Final Report

Comparing the Lived Experience of Urban Aboriginal Peoples with Canadian Rights to Quality of Life

UAKN Prairie Regional Research Centre

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ABSTRACT

Despite government recognition of the importance of improving Quality of Life (QoL), significant barriers to QoL remain for Aboriginal peoples. Although the 2010 Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study showed strong aspirations toward improving their QoL, urban Aboriginal people felt that access to education, income gaps, and government policy impeded their progress. Building on long-term studies of QoL by Community-University Institute for Social Research (CUISR), this study assesses the lived experiences of urban Aboriginal peoples as they relate to their QoL. The study establishes baseline information about QoL for urban Aboriginal peoples using the mixed-methods research approach of CUISR's QoL research iterations, integrating CUISR's collaborative community-based research approach.

The major findings of this research are that discrimination, the legacies of residential schools, and social problems marginalized urban Aboriginal people, decreased social inclusion, and even alienated them from their own culture and traditional teachings and adversely affected QoL. Largely because of these factors, as few as 6-11% reported their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being as excellent.

The findings underline the need to focus not only on meeting basic survival needs of Aboriginal persons, but also on their cultural and spiritual needs which are the foundation of QoL. Education and employment as well as a sense of community and belonging, family and friends, traditional teachings and culture, treaty and Aboriginal rights, and respect, as well as Aboriginal social spaces in the form of Aboriginal Friendship Centres were all deemed beneficial socially, culturally, and personally. The vast majority of respondents to the web-based survey identified the following six factors as either 'extremely important 'or 'very important' for improving QoL:
- Increasing education and training
- Improving the justice system
- Increasing understanding of Aboriginal culture and rights
- Increasing employment opportunities
- Increasing community/social service funding
- Increasing cultural and spiritual places

The study concludes that protagonists involved in improving the QoL of Aboriginal peoples should devote extensive attention to these particular factors, as well as some others identified in the report, which either directly or indirectly are related to them.

1. **INTRODUCTION**

   1.1 Purpose of Study
This study examines the lived experiences of urban Aboriginal peoples in relation to quality of life (QoL) in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, in 2013-14. Over the past decade, Community-University Institute for Social Research (CUISR) has charted what QoL means to the citizens of Saskatoon. This study builds on that body of research experience with Aboriginal organizations and communities by assessing QoL issues specific to urban Aboriginal peoples.

The overarching purpose of this study is twofold. The first purpose is to contribute to an understanding and improvement of QoL for urban Aboriginal people in Saskatoon. The second purpose is to produce usable knowledge about the QoL and the experienced barriers to it by Aboriginal people that will help them and others in fostering constructive policy development relative to their own lives.

Toward that end, the central goal of this study is to assess the lived experiences of urban Aboriginal peoples as they relate to their QoL, and to compare these findings with discourse emerging from governmental agencies on improving QoL for the general Canadian population or specifically for Aboriginal peoples.

This study establishes baseline information about QoL for urban Aboriginal peoples using the mixed-methods research approach of CUISR's QoL research iterations, integrating CUISR's collaborative community-based action research approach.

Quality of Life is an important policy issue at all levels of government*:* Federal, provincial, and municipal governments frequently identify improvements to the QoL of their citizens as priority areas for policy development. The research addresses the effectiveness of this policy for urban Aboriginal peoples by producing a comprehensive evaluation of their QoL, and by comparing it to recent QoL discourse.

A polarization of quality of life indicators persists in Canada: Significant gaps exist between the QoL of various Socio-Economic Status (SES) groupings in Canada. The impact falls disproportionately on Aboriginal populations, particularly in the prairie provinces—where under- and unemployment, a lack of affordable housing, and increased migration to urban areas have relegated many urban Aboriginal peoples to low-SES neighbourhoods, compounding a cycle of poverty and barriers to improving QoL. This study will prove invaluable in identifying the barriers to quality of life encountered by urban Aboriginal peoples and for developing policy and program frameworks to overcome them.

This research emphasizes postcolonial obligations: The research explores issues related to Aboriginal understandings of treaty, constitutional, statutory, and normative frameworks that may be significant for QoL issues in Saskatoon. In addition to constitutionally protected Aboriginal and treaty rights (Treaties 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, & 10 include guarantees of Aboriginal rights to spirituality, education, employment, living conditions, and equality), Canada is signatory to such relevant international instruments as the

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention of the Rights of the Child, the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The outcomes of the research may serve as a catalyst for renewed discussion about the obligations of various levels of government to maintain the rights laid out in treaties and conventions for urban Aboriginal peoples.

1.2 Objectives of Study
The central objectives of this study are three fold.
- The first objective is to assess the lived experiences of Urban Aboriginal peoples as they relate to their QoL.
- The second objective is compare the findings with the discourse emerging from governmental agencies about improving QoL for either the general Canadian population or specific to Aboriginal peoples.
- The third objective is to proffer some strategic directions for improving the QoL of Aboriginal peoples in Saskatoon and possibly also in other urban areas based on the findings of this research project.

1.3 Why is this Study Important?
Why is comparing the lived experiences of Aboriginal peoples with Canadian rights to a quality of life an important and timely topic? First, recognizing the unique impacts of colonization on Aboriginal life is key to decolonizing understanding and enhancing our capacity to improve Aboriginal quality of life. Second, comparing the lived experiences of Aboriginal peoples with Canadian rights to a quality of life is significant to social justice. Third, improving Aboriginal quality of life is critical to enhancing Canada's social justice potential. Fourth, developing a theory of the lived experiences of Aboriginal peoples in relation to Canadian rights to a quality of life is crucial to effecting decolonization and achieving social justice.

1.4 Research Questions
- What are the most important components of Quality of Life for Aboriginal people?
- How do urban Aboriginal peoples rate their Quality of Life?
- What do urban Aboriginal peoples consider major barriers to improving their Quality of Life?
- What do urban Aboriginal peoples consider to be key factors, if any, which have contributed to improvements in their QoL?
- What do urban Aboriginals believe should be done to improve the Quality of Life of those living below what is considered a positive Quality of Life standard?
- Is there a case that can be made based on provisions in the numbered treaties, in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, or in any statutory, policy, or normative frameworks that various orders of government should be doing more to improve the Quality of Life of urban Aboriginal people?

1.5 Methodology

Research priorities were to ensure this study was designed by, with, and for Aboriginal peoples. The research team including Dr. John Hansen, a member of the Opaskwayak Cree Nation, and Drs. Isobel M. Findlay and Joe Garcea, both of whom have significant research experience in and with Aboriginal communities, worked with the steering committee:

- Saskatoon Urban Aboriginal Strategy(UAS) (Brad Bird, Coordinator)
- Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT) (Darlene Lanceley, Employment Consultant)
- Office of the Treaty Commissioner (OTC) (Harry Lafond, Executive Director)

The partnership was governed by a formal agreement spelling out roles and responsibilities.

This research used a mixed-method approach within a participatory action research framework. Respecting CUISR's decolonizing 3 R principles of community engagement—research, relationships, and reflexivity—that draw on learning from Aboriginal researchers and Indigenous methods and ethical protocols, community partners' and participants' knowledge, expertise, and active engagement shaped a research process of mutual learning, relationship building, and collaborative reflection (Findlay, Ray, Basualdo, 2011).

In collecting baseline information for this study, three means were used: a web-based survey, a set of semi-structured in-person interviews, and faciliated focus group discussions. The data collected through these three means on the lived experiences of urban Aboriginal peoples' QoL in Saskatoon represent a valuable resource to identify the QoL experiences of Urban Aboriginal peoples and compare them with the related Canadian QoL standards emerging from governmental discourse. The methods and data storage fulfilled all Tri-Council human research ethical and data storage standards.

In summary, this study developed research tools based on community input, located student researcher Rose Antsanen (drawn from and with relevant experience with the urban Aboriginal population), and compiled a report—and did so in several phases:

Phase I – Researcher Selection, Literature Review and Ethics Approval A steering committee used the strengths and experiences of representatives of the local urban Aboriginal community, partner agencies, and the research team to select the student researcher, give feedback on draft literature review, secure ethics, and design and fine-tune the survey instrument and methodology in a time-consuming but very necessary iterative process.

Phase II – Survey Tool Development and Survey Research The steering committee reviewed and suggested amendments to the research design and the survey tools, developed targeted research areas, and assisted with locating respondents for the research.

