

Aboriginal Children and Early Childhood Development and Education in Canada: Linking the Past and the Present to the Future

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The premise of this article is that Aboriginal children in Canada cannot be extricated from Canada's colonial and colonizing history, nor can they be disentangled from the current socioeconomic conditions that dictate the everyday realities of Aboriginal people. The authors argue that Aboriginal early childhood is a site of politicized potential for transformative change that may benefit communities and Nations.

Historical Overview

Canada's relationship to Indigenous peoples is complex, dynamic, and often difficult. This relationship is predicated on colonial realities, historic contexts, and contemporary interactions, each of which has a profound effect on the lives and well-being of Aboriginal children. (The terms *Aboriginal* and *Indigenous* are used interchangeably in this article as they are generally in Canada.) Indeed, the lives of Indigenous children in Canada are guided and formed in many ways by historic colonial factors, by intergenerational traits, and by current socioeconomic and demographic elements experienced by Aboriginal peoples. The challenge for Aboriginal peoples thus becomes how to build a healthy future, the foundation of which is Aboriginal children, by acknowledging and addressing both historic colonial wrongs and present-day marginalization. The future of Aboriginal people is most certainly Aboriginal children, a truth that Elders have been stating from time immemorial (Government of Canada, 1996). This article takes this conviction as its starting point. We then consider the historic and colonial underpinnings of Canada's relationship with Aboriginal peoples, move to a brief overview of contemporary Indigenous demographics, discuss the present-day policies and

considerations guiding Canada's vision of and for Aboriginal children, and conclude with a contemplation of the challenges facing both Canada and Aboriginal peoples with regard to meaningful and culturally relevant child development programs, policies, and services.

The Aboriginal peoples of Canada comprise three population groups: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. These three populations include many groups, each with their own identities, histories, rights, and relationships to the nation state of Canada. To those unfamiliar with the history of Canada and its contemporary realities, a bewildering array of terms and categories conceptualizes or describes Aboriginal peoples. *First Nations* is the currently preferred term to describe "federally recognized, registered" Aboriginal peoples of Canada; the term "first came into common usage in the 1970s to replace the word 'Indian,' which many found to be offensive" (Diversity Watch, n.d.). The concept of First Nations was introduced by the political leadership—the National Indian Brotherhood now known as the Assembly of First Nations, which is a national representative organization composed of chiefs elected under the provisions of the Federal Indian Act—largely to reflect the fact that Aboriginal peoples are nations with rights and title to the lands now known collectively as Canada. The concept includes individual First Nations persons, communities, and lands; it also replaces the term *Indian bands*, which refers to the communities that live on particular *Indian reserves*.

First contact in Canada occurred in the 16th century. For over 200 years Indigenous and non-Indigenous interactions focused on the fur trade and colonial missionization (Fisher, 1977). Much of this interaction was concurrent with the spread of disease from non-Aboriginal to Aboriginal peoples (Kelm, 1998; Harris, 1997; Harris, 1997/1998). In the late 1700s, after the English defeated the French in Canada (with Aboriginal allies on both sides), the Royal Proclamation was signed. This was the first official recognition of Aboriginal rights in Canada, including rights to hunting and fishing, treaties, and land governance (Armitage, 1995).

Although the policies set forth under the Royal Proclamation held with relative success for a little under 100 years, increased social pressure and land settlement by non-Aboriginal peoples prompted the government gradually to erode the rights of Indigenous peoples through social policy. This period was marked by church and state intervention in Aboriginal lives. When the Indian Act was signed in 1876, a concentrated and consolidated effort was made by Euro-colonials to govern Aboriginal peoples. This desire to control and govern led to assimilation policies including residential schools. Many Aboriginal people (Battiste & Semaganis, 2002) believe that the assimilationist agenda has not entirely ended. This may indeed be the case, although by the mid-1970s governmental and policy rhetoric shifted away from the language of assimilation to language that

acknowledged the rights of Aboriginal peoples to self-government and self-determination.

