIAND

As the winds of change continue to blow, many are seeing hope for a renewed relationship. There is cautious optimism that the relationship is changing for the better. In most cases, the improvement is due to the interpersonal relationships, especially with the increased number of northern Aboriginal people working for DIAND. As well, for some the guiding principles of Gathering Strength are heralding a new vision and a new attitude. In this study, all respondents, except one, said DIAND is changing for the better when it comes to relationship building. They see a slight change in attitude, more open communication, better understanding within the department of the political dynamics of the North and the aspirations of communities and Aboriginal governments. There also seems to be a lessening of paternalistic attitudes, due to an awareness and understanding of the past.

Here is what two front line employees - the first Aboriginal and the second non-Aboriginal - said about the change:

> I definitely appreciate the younger, kinder gentler front line that is out there now. And I always know there's going to be certain old school people who are just going to be a pain in the butt to go to meetings with and you just do your own little damage control. Every time they say something you sort of counter it. So I think it is new skills we're bringing to the department.
>
> There's a lot of new blood and they come in and they want to do a good job and come in with fresh ideas and it seems to be a younger base as well. So maybe we're picking these things up before we come, like improved communication skills in the past 20 years.

When focus group participants were asked what the single most important element was in building relationships, they said it was attitude, mixed with learning, being open-minded and having the right personality. Other elements were commitment to building a relationship and flexibility. A key feature of the new DIAND is improved internal communication and support between front line people. There is a network developing among employees that is fostering relationships internally and, therefore, building better external relationships.

> The department has changed. I worked here six, seven years ago then went to the community and worked there. Now I'm back and even in the few months I've noticed a huge change, a lot of good things have happened. I see a lot more delegation between managers and staff and a lot more support too. And when you're out there, you don't feel alone. I used to go out to the communities and build my own little networks. Now it's being promoted by managers, saying we got to get together with the other front line groups, more communication back and forth within and with other departments, before it was a bit territorial. Now there's a lot more teams and relationships. *Aboriginal front line employee*

An Aboriginal leader believes we can make changes, but points out that in any relationship both sides need to work at it:

> It's two sided. We have to make changes too. I think we have to voice our needs more often, continue to talk about what's important to us... That's one of the things we're very consciously working on, not just with the department but with other organizations. Our relationships with people are becoming more visible and hopefully more positive....What we have in common is that we are here and we intend to stay here. Government is not going to go away, we're not going to go away, so let's build on that.

The Key to Success: The Interpersonal Approach

> *The people I find I have the most trusting relationships with are the ones where we've got to know each other over the years.* Front-line employee

All respondents said that at an individual level a trusting relationship may be possible, even if at an organizational level trust is absent. Some had personal experiences of good working relationships and had seen the benefits of working interpersonally with others. The message was clear: in any attempt to build relationships, the individual approach is where you get your best mileage.

> Individuals have more choice. On an individual basis we're not saddled with policy. The only thing that we're saddled with is our personal morals and our own personal values and beliefs. So if I have integrity in my life, I can create a relationship based on this integrity. But then again, trust is very tricky thing, so you have to be very careful with it, you have to be very careful where you put your trust. On an individual basis, you and I can sit down and talk without policy. And trust can develop. On an individual basis, the possibility is always there. *Aboriginal respondent*

The most common response when asked if they had experienced a trusting relationship with DIAND was "many, many times." And then participants would go on to describe a particular interpersonal relationship. For one Aboriginal youth, being in a meeting where DIAND officials just listened to what Aboriginal people had to say helped build trust: "The only time they spoke was to initiate conversation. For me, not too many people, government or otherwise, take a younger person's issue or speech to much worth of value. And I felt in that meeting when they listened, it was a very big step in the right direction."

While the individual basis may bring the most hope, it's not always easy for either side. An Aboriginal front line employee who has had good results in fostering relationships said this about her experience,

> They (Aboriginal clients) would start out being totally not trustful, but we have to keep showing, 'yes, we're going to bring the results back, yes, we're going to come back to the workshop, yes, we'll take all the crap you throw at us for at least three or four meetings' and then by the fifth or sixth meeting, we get past the crap throwing and can get into building a relationship. It's always easier with people who have direct dealings with the new kind of DIAND. Dealing with people, particularly elders who were treated rather atrociously, it's really hard to get their trust. But it takes longer.

Not surprisingly, experience in the field was cited as the key to building good interpersonal relationships, that both sides need to spend the time where people can get to know each other.

> There are individuals who have that personal touch. I used to have people say, let's meet for coffee even though we don't have to discuss an issue, let's go have coffee and visit and talk about any number of issues. There are some people who will make that extra effort to resolve things before they become problems rather than people who wait until there's a crisis and then they try to manage. *Aboriginal leader*

Built into the interpersonal approach is the desire for honest communication and to tell it like it is, even if the message is not always a pleasant one.

> Overall, my feeling is that there is still quite a bit of lack of trust. However, I think that it's starting to build and it's building because there are individuals within DIAND who understand the client really well, who are not afraid to go see the client and talk to them and tell them straight up front what they're doing and why they're doing it and working from there. So, in that aspect it is building. *Aboriginal leader*

> I think we have officers that are respected, but it is almost entirely now based on their own personal integrity. If they take a message into a community and deliver it honestly - it's very frequently an unpleasant message - but if they deliver it honestly and don't try to weasel on the hard points, then I think they are respected...When you're in those hard places, the best way to deal with them is to be as forthright as you can be. If it leaves on the table unresolved difficulties, then it leaves that on the table, but it doesn't get covered up. If you're trying to cover it up, everybody else knows it's there. As an individual, the best way to maintain your integrity and earn your respect is to acknowledge it. *Front line employee*

A question asked of participants was, "is there a certain type of personality or character that makes a good front line person?" Most responded that, yes, either employees are "people oriented" or they're not. And the ones you want on the front line are the ones who are personable.

> I'd say there are some not suited to it. Or there are some who are so uncomfortable with it, they'll do anything not to go out to the front line. And there are others who absolutely love and thrive on it. *Aboriginal front line employee*

> There are those who find it very easy to deal with another person and just natural instincts, I guess maybe they're politicians in disguise. You have some individuals, people in management even in DIAND here, they get into meetings with five or six Aboriginal people and they'll be totally intimidated right off the bat, their

> personalities completely change. In some cases, they're scared they might offend somebody so it makes them ineffective in doing their jobs and others who are, who cares, not so much who cares, but they're not intimidated. And doesn't mean your Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, that's not the point. *Aboriginal leader*

Yet, others felt that it wasn't so much personality but training and understanding of issues and culture, employees could be much better prepared and comfortable. People can be taught to work with the communities and regions.

> For those that aren't (naturals) there are different training things that can do to make people more comfortable with the unknown and unstructured. Once people become more comfortable with the unstructured way of communicating outside the organization, they might then be able to be better agents to build other relationships with the department. *Aboriginal front line employee*

Another question, when talking about trust between DIAND and Aboriginal people, was "do Aboriginal employees help build greater trust? Do Aboriginal clients trust Aboriginal people in DIAND and if so, does this lead to greater trust generally?" Most felt that it does make a difference and could point to specific examples where an Aboriginal person had made the relationship easier and better. Reasons for this centred on the existing relationships between Aboriginal people and DIAND Aboriginal employees. Many have known each other for years, perhaps grew up together. Aboriginal employees and clients have a shared history and understanding of the issues, talk the same language and have shared aspirations - they want what's best for the north because this is their home. As one client said about an Aboriginal employee, "he was born here, he was raised here, went to school here and he'll invest in the North, he's not going away."

Another key reason cited by an Aboriginal leader was the shared culture and practices:

> Aboriginal people understand the culture. They're not going to make little mistakes. They understand the practices in most cases and sometimes the language. So, this just totally blows the doors open.

A particular telling response came from an Aboriginal youth who, when asked what she would need to have a trusting relationship with a DIAND employee, said, "One of the things that would make it easier for myself would be if the actual employee was Aboriginal. That would set me at ease, walking into the place...And there would be less of a chance of that person to be disrespectful to you, because they are just like you."

Yet, I sensed some discomfort and internal struggle from Aboriginal employees as they strive to belong to two worlds. In some cases they have been called, "potatoes" and "turncoats" or even Indian Agents:

> That image is still out there of the institution (DIAND) being one that persecuted as opposed to one that protected and helped. So, they (Aboriginal people) joined it. I know myself, speaking as an Aboriginal person coming here, the first six months of my life and my work here was always a question every day, what am I doing here? I had to keep asking myself that. When I began connecting with the clients I soon discovered that they would call me because they wanted information, because they needed help with a proposal or whatever and I was able to direct them towards the different people. There was trust established and built that way. So, it made me feel better over time. Yeah, it's tough but I believe that an Aboriginal person is strong enough to take that shit and just let it slide and make inroads. *Aboriginal front line employee*

Many Aboriginal employees and clients alike pointed out that while being an Aboriginal person perhaps made it easier to initially build a relationship, for the trust to continue and grow, there is still the expectation of competence and willingness to help. In fact, some said that there's a greater burden on Aboriginal employees within DIAND because expectations are so high of what they'll be able to deliver once they're in the system. And there were a few who believed that the system was just too established for any real trust to occur. The person who had introduced the analogy of the wolf and rabbit when talking about trust relationship in general had this to say about Aboriginal employees in the system:

> It's like the wolf and a rabbit. The wolf will always be a wolf and a rabbit will always be a rabbit. And the relationship between them is that the wolf is going to eat the rabbit. Aboriginal people are just one of the little pieces of tooth. They're the tooth of the beast. Even if the tooth might say I don't want to do this, the mouth has a different plan and the stomach has a different plan. The policies are the same and he's got to follow policy. He's got to do "b." If he does "c" or "e" he's in trouble. So he's always got to do "b". It doesn't matter if he's a native or a white man. There's nothing else. So the people that work for the beast, they either become totally succumbed to it, or they can't be part of the system.

Others, too, recognized that the existing system and culture may be too entrenched to allow Aboriginal employees to make real inroads:

> Putting Aboriginal people in there is not what's needed. What's needed is changing the system in how you deal with people. I know that it's so hard because there are all these regulations and policies and rules...It's nice to see people within the department but if they're not working in a way that puts people at the community level in a comfortable position, it really isn't any different. *Aboriginal participant*

Yet, Aboriginal employees continue to work towards better relations, while being very aware of the battle they face:

> Never mind if our partners trust government, I don't trust government. In democracy, you're one cog in the wheel. It's thought that as Aboriginal managers we are used by government, yet we are seeing the impact from the inside. If I'm dealing with a giant monster, I'd want to be inside - eating from the inside. Are we being coopted? Yes, I think that's true, yet I personally won't be a parrot of government. I realize this could affect my ability to keep working, but that's not happened yet. *Aboriginal front line employee*

Study Conclusions

> *Our relationships are what's critical. It's important to look at how we work together. I'm not just talking about how we push paper, but how we work internally on a cross-directorate basis, how we carry out our intergovernmental relations and Aboriginal relations. We've got to pay attention to those areas. The reality is, we can't do it alone. We need to put energy and effort into our relationships, plus have the right mind set and understand the kind of relationships we want to achieve.* Associate Regional Director General, Opening Speech, Managers' Meeting, NWT Region, March, 2000

What conclusions can be drawn from the findings, in the context of RCAP's four principles of partnership: recognition, respect, sharing, and responsibility, and in the context of the review of the literature? A simple answer could be that there are many barriers which prevent a trusting relationship between Aboriginal people and DIAND, but that positive change is slowly occurring. Both sides are seeing that, in order to achieve goals, there must be good working relationships. The literature as well speaks to the need for relationships if parties involved want to achieve results. Yet, the analogy of the wolf and rabbit is an arresting image. The wolf will always want to eat the rabbit, said an Aboriginal participant. How do we start to change the nature of that relationship with its inherent imbalance of power?

In the Absence of Trust: Build Working Relationships

This project set out to explore how DIAND could begin to foster a trusting relationship with Aboriginal people in the Northwest Territories. I soon came to wonder if there ever could be trust between the two. The literature speaks of the need for a "moral duty" or "good will", to do no harm. Researchers also note the importance of knowing the expectations, having competency and credibility. The Aboriginal people and front line people who spoke to me echoed the literature. They spoke of a "doing no harm whatsoever," the "inherent goodness of humanity" and "honour" involved in relationship building.

Sadly, the relationship has mostly failed in this regard. Of all the key elements of trust, only "predictability" rings true and not in a positive way. As one Aboriginal participant put it, half-jokingly, "Yeah, there's trust that Indian Affairs will never do what's right." Further, the legacy of the relationship - the "suitcase" full of the past injustices - also prohibits trust. The literature notes how difficult it is to regain lost trust, and in the case of DIAND and Aboriginal people, there is over 200 years of mistrust and broken promises. After talking to DIAND employees, it's clear that the will is there to build relationship, yet the system is still deeply entrenched in a power and control culture. Also, due to the adversarial nature of the relationship, employees may often avoid fostering a good working relationship because they simply can't deal with differences and emotive environment.

What I was hearing from Aboriginal people wasn't so much a lament for lost trust - that was a given - it was more a desire for nation to nation relationship. One Aboriginal leader made it clear that trust was not his goal:

> ...the question really isn't trust. As long as you have respect for me and you recognize that, as a government, I can do these things. That's what's important. That's the step that's really not transpiring. We're not able to implement our powers of governance. We are not able to have our own dollars, to run our own schools. That's what we want, or to do a whole number of things that governments do - to set up a taxing regime, to generate our own dollars from resource revenue sharing. That's not being implemented. We're being seen as something else and we're being asked to trust each other. So, maybe we're taking the wrong angle.

Yet, after weighing it all, what I heard from both sides was the desire to have a good working relationship, built on competency, honest communications, and understanding of culture, history, aspirations, and issues. People said DIAND needs to work on the practical elements that will lead to improving credibility, then it can revisit the issue of trust.

Therefore, for me the focus began to shift from the somewhat elusive concept of "trusting relationship" to a more practical question of "how can we foster a *good working relationship* at the front line?" In the absence of trust, can we work together more effectively, with more integrity, more honesty and openness, more competency, and perhaps most importantly, with more understanding? Can a good relationship develop between individuals? In every instance, people told me, yes, this was possible, that they had experienced it at some point and that they were willing to work for it. As one Aboriginal leader is quoted earlier on in this report, "What we have in common is that we are here and we intend to stay here. Government is not going to go away, we're not going to go away, so let's build on that."

External Realities Mirror Internal Realities: The Need for Awareness, Reflection, and Action

> *How can we have a partnership with Aboriginal people when you don't have a partnership within the department?* Aboriginal participant

This is the challenge: in order to change the relationship with Aboriginal people, DIAND must first be "unconditionally constructive" and focus on what it can do, internally, to start fresh. DIAND has an entrenched and mechanistic corporate culture which dictates practices and behaviours. People within the system see this culture as somehow "normal". In order to build relationships DIAND will need to take a hard look at the internal systems and relationships that are often based on power, control and hierarchy and identify what key areas are holding it back from developing good relationships.

People spoke of the internal issues they face - the mistrust, lack of relationships, power imbalances, lack of autonomy, miscommunication - and how all of this adversely affects relationship building.