Phase III – Focus Group and Interviews The most important aspects of QoL for Aboriginal people identified in the survey were probed deeply through focus groups and in-depth face-to-face interviews with community members in selected neighbourhoods using the questionnaire developed by the steering committee.

1.6 Organization of Report

The remainder of this report consists of these seven sections.

- Section 2 establishes the policy context and relevance of the study.

- Section 3 reviews previous research on QoL in Saskatoon.

- Section 4 provides an overview of both the colonial legacy contributing to low quality of life for urban Aboriginal people, and the decolonization project underlining the importance of improving the QoL of Aboriginal people.

- Sections 5, 6, and 7 discuss study findings across three data collection methods.

- Section 8 provides some conclusions and proffers some recommendations.

2. POLICY CONTEXT & RELEVANCE OF STUDY

2.1 Governmental Recognition of Improving Quality of Life as Social Imperative

Federal, provincial, and municipal governments recognize the social imperative of improving the Quality of Life (QoL) for Aboriginal people. On National Aboriginal Day 2011, Prime Minister Harper committed his government "to working with Aboriginal communities, as well as provinces and territories, to provide Aboriginal people with the education and tools they need to reach their full potential and achieve a higher quality of life for their families" (PMO, 2011). Improving the QoL for its citizens is a primary policy of the Government of Saskatchewan; renewing its relationships with and meeting its legal obligations to Aboriginal people is at the heart of its commitment to Aboriginal QoL (Saskatchewan, 2014). The City of Saskatoon and the University of Saskatchewan have also committed to improving the quality of life for Aboriginal peoples by enhancing civic services and access to education, respectively. While addressing the 2012 Fall convocation, University of Saskatchewan President Ilene Busch-Vishniac identified the challenge in Saskatchewan's current economic boom of "recognizing and removing barriers to post-secondary education, particularly for Aboriginal students" (UofS, 2012).

2.2 Persistent Barriers to Optimizing Quality of Life

Despite policy action, significant barriers to QoL remain in Canada, particularly for Aboriginal peoples. This is clear in the latest iteration of the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (2012), which contrasts our nation's positive growth in GDP against drops in living standards, leisure and culture, environment, and health, along with plateaux in education and time use. Although the 2010 Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study (focused on eleven cities including Saskatoon) showed that urban Aboriginal people aspired to improve their QoL and pursue higher education, they also felt that access to education, income gaps, and divisive government policy impeded them. Regina and Saskatoon recorded the highest rates of Aboriginal people not feeling accepted (Environics Institute, 2010).

The Environics study confirmed a perception gap between Aboriginal and other Canadians reported in a 2003 Centre for Research and Information in Canada (CRIC) study that showed 75% support for strong Aboriginal cultures, yet 42% (54% on Prairies) believe that the inherent and treaty rights of Aboriginal should be eliminated and 51% believe Aboriginal people are as well off as or better off than other Canadians. Such beliefs persist despite studies confirming disparities in education, employment, and health among Aboriginal and other Canadians (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2006; Howe, 2011, 2012). The interim report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2012) attributes ongoing discrimination to an education system that has not taught Canadians well and the commission is hence committed to reconciling communities and to revealing "the complex truth about the history and ongoing legacy of the church-run residential schools, in a manner that fully documents the individual and collective harms perpetrated against Aboriginal peoples, and honours the resiliency and courage of former students, their families, and communities" (p. 1).

Despite constitutionally protected Aboriginal and treaty rights (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000; Henderson, 2006; Lerat & Ungar, 2005) and international instruments (Henderson, 2008; Venne, 1998) that have been critical in "advancing indigenous peoples' rights over the last 30 years, especially through the courts," James Anaya (2013), in his statement upon conclusion of the visit to Canada as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, concluded that the "well-being gap between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people in Canada has not narrowed over the last several years":

> Canada consistently ranks near the top among countries with respect to human development standards, and yet amidst this wealth and prosperity, aboriginal people live in conditions akin to those in countries that rank much lower and in which poverty abounds.

Anaya looks to "historical treaties and constitutional principles, the international standards endorsed by Canada and aboriginal peoples, in particular the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples," to "inform the definition of common objectives and goals."

2.3 Challenges in Overcoming Barriers to QoL for Aboriginal People
These barriers are often compounded by the status of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. For instance, the rate of unemployment for Aboriginal peoples in 18 of Canada's largest municipalities far exceeds that of the remainder of the population (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2006). In Saskatchewan, significant gaps exist in educational and employment achievement between Aboriginal peoples and the general population (Howe, 2011; 2012). This was further exemplified in a 2010 study on QoL indicators in Saskatoon conducted by the Community-University Institute for Social Research (CUISR): self-perceived QoL for Saskatoon's poorest neighbourhoods (and those with the highest proportion of Aboriginal residents) was lower than wealthier ones, especially in categories such as safety, neighbourhood condition, recreation, personal safety, and health (Chopin, Holden, Muhajarine, & Popham, 2010).

The Aboriginal population is one of the youngest and fastest growing demographics of the Canadian population. Additionally, the proportion of Aboriginal peoples living in cities is projected to grow to as high as 40% of the total population by the year 2030 (Malenfant and Morency, 2011), indicating that concern over QoL will continue to grow unless substantial changes in policies, programs, and practices are adopted.

3. PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON QUALITY OF LIFE RESEARCH IN SASKATOON

The quality of life of Aboriginal people in Saskatoon in particular has been approached through two research programs conducted over the 2001 through 2014 period. The Bridges and Foundations project approached the quality of life of urban Aboriginal citizens of Saskatoon from a housing lens. Recognising the place of housing as a major contributor to quality of life, this research program funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Community University Research Alliance set out to " develop a better understanding of how to establish and sustain culturally inclusive partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations, working to improve the quality of life through affordable quality housing options in Saskatoon" (Bridges and Foundations project, 2014).

The Bridges and Foundations project used quantitative and qualitative methods to approach the urban Aboriginal experience in housing from a community development point of view. The study produced a demographic profile of the Saskatoon Aboriginal population, surveys of the population's housing need, explorations of the training and career opportunities for First Nations people, and design and policy recommendations for appropriate, affordable housing options for urban First Nations and Métis people (Bridges and Foundations project, n.d.).

The Community-University Institute for Social Research has completed five iterations of research on the quality of life (QoL) of the people of Saskatoon. Beginning in 2001 and repeated every three years through 2013, this research was conducted across three distinct clusters of neighbourhoods in Saskatoon representing areas of High, Middle, and Low socio-economic status (SES). This research program is one of the most comprehensive and detailed time-series studies of QoL at the neighbourhood level in Canada. The research is unique in that it has employed a mixed-method (both quantitative and qualitative) approach involving telephone surveys, face-to-face interviews, focus groups, and discussions with key policy informants. In addition, a series of community policy forums have been held which have informed the research process and have initiated policies and strategies aimed at improving QoL in Saskatoon (Muhajarine, Holden, McCrosky, & Disano, 2013).

The Saskatoon quality of life research program is targeted at all citizens. Stratified into three groups of neighbourhoods based on their socio-economic status, the telephone survey randomly samples about 300 residents in each cluster (Muhajarine, et al., 2013). Typically, over the course of the program, the Aboriginal population has been under-represented. The quantitative survey sample typically included about 5% responses from

people who self-identified as Aboriginal while the actual percentage of the city's population identified as Aboriginal tends to be about 10%. Correlation analysis of demographic characteristics with the primary dependent survey variable (self-rate quality of life) did not identify a significant relationship between Aboriginal status and quality of life. Typically, the Saskatoon quality of life survey has identified three persistent relationships: age is negatively related to self-rated quality of life; income perception (whether people perceive their income status as less than others); and self-rated quality of life tends to be lower in lower socio-economic status neighbourhoods. Given that in Saskatoon throughout the period of the study program, Aboriginal people have tended to live in neighbourhoods described as of lower-socio economic, we might infer that Aboriginal residents of these neighbourhoods have rated their quality of life lower than the population of medium and high socio-economic neighbourhoods.