Armitage (1995) outlines six fundamental periods wherein monumental shifts occurred with regard to Indigenous peoples in Canada. These periods can be roughly compartmentalized as follows: early contact (1534-1763); the time of the Royal Proclamation (1763-1830); the period of Canadian social policy (1830-1867); the near century-long period of assimilation during which the Indian Act dominated (1867-1950); integration (begun in the 1950s and arguably present today); and self-government and self-determination (begun in the 1970s and underway today). Without question the development and implementation of Canada's Indian Act affected Aboriginal people profoundly. The Indian Act defined *Indian*, established the parameters of enfranchisement, created and enforced reserves, established control over Aboriginal governance systems by colonial subjects, banned Indigenous customs, and set education protocols (i.e., residential schooling).

Educational protocols were designed with the goal of assimilating Aboriginal children and peoples and transforming them "from their helpless 'savage' state to one of self-reliant 'civilization' and thus to make in Canada but one community—a non-Aboriginal, Christian one" (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2004, para. 1).

Of all the steps taken to achieve this goal, none was more obviously a creature of Canada's paternalism toward Aboriginal people, its civilizing strategy, and its stern assimilative determination than the step of education, particularly education in residential schools (para. 2).

Over 80 residential schools and many more day schools were operated across Canada, many as forced labor camps, in partnerships between the federal government and various churches. For Aboriginal parents, refusing to send their child to such a school constituted a criminal offence. According to many, the goal of the schools was to "kill the Indian in the child so as to save the man" (Churchill, 2004). More than 90,000 people alive today attended residential schools; their legacy of trauma and abuse has devastated several generations of Aboriginal people, and litigation for damages is ongoing against churches and the Canadian government (Milloy, 1999).

By the early 1950s and into the 1960s, the residential school system was on the wane in Canada (although the last school did not close until 1984). More children were being schooled in band-operated schools or in integrated provincial schools. Unfortunately, the government continued to intervene in the lives of Aboriginal children and families through the development of child welfare policies. These were designed to allow the state to intervene in families for issues like "child neglect" or "health and sanitation." In fact all these policies reflected colonial constructions of right and wrong, acceptable and not acceptable. More often than not, state

intervention in the lives of Aboriginal children and families was related to poverty-based issues; rather than address the issues of systemic poverty, the state simply apprehended children and placed them with non-Aboriginal families, often as a form of cheap labor for rural farming families.

Contemporary Realities for Aboriginal Peoples in Canada

Perhaps as a function of an aggressive colonial government intent on policies to eradicate Aboriginal peoples from the Canadian landscape, present-day Aboriginal socioeconomic demographics look considerably different than those of their non-Aboriginal counterparts. The demographic profile of Aboriginal people is unique among Canadian populations; in fact the Aboriginal age profile is exactly the reverse of that of non-Aboriginal Canadians: relatively young with few seniors compared with Canada's aging population. On almost all indicators, Aboriginal people can be found on the high end of negative indicators and the low end of positive indicators (Canadian Population Health Initiative, 2004). These national averages, however, conceal the health and strength of Aboriginal people and the tremendous diversity that exists among individuals, families, communities, and regions. Generally, some individuals are healthier than others on many if not all indicators of health and well-being. Suggested reasons for the variability in health status include differences between communities in terms of self-government/community control, community engagement, and "cultural continuity" (defined as "efforts to preserve and promote a sense of cultural belonging"), the presence of cultural facilities in a community, retention of the ancestral language, and traditional uses of land and natural resources (Lalonde, 2005).

According to the best available but limited information on Canada's Aboriginal population, 1,319,890 people identify themselves as being "of Aboriginal origin" (Statistics Canada, 2001), meaning that they have some Aboriginal ancestry and are members of the one of the three Aboriginal population groups (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit). Data from the 2001 Census show that the proportion of Aboriginal people is increasing; persons with Aboriginal ancestry now represent 4.4% of the total population compared with 3.3% 10 years before. Most Aboriginal people—608,850 or 62%—are First Nations, 30% are Métis, and 5%, or 45,070, are Inuit.

The Aboriginal population in Canada is quite young; the median age is 23.5 years compared with 37.7 in the non-Aboriginal population, meaning that 50% of the Aboriginal population are less than 23.5 years old (Statistics Canada, 2001). These averages conceal some regional differences. In Saskatchewan, for example, the median age of 18.4 years was a full 20 years lower than that of the province's non-Aboriginal population. The median age is even lower among the Inuit (19.1 years), who have the

youngest population of the three Aboriginal population groups (Statistics Canada).