The findings in this study show that Aboriginal people have gained awareness of the oppressive relationship with DIAND, the analogy of the wolf and the rabbit is particularly graphic. Following awareness and reflection comes action and, again, study findings show that Aboriginal people are beginning to push back to counteract the oppressive relationship. The result may be an enhanced adversarial relationship, with little understanding or communication, and lack of shared purpose. It is key that DIAND go through the same process of awareness, reflection and action in order to change the fundamental machine model system that continues to dictate the nature and terms of the relationship. What type of alternative thinking at DIAND is needed? How can DIAND change its internal attitude and and actions to change the relationship?

As DIAND goes through the process of gaining awareness and reflecting, it will need to look at the whole culture, system and practices. However, it will need to pay special attention to the front line employees, those people who have difficult jobs to do in less than ideal conditions. Two comments serve to illustrate the conflicting feelings:

> An Aboriginal front line employee's view: How do we prepare ourselves? We know we're going to get those questions, and it's inevitable and I feel it's like we roll over and show our belly.
>
> An Aboriginal participant's view: The people who work at Indian Affairs are the front line. They're the tooth of the wolf, they're ready to eat when the time comes. And so the rabbit is going to have to be really cautious, because there's lots of digested rabbits out there.

Both sides are fearful, both sides are pushing back. It is time for DIAND to hold up the mirror, see what's there, deal with it, and begin to build the kind of relationship that will benefit the people of the Northwest Territories. It may start with awareness and understanding.

Without exception, the people I spoke with believed both sides need greater understanding in a variety of ways. DIAND employees spoke of the need to understand Aboriginal culture, practices, issues, and aspirations. They also need to understand the history of the relationship between Aboriginal people and government, which still has such an influence on the nature our relationship. The literature on working relationships also speaks of the need for empathic understanding of perceptions, interests, values and motivation.

Most front line people lamented that the department did not afford them time to get to know the people and issues. All said they would like to spend more time in the field to build trusting, meaningful relationships. If it takes time to foster relationship, what kind of culture or environment does DIAND need to foster?

THE FRONT LINE: The Value of a Foot Soldier

The value of front line work is not recognized. Front line employee

Every person interviewed, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, was unequivocal in their view that, at an individual and interpersonal level, there was the hope of building good working relationships. All agreed that it is people who will make a difference and influence the quality of the relationship. It was felt that, in spite of the existing relationship, people at the ground level are developing working relationships, sometimes even with an element of trust.

Yet, a general underlying message from all interviewees was that front line employees and the work they do are not valued, and nor are they trusted to build relationships. Front line employees on average are at the bottom of the hierarchy, may be less educated, less compensated and get less support and attention. And most are in positions where they are the "foot soldiers" who go out in the field every day and work with Aboriginal clients and partner, often unprepared. Consequently, little may be accomplished, mistakes may occur, and the attitude that front line employees are of little value is reinforced.

> I guess I think government is dysfunctional anyway...It's addicted to process. It doesn't value employees, it doesn't empower employees, it doesn't allow them to push those edges and to be innovative and to take the time to do what you need to do. A lot of the stuff that you see there is personal stuff and if we're really valuing employees, there would be more emphasis on employee management and employee assistance, allowing people to empower themselves, to go out and be innovative, be healthy and welcoming. It's one thing to say it's a power-based system but the other side of it is that a lot of it is the individual. *Aboriginal participant*

This lack of value is troubling when you consider that the Government of Canada, through DIAND, has placed such great emphasis on renewing the partnership with Aboriginal people. There has been, and continues to be, good work done on renewing the partnership at the higher levels with senior officials and chiefs, but the front line is often left to fend for themselves.

Leadership, Authority and Decision-making

One of the most loudly expressed concerns - by both Aboriginal people and DIAND employees - was the lack of authority given to front line people. This lack of empowerment was seen to undermine their credibility and their ability to do their jobs. There was a feeling from many respondents that they were not trusted to handle the big issues. It became obvious that, in part, this was because they hadn't received the support and preparation necessary to handle the big issues. The view from the Aboriginal side is that DIAND "sends the poor front line person out there with little preparation and no authority to make decisions" and wastes everyone's time. This hardly inspires trust or credibility, or gets results. Relations worsen, because DIAND did not send an employee with authority.

Along with authority is the need for DIAND front line employees, or any DIAND official, to tell Aboriginal people the truth, even if the message is not good. One Aboriginal leader said,

> They've got to be straight. One of the worst things with management is their reluctance to say no early enough in the game. They tend to say, 'we'll take a look at it,' even though in the back of their minds they know the answer is no because of policy or legislation but they don't want to hurt someone's feelings or tick someone off. I would rather a person tell me right up front early, 'I cannot do this, here are the reasons why and here are your options.' I would respect that individual right off the bat as someone who can say no. Rather than seeing something evolve over several months and spending time, energy and money on something only to find out really the answer was no right at the start...I've dealt with officials from both governments where they've said no up front, I've always dealt with them and I still continue to deal with them because I can trust them.

The kind of leadership culture that supports empowerment and honest communication at the front line is in short supply at DIAND. One front line employee, when asked if there could be "leadership at all levels", said leadership at all levels meant that senior management wasn't doing their job, that they were ducking the issues and asking him to take the fall. There is distrust of senior management, that as any general in any battle they will let their foot soldiers take the first bullet. The attitude in the existing hierarchy is not one of possibility, opportunity, intelligent risk-taking and learning from mistakes. Rather, for front line employees who are at the bottom of the so-called "food chain," and who are working with clients in a political minefield, the fear of making mistakes and being accountable is great.

Writers in the area of leadership too state how dangerous empowerment can be for an employee in an environment of caution and retribution. Front line people recognize this dilemma. They know they are representing the federal government with a mandate to protect the crown in a very high risk political setting. Because of the imbalance of power, Aboriginal people only have the political arena to fall back on so the field is even more fraught with risk. In a hierarchy shrouded in fear and disempowerment, it is very difficult for a front line person to take responsibility and act in an unencumbered and innovative manner or to have the flexibility to act on the behalf of the partner. Given the operating climate, and the tragic history and lack of awareness, how can front line employees have the courage to act in the best interest of Aboriginal partners?

Yet, the literature clearly states the importance of empowerment if organizations want results. Front line people will need a shift in attitude to take on responsibility. And the organization will need to look at how the structure - the hierarchy, vertical lines of communication, protecting turf, individualism and narrow job descriptions, dual mandates - must change in order to foster relationship building Front line people deal with Aboriginal people - heavily loaded and emotional, yet receive no training on how to recognize and deal with them.

Hope on the Front Line: A Community of Leaders

We may not be able to change entrenched attitudes and corporate culture overnight, but we can begin to change how we deal with partners on a daily basis. And for most people, it all starts with our attitudes, our desire to work toward good relationships.

> I think attitude is the biggest one. But attitudes can be changed through training and learning our history. There's a little bit of the 'you can't teach a new dog new tricks', but I never believed that one, you can always teach an old dog something. *Aboriginal front line employee*

The majority of participants interviewed want to foster better relationships. People recognize that if they are going to make progress in the North, they need to work together. They don't want adversarial relations; they want with want what Fisher and Brown call "peace of mind." Although lingering shadows of the past continue to fall across the path, there is recognition that people are in this together.

> We're here to share. We're here to find ways to work together regardless. My strong feeling is that we need to create an environment of fairness for everyone, aboriginal, non-aboriginal, animals, water, trees. If we do not have that, then we are just lying to ourselves. We've got to stop pointing fingers and blaming and if we did steal your boots from you, then we'll give you something back, we'll give you a pair of boots...There was inequity and injustice, but let's admit that, let's accept that. We don't condone or approve of it, but let's get on and deal with it. *Aboriginal participant*

The increasing number of Aboriginal employees within DIAND and especially at the front line will go a long way to building good working relations, regardless of how entrenched the system. However, the message was clear that Aboriginal employees cannot depend on their shared culture; they too have to deliver results.

What does DIAND focus on? The literature and the findings point to the need to be practical, and to seek awareness, reflection and then take action. The underpinnings of trust are goodwill, predictability, competency and open communications. So, this is the beginning. DIAND must make sure that its front line people understand what constitutes good working relationship, knows what competency means, and have the interpersonal and communication skills required. And just as important, DIAND must use these same practices internally, throughout all directorates. In the next section, the study recommendations will address this - how DIAND can begin to take action and build working relationships.

Study Recommendations

> *Personality is a big thing but along with the right attitude, is being open minded. You have to be able to go out into the field and put yourself in their shoes and have a complete understanding. Sit back and listen take everything in and be open minded. Don't necessarily jump on it and make a decision and say, 'no you can't do that, that's not the way it's been done in the past.' You have to be open minded to make new decision and make changes. So I guess that's along with your attitude and your personality, but it's hard to say there's one thing each person needs. Everything is interconnected and interrelated.* Front line employee

The study conclusions spoke to a number of areas: the need for a good working relationship between DIAND and Aboriginal people; the need for DIAND to review its internal operations because our internal systems affect our external partnerships; the need to value, support and prepare front line people; and the hope people have that changes can be made. Ultimately it speaks for a call to action.

The intent of this study is to facilitate change through action. And the intent of these recommendations is to provide the concrete actions which DIAND can take from an internal perspective that will help bring about change at the front line. By strengthening the front line, DIAND will achieve a stronger working relationship with Aboriginal partners.

These recommendations come mainly from the Aboriginal and front line people who participated in this study. A question during the interviews was, "what can we practically do to improve good working relationships at the front line?" With no hesitation, they gave me a collection of practical ideas. I have also added some of my own recommendations, which I felt addressed certain areas.

> *Well, number one you know everybody says it and it's true, your staff are your greatest asset. They will help you achieve your goal. If your staff don't understand the mandate, the goals and objectives, then you're going to have some problems.* Aboriginal participant

RECOMMENDATION 1: Determine and describe what kind of relationship DIAND wants with Aboriginal partners and how this fits in with our overall goals and direction. With our Aboriginal partners, explore the meaning of relationship and partnership and what it is we're trying to accomplish. Explore this in the context of RCAP and Gathering Strength. Prepare a model outlining the kind of relationship wanted. Develop a clear mission for front line employees, which supports DIAND's mission of "working to make life better for Aboriginal and Northern people" or better yet, revise the DIAND mission statement to reflect the need for relationship.

> *We have to recognize the baggage we carry, whether or not we like it. I envision it like a suitcase and going to the border. You might not have packed it but you sure as hell have to know what's in it. And you are responsible for it regardless. And everyone else at that table knows what's in that suitcase, so we're not helping ourselves by just not dealing with it, and it might help people understand where these bitter things come from and not take them personally but to take them departmentally, just accept them.* Aboriginal front line employee

RECOMMENDATION 2: Hire the right people. Develop a progressive Recruitment Policy and Practices manual which identifies competencies needed for front line people. Define what we mean by "front line" employees and determine what makes an excellent front line person. Hire on the basis of not just operational skills, but more importantly, on the basis of interpersonal skills, knowledge of history, relationships and attitudes.

> *Start internally, change the hiring practices. Hire people who believe in Aboriginal rights for First Nations people. Fire people who are racist. Change the rule that you can't fire a government employee. If they're doing damage, stop them from doing damage. I'm tired of apologies and reports, commissions, recommendations, tired of bickering and fighting. Let's shake off the dust and get with some action. Fire people who are doing harm and rehire.* Aboriginal participant

RECOMMENDATION 3: Develop an enhanced Orientation Program for Front Line Employees that includes:

- history of the Department and the developing structure and culture;
- history of the relationship with Aboriginal people;
- history of Aboriginal people, with a focus on the North;
- what this history means for a renewed relationship;
- current aspirations of Aboriginal people (the hope for nation to nation relations); and
- departmental philosophy of renewed partnership, goals, direction and where the front line employees fit in.

The Orientation Program should be mandatory for every front line employee.

The frontline workers also have to deal with the anger and the 500 years of resistance that's been going on and persecution. It manifests itself in many different negative traits when you're dealing with some clients that are just bitter and angry and they're going to take it out on anybody. So, I would say a full orientation and understanding of the client, a full orientation and understanding of the department, where it's going today, not yesterday or tomorrow, but today given the history that we have. If we pair people up from different cultures, get them working together rather than having them start to isolate each other. Aboriginal participant

RECOMMENDATION 4: Prepare a series of learning/training modules which help to prepare front line employees. Elements would include:

- leadership development: vision (direction), bigger picture, values;
- communication standards: be "upfront and honest;"
- relationship building: the goal, the meaning, the application;
- conflict resolution and negotiation: how to interact with partners
- intelligent risk taking: how to best serve Aboriginal partners and stay employed.

I'm going to have to ask you to break the rules. If you gave me $20 to get some oil for my house, I might say, 'I like wood better.' There's got to be some of that flexibility. I can go and do something different and still get the same result. What goes a long way for me personally is that you're willing to take the risk with me. If I say 'I want to go for the wood,' I'm going to trust that you're going to make every effort to go and fight for my wood. It has to be that kind of relationship and so far that hasn't been the relationship. For you it's too big a risk. It means your job, your career, everything. And I don't know if I want you to take that risk, because how am I affecting you? Your whole career could go down the tube because you're going against the system. Aboriginal participant

RECOMMENDATION 5: Continue to explore how best to empower and give authority to front line employees. Look at the meaning of "empowerment" in a leadership context and how the organization can support it. Make use of the delegation model to ensure front line employees are clear in their roles, responsibilities and authorities.

The leadership initiative has certainly been talking about empowerment and delegation and getting out of the way. If you keep saying that, even if it only happens some of the time, the person that happens to get empowered and goes and does their job and is supported, then they're going to feel empowered. That only has to happen to them once a year. Front line employee

RECOMMENDATION 6: Undertake a policy review to identify policies which are archaic and work against relationship building. Strike a task force to begin immediately.

> *They need to change the nature of the beast. They need to change their policies. Indian affairs was set up to try to take the land from the Indians, that was their number one goal. Northern Affairs was added later on to administer the land that was taken away from the Indians. Indian and northern affairs has two goals. One is to take the land away from the Indians and then they have another system set up to take care of the land they took away from the Indians. That what's the whole system is all about . So they have to change that. Instead of looking at the land and seeing how they can benefit from it.* Aboriginal participant

> *Departmentally we have to look at all our policies and procedures, or at least our policies - departmental and regional - and ensure that none of them are conflicting with each other. The ones that are based on programs or somebody thought it was a good idea had better be revisited to conform with the law and don't make the law conform with the policy, it's not how it's supposed to work. I think that's one of the key things we have to do.* Front line employee

RECOMMENDATION 7: Conduct an in-depth evaluation of Aboriginal Awareness workshops to make sure they are meeting the goal. Explore other means to achieve cross-cultural awareness, such as participation in week-long spiritual gatherings.

> *There has to be some practical applications to cross-cultural awareness. For example, talk about what a sash was, a little about Metis history. Most Aboriginal groups will start the meeting with a prayer. And close off with prayer. Certain simple things like if Metis play a certain song, "Proud to be Metis," it's expected everyone will rise. You know, those practical things. When you go in there (to the workshops) they tell you quite a bit about the history, but those practical basics would be very good for the individual from the government to know.* Aboriginal leader

RECOMMENDATION 8: Increase time spent in the field. Each front line employee will be required to spend a certain amount of time in the field. Field work will be included in job descriptions. When a front line employee is hired, they spend a mandatory length of time in the communities.