The qualitative component of the Saskatoon quality of life research program has used face-to-face interviews, focus groups, and key informant interviews to augment the research for typically under-represented and hard to reach populations. Aboriginal people, immigrants, youth, low-income people, and people with disabilities are typical groups that have participated in this component of the research. Throughout the research, Aboriginal participants have indicated appropriate and affordable housing and experiences of prejudice as issues affecting their quality of life (Williams et al., 2001, p. 23). Again, in 2010, Aboriginal participants (drawn mainly from Aboriginal students from the University of Saskatchewan) identified housing as a major issue affecting their quality of life in addition to the condition of their neighbourhoods with respect to the condition of housing, parks and recreational opportunities (Chopin, et al., 2010; 2011).

Against this background, the following review of the literature is both historical and contemporary; it compares the lived experiences of Aboriginal peoples with Canadian rights to a quality of life and stresses postcolonial obligations. It discusses the notion that Aboriginal peoples—"the colonized"—have experienced unique historical disadvantages, systemic discrimination against their race and culture, which provides the Aboriginal community a unique experience in Canada's history, and this experience is reflected in contemporary quality of life disparities. Costanza, et al. (2008) define quality of life in the following way:

> Quality of Life (QoL) is the extent to which objective human needs are fulfilled in relation to personal or group perceptions of subjective well-being (SWB). . . . Human needs are basic needs for subsistence, reproduction, security, affection, etc. . . . SWB is assessed by individuals' or groups' responses to questions about happiness, life satisfaction, utility, or welfare. The relation between specific human needs and perceived satisfaction with each of them can be affected by mental capacity, cultural context, information, education, temperament, and the like, often in quite complex ways. Moreover, the relation between the fulfillment of human needs and overall subjective well-being is affected by the (time-varying) weights individuals, groups, and cultures give to fulfilling each of the human needs relative to the others. (p. 2)

Drawing on these widely accepted views of quality of life indicators and CUISR's research studies, we document quality of life disparities between Aboriginal peoples and the

dominant group in Canada. According to Picard (2012), Aboriginal Canadians have an average life expectancy of "a decade less than other Canadians":

> Native people have higher rates of disability… . Suicide: The rate is six times higher… Natives have three times the rate of diabetes; suffer more heart disease… .The unemployment and poverty rates are five times those in the non-aboriginal community… . Only 4 per cent of natives have a university education, one-quarter the rate in mainstream society. One-third of aboriginal people do not graduate high school, three times the rate for non-aboriginals. (p. 1)

Because quality of life (QoL) can be considered a general spectrum of needs associated with human fulfillment, we attempt to provide some understanding and a theory of the lived experiences of Aboriginal peoples with Canadian rights to a quality of life. In acknowledgement and explanation of the Aboriginal disparities in quality of life in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, in particular and in Canada in general, some attention must be devoted to the colonization and decolonization projects.

4. COLONIZATION, DECOLONIZATION, AND ABORIGINAL QoL

The first part of the review of the colonial project provides an interpretation of the colonization of Aboriginal life in Canada ("the assimilation model"), and then tries to explain the effects of colonialism. The second part reviews the decolonizing process and why all Canadians have an interest in decolonizing for our collective well-being in a renewed relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada. Throughout the review considers the development of mainstream Canadian quality of life, the underdevelopment of Aboriginal quality of life, and the degree to which human needs are fulfilled in relation to personal, social, and cultural collective group interpretations of well-being.

4.1 *Colonization and Aboriginal QoL*
Battiste and Henderson (2000) note that Aboriginal peoples have endured the "colonization of our creation, our ecologies, our minds and our spirits" (p. 11). They maintain that domination has altered Aboriginal social and cultural life in their ways of "thinking, feeling, and interacting with the world" (p. 13). In other words, colonization has been an important factor in the internalized oppression of Aboriginal life. Aboriginal quality of life can be understood only by unpacking the history of Western European colonization and its ideology reshaping Canada in accordance with the social, political, and economic interests of the dominant group. Yellow Bird and Wilson (2005), for instance, describe a colonization process of behaviours, ideologies, institutions, and policies that constrain rights to land, labour, and language and sustain the oppression of Aboriginal peoples, "the subjugation or exploitation of Indigenous Peoples, lands, and resources" (p. 2), and produce a range of widely documented pathologies that are the legacy of colonization's much-vaunted "gifts".

Whereas in theory Canadian rights to a quality of life are not intended to socially exclude any citizen, including Aboriginal peoples, in practice Aboriginal people in Canada do not

enjoy a quality of life that compares to mainstream Canadians (Commission on First Nations and Metis Peoples and Justice Reform [CFNMP], 2004; Environics Institute, 2010; Findlay, Popham, Ince, & Takahashi, 2013; Findlay & Wuttunee, 2007; Picard, 2012; Walker, 2008).

In her analysis of colonialism, Métis scholar Bourassa (2008) relates the rise of capitalism to the history of colonialism within which the concept of race "justified" the exploitation of Aboriginal peoples: "In a capitalist system, inequality is an absolute necessity. Working class groups are oppressed by the dominant group who benefit from profits" (p. 37). As a result First Nations and Métis peoples were historically exploited because they were socially constructed as inferior—undermined through a discourse of race that benefitted European traders and merchants accumulating wealth through trade and enhancing personal and social economic status.

Aboriginal quality of life, that is, cannot be understood without examining the ideology of race as the basis of unequal privilege:

> white racial and cultural prejudice and discrimination supported by institutional power and authority, used to the advantage of whites and the disadvantage of people of color. Racism encompasses economic, political, social, and institutional actions and beliefs that systematize and perpetuate an unequal distribution of privileges, resources, and power between Whites and people of Color. (Sensoy & Di Angelo, 2012, p. 101)

The above disparities are significant in relation to Aboriginal peoples' experiences with Canadian rights to a quality of life in what McMurtry (1998) calls the 'Civil Commons': the "organized, unified, and community-funded capacity of universally accessible resources of society to protect and to enable the lives of its members as an end in itself" (p. 376). The civil commons advocates for all citizens having rights to quality of life. And furthermore, the civil commons make accessible public schools, conversation, politics, and services whose value is beyond price. However, disparities between the quality of life of Aboriginal peoples and the mainstream Canadian population challenge notions of the civil commons. As Walker (2008) argues:

> Socio-economic disparities attributable largely to the effects of colonization and residential schools lead to high services demands in the Aboriginal urban community, many of which are met by a growing range of urban Aboriginal service providers and institutions or by universal municipal services (p. 22).

Whereas much discourse on disparities between Aboriginal quality of life and mainstream Canadians tends to stress an individual problem rather than systemic discrimination and often leads to blaming the oppressed for their problems, Ravelli & Webber (2010) unpack such racist thinking:

> The blaming the victim perspective assumes that the poor need only to work harder in order to transcend their poverty…. Sociologists have found little to no evidence to support the assertion that social inequality is the result of individual attributes. (p. 165)

Current strategies and policies to address social, economic, and quality of life disparities are not yet achieving the success to advance social equality as Aboriginal peoples in Canada remain among the most impoverished in Canada (Ravelli & Webber, 2010; Wotherspoon & Hansen, 2013).

Consistent with the blaming the poor perspective is the negative racial view held by the majority of the mainstream citizenry in Saskatoon. Environics Institute (2010) notes that a "segmentation analysis of Saskatoon residents reveals that the city has a larger than average proportion of Dismissive Naysayers (people who take a negative view of Indigenous peoples).... The large majority of Saskatoon residents recognize that Aboriginal people experience discrimination" (pp. 11-12). Given that non-Indigenous people recognize that Indigenous peoples are discriminated against, it is not surprising that the Urban Aboriginal Peoples study found that "Aboriginal peoples in Saskatoon generally believe that they are seen in a negative light by non-Aboriginal people" (p. 37).

Historically, Aboriginal people occupied the land of what is now called Canada and scholars typically characterized Indigenous peoples' social and cultural way of life as egalitarian in nature in the sense that wealth was distributed equally among members of the community and women were not characterized as inferior to men (Deer, 2009; Hansen, 2013). Therefore, there is really not a word for describing social inequalities, particularly the concept of class in many Aboriginal languages including the Cree and Dene (Antsanen & Hansen, 2013; Deer 2009).