Aboriginal people in Canada are highly urbanized: almost half live in urban areas, 25% in 10 of the nation's 27 census metropolitan areas. There is considerable migration between urban, rural, and reserve areas, and Aboriginal individuals and families are much more mobile than other Canadians. This high level of mobility "creates challenges for planning and implementing programs in education, social services, housing and health care, especially in urban areas" (Statistics Canada, 2001, p. 11).

Aboriginal Children in Canada: Linking the Past and the Present to the Future Aboriginal children in Canada cannot be extricated from Canada's colonial and colonizing history, nor can they be disentangled from the current socioeconomic indicators that dictate the everyday realities of Aboriginal people in this country. First Nations children aged 14 and under represented 35% of the total North American Indian population in 2001 compared with 19% of the total non-Aboriginal population. This means, among other factors, that "there are far more young people ready to enter the working-age population than there are older people preparing to leave over the next ten years" (Statistics Canada, 2001, p. 13). The young age of the Aboriginal population also means that "while most of Canada will be preoccupied with providing services for its growing number of senior citizens, on-reserve communities will face the challenge of providing development, education and employment opportunities for its young people" (British Columbia Aboriginal Child Care Society, 2005).

Aboriginal children aged 14 and under are much more likely than their non-Aboriginal counterparts to live in single-parent, mostly mother-led families. There are differences, however, between on-reserve and urban populations: 65% of First Nations children living on reserve or in rural areas live in two-parent families, compared with 50% in urban centers. In other words, there are fewer single-parent families on reserves than in urban areas. This may be the result of First Nations women leaving their communities with their children because of family violence. Aboriginal children living in large urban areas are "almost as likely to live with a single parent as they [are] with both parents" (Statistics Canada, 2001, p. 9). The incidence of single-parent families tends to be highest in the prairie provinces, where more than 50% of Aboriginal children were living in a lone-parent family (Statistics Canada). Child poverty rates are increasing in Aboriginal families: "Poverty impacts over half of all Aboriginal children in Canada: 52.1% of all Aboriginal children are poor" (Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres, 2000). Given these high rates and the effect of poverty on the survival and life chances of Aboriginal children, even the Organization for Economic Coordination and Development (OECD, 2004 report on Canada expressed "surprise that so little statistical evidence seemed available to chart child poverty levels and the cir-

cumstances of Aboriginal children more generally." Life expectancy is still significantly lower in Aboriginal populations than in the non-Aboriginal population; however, "the gap is narrowing over time" (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2004). The ability to speak an Aboriginal language is decreasing in most but not all Aboriginal language groups. The use of an Aboriginal language is strongest among the Inuit, where 70% of Inuit report "an ability to carry on a conversation in Inuktitut" (Statistics Canada, 2001, p. 17). In this context of statistical and population "profiling," it is important to note an ongoing resistance and hesitation by Indigenous people about the efforts of (primarily non-Aboriginal) people who undertake the research activities that define them. Many Indigenous scholars (Brant Castellano, 2004; Smith, 1999) argue that research about Aboriginal peoples must be undertaken through a decolonizing and Indigenous-focused lens, that the results of research should be (at least partly) owned by and accessible to the Indigenous peoples on whom the research is focused, and that the colonial positioning of Indigenous peoples solely as subjects of research, rather than as partners and drivers of the research, must come to a stop.

Aboriginal Early Childhood in Canada

Against a historic backdrop of colonization, and in a contemporary reality of socioeconomic and cultural marginalization in Canada, Aboriginal people across the country have been mobilizing and demanding that the Government of Canada commit both philosophically and economically to a future wherein the lives of Aboriginal children are made healthy and strong.

In the late 1980s following the release of the *Task Force on Child Care Report* (Cooke, London, Edwards, & Rose-Lizée, 1986), the federal government made exploratory and pilot development funds available through the Child Care Initiatives Fund (CCIF). Although the bulk of the funds went to non-Aboriginal projects, a number of Aboriginal initiatives were also funded, with several focused on education and training issues (Human Resources Development Canada, 1995). Some of these projects, for example, the Meadow Lake Tribal Council Indian Child Care Program (Jette, 1993; Pence, Kuehne, Greenwood, & Opekokew, 1993), led to multi-tribal education initiatives in the years following.