> *Most directors realize that, and I think they need to recognize that, a file could probably take a fraction of the time to deal with, but because you are trying to establish a working relationship...you may need a bit more time on that file than might be the norm, you should allow them to do that.* Front line employee

We need to put it (field time) into our work plans. If you want us to our jobs right it will take 1.2 FTE's versus 1 or it will take 1.3. We're going to spend that much more time. Front line employee

One thing we have to change is the hospitality. As part of staying and encouraging people to even put on donuts or bannock. This is part of how you make any deals with anybody is you break bread with them. Our program fully supports funding feasts now after our workshops. We're out there now doing four in the eastern Arctic and each one will have a feast. Aboriginal front line employee

RECOMMENDATION 9: Develop an aggressive northern Aboriginal recruitment and retention strategy. Review current policies, practices, barriers, issues around Aboriginal recruitment. Further, develop a sub-section on recruitment of front line employees which explores the nature of front line work and the connection to building relationships and developing a strong and healthy North.

RECOMMENDATION 10: Hold regular workshops for staff of Aboriginal organizations to explain the DIAND system of how things work in all areas. This will also present a more "open door" environment at DIAND offices.

RECOMMENDATION 11: Prepare a handbook, "What every front line employees needs" which would start from a set of operating principles or assumptions, such as:

- value for the front line employee and the work they do;
- trust that the front line employee will do no harm and will be competent;
- support from the organization;
- flexibility to operate as necessary on the ground; and
- empowerment, authority and ability to make a decision.

The handbook could include practices which would outline how best to work on the frontline and build relationships. Elements may include the same elements as in learning modules, plus:

- how to prepare for front line meetings ie. know the issues, a sense of the broader context, the departmental vision, direction, pre-meeting arrangements;
- have clear parameters, authority and delegation;
- make sure there is adequate field time to build relations;
- understand the practices and protocols and traditions in Aboriginal communities; and
- how to communicate honestly with partners.

I think there is some risk involved but you got to set parameters. You can discuss the issue beforehand. You can always give authority to your front line staff to say, 'this is the dollar figure involved and this probably one we can accept.' But you know if you need to go further because there are other issues then you will have to make the decision on the ground but at the same time, I think there is risk that whatever is put on the table may be much greater than the parameters you talk about. Front line director

RECOMMENDATION 12: DIAND Employees spend a percentage of work time working with Aboriginal organizations.

Allowing employees to go and work with an organization and not have to make up time for it, but just go there and spend two hours if you have some kind of skill you can share with them once a week or once a month, or whatever. That would go a whole long way to building trust relationships and partnerships. Because being able to access some of those non-monetary resources is almost as important as getting money and it would also increase understanding of operation. Aboriginal participant

RECOMMENDATION 13: Initiate a Front Line Employees Support Network and Information Sharing Group. Facilitate regular "open door" sessions for front line employees to share information, experiences, issues and stories. Foster better internal communications and teamwork.

What I've noticed happening is that when (people from different areas) are out at a meeting and contaminants comes up, they write a email and say this is what I heard and either you respond to them because they got the message first or the question first or respond directly. So I see DIAND as really improved and starting to interconnect, we're no longer saying, 'oh, that's not my department.' And we're no longer saying, 'here's the right person to contact.' We going a step more, 'I will take your concerns and will get answers for them.' I think people really appreciate that. Aboriginal front line employee

RECOMMENDATION 14: Adequately compensate front line employees for the important work they do in providing service and building relationships. Review job descriptions to ensure the important nature of their work is reflected.

RECOMMENDATION 15: Continue and enhance the Interchange Program between DIAND and Aboriginal Organizations. Make sure that DIAND employees are given opportunities to utilize and share their knowledge when they return to the department.

> *Probably be very good for the department to understand how an Aboriginal organization works internally, the problems they face internally when they deal with government, not talking about when they're dealing with finance. There's a classic one. Have the finance people in this department meet the finance people in the aboriginal organizations and say, 'this is how we do business, this is our process, we're legally bound by some rules so this is what you have to do on your side to make things work faster'.* Aboriginal leader

RECOMMENDATION 16 Rethink our definitions of consultation in a northern context. Work in partnership with Aboriginal people to redefine.

> *Or maybe we get it built in by defining consultation properly, that actually good consultation would be to go in and have an informal meeting the night before, talk to people and find out the concerns. Have the big meeting, spend another night because people take time to digest, plus the nature of people is that they go home and ask opinions of their loved ones and people they respect. Then the next day you could have your follow-up meeting. So if we define consultation as being that way, get a buy in to that and reflect it in our workplans.* Aboriginal front line employee

RECOMMENDATION 17: Use Fisher and Brown's model in relationship building. Focus is on: dealing with differences; separating the people from the problem; and being unconditionally constructive. Follow these elements:

- Rationality: balance emotions with reason;
- Understanding: learn how the opposite side see things;
- Communication: always consult before deciding and listen;
- Reliability: be wholly trustworthy, but not wholly trusting;
- Persuasion, not coercion: negotiate side by side; and
- Acceptance: deal seriously with those with whom we differ.

RECOMMENDATION 18: Continue this study, with a focus on how to improve the complete relationship. Work with an Aboriginal organization at the front line to more fully explore and understand the bigger picture and the full dynamics of the relationship. (See Chapter Five for more on this.)

CHAPTER FIVE - RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

The partnership is based on relationship. You can't have partnership without a relationship. A partnership is two equal people getting together in a partnership. They're both equal. One is not better than the other. A partnership is a relationship between you and I, between two things. The only way it's possible to create really true partnership is that you have to have two complete beings.
Aboriginal participant

Organization Implementation

The intent of this project was to foster change. The research undertaken is the first step in that it begins to shine light on some of the issues and, hopefully, has helped to build awareness. Following the thinking of Paulo Friere, after awareness comes reflection and then action. The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development needs to reflect on these results and then decide what actions must be taken. This is a beginning.

The relationship between DIAND and Aboriginal people is entering what the RCAP commissioners call Stage 4, Renewal and Renegotiation. Except for some lingering old-style attitudes, there is an increasing number of people who have the will and desire to improve the relationship. The key for DIAND is to prepare itself, to lay the groundwork so it can start to build relationships. DIAND needs to look at its structure and policies, as well as its internal relationships. The department needs to nurture the attitude that its front line staff and the work they do is integral and valuable to the larger work of DIAND and the federal government.

The door remains open. If DIAND misses this opportunity, then the vision for the North under Gathering Strength of strong northern people, communities and economies will not be achieved. In these times of change and uncertainty and ultimately hope, there is no certainty and there are no finite solutions. We now have some guidelines from front line workers and Aboriginal people on practical ways to make the relationship better. For the guidelines to work, there needs to be a fresh attitude and the will to make it happen.

DIAND, NWT Region will need to review and prioritize the recommendations at a regional level, and then develop an action plan which addresses its ongoing need for relationship building. The regional Strengthening the Front Line Operations Team will be in the best position to undertake this work, if and only if, the SFLO team has the support of the Region and the senior management team. This report will also be submitted to the National SFLO management team for their use in exploring the area of leadership and empowerment.

Finally, in any relationship, there are two sides. I have focussed on the trust Aboriginal people have, or do not have, in DIAND. This research did not look at the Aboriginal responsibility in fostering trusting or working relationships. It did not look at the lack of trust DIAND employees have in Aboriginal people. It focussed on DIAND and the recommendations are concrete actions that DIAND can take to begin to improve the relationship. This "hole" in the research should not prohibit DIAND from doing its own work. It may be too easy to put the blame on the Aboriginal people and communities and say that, until they change, our hands are tied. This would be a mistake. Although any relationship is a two-way endeavour, we must listen to Fisher and Brown who advise being "unconditionally constructive." DIAND can create guidelines which are good for the relationship and good for both sides, whether or not Aboriginal partners follow the same guidelines. The guiding principle of "do only those things that are both good for the relationship and good for us, whether or not they reciprocate" is key here.

Future Research

This research project proposed, perhaps too ambitiously, to look at a systems-based approach to the relationship between Aboriginal people and DIAND, with a focus on the front line. Instinctively, I felt that in order to look at how we improve partnerships we had to approach it in a collaborative manner with our Aboriginal partners. I was tired of the exclusionary way DIAND deals with our partners; the general view being that we must always work on our issues internally first, or "get our own house in order" before we bring in partners. My view is that when issues include partners, we need to start collaboratively from the beginning, in an open and transparent manner.

However, I underestimated the time I would need to take a holistic approach. In the time frame allowed, it was only possible to begin to explore DIAND's role in improving relationships. Therefore, although this study has focussed on relationships, it has been weak on the Aboriginal experience and reality. While Aboriginal people were interviewed, the research never delved into what were the key considerations in the Aboriginal communities to make a relationship work. Many times when I raised the issue of trust Aboriginal respondents talked about the lack of trust DIAND has in them. The issue of trust is complicated and interconnected and must be researched more fully.

As one Aboriginal leader was quoted earlier in the report, and it's worth repeating:

> It's two sided. We have to make changes too. I think we have to voice our needs more often, continue to talk about what's important to us... That's one of the things we're very consciously working on, not just with the department but with other organizations. Our relationships with people are becoming more visible and hopefully more positive....What we have in common is that we are here and we intend to stay here. Government is not going to go away, we're not going to go away, so let's build on that.

Therefore, one of the key recommendations in this study is to continue it. I propose that DIAND needs to work with an Aboriginal organization at the front line to more fully explore and understand the bigger picture and the full dynamics of the relationship. Not only will it get a better understanding, but it will get an opportunity to test some of the recommendations of this work. This will be critical because as I did this research it became clear that, as a non-front line person, I could not fully appreciate the realities.

Using Taiaike Alfred's work as a starting point, we may want to focus on Aboriginal leadership and power. Alfred writes: "Above all, indigenous nationhood is about reconstructing a power base for the assertion of control of Native land and life. This should be the prime objective of Native politics." (Alfred, 1999, p. 47) What is needed to take place in Aboriginal communities for this to happen? How must the relationship with the federal government change for this to happen? Is the strength there? Or, as Alfred suggests, have Aboriginal people been co-opted into the western, government way?

As we carry out this work, we will benefit by continuing to look at, and get a better idea of, what "relationship" and "partnership" means for the department. These terms are used often, yet it's not clear that we have a common understanding of their meaning. And, we also need to understand how all of this work comes together under our guiding and operating frameworks of Gathering Strength, Sustainable Development, and the Consultation Policy and Guidelines.

A final concern is that this report will have little relevance to the ongoing real relationship between Aboriginal people and DIAND employees. What I found in this research was that every conversation creates new awareness and understanding. The importance of shared understanding, shared meaning, shared goals cannot be underestimated. Both sides must continue the ongoing discussion about the issue of relationship building, one side can not do it in isolation.

CHAPTER SIX - LESSONS LEARNED

Research Project Lessons Learned

Overall, I feel this project was too ambitious. When the idea first started to take form one year ago, I was going to look at how to foster leadership with the front line employees. However, in keeping with systems thinking, I felt it important to research the bigger picture of the relationship. It seemed that if we were to look at how to improve the front line, we needed to look at the full relationship. While I still think this is important, I realize the time did not allow for more complete research.

My single most regret in this project was that I did not work in partnership with the regional Strengthening the Front Line Operations Team. I had originally planned to work collaboratively with the team to determine findings, conclusions and recommendations. The closest I got was holding a focus group session with mostly SFLO members and facilitating one brainstorming session on barriers to front line work. I found that working with the SFLO team was more demanding and difficult than first thought. Much of my energy in the fall went toward team creation and development. While this is important to the overall front line initiative, there was little time left for them to assist me in my research. Due to the dual nature of DIAND, NWT Region (the Indian program vs. the Northern program, reviewed in Study Findings) team development was challenging. At first, there was a lack of shared vision and shared objectives. In fact, the two sides seemed to be fighting each other. There was also a lack of time, interest and energy for the front line work, although all front line employees believed that it was important to explore. At times I felt I was trying to fire up a group of very unwilling participants.

Further to this was my initial desire to control the team, their thinking and actions. For example, it was my goal to have external Aboriginal representation on the SFLO Team. This would give me an opportunity to observe the relationship first hand. However, the DIAND employees who initially made up the SFLO Team decided that they wanted to have only internal representation. This clearly was not my plan, but it was also not my decision to make. I had to defer to the team.

As I did the research it became clear that, as a non-front line person, I could not fully appreciate the realities of life on the front line. It is possible my research is lacking depth due to this, or perhaps it has greater objectivity. Conversely, maybe it means there was greater subjectivity. I did find myself occasionally becoming judgmental of DIAND front line employees and the department as a whole.

I made an effort to interview Aboriginal people who are not involved in politics. It was an assumption on my part that Aboriginal leaders have been in the political arena long enough to play the game as the government has created it. I wanted to get a fresh and grassroots perspective on relationship building. My interviews with youth and Aboriginal community workers gave this fresh perspective.

Program Lessons Learned

In August 1999, I identified a number of Major Project Competencies for this project which I firmly believe I have achieved.

A) REQUIRED COMPETENCIES

1.c. Provide Leadership

Along with a strong personal commitment to project completion, my goal was to complete the project with integrity intact. I had a good understanding of my own leadership style and the approach to be used during research project. My leadership style was demonstrated during meetings the SFLO regional team, during focus group and interview sessions, and in my management of the project. During the project, I referred to and was guided by my personal leadership credo, developed last year. This credo highlights the leadership characteristics demonstrated throughout this project.

In this credo I commit to the following:
- to model leadership style and behaviour;
- to promote individual learning and personal/professional growth;
- to take responsibility for my actions;
- to have a vision - and focus on the desired result;
- to work to tap the potential of all employees;
- to approach work in a creative, innovative and progressive manner; and
- to tell the truth and to listen to others.

My focus was on

- Self-awareness: to have an excellent understanding of who I am in order to help others work on their own self-identity, self-correction and self-renewal;

- Authenticity: to know who I am and how my behaviour authentically projects that (to be "real");

- Intuition: to trust and honour my intuition as well as verbalize that intuition, knowing that my hunches can tell me much about people and a given situation; and

- Interpersonal skills: to practice good interpersonal skills, including listening, earning people's trust and respect, being empathetic (to truly understand where a person is coming from). To acknowledge, accept and deal with emotion in the work place.

2.b. Apply systems thinking to solution of leadership and learning problems

The systems thinking which wove its way through this work was informed by an open systems approach, that the whole of a system is more than the sum of its parts. The relational nature of the open system was key in this project and the understanding that we are all interconnected and interdependent. Although I never had a opportunity to work with a team of Aboriginal people and DIAND front line employees, I was able in my work with the focus group and the SFLO Team, to observe and compare the views of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal front line employees. The beginnings of shared understanding was evident with both groups. Further, I used consistent and innovative strategies and problem solving techniques, as shown by my work with the front line team. We went from initial startup to having a work plan with a purpose statement, principles, planning themes, environmental scan, deliverables, deadlines, as well as work plan.

5.a. Identify, locate and evaluate research findings

There were many elements to this project and I struggled not to get lost in the research. The history of the relationship alone, and how it influences the current relationship, was an in depth topic. I identified a wide variety of research from a large number of domains and synthesized findings and related these to project outcomes in an extensive literature review. I recognized my own feelings with regard to the existing relationship and the need for an objective, balanced approach to research which considered both sides.

5.b. Use research methods to solve problems

Naturalistic inquiry was the research approach used in this project. Data collection methods were appropriate to the exploratory, discovery and explanatory purposes of this project and resulted in information, advice and recommendations for DIAND. I maintained accurate records of project research and management activities. I clearly articulated the model for methodology, process and desired outcomes. I worked within this model, yet developed flexible workable solutions when the need arose.

