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# ***Accessing services across jurisdictions: the gaps, duplications, disjunctions and opportunities experienced by urban Aboriginal peoples in Fredericton, New Brunswick***

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*“You have to live in the world you find yourself in.”*

Fred Wheatley, Ojibway Elder <sup>1</sup>

## **INTRODUCTION**

According to Statistics Canada, in 2006, there were 1,172,785 Aboriginal people in Canada, accounting for 3.8% of Canada’s population.<sup>2</sup> In 2006, 17,650 Aboriginal people lived in New Brunswick (NB), representing 2% of the provincial population.<sup>2</sup> Based on Statistics Canada’s 2006 Aboriginal Identity Statistics for New Brunswick, 10,645 live off-reserve.<sup>3</sup> There are no data on where off-reserve Aboriginal people in NB reside. This being said, there is a concentration of 725 urban (Identity) Aboriginal people living in the province’s capital city of Fredericton (Population 50,535).<sup>4</sup> Although this seems like a relatively small sub-population, research suggests there is value in increasing our understanding of locally driven initiatives related to this population and the ability of initiatives to be responsive to immediate problems.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, it has been suggested that, “The federal government will achieve the highest level of responsiveness and the greatest opportunity for policy and program learning, at the local level and more broadly, if this approach is used”.<sup>5</sup> In other words, the methodology, findings and decidedly “local” recommendations put forward in this paper have the potential to inform the work of larger urban Aboriginal communities as well as the approach of Federal agencies.

The purpose of this paper is to examine how the urban Aboriginal population in Fredericton’s city core accesses services across jurisdictions. The reasons for considering the gaps, duplications, disjunctions and opportunities from the end-user’s and system-levels’ perspectives are threefold: 1. To better understand the current reality of urban Aboriginal people; 2. To explore what a functional and culturally appropriate integrated service delivery (ISD) framework might look like; and finally, 3. To identify practice and policy recommendations that would support ISD and that may be of use to urban Aboriginal populations generally.

The paper begins with clarification around the terms used throughout the paper as well as background information on Aboriginal communities in NB. An account of the methodology and its limitations follows. A demographic profile of Fredericton's urban Aboriginal population and a snapshot of the core urban Aboriginal service organizations in the city precede the findings. The findings are presented in three complementary sections: gaps, disjunctions/duplications and opportunities, viewed from the perspectives of the end-users, local urban Aboriginal organizations, communities, and provincial/federal governments and agencies. The paper ends with practice and policy recommendations and a brief conclusion.

## **TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

For the purposes of this paper, the term urban Aboriginal includes Indian, Innu, Inuit, and Métis persons who, regardless of status, self-identify as Aboriginal.

Health and education services are the primary focus of this paper but social services and employment are also referenced. Integrated Service Delivery (ISD), as defined by the Institute for Citizen-Centered Service is, “the concept of coordinating service delivery across branch, departmental, and jurisdictional boundaries”.<sup>6</sup>

When possible, reserves are referred to as communities. The generally accepted jurisdictions are the band council, as well as provincial and federal governments and agencies. In addition, this paper proposes a fourth jurisdiction, that of the local community – the on-the-ground environment where urban Aboriginal people live and where their service organizations operate.

## **BACKGROUND**

New Brunswick has 15 First Nation Communities, nine Mi'kmaq and six Maliseet. The Maliseet communities are situated along the Saint John River and its tributaries. Within the general Fredericton area there are three Maliseet communities. The St. Mary's community, one of the

largest in NB, is actually located within the city of Fredericton and has a population of 796 on-reserve and 712 off-reserve members.<sup>7</sup> Having over the past 200 years successfully rebuffed numerous government campaigns to relocate the community, St. Mary's is now a thriving hub for employment, services and entertainment.

All of NB's Aboriginal communities are connected by road and the furthest community is approximately a six-hour drive from Fredericton's city centre. Ties amongst and between these relatively small communities have been established through centuries of migratory hunting, fishing, visitations and inter-marriage. The communities also maintain strong ties with Mi'kmaq communities in Quebec and Nova Scotia and with the Passamaquoddy communities in nearby Maine. These networks and community ties extend to the urban Aboriginal people living in Fredericton.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The proposal for this paper was submitted to University of New Brunswick (UNB) Research Services where it received ethics approval. Following ethics approval, a literature search was conducted to generate a gaps, disjunctions/duplications and opportunities framework against which to contextualize emergent themes, as well as identify gaps in practice and policy. Findings from the literature search were used to refine the interview guide, which has been attached as Appendix A. Data from the key informant interviews were grouped under three broad headings: gaps, disjunctions/duplications and opportunities. The following sub-thematic categories emerged when the data under these three headings were analyzed: gaps (mental health and addictions; education; youth; coordination and facilitation; communication and information; culture; colonization and racism; and, data and identification); disjunctions/duplications (funding; the provision of services; and, partnerships and networks); and finally opportunities (Skigin-Elnoog; and Under One Sky). The practice and policy recommendations arose directly out of the findings in these 12 sub-thematic categories.