In 1993 the newly elected federal Liberal government made a commitment to move beyond pilot activities to create new child daycare spaces in Canada. There was no mention of on-reserve daycare, although a promise for an Aboriginal early intervention program was included. However, the following year, in Minister Axworthy's *Social Security Discussion Paper* (Government of Canada, 1994), a restatement of the federal government's child care commitment included First Nations and Inuit communities.

The First Nations Inuit Child Care Initiative announced in 1994 and implemented in 1995 had a mandate to create 6,000 new childcare spaces

in First Nations and Inuit communities. The initiative came with an initial three-year developmental phase followed by a commitment for ongoing support. The program was built on a set of principles designed to ensure quality care of children in settings designed and controlled by the community. Also in 1995 the Assembly of First Nations (1995) produced a *National Overview of First Nations Child Care in Canada*, which identified critical components of Aboriginal child care services including: (a) the preservation of language and culture; (b) parental and community participation; (c) local jurisdiction and control; (d) quality management and human resources; and (e) adequate fiscal resources that are embedded in a view of child care as a cultural issue. The Assembly states, "First Nations child care must be addressed culturally and holistically. Child care must encompass First Nations values and traditions ... child care programs [must] be placed within the culture of the First Nations communities" (pp. 14-17).

Also in 1995 Health Minister Dianne Marleau announced the Aboriginal Head Start Urban and Northern Initiative. This four-year initiative was in fulfillment of the federal government's commitment to an early intervention program that would serve Aboriginal parents and children living in urban and large northern communities. This program is built around six program components: parental and community involvement; health promotions; social supports; education; nutrition; and language and culture.

A second Aboriginal Head Start program was announced in 1997, this one to support Aboriginal children and families living on reserves. The primary goal of the Head Start program is "to demonstrate that locally controlled and designed early intervention strategies can provide First Nations preschool children with a positive sense of themselves, a desire for learning, and opportunities to develop fully and successfully" (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2004, para. 1).

In December 1997 the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Council on Social Policy Renewal was charged with developing a National Children's Agenda. A framework developed earlier in 1997 identified the intents of the agenda as being: (a) to develop long-term goals and a plan for achieving positive outcomes for young Canadians; (b) to establish common federal/provincial/territorial priorities for action; and (c) to provide a basis for coordinated and integrated efforts and partnerships among many sectors which share responsibility for policies, programs, and services for children and youth (Government of Canada, 1997). This framework made only one reference to Aboriginal children, as follows:

Supporting Aboriginal tradition-Children have a special place in Aboriginal cultures and are the hope for a strong future for Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Aboriginal children should grow up in an atmosphere that respects their unique history, recognizes their identity and values and enables them to draw on the inherent strengths of Aboriginal communities and traditions. (p. 7)

In 1998 the First Nations Quality Child Care National Study was undertaken (Greenwood & Shawana, 1999). The primary goals of the study were to examine implementation models for the development of First Nations quality child care programs and to develop options for First Nations jurisdiction in child care. The study found that a First Nations quality child care program must ensure the following: (a) it provides safe, loving, and nurturing care for children; (b) it meets the needs of children, families, and communities; (c) it facilitates the passing on of the culture and language from generation to generation; (d) it provides children with opportunities to learn their culture and language so they are instilled with a sense of pride about who they are; (e) it fosters all aspects of children's growth and development; and (f) it gives children opportunities to learn and develop school readiness skills.

In September 2000 the federal, provincial, and territorial First Ministers established the Early Childhood Development Agreement (Government of Canada, 2001). As part of this agreement, the First Ministers agreed to work with Aboriginal peoples to find practical solutions to address the developmental needs of Aboriginal children. To complement the federal/provincial/territorial agreement in 2002, the Government of Canada (2002) announced the Federal Strategy on Early Childhood Development for First Nations and other Aboriginal Children, which identified several new federal ECD investments including the enhancement of Aboriginal Head Start and the First Nations Inuit Child Care Initiative, as well as dedicated resources to address fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effects in Aboriginal communities. One of the most significant features of the strategy was a commitment to a "single window approach" for ECD programming for Aboriginal children. The overall goal of this approach is to ensure better integration and coordination between federal ECD programs for young Aboriginal children and their families. This federal government emphasis on a single-window approach also fulfills the commitment of the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Council on Social Policy Renewal (Government of Canada, 1997) to reduce overlap and duplication among programs and services. The single-window approach has six specific objectives: (a) an integrated system at the community level; (b) community-based decision-making; (c) flexibility and responsiveness to diverse needs; (d) improved outcomes and accountability; (e) reduced administrative burden on communities; and (f) a foundation for other programs (Health Canada Coordinating Committee on Children, 2002).