7.b. Communicate with others through writing

Through a series of re-writes and edits, I worked to ensure that the final report communicates its findings as clearly and succinctly as possible. I wanted the voices of the participants to come through clearly, and I also wanted my own voice to be heard. I think I was able to strike a balance. I used appropriate language, and consulted the style guides and academic conventions as required. I used the literature review and the history of the relationship as a "backdrop" against which the study findings, conclusions and recommendations could be seen.

B) ELECTIVE PROJECT COMPETENCIES

1.e. Recognized ethical considerations and values and took them into account when making decisions.

I reviewed the appropriate ethical guidelines for research and applied these throughout. As my study was on trusting relationships, I was even more cognizant of the ethical considerations. The phrase from the literature review on trust that kept surfacing was "do no harm." These three little words acted as my guide during the study. I finish this work with the knowledge that I indeed did no harm.

3.c. Created and led project teams

In the fall, I created the regional Strengthening the Front Line Operations Team, with some reluctance and considerable apathy on the part of team members. I functioned as team leader until March, 2000. I also acting as the NWT Region's representative on the national management team. Under my lead, the Region developed a team charter, a workplan and was able to explore the key barriers facing the team.

4.c. Created learning opportunities for others.

The key goal of my project was to make the research a learning experience for the participants by giving them: the full scope of the study; an indication of the broader significance for the future of the North; and the importance of their contribution. Creating learning opportunities was a major benefit of this, to increase understanding and broaden awareness. Specifically, I encouraged a member of the SFLO to become team leader in March 2000. I have assisted and supported this person and have stayed on with the team as a facilitator/resource person.

7.a. Listened effectively and valued others different opinions.

I practiced effective listening in each interview and the focus group session. Every comment was valued, and different opinions welcomed. I discussed my findings, conclusions and recommendations with key players during the report writing stage and incorporated their comments if appropriate.

7.e. Contributed to project team success.

Given the apathy which surrounded the creation of the SFLO Team, the team has made much progress. The dual mandate of DIAND, NWT Region worked against creating a cohesive team. There was reluctance on both the Indian Program side and the Northern Program side to work together. Yet, a team was created, complete with a work plan and with a clear idea of its direction. My contribution was providing an initial leadership role, as well as acting as a secretariat for the team. There were times when the SFLO Team just needed a shot of energy and, I feel, I provided that as well.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Focus Group/Interview Questions

INFORMAL PRELIMINARY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ALL PARTIES

Guiding Questions:

1. What does a meaningful relationship look like?
2. What is current reality?
3. What are the key barriers to building a trusting relationship?

From these interviews came a better understanding of the issues and an identification of a set of formal interview questions.

FORMAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS for DIAND FRONT LINE EMPLOYEES

- Description of Project
- Consent Form
- Tape recording and what will be done with the information
- Questions?

1. What are the elements of a trusting relationship?
2. In your experience, what is the existing relationship like between Aboriginal people and DIAND?
3. Is there trust between Aboriginal people and DIAND?
4. What are the key issues or barriers to having a trusting relationship?
5. Can an individual develop a trusting relationship, even though there may not be trust between Aboriginal people and DIAND as an organization?
6. What does DIAND have to do to build a trusting relationship with Aboriginal people?
7. Was there a time when you experienced a trusting relationship with an Aboriginal person?
8. What can be done, practically, to make the relationship better?
9. Any final comments?

FORMAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS for ABORIGINAL PARTICIPANTS

- Description of Project
- Consent Form
- Tape recording and what will be done with the information
- Questions?

1. What are the elements of a trusting relationship?
2. In your experience, what is the existing relationship like between Aboriginal people and DIAND?
3. Is there trust between Aboriginal people and DIAND?
4. What are the key issues or barriers to having a trusting relationship?
5. Can an individual develop a trusting relationship, even though there may not be trust between Aboriginal people and DIAND as an organization?
6. What does DIAND have to do to build a trusting relationship with Aboriginal people?
7. Was there a time when you experienced a trusting relationship with someone at DIAND?
8. What can be done, practically, to make the relationship better?
9. Any final comments?

FORMAL QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUP SESSION

- Introductions and Description of Project
- How a Focus Group Works, process, roles
- Tape recording and what will be done with the information
- Consent Forms
- Questions?

1. What are the elements of a trusting relationship?
2. In your experience, what is the existing relationship like between Aboriginal people and DIAND?
3. Is there trust between Aboriginal people and DIAND?
4. What are the key issues or barriers to having a trusting relationship?
5. Can an individual develop a trusting relationship, even though there may not be trust between Aboriginal people and DIAND as an organization?
6. What does DIAND have to do to build a trusting relationship with Aboriginal people?
7. Was there a time when you experienced a trusting relationship with an Aboriginal person?
8. What can be done, practically, to make the relationship better?
9. Any final comments?

Appendix B

Consent Form (Copy)

I, _____ do hereby agree to participate in research activities to determine "How we build Trusting Relationships between Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Aboriginal People in the North ".

I have been informed about the Major Project being conducted by Sandy Osborne and sponsored by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in partial fulfilment of requirements for an M.A. in Leadership and Training for Royal Roads University.

I understand:
- the purpose of the project
- how the data will be gathered
- how the data will be used
- what signing this consent form means
- confidentiality considerations employed in the project

I would like the following pseudonym to be used when I (or my comments) are referred to specifically (as opposed to summarized generally) in the above written work
_____.

Signature:
Date:
Project Researcher: Sandy Osborne
Project Sponsor: Indian Affairs and Northern Development
4914 - 50 Street
Yellowknife, NT
X1A 2R3
Phone: (867) 669-2581

Appendix C

Speaking Notes
for the Honourable Robert D. Nault
at the NWT Legislative Assembly
Yellowknife, NWT January 20, 2000

Speaking Notes
for the Honourable Robert D. Nault
at the NWT Legislative Assembly
Yellowknife, NWT January 20, 2000

Good afternoon Premier, Ministers, Members of the Assembly, Elders, Chiefs and honoured guests.

I welcome this opportunity to join you so soon after the opening of the 14th session of the legislature. I would like to congratulate Premier Kakfwi and his Cabinet team as they assume leadership responsibilities and accept the challenges ahead. I'd also like to congratulate both new and returning members of the legislature on their recent election. This is my second visit to the territories. And again, I'm struck by the excitement and opportunity that is before you here.

There continue to be rapid new developments for the Northwest Territories. New elected representatives. Leading a territory with a new face since April 1 of last year. On the economic side, we are seeing exciting new opportunities unfold. There is new progress in settling of Aboriginal claims in the territory. The *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act* is now in place.

In my view, there has been significant change in recent months in all kinds of areas, including even my own appointment as Minister. And so I thought it would be appropriate to spend some time talking to you about my impressions of the change that's going on and what I think that means for the relationship among the Government of Canada, the territorial government and Aboriginal governments. And I want to talk to you about the role that Canada is prepared to play as that relationship evolves.

The role of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in the North is unique. We are the face of the Government of Canada here, with all of the responsibilities and challenges that brings. And sometimes the competing interests we represent are difficult to reconcile.

For better or for worse, my department is an integral part of the daily lives of northerners. My department is in the business of claims and self-government negotiation and implementation, land use regulation, sustainable development and public service employment. Simply put, the department has a strong role to play in supporting the economic, social and political development of the NWT.

Until fairly recently, departmental involvement has meant departmental control. That's changing. And it needs to continue to change. We've had a variety of experiences over the last 30 years with the management of land and resources in land claim agreements, the transfer of forestry resources, health services and airports, to name a few. However, there remains some unfinished business.

If there's one thing we can all agree on, it's that governance, economic development and environmental stewardship in the North should reflect the priorities of all northerners, including of course Aboriginal people. If there's another thing we can agree on, it's that the concept of more control for northerners over lands and resources has been talked about too much, for too long, with too little to show for it. It's time that the business of my department became the business of northerners.

We have been talking about devolution for 30 years. And I'm going to talk to you about devolution today. What's different today? The definition of devolution. Today's picture of what devolution can be has evolved. It's better informed, thanks to our past experience in health and forestry. And it's more inclusive, because we know now that's the only way to move forward.

When this discussion started, devolution meant transfer of responsibilities from the federal government to the territorial government. And, along the way, we would negotiate claims and self-government agreements with Aboriginal groups, also transferring jurisdictions to them. And somehow, these parallel and disconnected processes would lead to governance arrangements that met everyone's needs.

We now understand the limitations of that old approach. We need a comprehensive and inclusive approach to developing governance structures, to sharing resources, to building the economy and to managing the environment.

Today, when I say devolution I mean a modern government-to-government-to-government relationship. I envision a relationship that recognizes linkages to lands and resources in land claim and self-government negotiations. I see Canada transferring responsibilities to appropriate territorial and Aboriginal governments. According to trilateral decisions. Made to reflect everyone's needs. I think the term devolution has largely been a hollow one. Partly because we didn't know how to go about making devolution real. Partly because we each weren't sure we had the vision right. Now, I think that both of those things are changing. Plus, we've learned some lessons.

From Canada's perspective, through years of work here, and informed by devolution efforts in the Yukon, we know that certain conditions must be in place for devolution to succeed. Devolution discussions must complement, not undermine, other negotiations.

Expectations must be realistic. Time lines must be realistic. And, there has to be a critical mass of support to get the process off the ground -- understanding that there are no vetos. In short, all parties must perceive that a win-win-win outcome is possible in order to come to the table and invest their political capital in the process. Our challenge now is to sit down with the territorial and Aboriginal governments to craft a common vision that meets the specific needs of the people of the Northwest Territories.

I believe that's possible now, when it might not have been before. Why? Because I really do believe that the landscape has changed significantly. We already have three comprehensive land claim agreements covering nearly half of the territories. We've just signed the Dogrib Comprehensive Land Claim and Self-Government Agreement-in-Principle. This important step brings the Dogrib people closer to self-government and is the foundation for a positive, stable environment for investment in Dogrib communities.

The Dogrib AIP is an excellent example of what can be achieved when the federal, Aboriginal and territorial governments work together. The AIP recognizes the law-making powers of the Dogrib First Nations members living on Dogrib lands. Prior to the signing of the final agreement, an intergovernmental services agreement will be negotiated to jointly deliver key programs and services to the residents of the four Dogrib communities.

I am pleased to say that the Akaitcho Treaty 8 have expressed their desire to move on with negotiations. With the recent appointment of a Chief Federal Negotiator, I am confident that we can make steady progress in these talks. There has been a re-start of the South Slave Métis process.

Discussions at the Deh Cho table are underway and we are working hard to re-establish a positive working relationship with the Deh Cho First Nations. This progress demonstrates the government's deep commitment to work with Aboriginal groups to implement the inherent right policy and resolve outstanding land claims. It shows the dedication of all parties to work toward agreements and to build new relationships.

As with the Dogrib AIP negotiations, the territorial government is an integral part of these talks, putting government-to-government-to-government principles to work in a very practical manner which will safeguard the rights and concerns of everyone around the table and the people they represent.

Tremendous economic opportunities exist now, with many more possibilities just around the corner. The country, and indeed the world, are watching as national and international companies take a keen interest in pursuing natural resource development in the NWT.

We have seen the recent opening of Canada's first diamond mine. Each day we move closer to realizing the start up of a second mine. Increasing demand and favourable economies are driving the exploration of the North's huge gas potential. In addition, the recoverable conventional oil potential in the Beaufort Sea and Mackenzie Delta region alone is equal to that remaining in Alberta. We are now working towards the long term goal of creating an attractive and stable climate for even more investment in the NWT.

With respect to responsible environmental stewardship, the new *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act* ensures that Northerners, and in particular the Aboriginal peoples, of the NWT have key decision-making roles in resource management via an integrated management system which will hopefully be in tune with a wide range of interests, including business and environmental concerns. The Act provides the structure – our challenge now is to make it work.

The bottom line is that all of us involved recognize there are political, economic and social gains to be made. Even more, I think there's greater consensus that it's through devolution that we can reap those benefits. Of course, it's still very difficult to still talk only in theoretical terms about devolution without knowing for sure where discussions will lead. In my view, Canada has a responsibility to make sure those discussions lead us to where we want to go.

In my view, devolution will round out developments in three priority areas for the NWT: governance, economic development and environmental stewardship.

First of all, devolution will provide teeth to modern governance. It will solidify the structures that reflect priorities of territorial and Aboriginal governments. And clearly define government-to-government-to-government relations. It's my hope that the Intergovernmental Forum and related process will be the vehicle for the discussions that will flesh out this relationship. I think now is the time to confirm our interests through an intergovernmental process. Even now, the federal, territorial and Aboriginal governments are building stronger and more effective relationships at the regional and local levels through claims and self-government negotiations.

Now, I think there is agreement amongst each of us that we need to move beyond local and regional issues and build a forum to address issues of concern to the whole territory. Where Aboriginal, territorial and federal leaders are together at the table talking about shared aspirations and shared concerns.

As I said, I'm hopeful that the Intergovernmental Forum will be the right table for this kind of discussion. I propose that we all sit down together in the spring to begin this dialogue. With all of us at the table, we can begin to build consensus and set ourselves the goal of improving the day-to-day lives of Northerners.

We need not always agree, but together we share a responsibility to deliver effective governments at the territorial, regional and community levels —— to exchange views, to keep the dialogue going and to work through our problems — building a foundation for change. Let me also be clear that, in my view, the Intergovernmental Forum discussions will neither undermine nor overtake the self-government negotiations now underway. In the same vein, we need to ensure all processes are moving ahead together.

The second area where devolution will further solidify and formalize our progress is access to benefits from resource development. The goal is an inclusive approach to resource revenue-sharing to ensure that all people in the North have access to the jobs, investment and other opportunities that development brings. Improving the current resource benefit-sharing relationship is basic to building on the relationship among the three governments.

The riches of the Mackenzie will help drive the territorial economy for years to come. Access to this abundance of natural resources should ultimately be controlled *by* northerners, *for* northerners. We *can* find ways to spread wealth and resources more evenly throughout the territory and to recognize the diversity of its regions and its Aboriginal peoples. We need to put our heads together to work creatively, in a spirit of give and take, to ensure the current resource revenue sharing regime reflects our ultimate goals.

Environmental stewardship is the third area in which we will see devolution come to life – in a joint approach to protecting and managing the environment that is soundly-based in both traditional and newly-acquired scientific knowledge and a belief that development can happen in a responsible way. Under the *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act*, steps were taken to ensure there is fair representation of federal, territorial and Aboriginal interests by having Aboriginal governments nominate half the board members and the federal and territorial governments the other half. This joint approach is the principle that should continue to guide our efforts in this area.

The nature of the relationship between the Government of Canada and the people of this territory is changing —— it is empowering the people of the North as never before. Our shared goal is devolution, not in the old sense of the federal government transferring its powers to a territorial government. Today, devolution in the new NWT directly involves all governments in a government-to-government-to-government relationship.

In real terms, devolution will fill in the blanks, if you like. It will complete the picture of how all three governments -- federal, territorial and Aboriginal -- work together. The end result: decision-making powers where they belong. Firmly in the hands of northerners themselves. While some might be intimidated by the scope and pace of change underway in NWT, I think these changes represent the emergence of many opportunities for governments, businesses, communities and individuals to make their mark on the new NWT. All of us have major roles to play in how this relationship takes shape. With the Intergovernmental Forum, we can begin to shape our government-to-government-to-government relationship. As with the creation of Nunavut, this process promises to prove the flexibility in our federal system and its practical recognition of Aboriginal rights. Now is the time to get on with the process of building the NWT.