Over a two-month period, a word-of-mouth sample of 19 area experts, senior administrators and

front-line workers were identified and interviewed. The key informant interviewees selected, were repeatedly identified by the Aboriginal community itself as being representative of the urban Aboriginal population and organizations located in Fredericton, as well as band, provincial and federal governments and agencies. Individuals from the following institutions and agencies were interviewed: Fredericton's Friendship Centre, New Brunswick Aboriginal People's Council (NBAPC), Under One Sky Head Start Program, Skigin-Elnog Housing Corporation, Gignoo Transition House, New Brunswick Aboriginal Workplace Essential Skills Project, Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat, Intergovernmental Affairs, New Brunswick Department of Health, Public Health, UNB Community Health Centre, Department of Education and Early Child Development, Department of Social Development Housing and Homelessness, the RCMP as well as UNB and St. Thomas University. Of the 19 persons interviewed, nine voluntarily self-identified as Aboriginal.

The primary quantitative data source is Statistics Canada's 2006 Aboriginal Population Profile Fredericton (city), New Brunswick.<sup>4</sup> This profile focuses solely on the city of Fredericton. No reserve communities, including St. Mary's are included in this profile. In the spirit of the Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP) principles,<sup>8</sup> a preliminary draft of this paper was circulated amongst persons interviewed to facilitate feedback and validate the findings. Following formal publication, an open session to discuss the findings and recommendations will be held.

The study's limitations include the absence of readily accessible systems-level data relating to urban Aboriginal people living in Fredericton. Also, Statistics Canada figures may be low due to non-participation in the census and persons choosing not to self-identify as Aboriginal. Urban Aboriginal people in the justice system or seniors requiring care were outside the scope of this paper.

## **URBAN ABORIGINAL PEOPLE LIVING IN FREDERICTON**

In the 2006 Census 725 (1.5%) of Fredericton’s 50,535 citizens self-identified as Aboriginal.<sup>4</sup> Like any population, urban Aboriginal people are rich in their diversity. Some have strong ties with their home community while others have little or no contact. In Fredericton, there are long established intergenerational families as well as transients who are just passing through. There are students who’ve come to further their education and families who’ve had to relocate to Fredericton for medical care. As with any population, the urban Aboriginal people living in Fredericton form a gradient with highly enabled individuals at one end of the spectrum to those requiring additional assistance and support at the other. How the urban Aboriginal population in Fredericton is parsed out along that gradient remains unknown.

That being said, from the Statistics Canada 2006 Community Profiles (Fredericton city) and the 2006 Aboriginal Population Profile, it is possible as evidenced in Table 1. below to put together a picture of Fredericton’s 725 urban Aboriginal people in relation to the city of Fredericton, New Brunswick’s Aboriginal Identity Population and the province of New Brunswick as a whole.

**Table 1. Indicators comparing Fredericton’s Urban Aboriginal Population, Fredericton city, NB Aboriginal Identity Population and the Province of NB.**<sup>4</sup>

	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Fredericton Urban Aboriginal People</b>	<b>Fredericton City</b>	<b>NB Aboriginal Identity Population</b>	<b>Province of NB</b>
1.	Population	725	50,535	17,585	729,997
2.	% of the population 24 years of age and under	45.9	30.5	41.9	28.8
3.	Median age of the population	27.1	38.4	31.5	41.5
4.	Mobility status: moved in 2005	29.4	20.2	14.1	12.1

	– 2006 to a different address, municipality, province or country				
5.	Total population: % female	61.4	52.8	51	51.3
6.	Total population 15 years and older with no certificate, diploma or degree	19.5	15.9	39.2	29.4
7.	Total population 15 years and older: employment rates	62.8	63.3	49.7	57.3
8.	Median earnings 15 years and over for 2005  *Median income all census families, 2005	22,944	60,705*	14,593	52,878*
9.	15 years and over with income: government transfers as a % of total income	9.9	11.0	24.4	16.5
10.	% Whose mother tongue is an Aboriginal language	6.2		18.1	
11.	% Of the population with knowledge of Aboriginal language(s)	7.6		19.8	

To summarize, Fredericton’s urban Aboriginal population is young, mobile and predominantly female. As a group they are more likely to have a certificate, diploma or degree than their community or provincial counterparts. They are as likely to be employed as their Fredericton cohort and more likely to be employed than residents of New Brunswick generally. Of note, Urban Aboriginal people receive a lower percentage of their total income through government transfer payments than residents of the city of Fredericton, New Brunswick’s Aboriginal Identity Population and the Province of New Brunswick. That being said, and understanding that this is a relatively young population, the median income of urban Aboriginal people is approximately one third of Fredericton’s non-Aboriginal population and less than half of that of the people of New Brunswick generally. Women are more likely to be employed than men and earn slightly more



money. In 2006, there were 40 single-parent families -- all headed by women. Urban Aboriginal people are approximately two thirds less likely than the Aboriginal Identity population to have an Aboriginal language as their mother tongue or have knowledge of Aboriginal languages.