In July 2002 Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), Health Canada (HC), and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) were authorized to implement jointly the federal Aboriginal ECD strategy (Government of Canada, 2002) and were asked to propose options for a coordinated approach to ECD programming by March 2004. To meet this commitment, the three federal ministries collaboratively undertook

several initiatives, including an environmental scan led by HRDC and implementation of ECD pilot sites led by INAC. In addition, HC and INAC undertook a national dialogue designed to engage people involved and interested in ECD activities. These dialogues were an effort to gather feedback and information about the development and improvement of the federal ECD delivery system.

While the First Nations and Inuit ECD dialogues were being undertaken, the federal, provincial, and territorial governments identified early learning and child care as a shared priority. This was evidenced in the agreed-on shared objectives and principles in the Multilateral Framework for Early Learning and Child Care (Government of Canada, 2003). In the multilateral framework, the Government of Canada committed to transferring \$1.05 billion over five years, and provincial and territorial governments have begun to make new investments to improve the availability and affordability of quality early learning and child care for children under age 6 (Greenwood, 2005). The October 5, 2004 Speech from the Throne confirmed the Government of Canada's commitment to work with provinces and territories on developing a national vision to guide the development of Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC). The development of ELCC was based on four principles: quality, universally inclusive, accessible, and developmental (QUAD).

At their November 2, 2004 meeting, the federal, provincial, and territorial ministers responsible for social services recognized the critical need to engage Inuit leadership in discussions about ELCC implementation. Together HC, INAC, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), and Social Development Canada (SDC) were to lead an engagement strategy on Aboriginal ELCC. Aboriginal organizations were asked to consider how the QUAD principles would be contextualized in Aboriginal communities (Greenwood, 2005). In early 2005 and following early childhood single-window discussion that First Nations and Inuit communities had started in 2000, discussions became entangled with the new federal ELCC, including its QUAD principles. National Aboriginal groups were asked to consult with their constituents about the integration of First Nations and Inuit early childhood programs and services and the interface of ELCC's QUAD principles with the single-window approach. These constituent discussions resulted in four national reports: *Native Women's Association of Canada Discussion Paper: Early Learning and Childcare* (April 29, 2005); *Aboriginal Engagement Strategy Inuit Early Learning and Child Care Discussion Paper Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami* (April 30, 2005); *Early Learning and Child Care for First Nations Assembly of First Nations* (April 2005); and *Congress of Aboriginal Peoples Building a National Aboriginal Early Learning and Childcare System* (April 2000).

On May 31, 2005 INAC was announced as the lead federal department in the development of a single-window ELCC transition plan. The devel-

opment of this new program involved merging four federally funded programs: First Nations Inuit Child Care Program (FNICCI), Aboriginal Head Start On Reserve Program, Aboriginal Head Start Urban and Northern (i.e., Inuit communities located north of the 60th parallel) Program, and INAC-funded daycare centers in Alberta and Ontario. This undertaking was to be the task of five federal ministries, HC, HRSDC, SDC, INAC, and Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), along with the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), and the National Aboriginal Head Start Council (NAHSC). Together all were charged with working collaboratively to develop an ELCC transition plan.

The election of Stephen Harper's Conservative government on January 23, 2006 significantly shifted the contours of Canada's child care policy from a national vision of child care service delivery to support for individualized parent choice. Called *Canada's Universal Child Plan* (Government of Canada, 2007), the Conservative government pledged to increase the availability of "choices, support, and spaces" for Canadian parents needing child care options. For the most part, Aboriginal early childhood initiatives moved into a holding pattern; however, some implications for Aboriginal families arise from this policy shift.