This process, to be most effective, must be one that reaches out to all people of the North, and reflects back to us their input. As we work towards a spring date for a meeting, I encourage every northerner to continue to speak up and speak out. Get in touch with your representative within government, whether Aboriginal, territorial or federal. This is your opportunity to give us our marching orders as we embark on the design phase of our relationship.

I sense a genuine feeling of excitement — a genuine feeling that together, all of us are entering a new kind of relationship. A relationship that begins with a shared vision for this territory and which finds strength in a shared desire to work together to turn the vision into reality. A relationship that is built on a solid foundation of respect, trust, and mutual responsibility. A relationship that will grow and contribute to a stronger Canada.

There is plenty of work to do. Work that will have a dramatic and lasting impact on the western Arctic and the people who live here for years to come. We won't get there overnight. But we will get there. I give you my commitment as Minister, and as a northerner myself, to move discussions forward in a timely manner. To ensure that we do build a strong territory. A thriving economy. And a bright future for the children and youth of the NWT.

I realize you might be rightly sceptical of another Ottawa minister telling you he's committed to making change. But I give you my commitment to be a positive driver of this process. As far and as fast as we are all ready to go. I believe the time is right. The leadership is in place. And the stage is set for progress. I look forward to our continuing work together.

Thank you.

Appendix D

Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan

Strengthening the Front Line Operations Cross-Directorate Work Plan 2000 - 2001

Priority: The mandate of the NWT Region Front Line Team is to support and assist front line employees for effective and improved delivery of programs and services.

Under Strong Region/New Ways of Doing Business, Develop the Organization
4.1.6 Strengthen front-line staff as they build relationships and support clients.

Objectives:

1. To have in place a functional and high profile regional SFLO Team to facilitate strengthening of the front line operations in the NWT Region
2. To complete the key tasks in the SFLO workplan
3. To create, with all front line regional staff, a more effective and participative relationship with external clients
4. To work with the national management SFLO Team
5. To work in partnership with national counterparts (NAP and IIAP)
6. To have the adequate resources required to carry out the objectives
7. To increase understanding of how strengthening the front line is linked to department priorities and business lines.

Definition: In the NWT Region, the front line is broadly defined as those employees who work more directly with our external clients.

Milestones

Tasks	Responsibility	Timing
Strike Team	Sponsor	Oct 1999
Action Plan	Team	Feb 2000
Problem Defined/Verified	Team	Oct 1999
Goals Set/Verified	Team	Feb 2000
Data Collected	Team	ongoing
Options Developed	Team	April 2000
Options Evaluated	Team	May 2000
Recommendation Developed	Team	June 2000
Recommendation Implemented	Sponsor	Sept 2000
Monitored, Evaluated, Refined	Sponsor	ongoing

Resource Requirements Oct 2000 - Sept 2000

Team Members		Minimum Commitment
Representatives from each directorate with a focus on the front line		
Front line (leader)	IIAP	1.0 Day/Week (15 Days)
Front line members (2)	IIAP	0.5 Day/Week (15 Days)
Front line members (2)	RR&E	0.5 Day/Week (15 Days)
Front line member	Mineral Resources	0.5 Day/Week (15 Days)
Front line member (2)	Operations	0.5 Day/Week (15 Days)
Front line member	ATR	0.5 Day/Week (15 Days)
Totals	9 Members	120 Days
	Financial Resources	

Significant Implications:

- recognition that there is a need to improve the front line service and that the team chosen to help facilitate this is of value
- to work as a cohesive team, given the mandate of the Department and the dualistic and what sometimes appears to be opposing objectives or mandates of IIAP and the NAP
- to strengthen internal capacity to enable building an effective and excellent front line
- identifying common concerns, clients and effective solutions
- establishing a good working relationship with external clients
- ensuring that the team has adequate commitment and time to work on this project
- finding adequate resources in a competitive environment

Deliverables

- identify commonalities between IIAP and NAP and work on common solutions
- identify issues regarding strengthening the front line (ie. training, communications, information sharing)
- hold workout on the changing culture (from service provider to advocate and facilitator) and the skills needed to deal with the changing environment
- ongoing communication on the mandate, activities and accomplishments of the regional team so employees see the value
- increase awareness of general front line activities
- create final recommendations for senior management on how to strengthen the front line, including framework and implementation and monitoring.

SFLO Regional Team
Issues and Barriers - Results of Brainstorming Session
Feb. 21, 2000

Issues/Barriers

- lack of time
- competing priorities (we're always bombarded)
- apathy (don't make an effort to help)
- systemic issues - how our system and structure works
- negative attitudes
- ignorance of roles
- communication systems and tools are limited (districts have no access to T:Drive)
- changing priorities
- poor planning
- lack of senior management support and commitment
- management philosophy is reactionary
- other managers or HQ change things
- misinformation or incomplete information both within and without
- lack of orientation when go out in the field
- too much red tape internally
- lack coordination internally (stovepipes)
- little understanding of importance of quick turnaround and response
- recognition for job well done
- what are the boundaries to your authority (when do you stop talking?)
- need strategic skills
- need to know boundaries and be empowered
- flexibility reduced, especially NAP (regulatory)
- value of front line work not recognized
- no client service standards in department
- may be lack of accountability - how to do the job
- competition between clients
- leadership vs. management styles - some managers like to micro manage (need to train those who supervise the front line people)
- lack of awareness between region and regions and HQ
- we're seen as the federal representative in the north
- front line people don't want to have to make an unpopular decision

Appendix E

Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan

Gathering Strength

Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan

Published under the authority of the
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Gathering Strength -- Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan

Foreword

Gathering Strength is an action plan designed to renew the relationship with the Aboriginal people of Canada. This plan builds on the principles of mutual respect, mutual recognition, mutual responsibility and sharing which were identified in the report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. That report has served as a catalyst and an inspiration for the federal government's decision to set a new course in its policies for Aboriginal people.

Gathering Strength looks both to the past and the future. It begins with a Statement of Reconciliation that

acknowledges the mistakes and injustices of the past; moves to a Statement of Renewal that expresses a vision of a shared future for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people; and outlines four key objectives for action to begin now:

- Renewing the Partnerships speaks to bringing about meaningful and lasting change in our relationships with Aboriginal people;
- Strengthening Aboriginal Governance is about supporting Aboriginal people in their efforts to create effective and accountable governments, affirming treaty relationships, and negotiating fair solutions to Aboriginal land claims;
- Developing a New Fiscal Relationship means arriving at financial arrangements with Aboriginal governments and organizations which are stable, predictable, and accountable and will help foster self-reliance; and
- Supporting Strong Communities, People and Economies focusses on improving health and public safety, investing in people, and strengthening Aboriginal economic development.

A separate section in Gathering Strength focusses on how these objectives can be achieved in the unique circumstances of Canada's northern territories.

This action plan is best described as a framework for new partnerships with First Nations, Inuit, Métis and Non-Status Indians. It is a first step toward more effective working relationships between the Government of Canada and Aboriginal people. We want to work with them to develop agendas that respond to their unique needs and circumstances. Work is already advanced on this front.

The partnerships envisaged in this action plan are broadly based, and should include Aboriginal people and organizations, the Government of Canada, other levels of government, the private sector -- indeed, all Canadians. Working together, we can address the needs of Aboriginal people and communities. Working together, we can make the promise of a renewed partnership a reality.

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Statement of Reconciliation

Learning from the Past

As Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians seek to move forward together in a process of renewal, it is essential that we deal with the legacies of the past affecting the Aboriginal peoples of Canada, including the First Nations, Inuit and Métis. Our purpose is not to rewrite history but, rather, to learn from our past and to find ways to deal with the negative impacts that certain historical decisions continue to have in our society today.

The ancestors of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples lived on this continent long before explorers from other continents first came to North America. For thousands of years before this country was founded, they enjoyed their own forms of government. Diverse, vibrant Aboriginal nations had ways of life rooted in fundamental values concerning their relationships to the Creator, the environment, and each other, in the role of Elders as the living memory of their ancestors, and in their responsibilities as custodians of the lands, waters and resources of their homelands.

The assistance and spiritual values of the Aboriginal peoples who welcomed the newcomers to this continent too often have been forgotten. The contributions made by all Aboriginal peoples to Canada's

development, and the contributions that they continue to make to our society today, have not been properly acknowledged. The Government of Canada today, on behalf of all Canadians, acknowledges those contributions.

Sadly, our history with respect to the treatment of Aboriginal people is not something in which we can take pride. Attitudes of racial and cultural superiority led to a suppression of Aboriginal culture and values. As a country, we are burdened by past actions that resulted in weakening the identity of Aboriginal peoples, suppressing their languages and cultures, and outlawing spiritual practices. We must recognize the impact of these actions on the once self-sustaining nations that were disaggregated, disrupted, limited or even destroyed by the dispossession of traditional territory, by the relocation of Aboriginal people, and by some provisions of the Indian Act. We must acknowledge that the result of these actions was the erosion of the political, economic and social systems of Aboriginal people and nations.

Against the backdrop of these historical legacies, it is a remarkable tribute to the strength and endurance of Aboriginal people that they have maintained their historic diversity and identity. The Government of Canada today formally expresses to all Aboriginal people in Canada our profound regret for past actions of the federal government which have contributed to these difficult pages in the history of our relationship together.

One aspect of our relationship with Aboriginal people over this period that requires particular attention is the Residential School system. This system separated many children from their families and communities and prevented them from speaking their own languages and from learning about their heritage and cultures. In the worst cases, it left legacies of personal pain and distress that continue to reverberate in Aboriginal communities to this day. Tragically, some children were the victims of physical and sexual abuse.

The Government of Canada acknowledges the role it played in the development and administration of these schools. Particularly to those individuals who experienced the tragedy of sexual and physical abuse at residential schools, and who have carried this burden believing that in some way they must be responsible, we wish to emphasize that what you experienced was not your fault and should never have happened. To those of you who suffered this tragedy at residential schools, we are deeply sorry.

In dealing with the legacies of the Residential School system, the Government of Canada proposes to work with First Nations, Inuit and Métis people, the Churches and other interested parties to resolve the longstanding issues that must be addressed. We need to work together on a healing strategy to assist individuals and communities in dealing with the consequences of this sad era of our history.

No attempt at reconciliation with Aboriginal people can be complete without reference to the sad events culminating in the death of Métis leader Louis Riel. These events cannot be undone; however, we can and will continue to look for ways of affirming the contributions of Métis people in Canada and of reflecting Louis Riel's proper place in Canada's history.

Reconciliation is an ongoing process. In renewing our partnership, we must ensure that the mistakes which marked our past relationship are not repeated. The Government of Canada recognizes that policies that sought to assimilate Aboriginal people, women and men, were not the way to build a strong country. We must instead continue to find ways in which Aboriginal people can participate fully in the economic, political, cultural and social life of Canada in a manner which preserves and enhances the collective identities of Aboriginal communities, and allows them to evolve and flourish in the future. Working

together to achieve our shared goals will benefit all Canadians, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike.

Statement of Renewal

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples concluded that fundamental change is needed in the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada. The Royal Commission's vision included rebuilding Aboriginal nationhood; supporting effective and accountable Aboriginal governments; establishing government-to-government relationships between Canada and Aboriginal nations; and taking practical steps to improve the living conditions of Aboriginal people. It called for a partnership based on the four principles of mutual respect andrecognition, responsibility and sharing.

The Government of Canada agrees with the Commission's conclusion that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people must work together, using a non-adversarial approach, to shape a new vision of their relationship and to make that vision a reality. In that spirit, Canada is undertaking to build a renewed partnership with Aboriginal people and governments.

Canada's vision of partnership means celebrating our diversity while sharing common goals. It means developing effective working relationships with Aboriginal organizations and communities. Above all, it means all levels of government, the private sector, and individuals working together with Aboriginal people on practical solutions to address their needs. Our commen aim should be to help strengthen Aboriginal communities and economies, and to overcome the obstacles that have slowed progress in the past.

The federal government recognizes, as did the Commission, that meaningful and lasting change will require many years to implement. The renewal of Canada's relationship with Aboriginal people must begin now.

The government has adopted four closely linked objectives that will guide its commitment to Aboriginal people.

We begin with a commitment to Renewing the Partnerships. Canada acknowledges errors in its past relationship with Aboriginal people and the need for healing to occur. The Government of Canada will work together with Aboriginal people and organizations, provincial and territorial governments, and other partners to develop solutions for the future.

Moving to new solutions means ensuring that the authority, accountability and responsibility of each of the parties are established. It means recognizing traditional customs, including their role in governance; celebrating Aboriginal languages, heritage, and culture; assisting to build the capacity of Aboriginal institutions to handle new responsibil-ities; and working to establish mechanisms to recognize sustainable and accountable Aboriginal governments and institutions.

The government will work with Aboriginal people to help achieve the objective of Strengthening Aboriginal Governance, building on treaty relationships where appropriate. This means developing practical arrangements for self-government that are effective, legitimate and accountable; that have the strength to build opportunity and self-reliance; and that can work in a co-ordinated manner with other governments. It also means extending co-management arrangements, negotiating First Nations acquisition of land and resources through claims processes, and taking steps to improve the claims process.

Helping Aboriginal governments and institutions become effective will require financial arrangements that are more stable, predictable, and accountable and that encourage Aboriginal governments to develop their own sources of revenues. To that end, the government will work with Aboriginal partners and with provincial and territorial governments towards the goal of Developing a New Fiscal Relationship.

A renewed partnership will provide the base for working together with Aboriginal people in Supporting Strong Communities, People and Economies, so that the promise of a brighter future turns into a reality. The federal government is committed to addressing social change for Aboriginal people by focussing on improving health and public safety, investing in people, and strengthening economic development. These initiatives will be developed in partnership with Aboriginal people, their communities and governments. All partners have a role in turning these goals into realities.

While it has a unique relationship with Inuit and First Nations communities, Canada recognizes that Métis, off-reserve and urban Aboriginal people face significant and growing challenges. As a result, many of the initiatives for renewal apply to all Aboriginal people without regard to their status or where they live. Specific initiatives have also been designed to meet the unique needs of Métis, off-reserve and urban Aboriginal people. Consistent with the government's commitment to a renewed relationship, these initiatives will be developed in partnership with the Aboriginal people and communities affected, as well as provincial and territorial governments.

Conditions for creating a renewed relationship with Aboriginal people in the North differ from those in the rest of Canada. Significant progress has already been made on land claims and new forms of governance, including the creation of the new territory of Nunavut.

Working with Aboriginal people and territorial governments to develop governance structures and strengthen communities in the North will be a priority. The federal government is committed to ensuring that Aboriginal people share in the resource-based opportunities now emerging in the North, while protecting the fragile northern environment.

In Gathering Strength, the federal government has set out the details of the agenda for renewal which it intends to implement in partnership with Aboriginal people. Some of these new approaches have already begun. Others will be added to this framework over time.

Many more practical steps are needed to make this a reality. It will be a long journey, but it is one that offers hope and opportunity for all who are involved, and for Canada as a whole.

Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan

I: Renewing the Partnerships

An important objective for the Government of Canada during its last mandate was to build a partnership with Aboriginal people, other levels of government and the private sector.