4.2 Decolonization and Aboriginal QoL

Decolonization of Aboriginal life (and mainstream thinking and institutions) is no small task. For the ethical and practical or pragmatic benefit of both Aboriginal peoples and the broader community, this study supports decolonization, its strategies of unpacking colonial narratives and ideology to disclose the production of privilege and disadvantage (in section 4.1 here) and (in this section) of reclaiming Indigenous voice and vision (Battiste, 2000), and Indigenous rights to education, for example, to "nourish the learning spirit," resist "cognitive imperialism," reimagine Aboriginal-non-Aboriginal relations, and remake our world in holistic ways (Battiste, 2013). As Howe (2011) argues, closing the education gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people could bring "a total social benefit" of $90 billion to Saskatchewan alone. Canada's GDP would benefit to the tune of $401 billion by 2026, according to the Centre for the Study of Living Standards, if Aboriginal peoples could match the education, employment and social well-being of their non-Aboriginal counterparts (Lendsay, 2011).

Smith (1999), a prominent Maori author on Indigenous decolonization methodologies, notes that "cultural survival, self-determination, healing, restoration and social justice are engaging Indigenous researchers and communities in a diverse array of projects" (p. 142). Like the Hungarian-Canadian writer George Faludy (1983), Smith makes clear that culture is neither trivial nor secondary to basic needs for survival. Only those who can presume the privilege of their cultures can fail to recognize its foundational importance. In sharing his experience of concentration camp life, Faludy demonstrates that culture is quite literally a matter of life and death. Those in the camp who "concentrated" on physical

survival (food and sleep) died, while those who focused on culture—sharing stories, reciting well-loved texts, and even whistling "entire operas"—ensured their "physical and spiritual survival," while keeping alive a civilization from which [they] were hopelessly . . . cut off" (pp. 41-42).

Smith's decolonizing critique speaking of "cultural survival, self-determination, restoration and healing" harmonizes with the idea of "Pimatisiwin," the Cree word for living the good life (Settee, 2013, for example). Intrinsic to this study is an Indigenous perspective that emerges from the growing awareness that Indigenous peoples (Nehewak, Inninew, Denesuline, Lakota and Dakota), all who reside in this territory, represent an insider perspective and the recentring of Indigenous voice that Smith argues is necessary to "rewriting as righting." Recentring Indigenous voices is so critical when, as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2012) makes clear, in residential schools "not only language was lost: it was voice. People and their mouths had been padlocked. . . . (and they] have been left to heal themselves" (pp. 5-6). Because we have been influenced by Dene and Cree narratives as well as the growing voices of worldwide Indigenous scholars, we bring Indigenous voices into this literature review.

In her book *Pimatisiwin: The Good Life, Global Indigenous Knowledge Systems* (2013), the Swampy Cree scholar Priscilla Settee articulates a Mushkegowuk (Swampy Cree) perspective of what it means "to be alive"! She discusses the need to protect Indigenous knowledge from the widespread hegemonic discourse that has overshadowed Indigenous reality for generations, and advocates Indigenous-based struggles for decolonization, and social justice. She stresses the importance of "stories from the margins, as well as the intellectual nerve centers of our communities, form[ing] the foundation for research, development, and policy" (p. 29).

The Cree word "Pimatisiwin" or the Dene concept "Soh gah nah" describes the capacity for a good quality of life. These Indigenous concepts describe the capability of individuals and community to achieve a good quality of life based on recovering Indigenous ways of knowing and being. In Canada, for example, some First Nation communities have already begun to experience positive changes to QoL as a result of recovering aspects of their culture and justice traditions. A prime exemplar of this is Hollow Water First Nation (Ross, 1996; Green 1998). Returning to the First Nation teachings that sustained generations in self-sufficiency (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000; Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991; Henderson, 2006) before they were overrun by colonial powers as state justice and government is critical to the welfare of our communities. In short, the colonial "gifts" of good governance and the rule of law proved to be a great failure.

Decolonization requires countering colonial interpretations of Aboriginality with holism and harmony between the mental and emotional realms (Lightning, 1992). As Yellow Bird and Wilson (2005) advise, decolonization is "the intelligent, calculated, and active resistance to the forces of colonialism that perpetuate the subjugation and/or exploitation of our minds, bodies, and lands, and it is engaged for the ultimate purpose of overturning the colonial structure and realizing Indigenous liberation" (p. 5).

According to Smith (1999), "[r]estorative justice in Canada, for example, applies the concepts of the 'healing circle' and victim restoration which are based on indigenous processes … and as such … "[r]estorative programs are based on a model of healing rather than punishing" (p. 155). Her words recall the work of the past few decades when Indigenous communities started decolonizing their justice systems, struggling toward self-governance and independence in the political, social, economic, and judicial realms, and focusing on healing (Green, 1998; Smith, 1999; Stuart & Pranis, 2006).

Although there has been a renaissance of Aboriginal justice initiatives, statistics on Aboriginal incarceration, unemployment poverty, children in care continue to increase (CFNMP, 2004; Findlay & Weir, 2004). However, to address Aboriginal over-representation in the justice system, the Gladue decision of 1999 requires courts in Canada to consider the particular circumstances and all alternatives to incarceration when dealing with Aboriginal offenders. As the Canadian Bar Association (2012) notes, "Canada's Criminal Code applies to all aboriginal people, including offences by Indians whether on or off reserve. However, if convicted, the sentencing provisions of the Criminal Code direct judges to consider all reasonable alternatives to imprisonment, with particular attention to Aboriginal offenders" (p. 1). The Canadian Bar Association maintains that "some courthouses have a Native Courtworker who can help Aboriginal people understand the court process, find a lawyer, and apply for legal aid, if necessary" (p . 1). Yet the Gladue decision has not been embraced fully by a system that remains in need of decolonizing (Findlay, 2001). Nor have Gladue reports been well or widely used to support judicial decision making—and learning from Aboriginal peoples who were so long relegated to the role of "willing learners of modernity" and now find "the collective strength to return to [their] traditional role as the teaching civilization" (Henderson, 2008, p. 48). And we all have an interest in change when continuing the over-representation of Aboriginal peoples in the justice system instead of investing in education and alternative measures will cost Saskatchewan alone as much as $13 billion over twenty years (Findlay & Weir, 2004).

5.SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS FROM WEB-BASED ONLINE SURVEY

This section provides a summary of the findings from the web-based online survey conducted in the spring of 2014 and completed by 105 respondents who met the inclusion criteria (living in Saskatoon and identifying as Aboriginal) in the screening questions, although respondents exercised the right not to answer all questions.

5.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents
The key features of the respondents' demographic profile were as follows:

Residency:
- 89% of the respondents lived in Saskatoon full time, 2% lived in Saskatoon part-time, and 9% did not live in Saskatoon;

Identity:
- 59% of respondents self-identified as First Nations, 27% as Metis, 6% as non-Status Aboriginal, and 8% as none of those categories;

Age:
- 15% were 18-24, 33% were 25-34, 27% were 35-44, 21% were 45-54, and 4% were 55-64;

Gender:
- 30% were male, 69% female and 1% other;

Education:
- Grade 8 or less (1%), Some high school (5%), high school diploma (25), some trade, technical or vocational school, community college (6%), business college (15%), some university (26%), university graduate (33%), university post-graduate (22%).

Household Income:
- Less than $25,000 (21%), $25,000 to $50,000 (17%), $50,000 to $100,000 (32%), More than $100,000 (28%), and no response (2%).

5.2 Perception/Description of Quality of Life

5.2.1 *Perceptions of Overall Quality of Life*
In describing their "overall quality of life" a total of 87% indicated it was either excellent (13%), very good (39%), or good (35%). A total of 14% indicated it was either fair (12%), poor (0%), or did not know (2%).

Figure 1:
How would you describe your "overall" quality of life?

Responses	Chart	Percentage	Count
Excellent		13%	12
Very Good		39%	37
Good		35%	33
Fair		12%	11
Poor		0%	0
Don't know		2%	2
	Total	100%	95

5.2.2 Rating Quality of Life on Several Dimensions

In responding to the question: How do you rate your quality of life on the following four dimensions (i.e., physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being), only a small proportion ranging from 6% to 11% rated it as excellent, and an even smaller proportion ranging from 2% to 5% rated it as poor. The percentage of respondents who rated their well-being as very good or excellent (ranging from 40%-49%) was substantially higher than those who rate it as fair or poor (ranging from 16% to 27%).

Figure 2:
How do you rate your quality of life on the following dimensions?