Challenges to Aboriginal-Specific Early Childhood Programs and Services

Early childhood programs and services in Canada currently exist in a climate of change. This highlights challenges facing Aboriginal peoples in the delivery of specific programs and services for their children and families. One of the most significant overarching considerations is the inherent right of Aboriginal peoples to care for and educate their children. Communities and nations continue the struggle to assume jurisdiction over their lives; early childhood programs and services are one site of this struggle.

Related to this inherent right is the desire to design and implement programs and services that foster the unique identity of children through the inclusion and direct implementation of Indigenous knowledges. Regardless of within which policy context they are enfolded, Aboriginal peoples for the most part continue to grapple with the concept of quality as it applies to them. These concerns are underscored by Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies that privilege families and community collectives in all considerations of early childhood programming. This concern is often positioned antithetically to individualism and relatedly to concepts of the nuclear family. Thus fundamental to the very structuring of programs are concepts such as governance structures, pedagogy, and content. As change occurs in Aboriginal-specific programs and services, Aboriginal peoples will need to be vigilant in ensuring that Indigenous knowledges are central to all aspects of these programs and services.

With a backdrop of these overarching challenges, specific challenges may be found in the areas of culture and language, standards and regula-

tions, training, and capital. Culture and language should permeate all aspects of Aboriginal-specific programs and services. The reality of implementing government-funded early childhood programs is that they come with a set of predetermined structural elements that may or may not support the inclusion of unique Indigenous attributes in the face of no Aboriginal-specific authority. For example, they may not support the direct inclusion of parents and community in decision-making that affects the daily implementation of the program. Teaching the language is another challenge often faced by Aboriginal communities, not for a lack of desire, but because in many communities and nations few speakers remain. Language teaching as a strategy for the development of children's identity—and in the long term citizenship in their nations—becomes even more critical when this reality is considered.

Related to the teaching of language and culture is curriculum that is specific to the children's community and nation. Few resources of this nature exist, and so supports for development and implementation of language and cultural teaching must be done at the community level where the knowledge exists. This may entail partnerships outside the community (e.g., First Nations Partnership Program, Pence & McCallum, 1993; Ball & Pence, 2006). Fundamental to these relationships are principles of community design, control, and ownership.

Similarly, curriculum of this nature for service-providers is a necessary part of any early childhood postsecondary training program. Curriculum in this sense would include both pedagogy and content; as with the children's curriculum, the foundational knowledge exists in the community and its members. Again, partnerships with outside agencies to develop and implement curriculum resources must be built on principles that reflect a commitment to Aboriginal communities and their aspirations. Examples of such partnerships include the First Nations Partnership Program (Ball & Pence, 2006) and the collaboration for early childhood training between Lake Babine Nation and the College of New Caledonia in northern British Columbia.

For many reasons, trained Aboriginal early childhood service-providers are in short supply across the country. These include licensing requirements, proximity to programs, cost prohibitions, and entrance requirements to name a few. Most Aboriginal-specific early childhood programs are either required or encouraged to be licensed under provincial authorities, including service-provider qualifications. This requirement often causes difficulty when implementation of services depends on the presence of qualified service-providers. It is often difficult for community members to acquire training for reasons that include remote locations and restricted technology. In many cases, lack of or limited technology leaves potential students no choice but to relocate. These difficulties are complicated by the costs of relocation, tuition and books, supporting family, and

daily living expenses. Finally, entrance requirements are often prohibitive for many. The reality is that many potential students do not have the formal academic requirements, but do have experience and knowledge that is relevant and applicable to the care of children. Early childhood programs that take into account prior learning experience become more appropriate for some learners.

In addition, the relevance and meaningfulness of early childhood programs for learners is a critical consideration when one takes into account the effect that service providers have on the daily lives of young children. This teaching must reflect the community and nation so that children are socialized into their heritage and ancestry. Training programs derived from diverse paradigms and knowledge bases have the potential either to support, contradict, or at least have some relevance to service-providers and community. Programs built on community knowledge have a much greater chance of success and applicability than those developed outside the community. Finally, the need to develop services, including actual facilities, continues to be a challenge in Aboriginal communities. A lack of resources for capital developments prevents the development of programs and services.

Resolving these challenges will take time and will involve, along with community commitment and action, political involvement at all levels. These are times of change, and change can be transformative in ways that benefit communities. We must continue the struggle and see the current context as holding the potential for this transformation.

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