This approach yielded a number of important and tangible results, such as the government's new Aboriginal housing and procurement policies, the Joint Economic Development Initiative (JEDI) in New Brunswick and the Aboriginal Single Window Initiative in Winnipeg. However, Aboriginal people

continue to fare worse than non-Aboriginal people in terms of virtually all social and economic indicators. This means that we must all do more.

A key theme in the Royal Commission's report is the need for restructuring the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians. This is why a partnership that clearly defines the authority, accountability and responsibility of each of the parties is the foundation of Gathering Strength.

Elements of a Renewed Partnership

Reconciliation

As the Royal Commission states in its final report, before the renewal of the relationship can begin, "a great cleansing of the wounds of the past must take place." It is for this reason that Gathering Strength begins with a Statement of Reconciliation in which the Government of Canada formally acknowledges and expresses regret for the historic injustices experienced by Aboriginal people.

Healing

Any attempt at reconciliation would be incomplete without reference to Residential Schools, and dedicated action in support of those Aboriginal people who tragically suffered abuse as children while in these institutions. Concerted efforts are required to help Aboriginal individuals, families and communities in the healing process. In the Statement of Reconciliation, the Government of Canada has said to the victims of sexual and physical abuse that we are deeply sorry. The Government of Canada is also committed to assisting in community healing to address the profound impacts of abuse at Residential Schools. Healing initiatives will be designed in partnership with the Aboriginal leadership and victims groups, and will be delivered in the broadest possible fashion to all Aboriginal people, including Métis and off-reserve individuals and communities that have been impacted by the residential school system.

In developing its Aboriginal Action Plan, the Government of Canada sincerely hopes and believes that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people can develop a common vision for the future. This vision must include the means for Aboriginal people to participate fully in the economic, political, cultural and social life of Canada in a manner which preserves and enhances the collective identities of their communities, and allows them to build for a better future. This can and will be achieved as all parties accept, in a spirit of mutual respect and mutual responsibility, the challenge of strengthening the partnership between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

A Treaty Relationship

A vision for the future should build on recognition of the rights of Aboriginal people and on the treaty relationship. Beginning almost 300 years ago, treaties were signed between the British Crown and many First Nations living in what was to become Canada. These treaties between the Crown and First Nations are basic building blocks in the creation of our country.

For most First Nations, the historical treaties are sacred. They impose serious mutual obligations and go to the heart of how the parties wanted to live together. The federal government believes that treaties -- both historical and modern -- and the relationship they represent provide a basis for developing a strengthened and forward-looking partnership with Aboriginal people.

Federal-Provincial-Territorial-Aboriginal Partnership and Co-ordination

The Government of Canada intends to work with other levels of government to find practical solutions to the problems facing Aboriginal people, both nationally and on a province-by-province basis. The Government of Canada therefore invites other governments to give priority to the establishment and strengthening of forums that will identify areas for immediate co-operation and create the basis for more substantial change over the longer term.

The distribution of responsibilities and powers in our federation means that shared objectives for addressing Aboriginal issues can only be achieved if all levels of government work co-operatively with each other and with Aboriginal people. We need to move beyond debate and disagreements over jurisdictions and responsibilities and employ alternative approaches that support a partnership.

There are already examples of how governments and Aboriginal people can act co-operatively to address Aboriginal issues. These examples include the British Columbia Treaty Process, the Canada-Saskatchewan common table with the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN), and the Joint Economic Development Initiative in New Brunswick. Similarly, tripartite self-government processes exist in most provinces to address the self-government aspirations of Métis and other off-reserve Aboriginal people. We can build on these approaches.

Partners in Design, Development and Delivery

Another key element of a renewed partnership is the recognition that Aboriginal people must participate fully in the design and delivery of programs affecting their lives and communities. The federal government will continue to work with Aboriginal communities and organizations to develop a common vision of the future on priorities for action. The federal government and Aboriginal governments and institutions will also work with other levels of government, the private and non-profit sectors and other partners, as appropriate, to design and implement initiatives at both the national and regional levels.

The federal government is also making a concerted effort in developing new and renewed federal initiatives to consider the needs of Aboriginal people, both on and off reserves, in areas such as employment and training, economic development, health, and youth and children's programs.

The Government of Canada will also consider increased support for Aboriginal representative organizations, both on and off reserves, in order to assist these organizations to more effectively represent their members.

Restructuring Federal Institutions

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples made a number of suggestions for restructuring federal institutions. The Government of Canada agrees with the underlying view that policy development and implementation, and the delivery of programs and services should reflect the new relationship. We are open to further discussions on the departmental and institutional arrangements that could improve existing systems.

Language, Heritage and Culture

Respect and support for Aboriginal language, heritage and culture is an important element of a renewed partnership. The Government of Canada will work to help preserve Aboriginal languages, both as a link to our collective past and as a promise for the future of Aboriginal people. We will continue to work with

Aboriginal people to establish programs to preserve, protect, and teach Aboriginal languages, and to ensure that these languages are kept alive for future generations.

Public Education

Partners need to understand one another. To that end, Aboriginal people and other stakeholders will be asked to join in a public education campaign that builds on existing initiatives, programs and events. This initiative will reach out to all corners of Canada, including young Canadians, mainstream and corporate Canada, and influential leaders and organizations, in order to build more balanced, realistic and informed perspectives with respect to Aboriginal people, their cultures and their present and future needs.

Urban Issues

The federal government recognizes the need to respond to the serious socio-economic conditions that many urban Aboriginal people are facing. It also recognizes that the only way to effectively respond to these problems is to involve all stakeholders. That is why the federal government has recently been making greater efforts to strengthen partnerships with provincial governments and Aboriginal groups to develop practical approaches for improving the delivery of programs and services to urban Aboriginal people. An example of this new approach is the recent establishment of an Aboriginal Single Window Initiative in Winnipeg, in conjunction with the Province of Manitoba and the City of Winnipeg. The Single Window provides improved access to, and information on, government programs and services of interest to Aboriginal people, and helps to form a climate of co-operation and information sharing between governments. The federal government is committed to working with stakeholders to develop other joint ventures of this nature.

Another important measure is the recent publication of the Guide to Federal Initiatives for Urban Aboriginal People, which provides information on more than 80 federal initiatives of interest to First Nations, Inuit and Métis people, businesses, and organizations located in urban centres.

International Partnerships

Canada is working at the forefront of many international issues that affect indigenous peoples. An example is its work at the United Nations on the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Canada is committed to achieving a declaration that reflects the unique place of indigenous peoples in the world and applies universally; that promotes and protects indigenous rights; that works against discrimination; and that provides clear guidance for developing effective and harmonious relationships between indigenous peoples and the states in which they live. Other examples include partnerships to implement the Convention on Biological Diversity and efforts to promote international trade opportunities for indigenous peoples' products and handicrafts.

Partnership within Canada with indigenous peoples is an important aspect of Canada's northern foreign policy. The federal government is also committed to the participation of northern indigenous peoples in formulating and implementing Canada's circumpolar objectives.

At the circumpolar level, this partnership has been realized by according indigenous peoples the status of permanent participants within the Arctic Council, a new international forum of eight Arctic countries formed to promote co-operation and concerted action on issues such as sustainable development and environmental protection. They will oversee and co-ordinate those programs established under the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy.

II: Strengthening Aboriginal Governance

The Royal Commission took the view that the right of self-government is vested in Aboriginal nations and noted that the exercise of extensive jurisdictions by local communities may not always lead to effective or sustainable governments in the long term. The federal government supports the concept of self-government being exercised by Aboriginal nations or other larger groupings of Aboriginal people. It recognizes the need to work closely with Aboriginal people, institutions and organizations on initiatives that move in this direction and to ensure that the perspectives of Aboriginal women are considered in these discussions.

Aboriginal people recognize the need for strong, accountable and sustainable governments and institutions. This means ensuring that Aboriginal governments and institutions have the authority, accountability mechanisms and legitimacy to retain the confidence and support of their constituents and of other governments and institutions, to govern effectively. The Government of Canada will work closely with Aboriginal people, and provincial and territorial governments, where appropriate, to turn this political ideal into a practical reality.

Recognizing the Inherent Right of Self-Government

The Government of Canada recognizes that Aboriginal people maintained self-sufficient governments with sustainable economies, distinctive languages, powerful spirituality, and rich, diverse cultures on this continent for thousands of years. Consistent with recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the federal government has recognized the inherent right of self-government for Aboriginal people as an existing Aboriginal right within section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

Today, approximately 80 tables to negotiate self-government arrangements have been established that bring First Nations and Inuit communities together with the federal government, provinces and territories.

Federal departments continue to devolve program responsibility and resources to Aboriginal organizations. More than 80 percent of the programs funded by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development are now being delivered by First Nation organizations or governments. In April 1996, the administration and funding of cultural education centres was transferred to First Nations control, and management of the Aboriginal Friendship Centre Program was devolved to the National Association of Friendship Centres. Responsibility for administering training supports has been devolved through regional bilateral agreements.

In the North, the federal and territorial governments and Aboriginal organizations are involved in a number of forums throughout the western Northwest Territories to discuss the ways of addressing Aboriginal self-government aspirations at the territorial, regional and community levels. Progress continues to be made on the establishment of the new territory of Nunavut, in which the self-government aspirations of Inuit of that region can be implemented through a new territorial government. In the Yukon, six self-government agreements have been signed and eight are being negotiated with Yukon First Nations, while discussions are under way with the Yukon Territorial Government and Yukon First Nations about the devolution of remaining provincial-type powers to the territory.

Self-government processes for Métis and off-reserve Aboriginal groups exist in most provinces. In these

processes, the federal government is prepared to consider a variety of approaches to self-government, including self-government institutions, devolution of programs and services, and public government. All of these initiatives provide opportunities for significant Aboriginal input into program design and delivery, and should ultimately lead to direct control of programming by Aboriginal governments and institutions. New approaches to negotiations in the recent past have led to agreements on processes being reached with the land-based Métis Settlements General Council in Alberta and with the urban-based Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg.

Recognition of Aboriginal Governments

The Government of Canada will consult with Aboriginal organizations and the provinces and territories on appropriate instruments to recognize Aboriginal governments and to provide a framework of principles to guide jurisdictional and inter-governmental relations. While the Royal Commission captured some of the key factors that must be considered, any initiative in this regard would be undertaken only in close consultation with Aboriginal and other partners.

Métis Enumeration

Enumeration is one of the building blocks of Métis and off-reserve self-government. The federal government and the Province of Saskatchewan cost-shared and participated in the development of an enumeration proposal with the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan government has agreed to cost-share the enumeration, which should be completed by the spring of 1999. The Government of Canada will continue to pursue the issue of enumeration with other provinces where Métis and off-reserve groups identify this as a priority.

Implementing Self-Government

Strengthening Aboriginal governance means working with Aboriginal people, the provinces and territories, as well as other partners, to:

- Build governance capacities;
- Affirm the treaty relationship; and
- Continue to address claims in a fair and equitable manner.

Building Governance Capacity

As the Royal Commission noted, many Aboriginal groups and nations require support in order to assume the full range of responsibilities associated with governance, including legislative, executive, judicial and administrative functions. The federal government acknowledges that the existing federal policy and negotiation process, particularly in the area of capacity-building, can be improved. To address this, the Government of Canada intends to include a focus on capacity-building in the negotiating and implementing of self-government.

The government is also prepared to work with Aboriginal people to explore the possible establishment of governance resource centres. These centres could help Aboriginal people develop models of govern-ance, provide guidance on community consensus building and approaches to resolving disputes, and serve as a resource on best practices. It could assist Aboriginal people to identify the skills required. It could also play a role in supporting capacity development in the areas of administrative, financial and fiscal management.

Part of the vision for Nunavut includes a workforce that is representative of the population of Nunavut. As such, the parties to the Nunavut Political Accord have endorsed an initial target (by 1999) of 50 percent Inuit employment in Nunavut's public service, growing to a level of 85 percent over the longer term to correspond to the Inuit share of Nunavut's population.

Inuit face many challenges including low levels of education and training, as well as high drop-out rates. To address these issues, the parties have developed a unified strategy which addresses the need for human resource-development activities. This strategy is intended to fill the gaps not addressed by existing human resource planning and training programs, to ensure that more Inuit stay in school, and to prepare individuals for jobs in Nunavut.

Aboriginal Women and Self-Government

Capacity development also means ensuring that Aboriginal women are involved in the consultations and decision-making surrounding self-government initiatives. The federal government recognizes that Aboriginal women have traditionally played a significant role in the history of Aboriginal people and will strengthen their participation in self-government processes. This is particularly relevant for women at the community level. Consistent with the approach recommended by the Royal Commission, the federal government will consider additional funding for this purpose.

Aboriginal Justice

The Government of Canada will continue to discuss future directions in the justice area with Aboriginal people. We will work in partnership with Aboriginal people to increase their capacity to design, implement and manage community-based justice programs that conform to the basic standards of justice and are culturally relevant. We will also work with Aboriginal people to develop alternative approaches to the mainstream justice system, as well as dispute resolution bodies. Programs will require the inclusion of Aboriginal women at all stages.

Professional Development in Land, Environment and Resource Management

The Government of Canada, in partnership with First Nations, intends to develop and implement professional development strategies in the following key areas:

- Law-Making: a primary vehicle for legislative and executive capacity building to equip First Nations with trained personnel;
- Lands and Environmental Stewardship: initiatives will be supported to provide accredited professional development programs;
- Land and Resource Management: initiatives will support accelerated transfer to First Nations of land management, land registry and survey functions; and
- Community Support: specific capacity-development initiatives will be directed at promoting the informed consent of constituents in Aboriginal communities in order to help harmonize progress in governance with how community members understand the changes taking place.

These initiatives will strengthen First Nations capacity in key areas of governance and economic development.

Affirming the Treaty Relationship

Beginning in 1701, the British Crown entered into solemn treaties which were designed to foster the peaceful co-existence of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Over several centuries and in different parts of the country, treaties were signed to accommodate different needs and conditions. The treaties between Aboriginal people and the Crown were key vehicles for arranging the basis of the relationship between them. The importance of the treaties is confirmed by the recognition of treaty rights, both historical and modern, and Aboriginal title in the Constitution Act, 1982.

The Government of Canada affirms that treaties, both historic and modern, will continue to be a key basis for the future relationship. The federal government remains willing to enter into a treaty relationship with groups which do not have treaties. This could take the form of a comprehensive claim agreement or a self-government agreement, so long as, where required, the relevant province or territory is party to the agreement. In this case, certain provisions in self-government agreements with First Nations, Inuit, Métis and off-reserve Aboriginal people could be constitutionally protected as treaty rights under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

In moving forward, the federal government believes that treaties, and the relationship they represent, can guide the way to a shared future. The continuing treaty relationship provides a context of mutual rights and responsibilities which will ensure that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people can together enjoy the benefits of this great land.

Commemorating the Historic Treaties

The federal government will work in partnership with Treaty First Nations to facilitate the development of commemorative initiatives which honour and recognize our shared heritage and the historic relationship of the treaties.

Exploratory Discussions with Treaty First Nations

With respect to the historic treaties, First Nations representatives have often expressed frustration that governments have not sufficiently appreciated the importance of the treaties and the treaty relationship. First Nations commonly hold the view that many treaty promises have been broken over the years. The federal government recognizes that the treaty parties must deal with and honour the past relationship in order to move in partnership into the future.