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't know	Total Responses
Physical well-being	6 (6%)	33 (35%)	29 (31%)	22 (23%)	4 (4%)	1 (1%)	95
Mental well-being	11 (12%)	33 (35%)	35 (37%)	10 (11%)	5 (5%)	1 (1%)	95
Emotional well-being	8 (9%)	38 (40%)	28 (30%)	15 (16%)	5 (5%)	0 (0%)	94
Spiritual well-being	9 (10%)	28 (30%)	31 (33%)	23 (24%)	2 (2%)	1 (1%)	94

5.3 Major Factors That Affect Quality Of Life

5.3.1 Major Obstacles to Quality of Life

The respondents indicated that the four major obstacles to their quality of life are: marginalization and subjugation (40%), cost of living (34%), health issues (13%), and lack of access to appropriate services and supports (12%).

5.3.2 Relative Importance of Key Factors for Quality of Life

In answering the question on the level or degree of importance of seven factors (i.e., employment; level of income; adequate housing; family relationships; good health; and warm, welcoming and caring communities), the vast majority of respondents indicated that all were either extremely important or very important for their quality of life. Not surprisingly, the factors related to basic needs were ranked highest and the factors related to social needs were ranked a bit lower.

In terms of the basic survival needs, the highest ranked factor was 'Good Health' with a total of 95% indicating it was either extremely important (58%) or very important (37%). The second highest was 'Adequate Housing' with a total of 93% indicating it was either extremely important (50%) or very important (43%). The third highest ranked factor was 'Employment' with a total of 89% indicated it was either extremely important (51%) or very important (38%).

In terms of the factors related to social needs, they were quite similar in degree of importance attached to them. The highest ranked factor was "Warm Welcoming and Caring Communities' with a total of 83% indicating it was either extremely important (47%) or very important (36%). The second was 'Family Relationships' with a total of 81% indicating it was either extremely important (69%) or very important (22%). The third was 'Friendships' with 81% indicating it was either extremely important (42%) or (39%).

Figure 3:
How important is each of the following factors for your Quality of Life?

	Extremely Important	Very Important	Moderately Important	Slightly Important	Not Important	Total Responses
Employment	46 (51%)	34 (38%)	6 (7%)	3 (3%)	1 (1%)	90
Level of Income	22 (25%)	42 (47%)	21 (24%)	4 (4%)	0 (0%)	89
Adequate Housing	45 (50%)	39 (43%)	3 (3%)	2 (2%)	1 (1%)	90
Friendships	38 (42%)	35 (39%)	16 (18%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	90
Family Relationships	61 (69%)	20 (22%)	6 (7%)	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	89
Good Health	52 (58%)	33 (37%)	3 (3%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	89
Warm, Welcoming, and Caring Community	42 (47%)	32 (36%)	14 (16%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	89

5.4 Impact of Discrimination on Quality of Life

5.4.1 *Effect of Discrimination of QoL*
The responses related to questions on the extent to which discrimination has affected their quality of life reveal that a large proportion of respondents (73%) indicated that it has affected them either 'a great deal' (20%), 'a lot' (23%), or a 'moderate amount' (30%). Only a small proportion (27%) indicated it had affected them either only 'a little' (22%), or 'not at all' 5%.

5.4.2 *Frequency of Discrimination Experienced on Daily Basis*
In responding to the question on the frequency to which respondents experienced discrimination on a daily basis, the vast majority (79%) indicated they experienced it either 'very frequently' (14%), frequently (24%), or 'occasionally' (41%). Only a small proportion (21%) indicated either 'rarely' (20%), or 'never' (1%).

5.4.3 *Experienced Discrimination from non-Aboriginal People*

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In responding to the question on whether they experienced discrimination from non-Aboriginal people while searching for employment, a high proportion (69%) indicated that they had experienced it either 'very frequently' (16%), 'frequently' 21%), or 'occasionally' (32%). Of the remainder (31%) indicated they had experienced such discrimination from non-Aboriginal people either 'rarely' (20%), or 'never' (11%).

5.4.4 *Experienced Discrimination from Aboriginal People*

In responding to the question on whether they experienced discrimination from Aboriginal people while searching for employment, 57% indicated they had experienced such discrimination either 'very frequently' (10%), frequently (13%), or 'occasionally' (34%). The remaining 43% indicated that they had experienced such discrimination from Aboriginal people either 'rarely' (31%), or 'never' (12%).

5.5 Barriers Encountered in Accessing Public Services

In responding to the question on the frequency with which they encountered barriers to accessing public services such as health care and education, 74% indicated that they had encountered such barriers either 'very frequently' (13%), 'frequently' (24%), or occasionally (37%). The remaining 26% indicated that they had encountered such barriers either 'rarely' (18%) or 'never' (8%).

5.6 Importance of Key Factors for Quality of Life

5.6.1 *Importance of Education & Training Opportunities for QoL*

In responding to the question on the importance of education and training opportunities for quality of life, 90% indicated it is either 'extremely important' (67%) or 'very important' (23%). The remaining 10% indicated it was 'moderately important' (7%) or 'slightly important' (3%).

5.6.2 *Importance of Employment for Quality of Life*

In responding to the question on the importance of having employment for quality of life, 96% indicated it is either 'extremely important' (79%) or 'very important' (17%). Of the remaining respondents only 3% indicated it was 'moderately important' (2%), 'slightly important' (1%), or 'not important' (0%).

5.6.3 *Importance of Housing for QoL*

In responding to the question on the importance of adequate, appropriate, and affordable housing for quality of life, 91% of the respondents indicated it is either 'extremely important' (61%) or 'very important' (30%). Of the remaining respondents, only 9% indicated it is either 'moderately important' (7%), 'slightly important' (0%), or 'not important' (2%).

5.6.4 *Importance of Easy & Convenient Access to Shopping for QoL*

In responding to the question on the importance of easy and convenient access to shopping for quality of life, 64% of the respondents indicated it is either 'extremely important' (17%) or 'very important' (47%). Of the remaining respondents only 36% indicated it is either 'moderately important' (27%), 'slightly important' (3%), or 'not important' (6%).

5.6.5 *Importance of Easy & Convenient Access to Public Services for QoL*

In responding to the question on the importance of having easy and convenient access to public services such as schools, bus routes, recreation and leisure services facilities for quality of life, 66% of the respondents indicated it is either 'extremely important' (30%) or

'very important' (36%). Of the remaining respondents 33% indicated it is either 'moderately important' (17%), 'slightly important' (13%), or 'not important' (3%).

5.6.6 *Importance Good Neighbours/Neighbourhoods for QoL*

In responding to the question on the importance of good neighbours and good neighbourhoods for quality of life, 75% of the respondents indicated it is either 'extremely important' (39%) or 'very important' (36%). Of the remaining respondents, 25% indicated it is either 'moderately important' (20%), 'slightly important' (3%), or 'not important' (2%).

5.6.7 *Importance of Healthy Lifestyles for QoL*

In responding to the question on the importance of healthy lifestyles for quality of life, 93% of the respondents indicated it is either 'extremely important' (48%) or 'very important' (45%). Of the remaining respondents, 7% indicated it is either 'moderately important' (6%), 'slightly important' (0%), or 'not important' (1%).

5.6.8 *Importance of Cultural & Spiritual Places for QoL*

In responding to the question on the importance of cultural and spiritual places for quality of life, 69% of the respondents indicated it is either 'extremely important' (45%) or 'very important' (24%). Of the remaining respondents, 31% indicated it is either 'moderately important' (23%), 'slightly important' (6%), or 'not important' (2%).

5.6.9 *Other Important Factors for Improving QoL*

In addition to the factors noted above, respondents identified several other factors they deemed important for quality of life. Some of these factors are related to the items identified in the tables above, but are more precise. The factors listed below range from basic needs to civic engagement and even cultural integration:

- Housing for homeless people
- Easy access to healthy food
- Support for single parents
- Support for people with mental and emotional problems.
- Personally tailored addictions control regimes
- Healthy relationships with others
- Low cost leisure centres and safe recreational sites
- Easy access to natural places with water and natural land, not just developed parks
- Fostering a warmer and less discriminatory community by "educating people on diversity from race to sexuality and everything in between."
- Opportunities to engage in political and policy-making processes

One of the most interesting responses noted the importance of facilitating the cultural and social integration of Aboriginal people into the Aboriginal communities. The respondent explained this point by sharing the following insight into his/her life experience:

> *I did not grow up surrounded by my own culture and I have difficulty figuring out how to integrate it into my life. I don't feel like I fit in either world. I've had First Nations folks say that I 'don't talk brown'. I've experienced racism like any other Indigenous*

person, but without the cultural/community connection and fulfillment. I'm still trying to find out what works for me.