To that end, the federal government is currently meeting with groups of Treaty First Nations to seek their views on how the historic treaties and treaty issues can be understood in contemporary terms, while fully recognizing their original spirit and intent. These discussions allow the parties to develop a common understanding of the issues and to consider ways to move into a relationship that is oriented to the future. The federal government intends to conduct additional exploratory discussions to respond to the request of Treaty First Nations for such a forum. Since many important treaty provisions are of direct interest to them, provincial governments also have an important role to play in this process.

Bridging to Self-Government

The Government of Canada is prepared to work in partnership with Treaty First Nations to achieve self-government within the context of the treaty relationship. For example, the Government of Canada, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, and the Province of Saskatchewan are currently engaged in a process which links discussions on the historic treaties with governance, jurisdictional and fiscal

negotiations. We are optimistic that this forward-looking and integrated approach will lead to strong governments. We are willing to establish similar integrated processes in consultation with other Treaty First Nations.

Treaty Commissions

Our experience has shown that an independent treaty commission can be of considerable help in educating the public, as well as in facilitating discussions of treaties, governance, jurisdictional and fiscal issues. An example is the Office of the Treaty Commissioner in Saskatchewan, which was established with the agreement of the federal government, Treaty First Nations and the provincial government. The federal government is prepared to consider the creation of additional treaty commissions to contribute to treaty renewal and the development of self-government where its partners agree that such an approach would be useful.

Improving the Claims Process

Over the last four years, the government has negotiated 61 specific and treaty land entitlement claims representing 417,000 hectares of land and $323 million in financial settlements. A $75-million, 440,000-hectare settlement of treaty land entitlement claims in Manitoba has been concluded.

Seven comprehensive claims settlements have been finalized since 1993, representing 66,000 square kilometres of land and approximately $230 million in financial settlements. With some 70 comprehensive land claims negotiations currently under way, the government is focussing its efforts on maintaining forward momentum.

Comprehensive Claims and Certainty

The Government of Canada is ready to discuss its current approach to comprehensive claims policy and process with Aboriginal, provincial and territorial partners in order to respond to concerns about the existing policy. The government will continue to work with its partners to explore possible methods that will provide certainty for all parties in comprehensive claims settlements.

Independent Claims Body

The Government of Canada has been working with First Nations to make recommendations for an independent claims body to render binding decisions on the acceptance or rejection of claims. We are working in partnership with First Nation organizations to determine the extent of the body's authority to facilitate, arbitrate, or mediate disputes that may arise between Canada and the First Nations in the negotiation process.

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III: Developing A New Fiscal Relationship

The Government of Canada will work in partnership with Aboriginal governments and organizations to develop a new fiscal relationship which provides more stable and predictable financing, is accountable, and which maximizes the internal generation of own-source revenue.

For First Nations, this means putting in place new fiscal relationships that will allow First Nations

governments to exercise increased autonomy and greater self-reliance through the creation of expanded new transfer arrangements, First Nation fiscal authority, resource-revenue sharing and incentives for enhancing First Nations own-source revenue capacity.

Funding Arrangements

The federal government has recently improved its funding system by introducing new multi-year funding arrangements which give First Nations greater flexibility to design their own programs and allocate funds according to community priorities. In 1996-1997, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development transferred approximately $1 billion to almost 300 First Nations through multi-year agreements. Recent agreements have transferred the management of the programs for Aboriginal friendship centres and cultural education centres to their respective national organizations. Similar arrangements will be considered and implemented wherever possible and appropriate.

The government will continue to work in partnership with Aboriginal, provincial and territorial governments to further improve its fiscal relationship with Aboriginal governments and institutions. Future multi-year arrangements will establish clear funding formulas which will provide a more stable and predictable flow of revenue to facilitate program and financial planning. The government also intends to develop a process for renewing funding agreements with its Aboriginal partners. The overall aim will be to ensure that programs and services provided by Aboriginal governments and institutions are reasonably comparable to those provided in non-Aboriginal communities.

As part of the First Nations interest in improving financing arrangements, some progress has also been made in consolidating funding from different government departments into one funding arrangement. Health Canada and the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development have initiated a pilot project designed to create a combined funding agreement for First Nations governments, while achieving economies in administration.

Joint fiscal-relations tables are being established in several provinces in order to facilitate the development of mechanisms for financial government-to-government transfer systems for First Nations governments. These transfer arrangements are to provide fair, stable and equitable transfers commensurate with responsibilities and circumstances. The fiscal relationship is also an issue in current self-government negotiations.

Accountability

As recognized government bodies, First Nations are adopting enhanced accountability mechanisms that are comparable to those of other governments in Canada. Any new fiscal relationship must ensure that all Aboriginal governments and institutions are accountable to their members through frameworks built on the recognized principles of transparency, disclosure and redress common to governments in Canada. This includes the progressive implementation of government budgeting, internal controls, reporting and auditing standards.

A project has already been initiated with First Nations and the accounting industry to make information within First Nations financial statements relevant and comprehensible to community members and other users. Similarly, the accounting industry is becoming engaged in a process of considering the needs of First Nations within the accounting structures they develop.

Accountability to both community members and the Government of Canada will be enhanced through

regular reporting of results against defined criteria and periodic evaluation of the effectiveness of financial arrangements with Aboriginal governments.

In addition to the new priorities for enhancing accountability, there remains the imperative to demonstrate the proper functioning of the existing framework. We will work together with our First Nations partners to implement increased measures to ensure proper and consistent application of existing accountability regimes.

Own-Source Revenue

Aboriginal governments want to increase their level of financial independence. The federal government supports this objective and will work with these governments to increase their capacity to generate their own revenue through economic development and internal sources. Models for applying own-source revenue as a contribution to the cost of government will be developed. Resource-revenue sharing with Aboriginal communities will also be encouraged through negotiation with provincial and territorial governments.

Data Collection and Exchange

Having relevant and meaningful data is critical to making a new fiscal relationship function effectively, particularly for a fiscal-transfer system. Reliable data are required to measure performance against program goals. To strengthen this capacity in First Nations communities, Statistics Canada plans to offer statistical training in data collection and analysis techniques to 30 to 40 Aboriginal people per year. In addition, planning is under way for Statistics Canada to co-ordinate an Aboriginal Peoples' Survey after the 2001 Census. This survey would offer an integrated approach to collecting information relevant to the needs of Aboriginal people and other levels of government.

Reducing the Administrative Burden for Métis and Off-Reserve Groups

Although the principles described above can be applied generally, the government has also looked specifically at the unique requirements of Métis and off-reserve Aboriginal groups. The government will seek to create multi-year funding arrangements with these groups and to harmonize federal fiscal reporting requirements across federal departments wherever possible, while maintaining the principle of accountability. These initiatives will contribute to creating a more stable and predictable environment for Métis and off-reserve Aboriginal groups, and should lessen the administrative burden that they face.

IV: Supporting Strong Communities, People and Economies

Supporting healthy, sustainable Aboriginal communities means finding new ways to empower individuals and their communities. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples spoke of a circle of well-being in which self-government, economic self-reliance, healing and a partnership of mutual respect are the key building blocks.

Well-being is measured by the presence of certain factors that are important to all Canadians. These include the physical environment, such as adequate housing and clean water; access to education and training opportunities; the opportunity to participate in the economy and earn a meaningful livelihood; and access to the health, social and cultural supports needed to ensure that people can remain healthy.

These factors also speak to the importance of building capacity for both individuals and communities. As self-government becomes a reality, Aboriginal communities will require increasingly sophisticated policy and program skills and administrative structures to support good governance. Wherever they live, Aboriginal people will want equitable access to culturally relevant programs and services to help improve their own quality of life.

Previous federal initiatives have provided a measure of progress, but persistent gaps remain between most Aboriginal people's quality of life and that enjoyed by most other Canadians. It has become increasingly important to focus on some of the key factors that contribute to the circle of well-being for Aboriginal people and their communities. This translates into a concentrated framework for action, to be pursued with Aboriginal people and other partners, in three key areas:

- Improving health and public safety
- Investing in people
- Strengthening economic development

Improving Health and Public Safety

According to every health and social indicator, Aboriginal people lag behind other Canadians. This is a situation we are committed to working in partnership to change.

Aboriginal people represent the fastest growing segment of the Canadian population. Population growth for Status Indians is expected to be 2.7 percent on reserves and 2.8 percent off reserves over the period from 1996 to 2000. Between 1991 and 2000, the Métis and off-reserve population is projected to increase by 18 percent.

With approximately 50 percent of the total Aboriginal population under the age of 25, including almost 60 percent of the Status Indian population, demands for infrastructure, education and economic-development opportunities are increasing very rapidly. The Government of Canada is committed to working in partnership to address the needs that this population growth will create, and to improve living conditions in Aboriginal communities.

Improving Community Infrastructure

One of the most important elements of people's sense of well-being is access to good quality housing. Fifty percent of dwellings on First Nations reserves require renovations or replacement. The government's new on-reserve housing policy, introduced in 1996, establishes a solid framework incorporating the required structural reforms within which sustainable improvements are being achieved.

The new policy provides First Nations with greater control while strengthening accountability. The development of community-based housing programs and multi-year plans provides First Nations with the flexibility to accommodate the diverse housing needs within their communities. The policy encourages communities to build links between housing and community economic development, job creation and skills enhancement, as well as promoting partnering with the private sector and more private investment on reserves.

One example of how the new policy works is in a First Nation community in Ontario, where the First Nation has developed a series of housing programs to meet the various needs of its residents, including

rental units for starter homes and low-income earners, as well as home ownership opportunities. The First Nation recently won an award from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) for its construction of five houses designed for independent living for seniors.

The government recognizes housing as a priority area and plans to make increased investments, in combination with existing resources, to accelerate the implementation of the new on-reserve housing policy by First Nations.

First Nations continue to access CMHC's Non-Profit Housing Program which provides annual housing subsidies for social housing. CMHC's Residential Rehabilitation Assistance and Shelter Enhancement programs are also available to First Nations. The latter initiative contributes to providing safe shelter for victims of family violence.

The federal government will continue to support off-reserve Aboriginal housing through CMHC's annual housing subsidies on the existing social housing portfolio. In addition, off-reserve Aboriginal households or organizations benefit from CMHC's Residential Rehabilitation Assistance, Home Adaptations for Seniors Independence and Shelter Enhancement programs.

CMHC also continues to work with Aboriginal and other interested parties to facilitate access to the private housing market for Aboriginal households. Under a CMHC/Aboriginal Capital Corporation pilot project launched in 1996, All Nations Trust Company acts as CMHC's agent for financing or re-financing of Aboriginal housing projects under the On-Reserve and Urban Native Housing programs.

Clean water is a basic necessity for ensuring good health. In 1995, a joint DIAND/Health Canada survey found that 211 community water-treatment systems and 64 community sewage-treatment facilities in First Nations communities posed significant health and safety risks and required upgrading. The federal government has responded by re-allocating resources to address these basic needs for community infrastructure. To date, remedial work has been undertaken on more than three quarters of the problem systems.

Since 1987, the proportion of houses on reserves with water service has risen from 74 to 96 percent and those with sewer facilities from 67 to 92 percent. However, a significant backlog still exists, and more water and sewer facilities are needed to keep pace with the expected growth in new housing. Addressing health and safety issues remains a government priority and the government will continue to allocate additional resources with a view to addressing water and sewer needs in First Nations communities.

Healthy Communities

Major community health programs include nursing, community health representatives, a National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program, and a program for children's health, called Brighter Futures. The Building Healthy Communities Strategy was announced in 1994. The strategy sets out a two-pronged approach: a transfer strategy to facilitate community control of health resources, and a program strategy to address priority service gaps in mental health, solvent abuse and home-care nursing.

Health programs are being devolved to First Nations so they can be controlled and delivered at the community level. By late 1997, some 30 percent of First Nations had signed a health transfer agreement and 12 percent an integrated agreement. Almost a third of the remaining First Nations communities are involved in pre-transfer planning.

Training of Aboriginal health professionals is an important part of enhancing capacity in improving Aboriginal health. The current Indian and Inuit Health Careers Program contributes to this training. Further work will be done with all parties involved in Aboriginal education to ensure health careers remain a priority.

Of increasing national concern is diabetes, a disease which is three times as common among Aboriginal people as among other Canadians. The government will work to ensure a greater focus on prevention, care and research related to diabetes in Aboriginal communities.

An Aboriginal Health Institute

Better knowledge and understanding are needed about how best to address health and social problems among the Aboriginal population. By building upon existing capacities and programs, Aboriginal people themselves will identify the strategies that will work for them. One way in which this can be achieved is through the creation of an Aboriginal Health Institute which will benefit Aboriginal people both on and off reserves. This institute could, for example, conduct health research focused on the needs of Aboriginal people, gather and disseminate information on culturally appropriate medicines and treatments, support basic and advanced training of Aboriginal health workers, and serve as a support system for health workers in Aboriginal communities.

Improving Public Safety

The federal government is also committed to enhancing the safety and security of First Nations by providing them with access to police services that are professional, effective, culturally appropriate and accountable to the communities they serve. Under the First Nations Policing Policy, introduced in 1991, the federal government, provincial and territorial governments, and First Nations work together to negotiate tripartite agreements for police services that meet the particular needs of each community. The cost of the police services is shared by the federal government (52 percent) and the relevant provincial or territorial government (48 percent). There are more than 100 policing agreements serving 290 First Nation communities.

Building on the success of this policy, the government will provide additional resources to expand First Nations police services. It will work with First Nations to ensure a focus on crime prevention, particularly for vulnerable groups, such as children, women and youth.

Investing in People

Investing in people means assisting individuals to acquire the education, skills and training necessary for individual self-reliance. The government will work in partnership with Aboriginal people to support individual, family and community well-being.

Better Beginnings for Children

An investment in Aboriginal people begins with an investment in children. Healthy lives start with healthy beginnings. By continuing the off-reserve Aboriginal Head Start Program and extending it to include on-reserve communities, the government will work with Aboriginal people to address the early childhood development needs of Aboriginal children. As well, the First Nations and Inuit Child Care Program that was developed in the last mandate will be continued.

The government is also committed to working with First Nations to ensure that their children, like other Canadian children, will benefit from the National Child Benefit system when it is introduced nationally in July of 1998. An increased federal child benefit will be provided to low-income families in First Nations communities. Welfare savings that may accrue from these changes on reserves will be available for re-investment in First Nation communities to help alleviate the depth and consequences of child poverty and to support welfare reform.

Youth Strategy and Education

Too many Aboriginal youth do not complete high school. They leave the school system without the necessary skills for employment, and without the language and cultural knowledge of their people. The federal government recognizes that a strong future for Aboriginal people depends on providing a better future for Aboriginal youth.

Working with First Nations, the government will support education reform on reserves. The objective will be to improve the quality and cultural relevance of education for First Nations students; improve the classroom effectiveness of teachers; support community and parental involvement in schools; improve the management and support capacity of First Nations systems; and enhance learning by providing greater access to technology for First Nations schools. One example of the successful use of technology is the introduction of Industry Canada's SCHOOLNET and Computers for Schools Initiative into First Nations schools.

By improving the quality of education, the government will work with First Nations to encourage youth to stay in school. These initiatives will focus on increasing high-school graduation rates and ensuring that First Nations youth leave school optimistic about their future.

Through the Youth Employment Strategy launched in 1996, the government is committed to continuing its support for First Nation, Inuit and Métis youth to explore career options while in school and to acquire practical work experience.

In today's economy, self-employment provides a rapidly increasing share of new job creation. The government has expanded its support of young entrepreneurs through activities such as the recently announced Aboriginal Business Youth Initiative, which provides loan funds, mentoring, and business support through Aboriginal financial organizations.

Multi-Purpose Urban Youth Centres

To reach urban Aboriginal youth more effectively, the government intends to establish a network of multi-purpose Aboriginal youth centres linked to friendship centres or other Aboriginal community organizations. These centres will focus on encouraging youth to stay in school to complete their education. The programs to be provided will include career planning, employment opportunities, and recreational activity in a supportive, culturally relevant environment.

Reforming Welfare

The government proposes to work with First Nations to reform social assistance programs on reserves, to increase personal independence and to improve employment prospects for First Nation workers. The goal of this initiative will be to support First Nations in their efforts to re-orient their welfare systems away from passive income maintenance toward active measures. A central focus of this initiative will be

linking the welfare system with work and training opportunities within the community. One priority will be to support the development of their management and administrative capacity to implement an active case-managed system, and to further strengthen data and information systems.

Training and Skills Development

The government will also work with Aboriginal partners to implement a five-year Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy which will extend the current Aboriginal labour market agreements when they expire in 1999. The objective of this strategy is to provide Aboriginal groups with a number of tools to increase employment. The strategy will serve Aboriginal people on reserves and off reserves, and will feature a results-based system of accountability using jobs and increased self-reliance as measures of achievement. Success in meeting the human resources challenge faced by Aboriginal people is based on creating a broad-based partnership involving Aboriginal groups, governments, the private sector and relevant institutions.

As part of the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy, the government will work with its partners to establish a private sector-driven Aboriginal Human Resources Development Council. This Council will bring business, labour, academic and Aboriginal experts together to focus on addressing the human resources challenge and to encourage the private sector to share responsibility for improving Aboriginal access to the labour market. A special focus on urban Aboriginal people and on Aboriginal children and youth will be part of the strategy's efforts to improve well-being.

Aboriginal groups and organizations will continue to be integral to human resources development. The government will seek their views on the best way to implement the strategy and the proposed council. We are also working in partnership to develop best practices and forecasts on labour-force training requirements and job opportunities.

Strengthening Economic Development

Jobs and wealth creation are the underpinnings of prosperous, self-reliant Aboriginal communities and of meaningful self-government. The transition to self-reliance is difficult, as many Aboriginal communities have limited economic opportunity and capacity. They experience major difficulties in accessing the tools to build economic self-reliance: investment capital, markets for their products and services, suitable work experience, access to lands and resources, and innovation in the workplace.

The government will work in partnership with Aboriginal leaders, business people and communities, the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board, the private sector, the provinces and territories, and the voluntary sector to expand opportunities for economic development and reduce obstacles. As part of this approach, the government will participate in sectoral, national and regional economic development forums to help identify priorities and shape new initiatives. One such forum, the Joint Economic Development Initiative in New Brunswick, was launched in 1996.

Access to Capital

Access to debt and equity capital is a major issue for Aboriginal business and community development. The government supported the launch of a National Aboriginal Financing Task Force in 1995 and is working with its recently tabled conclusions and recommendations for greater access to investment capital. In particular, the government, Aboriginal leaders, and the financial services sector are working together to expand the availability of commercial loan instruments and services for Aboriginal businesses

and communities. Working with institutions such as the Aboriginal Capital Corporations, Community Futures Development Corporations and the Business Development Bank of Canada, we are also exploring ways to provide development capital that is not available from commercial sources. As well, the government has signalled its willingness to discuss the idea of extending tax credits to investors in Aboriginal venture capital corporations.

The government is also seeking to increase business equity funding for First Nations enterprises by expanding its Opportunity Fund. This fund invests in small First Nations businesses, such as a wood manufacturing facility in Alberta, which is expected to employ 25 to 30 band members and generate $1.6 million in annual sales.

Increased Market Access

Market access is another area for partnership. The majority of the 20,000 Aboriginal businesses in Canada are small and serve local and regional markets. A concerted effort is needed from industry and governments at all levels to work with Aboriginal businesses to open up existing and emerging market opportunities through mentoring, joint venturing and supplier development.

The government is making progress in opening up procurement markets. Under its Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Business, 39 federal departments and agencies have adopted specific objectives and have awarded contracts to Aboriginal businesses worth more than $50 million in 1997 alone. The government will seek to engage the private sector, the provinces and municipalities in joint initiatives and in sharing best practices to increase Aboriginal business success in these procurement markets. Concerted efforts will also be made to develop opportunities with international agencies such as the Inter-American Development Bank, and the Latin America Fund for the Development of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas and the Caribbean.

The government is also working to open export markets for Aboriginal businesses led by Aboriginal women and men and to improve their ability to supply these markets. Trade missions to Europe and the United States have been used to showcase Aboriginal products. Aboriginal firms are also participating in the Prime Minister's January 1998 Team Canada mission to Latin America.

Aboriginal Business Canada has made export market development a priority. Work is just beginning on a new three-year strategy to improve market access and export readiness which will assist Canadian Aboriginal businesses to develop markets abroad. For instance, support has been provided to the Meadow Lake Tribal Council to establish a joint venture with the Miskito Indians of Nicaragua to develop forest concessions and tourism opportunities.

Aboriginal business leaders, federal and provincial officials, and the Canadian Tourism Commission recently agreed to create an Aboriginal Tourism Team Canada to promote tourism opportunities. The federal government will participate in the development of international marketing strategies for Aboriginal tourism, including a system of standards, quality control, and measures to ensure that tourism developments are environmentally sound. These activities have enormous potential, especially for many remote communities.

Increased Access to Lands and Resources

For many First Nations, land and natural resources offer the most important opportunity for creating jobs and economic development. The government will work with First Nations, provinces and territories to

strengthen the co-management process, and to provide increased access to land and resources. The government will also work to accelerate Aboriginal participation in resource-based development in and around Aboriginal communities, and to improve the benefits that communities receive from these developments. The government also re-affirms its commitment to the claims process, which provides First Nations people with increased access to lands and resources.

The government will increase funding for resource initiatives so First Nations communities can derive more benefits from resource development projects, the co-management of resources, and harvesting and contracting opportunities related to resources.

A new strategy is also being developed to build capacity for lands and resource management in First Nations communities. The government is working with First Nations to help them develop the needed skills to prepare for the transfer of oil-and-gas management and control. It will also co-partner innovative initiatives to develop the traditional Aboriginal activities of wild-food harvesting and fur trading on a competitive and sustainable basis.

The government is contributing to a number of Aboriginal-industry-government co-operation initiatives and intends to expand these activities. Those already under way include the BHP diamond development initiative in the Northwest Territories; an initiative for economic development in northern Ontario; a joint process for resource co-management in Saskatchewan; and resource-management bodies based on comprehensive claims settlements in the North.

The federal Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy and ongoing treaty negotiations are important mechanisms for increasing Aboriginal people's access to commercial fishing opportunities. For example, the Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy has led to 239 commercial fishing licences being retired and issued to First Nations communities and Aboriginal organizations since 1992. New funds will now be provided to accelerate Aboriginal participation in coastal fisheries.

Innovation

The adoption of innovative processes of production and the development of new products are crucial for the survival of Aboriginal businesses, and for creating more jobs and wealth in Aboriginal communities. The government is working to ensure that its programs support the innovation needs of Aboriginal businesses. Aboriginal Business Canada has identified support of innovation as one of its four strategic priorities for business development funding. The government will improve access to the information highway, help develop electronic business tools that address Aboriginal business needs, and support Aboriginal firms in the development of new products and services.

The government will also be supporting initiatives for innovation in the natural resources sector, and a network for innovation in Aboriginal economic development. This network will facilitate the sharing of best practices and innovative approaches to Aboriginal economic development among governments, the private sector, and Aboriginal communities and businesses.

Northern Initiatives

Considerable progress has been made in the northern territories in creating partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Progress has been made in the settlement of many land claims and

self-government agreements. The new territory of Nunavut will change the map of Canada. The challenge for the North is to continue to develop new governance institutions which are sensitive to Aboriginal interests, and to the shared interests of all people in Canada, while working to strengthen the North's economic base.

A Unique Environment

For a number of reasons, the environment for Aboriginal policy in the North is very different than in southern Canada. The North has few reserves and the proportion of Aboriginal people in the northern population is extremely high -- 85 percent in Nunavut, 28 percent in the Yukon, and close to 50 percent in the western Northwest Territories. Although the overall population is small, the total land mass comprises over 40 percent of Canada. Through a formula financing agreement with the federal government, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) delivers a range of social and community programs to people in the North, including Aboriginal people, that, in the south, are funded by Canada for First Nation delivery on reserves, and by provinces for all people off reserves. These programs and services include housing, community infrastructure, water and sewer services, social services and education. While in the Yukon, the federal government delivers many of these programs and services, the Yukon Government through similar arrangements, delivers some programs such as elementary and secondary education.

A strong foundation for renewed partnership exists with the signing of comprehensive land claims agreements with all Inuit in the Northwest Territories (NWT) and with close to half of the Aboriginal groups in the Yukon and western NWT.

A Northern Agenda

The Government of Canada is committed to continuing its efforts to advance political and economic development in the existing two, and soon to be three, northern territories. This will be done by building strong partnerships with Aboriginal people throughout the North and encouraging the private sector and territorial governments to play a strong role. With these partners, we will build on what has already been achieved towards the goal of ensuring that strong Aboriginal communities emerge in the North.

The challenge in Nunavut will be to establish an effective, decentralized government by April 1, 1999 in collaboration with the territory's Inuit population, and to achieve the objective of having Inuit fill 50 percent of positions at all levels of Nunavut's public service. The federal government is committed to supporting the establishment of the new territory's government, including a substantial investment in training Inuit to work in its public service.

In the western NWT, the completion of land claims and self-government agreements with Aboriginal groups will remain a priority. The federal government will continue to support the unique dialogue between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to define a new constitution for the western NWT. One of the major issues will be to explore how public government in the NWT can accommodate the inherent right of self-government and the self-government aspirations of northern Aboriginal people. A parallel challenge will be to ensure that Aboriginal people and communities share in the wealth and benefits expected to flow from major resource development in the NWT.

In the Yukon, success in settling land claims is leading to new relationships among Canada, the Yukon Territorial Government and Yukon First Nations, and to major changes in the territory's framework for governance. Public boards with Aboriginal participation will be established throughout the territory to

manage land and resources. New arrangements are being developed on a tripartite basis to transfer the delivery of programs and services to First Nations and to devolve provincial-type responsibilities to the Yukon government.

Finally, the action plan for the North includes fostering the circumpolar relationship among Arctic countries. Canada has emerged as a leader in this area, and Aboriginal people are playing a key role. Mary Simon has been appointed as Canada's first Ambassador for Circumpolar Affairs. Indigenous peoples, including Inuit, have been granted status as permanent participants in the eight-nation Arctic Council, a body whose agenda includes sustainable development and environmental protection in northern territories around the globe. The federal government plans to demonstrate Canada's commitment to these issues by hosting the first International Circumpolar Conference on Sustainable Development to be held in Whitehorse in 1998. Canada is taking a lead role in the negotiation of international protocols on persistent organic pollutants, which present a particular problem for the northern environment.

Gathering Strength

Although the environment for Aboriginal policy in the North is unique, the four basic objectives of Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan provide directions for the future.

Partnership

In addition to land claim and self-government agreements, other initiatives to renew the partnership will include a consultation process in all three northern territories to acquaint Aboriginal northerners with the action plan and to ensure follow-up, and a public education plan to build more balanced, realistic and informed perspectives. The federal government is prepared to support further enumeration of Métis in the Northwest Territories, in conjunction with the GNWT. Community healing initiatives intended to address the legacy of abuse at Residential Schools will include the North.

Governance

A number of commitments in the Aboriginal Action Plan apply to the North. Aboriginal groups will benefit from the proposed governance resource centre. The proposal to focus on capacity-building in self-government negotiations will also be of benefit. Funding support for Aboriginal women's organizations will apply in the territories, and commemorative initiatives honouring the shared heritage emanating from Treaty 8 and Treaty 11 in the NWT will be discussed with beneficiaries. Resolving the question of "certainty" language in land claims agreements is also important for reaching lasting settlements in the western NWT.

Fiscal Relationships

In developing a new fiscal relationship, the Government of Canada will work with Aboriginal people and territorial governments to increase self-sufficiency. As with initiatives in the south, the objective in developing a new fiscal relationship is to provide greater stability and predictability in financing, and to ensure accountability for funding to community members as well as to the governments which provide the funding. In addition, the government will work in partnership with Aboriginal governments and institutions to maximize the generation of own-source revenue.

Strong Communities, People and Economies

Many elements in the action plan will be applied to strengthen northern communities and build a stronger economic base for the North. These range from initiatives by Health Canada to prevent diabetes, to support for young people to improve their skills and find jobs through the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy.

The government will work in partnership with Aboriginal leaders and business people, the larger business community, territorial governments and the voluntary sector to expand Aboriginal economic opportunities in the North. The obstacles common to Aboriginal people throughout Canada, such as access to capital, land and resources, and labour-force experience are being addressed in the North through comprehensive land claims, impact benefits agreements covering major resource development initiatives, resource co-management, support for education, training and youth employment, improved northern access to the information highway and business development support. Major opportunities revolve around natural resources, Aboriginal tourism and eco-tourism, and cultural industries. The North figures prominently in the national Aboriginal Tourism Strategy and efforts to develop export markets for Aboriginal products. The federal government is also supporting innovative initiatives for the natural resource sector, including the traditional economies of fur trapping and wild-food harvesting, which are particularly important in the North. First Nations in the Yukon will be invited to continue working with government in these important areas, including the development of a forestry policy.

The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development's Sustainable Development Strategy has the potential to be an important tool in the North. It emphasizes community participation in regulatory structures set up by government, some of which arise from land claims settlements and some from the belief that communities will produce more appropriate strategies to meet their needs if they are directly involved. All partners, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, will need to work together to address difficult northern issues such as high unemployment, the demographic pressure of rising populations in Aboriginal communities, and problems in delivering training, health and youth services.

A Commitment to Meaningful and Lasting Change

We have created this action plan, Gathering Strength, as the start of a new chapter in Canada's relationship with Aboriginal people, a turning of the page in order to focus on a more prosperous and co-operative future.

Canada's approach pledges us to renewing partnerships with Aboriginal people and governments, strengthening governance, creating a flexible yet accountable fiscal framework, and supporting strong communities, people and economies. Our efforts are aimed at targeted, measurable short-term benefits, as well as building for the long term.

We recognize, as did the Royal Commission, that a truly Canadian approach must be multi-dimensional and will have many players. That is why Gathering Strength is designed to provide a comprehensive, flexible framework in which all parties can work together to address the priorities of Aboriginal people. We envision a partnership not just between the federal government and Aboriginal people, men and women, Elders and youth, but one that also includes provincial, territorial and local governments; national, regional and local Aboriginal leaders; the private sector; and other interested groups and organizations. This partnership must extend to include all Canadians, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike.

Clearly, we need to work closely with all our partners to ensure meaningful and lasting change. That is why, in the coming months, we will be working with Aboriginal people, communities and organizations to develop work plans, establish targets and objectives, and monitor the implementation of the various initiatives in this action plan. We will also engage other governments, the private sector and the voluntary sector, in order to implement new solutions and overcome obstacles that have held back action in the past, including the need to secure strong public support.

Tradition and innovation need not be mutually exclusive. We have a rare opportunity to gather strength for a better future. In partnership, we can all succeed.

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