5.7 Key Factors in Improving Quality of Life for Aboriginal People

This section of the survey asked respondents to indicate the relative importance of six key factors, and any other factors they deemed important, that should be the central focus on any strategies for improving the quality of life of Aboriginal people. Their responses reveal that notwithstanding some differences in the precise ratings for each factor, all six factors are ranked highly as either 'extremely important 'or 'very important'. These are listed below in order of importance. Arguably, the most interesting aspect of the list is that increasing employment opportunities ranked lower than improvements in the justice system, and increasing understanding of Aboriginal culture and rights.

<div align="center">

Figure 4
Most Important Factors for Improving QoL
</div>

Increasing Education and Training Opportunities	*95%*
Improving the Justice System	*90%*
Increasing Understanding of Aboriginal Culture and Rights	*90%*
Increasing Employment Opportunities	*83%*
Increasing Community/Social Service Funding	*75%*
Increasing Cultural and Spiritual Places	*69%*

This may suggest that, at least for some respondents, real or perceived adverse effects of the way the justice operates and the lack of understanding of Aboriginal culture and rights are more significant problems and in need of greater attention than employment in improving the quality of life for Aboriginal people. For reasons that are not easy to ascertain, this listing of important factors for improving QoL has some connections to, but does not square perfectly with, what respondents identified as the four major obstacles to Q of L, namely: marginalization and subjugation (40%), cost of living (34%), health issues (13%), and lack of access to appropriate services and supports (12%).

5.8 Concluding Observations on Web-Survey Results

The essential points that emerge from the web-based survey are that in addition to focusing on factors related to meeting basic survival needs of Aboriginal persons, improvements in their QoL also requires attention to their cultural and spiritual needs. Thus, at the broadest level, the web-based survey suggests that initiatives to improving the quality of life of Aboriginal people hinge extensively on improvements in, among other things, the following six important factors:
- Increasing education and training
- Improving the Justice system

- Increasing understanding of Aboriginal culture and rights
- Increasing employment opportunities
- Increasing community/social service funding
- Increasing culture and spiritual places

This is confirmed by the responses and recommendations made by other respondents who participated in the interview and focus group data collections processes.

6. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF INTERVIEWS

The data collected through interviews with nineteen informants (predominantly older males at the Friendship Centre and roughly equal numbers of men and women at Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies) confirmed the findings derived through the web-based survey regarding the factors deemed to have either an adverse or positive effect on Aboriginal QoL. The interviews were transcribed and analysed for key factors and themes identified by respondents (Wood & Kroger, 2000). The key points and themes regarding the factors that inhibit or enhance QoL are summarized below in Table 1.

Table 1. Factors that Enhance or Inhibit QoL

Factors that Enhance QoL	Factors that Inhibit QoL
- Education - Employment - Family - Money - Food - Housing - Good Neighbourhood - Friends - Respect - Honouring Treaties - Traditional Teachings and Culture - Aboriginal Friendship Centres	- Discrimination - Residential School Legacies - Alcohol addictions - Drug addictions - Under- and unemployment - Justice system involvement - Childhood trauma - Stress - Lack of Transportation

The data analysis was developed from the interview transcripts to identify themes that corresponded to QoL indicators. A theme of racial discrimination emerged as a common experience among the participants after both within-case and cross-case analysis (Creswell, 1998) in a process producing what Denzin (1989) calls a "rich, thick description" (p. 83).

Identified themes were organized around QoL development: sense of community, having children and family, traditional teachings and culture, access to education and employment. Participants reported that Aboriginal social spaces within the urban community, such as the Aboriginal Friendship Centre, are beneficial to them socially, culturally, and personally.

Data also produced thematic contributing factors to QoL decrease, such as racial discrimination, unemployment, underemployment, lack of transportation, stress, involvement in the justice system, family history and legacy of residential schools, history of addictions with family members, and childhood trauma. Particular and ongoing effects of residential schools stressed by participants included the loss or erosion of language, identity, and culture and having their children taken away by child and family services.

6.1 Factors Inhibiting Quality of Life

6.1.1 Effects of Discrimination

Consistent with the literature, the experience and effects of discrimination were identified as a major factor in restricting the capacity for Aboriginal quality of life in Saskatoon. A commonly held notion among the participants was that, in addition to discrimination, alcohol consumption, drug addictions, childhood trauma, incarceration, and lack of transportation restrict the capacity for quality of life and contribute to problems in the urban Aboriginal community. These social problems—related in turn to the legacy of residential school—decrease the potential for social inclusion and play an important role in the marginalization of urban Aboriginal people in Saskatoon, which participants suggest are barriers to an enhanced quality of life. Others reflected on the economic barriers:

> I would like to see affordable living; I would like to see just that. You have to have those opportunities. Basically that's it . . .it is so expensive to live, and mothers can't stay home anymore. There has to be two incomes for a family. Like it's getting worse and worse. — Participant 5

The experience of racial discrimination is recognizable when participants express the view that they are treated unjustly because of their Aboriginality. When asked about experiencing discrimination, Participant 2 responded:

> I suffered so many forms of discrimination . . . . It still hurts my heart to be discriminated, but I know that is because of all the things I cannot control like the color of my skin, or the money in my bank, or the education, or the fact I was born into that lifestyle. — Participant 2

Discrimination results in social exclusion and difficulty in life because the Aboriginal participant is treated with intolerance. Such intolerance is also manifest in the form of physical violence:

> I got beat up by white people already. Five of them, they chased us for no reason downtown here. They beat us up. You phone the cops; they don't do nothing. Prejudice, prejudice. — Participant 5

For the victim, the experience is racialized violence and the police are seen as doing nothing about the violence when reported. Discrimination by other ethnic minorities became apparent in participant 11's narrative:

> [At] Fas Gas and every time you buy something, the worst kind of discrimination you get is from an immigrant, when you walk into the store. They look at you; they assume you are stealing . . . since they took over I never go to the store unless it is very necessary. I find a very a large discrimination against myself by immigrants. It's weird. They come to my country and all the sudden they think they are better them me. It's the worst kind of discrimination I ever face. — Participant 11

Although visible minorities are also the 'other' in Canada, it must be recognized that racial discrimination can take various forms, including among those who themselves are racialized by the dominant society.

6.1.2 *Effects of Residential School Legacy*

It is well documented that there is a relationship between residential schools and social dysfunction. It also recognized that those who have been abused tend to become abusers (Cuthand, 2005; Jaine, 1993, RCAP, 1996). That is, the wrongs that occurred in the forced assimilation of residential schools (CFNMP, 2004; Hansen, Booker, Charlton 2014; Jaine 1993) provided a significant stimulus in creating a vicious cycle of violence and social problems that remains in Aboriginal families and communities to the present time.

Many participants are first- and second-generation residential school survivors; they exhibited residual effects of residential schooling, such as the loss or erosion of language, identity and culture, having their children taken away by child and family services. Participant 2, for example, describes the residential school effects as intergenerational:

> It is generational; generation genocide in the residential schools had impacted our way of creating our life and how our life cycles… My mom being in residential school, my granny being in residential school, there is not opportunity for learning cultural ceremony or traditions. — Participant 2

For participant 2, residential school not only suppresses Aboriginal culture but also creates a state of disharmony in the family and alienation from traditional teachings. It describes a colonial process, a marginalization process that for the residential school survivor, their children, and families and Aboriginal culture.

6.2 Factors that Enhance Quality of Life

The major factors that are enhancing quality of life were family or sense of belonging, good neighborhood, being treated with respect, traditional teachings and culture, education and employment, housing, money, which is related to having adequate food, shelter or housing. Such findings are consistent with Canadian rights to a quality of life that emphasize access to adequate services, food, water, and shelter. In summary, participants expressed the view that quality of life is enhanced through education, housing, and employment; it is, in other words, connected to socio-economic status. Education is an important factor in the lives of

participants. Pursing education and training promoted meaning and purpose and gives an indication of participant hopes, outlooks and aspirations for improving quality of life.

7. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUPS

To complement the survey and interviews and help deepen findings and analysis, two focus groups with young adults over the age of eighteen years (largely early twenties) were conducted at Oskayak High School. QoL was defined as "having a good job, doing what you love, having your own place, having the things you've always wanted, and doing the things you love to do. . . having no worries . . . and those human connections." Not surprisingly, education (as well as housing) emerged as a key theme in terms of both inhibiting and enhancing QoL, although participants also reflected some important life lessons learned on the job and on the streets. In particular, lessons were reported about labelling and stereotyping as the basis of racism and discrimination and what some perceived as a city overly invested in people being the same. While there were concerns about peer pressure leading to poor QoL outcomes, peer pressure was also stressed when "everyone wants to be like everyone else. One guy sees one guy wearing this, he starts wearing that the next day and there is a big chain. It's like there is no individuality in Saskatoon anymore."

7.1 Major Barriers Inhibiting QoL

7.1.1 *Discrimination*

For some Saskatoon was not a safe place. "I don't like it all," said one, "It is too small. . . . when you go over to the Westside, you see these hoodlums or whatever they want to be called. Yeh, it is like, they really bring you down when you are in the public and they act like a dick." The big concern is that "other people see us the same way." Several resented such labelling and stereotyping: "Just because you live around that area doesn't mean that you are like that."

Stereotyping and discrimination were widely experienced: one talked about shopping "wearing lazy clothes because it's my laundry day . . . and people will look at me and keep an eye on me." Another had had cars drive by and people yell "racist things"; another had a drunken white guy chase and yell, "'I'm going to f--- kill you Indians' and it was really scary because I was eleven years old at the time." Another explained, "... this one lady screamed at me for no reason. I don't know why. Even bus drivers. I did a video, Mount Royal did a video, of that experience of racism." While justice was very important, more than one felt it doesn't exist in the city or the system. Another experienced a driver on Broadway in a big truck telling him that "he hates f--- Indians because they're brown and ugly and that we should just go back to the land we're given. I thought to myself that's kind of messed up because we're the ones who gave him our land."

The role of the media in perpetuating discrimination was another key theme:
> Every day on the first page there's a terrible First Nations story, but right down the block there was a non-Aboriginal person that was killed . . . The media is always putting forth the bad First Nations stories. What about all the success that we've had? When people see that on TV, then people think of us as nothing or worthless. They never talk about the way First Nations people value life because there's so much negativity.

7.1.2 Education, Foster Care, and Recreational Resources

Discriminatory practices were related to residential schools—and the "foster care system just like an updated residential school system"—and to access to culturally appropriate programming. One person recalled foster care with a sibling (from ages six to twelve) and the beatings and sleeping on a concrete basement floor and being bribed to keep "my mouth shut" when the worker came around. "It's an outdated residential school basically." Others spoke about reserve schools and the lack of money for good teachers or the courses that are needed, which explained why many had moved to Saskatoon for educational opportunity and to get away from poverty and high prices on reserve.

One respondent wanted to see more and better cultural programs for the safety of kids: "It would be good to have cultural programs or something like that for the younger people to stay out of trouble." Another experienced verbal violence" "this teacher used to yell at me a lot. . . . And not treating me like the other students made me feel different and outcast and stuff." In other words, policy emphasis on skills and training as steps to employment or access to education are never enough if the cultural needs, strengths, and priorities of Aboriginal people are not taken into account in designing programs and pedagogies to reduce barriers and make access meaningful. Low expectations were major barriers to success:

> They don't expect very much of you when you go to school, so they cut down your growth. . . .they just don't tell you it's in your reach; they tell you it's out of your reach so pick something else. So they cut down your growth and shut most of your open doors.

7.1.3. Housing and Transportation

Inadequate housing (and parenting) was an issue impacting QoL: "Kids kept me up last night. So tiring. His mom was sitting in the bedroom and not doing anything about it. Crowding in her home and I ended up staying up all night and they were being loud. And I slept in." For some, homelessness is a major barrier, so "they end up dropping out of school and getting labouring jobs." One added, "That's what I was doing until I found this school." Transportation was an issue with the cost of gas. Better transportation and affordable bus passes were recommended.

7.1.4 Bullying, Poverty, Gangs, and Drugs

Bullying, peer pressure, and decision making around drugs were other barriers to QoL exacerbated by poverty: "I would be playing in the playground alone. And they would come to the playground and beat me up. Got bullied a lot." Yet another remembered "being bullied a lot," and not being believed by the teachers when he would tell them: "they would believe the other kid."

"You got to make the choice to hang out with the right people and do the right things for yourself not because someone will think that you're cool doing it," said another who had been "a follower until I was told that I could do so much more and that I could offer so much more." Your QoL "depends on what you choose." But several agreed that some find it difficult to make good choices because they have been told, "you can't do that or you won't make it."

In the case of gangs, the threat of violence adds layers of difficulty: "you have to do your time, or get beat up." And the police may not let you off the hook either:

> the police are kind of looking over you. Like they think that you're still doing bad. . . They think that we're just all the same . . . . Like we are all drug dealers, gang bangers.

> Like if you're a Native driving a nice car, then the police will look at them like 'You can't afford that,' but if it's a white person, it's like, 'Oh, yeh'.

Even when told otherwise, one insisted, "I just told myself that I can do it because I'm the one who's making that step and going to school, waking up early in the morning and being here so I can get my education and get the job I want when I'm older."

7.2 Factors that Enhance QoL

As in the interviews, family, a sense of belonging, cultural traditions, treaty promises, education and employment, housing, and social spaces where people feel safe and welcomed, and the resources to participate (whether in work, sports, or education) were high on the list of responses. In particular, one participant identified education, family, and cultural identity as key to meaningful life choices:

> What is important is . . .education, beliefs, my son, culture, staying away from peer pressure, making your own choices. Gaining support from your family.

7.2.1 Family, Culture, and a Sense of Belonging

As one participant put it, "Feel safe . . . . yeah, safety is very important to quality of life." A community with QoL is one where "everybody helped without judging" and where people "worked together, " "stayed positive," and all have a "feeling of being welcome." Others added "everyone is friendly" and there is "more acceptance." As one put it, "First Nations people don't live outside community. Life is community. . . . Our culture is to look after our own . . . . Extended family is community."

7.2.2 Education and Employment

Many respondents listed education, staying in school, and finishing grade 12 as the way to "a really good job". And for several, Oskayak in particular was a source of security as well as education: "It feels a lot more safe" than in the broader community and an important source of acceptance. "Yeh, it is very culturally appropriate."
Another reinforced how Oskayak empowered and made "you feel like you do have a future." Another participant "felt like I was welcomed and they understood where I was coming from and what grounds I stood on. After I graduate there's a lot of doors that are going to open."

Education was an important source of opportunities for "doing what I want to do instead of looking around for work part time." Others equated education with freedom and quality of life. Another bore testimony to the "strength in this community to speak out and say that we won't take that discipline from police, we are deserving of education. . . we have strong

First Nations youth coming up here that are ready to stand up. They value education and they value their voice. They've found their voice and that's going to change some things.

7.2.3 Housing

Living with "the fear that they don't have a home" in the context of housing that "is the most expensive thing out there" was a problem for individuals and for families. "$1000 is a lot of money." By contrast, Saskatoon is a good place to live for those "who make a lot of money" and can live "in a good neighbourhood and have a good place to live."

7.2.4 Respecting Treaty Promises and Relationships

Aboriginal rights and treaty promises were regarded as "really, really important . . . . Those are natural laws. Respect the land." Self-government was likewise "really important" so "That we get to decide, because if we didn't then the world would probably be destroyed . . . . And people that can relate to the way we think is a really good thing. I like how people can relate a lot to other people and how they want to save the world." According to another participant," if we had that [self-government] from the beginning, families would not have to go through residential schools and we would not have the problem that we have." Several claimed the government was not doing enough and should "set a good example." According to another participant, government is not respecting treaties and is "all about money; they are not thinking about what's going to happen to the earth. Like all the pipelines, oil, and fracking."

Others resented government "making decisions without us consenting" and felt "it should be up to us, not up to the government." Pinehouse decided as they did on the uranium waste storage because they were offered "a huge amount of money" and they are "a poor area" and "it's really split up the community."

Respectful relationships would be key: "Treat people the way you want to be treated." And culture can be a powerful source of teaching: "poster, art, music" because "we're not giving up our treaty rights and there's always arguments about it" and people saying "that happened so long ago you should just forget about it." They want Aboriginal Peoples to be just like the rest of them, but "we're not." It may be "uncomfortable for a while" as people are speaking out, but there are also "good people out there no matter what your background is." In Geneva people thought everything was paid for on reserve and life was good. "Well our kids spoke out and said, "Oh no. Actually it's like living in the Third World." "Educate the ignoramuses," said another explaining that it was "just a fancy word for ignorance." First Nations organizations such as Friendship Centres and White Buffalo had key roles in educating all and sharing cultural knowledge, as well as in supporting Aboriginal peoples. And schools "should teach more about First Nations so that they have a better understanding of us."

"It's up to us to make that choice and decision, to stand up for what we know is right or wrong, speak out and use our voices because we're youth right now but as we get older we can still pass the knowledge we have to the younger ones," another commented. "Everyone has a choice and a right, and it's in the treaty and it needs to be there."

8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite federal, provincial, and municipal governments' explicit commitments and the efforts of educational, health and other institutions to address the social imperative of improving the QoL of Aboriginal peoples, significant barriers remain. Study after study confirms significant gaps in QoL of various socio-economic groups in Canada and underlines the disproportionate impact on Aboriginal peoples in health, education, employment, poverty rates as well as their over-representation in the criminal justice system. Studies similarly disclose a perception gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples on the relative QoL of different populations and on the importance of Aboriginal and treaty rights. Recognizing the importance of treaty promises and Aboriginal rights as well as the unique impacts of colonization on Aboriginal life is critical to undoing entrenched frameworks, rebuilding relationships, enhancing individual and institutional capacities to improve Aboriginal QoL, and achieving a just society in which the capacities and contributions of all citizens count.

This study of the lived experiences of urban Aboriginal peoples residing in Saskatoon aims to enhance understanding and foster policy and other change in order to help improve QoL. To that end, this research study adopts a decolonizing approach and emphasizes postcolonial obligations, exploring the adequacy of current policy priorities and issues related to colonial and decolonizing legacies. In particular, it unpacks colonial history to expose how colonial ideology and institutions shaped Canada to the social, economic, and political advantage of the dominant group and to the serious disadvantage and impoverishment of Aboriginal peoples. It also traces relations among capitalism, colonialism, and constructions of race that combined to rationalize the exploitation of Aboriginal peoples and blame the victims understood as needing assimilation into the mainstream in order to succeed. And it records Aboriginal understandings of treaty, constitutional, statutory, and normative frameworks that may be significant for QoL issues in Saskatoon. Treaties 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, & 10, for instance, include guarantees of Aboriginal rights to spirituality, education, employment, living conditions, and equality.

The outcomes of the research may serve as a catalyst for renewed discussion about the obligations of various levels of government to maintain the rights laid out in treaties for urban Aboriginal peoples. When the Aboriginal population is one of the youngest and fastest growing demographics of the Canadian population and the proportion of Aboriginal peoples living in cities is projected to grow, all Canadians have an interest in substantial changes in policies, programs, and practices to improve QoL for Aboriginal peoples.

8.1 Overview of Major Findings

Importantly, findings underline the need to focus not only on meeting basic survival needs of Aboriginal persons, but also on their cultural and spiritual needs which are the foundation of QoL. In fact, as few as 6-11% reported their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being as excellent.

Thus, survey findings suggest that improving the quality of life of urban Aboriginal people depends extensively on improvements in, among other things, these important factors:
- Increasing education and training
- Improving the justice system
- Increasing understanding of Aboriginal culture and rights
- Increasing employment opportunities
- Increasing community/social service funding
- Increasing culture and spiritual places

These emphases are confirmed and elaborated by the responses and recommendations made by those who participated in the interview and focus group processes.

Discrimination, the legacies of residential schools, and social problems marginalized urban Aboriginal people, decreased social inclusion, and even alienated them from their own culture and traditional teachings. Labelling, stereotyping, bullying, gangs, policing and negative media were widely reported as having an adverse effect on QoL. Racialized violence was one consequence experienced by some who found little solace in the justice system.

Several factors appear on both lists (of inhibitors and enhancers of QoL). Just as culturally appropriate education can be helpful to QoL, education has also been a major barrier for those who experience it as an unsafe, even violent, place of low expectations, few resources, and little respect.

A sense of community and belonging, family and friends, traditional teachings and culture, treaty and Aboriginal rights, and respect, as well as Aboriginal social spaces in the form of Aboriginal Friendship Centres were deemed beneficial socially, culturally, and personally and importantly related to access to education and employment.

If QoL is related to socio-economic status, it is also related to treaty promises that, like meaningful education, mean hope to fulfil aspirations to improve QoL. "Making your own choices" was for one young person related to "education, beliefs, culture" and "gaining support from your family." As another put it, "First Nations people don't live outside community. Life is community . . . . Our culture is to look after our own . . . . Extended family is community."

Others were clear that respecting treaty relationship and Aboriginal rights is at the heart of renewed relationships in Canada—and to enhancing our collective ability to protect the planet and ensure the capacities and contributions of all Canadians are nourished and

celebrated. Although many still think Aboriginal peoples should be just like other Canadians, resist what they call "special rights," and support funding cuts to Aboriginal organizations, this is to deny the unequal effects of colonial history. Recognizing that it could be uncomfortable for a time, others felt the conversation had to begin in order to end the ignorance that is so oppressive and destructive to all.

8.2 Recommendations for Improving QoL

- Anti-racist education initiatives need to be better coordinated and resourced (including Treaty education, cultural diversity, and Aboriginal awareness training)
- Policy on education and skills training should adopt a cultural and decolonizing lens to ensure that education and employment opportunities are meaningful and necessary resources are in place.
- School boards and postsecondary institutions need to build their capacities to meet obligations and opportunity to deliver culturally appropriate and empowering education (both content and delivery methods).
- Employment strategies need to focus as much on the readiness of the workplace to make the most of Aboriginal capacities as on the readiness of Aboriginal people for the workplace.
- Urban Aboriginal organizations such as Friendship Centres need enhanced support to provide the sort of safe social spaces and community services so necessary to QoL.
- Affordable housing requires a coordinated approach across levels of government to create welcoming, respectful neighbourhoods.
- The Criminal justice system needs to build on and implement more effectively efforts such as the Gladue decision (and related reports) to address the over-representation of Aboriginal peoples.

8.3 Entitlements Related to QoL for Aboriginal People

Respecting the numbered treaties, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and other national and international statutory, policy, or normative frameworks reinforces obligations of all orders of government to improve the Quality of Life of urban Aboriginal people.

8.4 Knowledge Mobilization Activities

All findings from the study will be disseminated to policy makers and the public. In particular, our dissemination plan includes the following:

- Community consultation
- Technical report posted on CUISR website
- Master's thesis (the Steering Committee approved the use of the research as the basis of the student researcher (Rose Antsanen's) thesis
- (Social) media strategy
- Policy table engagement (CUISR is a member of the Saskatoon Intersectoral Committee, for instance)
- Co-authored journal articles, including one to be submitted to the special issue on of the *Engaged Scholar Journal: Community-engaged Research, Teaching,* and learning and others to be submitted to *Canadian Journal of Native Studies,* and *Aboriginal Policy Studies*
- Conference presentations the first of which was within the CUISR conference Quality of Life: Towards Sustainable Community Futures, May 15-16, 2014

The goal of the research dissemination initiatives is to contribute to the ongoing work on quality of life, Aboriginal justice, and social and economic development both in urban and rural areas. Toward that end, the dissemination initiatives are intended to foster additional research partnerships and to stimulate thinking about the types of issues and options that should be considered in developing policies and programs that will have a positive effect on the QoL of Aboriginal people in urban areas and beyond. One of the important things for those devoted to improving the QoL of Aboriginal people is that the basis for proactive action on initiatives that contribute to the QofL of Aboriginal people is rooted in the dual pillars of a wide range of rights and moral obligations for a portion of the population that has been dubbed as 'citizens plus', rather than 'citizens minus' in the seminal historic report produced nearly half century ago that focused attention on the QoL challenges faced by Aboriginal peoples and the clarion for proactive and constructive actions for the first time in modern history (Hawthorn 1966; Cairns 2000). The echoes of that clarion call still resonate because many Aboriginal people still face challenges to their QoL. Consequently, despite any progress that may have been made during the past half century, much more work remains to be done in improving the QoL of many Aboriginal peoples in urban as well as rural areas.

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