## **EXTENT URBAN ABORIGINAL SUPPORTS**

There are four core service organizations supporting urban Aboriginal people living in Fredericton: the Fredericton Native Friendship Centre, New Brunswick Aboriginal People's Council (NBAPC), Skigin-Elnoog Housing Corporation, and Under One Sky Head Start Program.

Fredericton's long standing Native Friendship Centre offers a 9:00 am to 5:00 pm drop-in service, phone, fax and e-mail access, as well as occasional craft classes and an informal food bank and clothing exchange. The Friendship Centre has one full-time and one half-time employee who are presently in the process of selling the Friendship Centre building and re-locating.

The NBAPC was established in 1972 and its overarching goal is to advance the cultural, traditional, economic and general living conditions of its off-reserve membership distributed across New Brunswick. NBAPC members are generally understood to have been living off-reserve for successive generations. The NBAPC has a long history of initiating programs that have evolved into organizations in their own right, for example, Skigin-Elnoog Housing Corporation and Under One Sky Head Start. Both of these organizations are profiled in the Opportunities section of the paper.

There are also organizations that serve the Aboriginal population more generally, including: Gignoo Transition House and the NB Aboriginal Women's Council both of which have close working relationships with Under One Sky and Skigin-Elnoog Housing; NBAPC's highly successful Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS); the Joint Economic Development Initiative's (JEDI); New Brunswick Aboriginal Workplace Essential Skills

(NBAWES) pilot project; and, the Aboriginal Workforce Development Initiative (AWDI). UNB's Mi'kmaq and Maliseet Institute, and St. Thomas University's Aboriginal Educational Initiatives also are valued local resources for urban Aboriginal people.

## **FINDINGS**

The findings from the key informant interviews are organized under gaps, disjunctions/duplications and opportunities. The themed material under each of these headings underscores the challenges experienced when trying to access services across jurisdictions. Interestingly, in addition to the federal, provincial and band jurisdictions, many of the challenges are played out in what is referred to as the local jurisdiction.

### **Gaps**

Gaps identified by the persons interviewed are organized around eight themes: mental health and addictions; education; youth; coordination and facilitation; communication and information; culture; colonization and racism; and data and identification. Systems-level perspectives complement those of the end-user. Together they provide a picture of the gaps experienced when accessing services across jurisdictions.

#### ***Mental health and addictions***

The most often identified gap in services was mental health and addictions. *“There is no provincial mental health and addiction strategy.” ... “Mental health and addictions are reported to be the top health priority but people are going without.” ... “There is a huge stigma around seeking help for mental health. They won't seek help off-reserve.”* The complexity of the topic is reflected in the population served. There are urban Aboriginal people who have few or no connections with their communities and access mental health and addictions services in Fredericton; but for others, what their home community provides supersedes what the off-reserve system has to offer.

## **Education**

When it comes to education gaps, disjunctions and duplications go hand in hand especially around funding. *“Students have the education to go on but not the funding. They need someone to help them navigate their funding options.” ... “We need funding flow charts to determine who is paying for what and where are the gaps. It needs to be made transparent who has the core funding and how we can work together to make this happen.”* Both the funding system and the navigators/facilitators need to be centralized in an accessible location.

There are also gaps in the educational system itself. *“It’s hard to keep youth in school. They don’t have the same participation and success rates. They are graduating with Level 3 instead of Level 2 certificate. Employers are looking for Level 2.”* There are also gaps around eligibility. *“There is community adult learning but you have to be over 19 years of age to write the GED.”* Efforts to make the existing system work are resourceful but piecemeal. *“If someone expresses interest in joining the RCMP, we work with the bands to help support that person so they are eligible for the program – even if they are not from that community. The RCMP has a very successful mentoring and brokering program. You just have to ask the bands for help.”* These systems-level gaps have a domino effect and as evidenced in the literature must be addressed.<sup>9 10</sup>

## **Youth**

There is a substantive gap in our understanding of male urban Aboriginal youth. *“The sole focus has been on the family, we’re disconnected from youth. Aboriginal youth is a lost issue.” ... “There is a gap regarding homeless boys – but we do meet the needs of girls under the age of 19.” ... “There is a lack of communication regarding the programs and services that are available for youth.” ... “We need mentoring programs -- to create interest – to promote by example -- to present them with opportunities around what you can be.”* This growing body of anecdotal evidence needs to be substantiated.

## **Coordinators & facilitators**

Many of the interviewees cited the need for a coordinator or facilitator to help urban Aboriginal

people navigate both the interface between the end-user and the service or program as well as services across jurisdictions. *“They need to establish coordinator positions in public health, primary care and mental health and addictions.” ... “We [NBAPC] had a nurse for a couple of years. She crossed jurisdictions, she worked with the regional health authorities and off-reserve who self-identified. She kept the lines of communication open.” ... “We need a one stop shop like an Aboriginal peoples’ family resource centre to develop comprehensive plans for individuals with dreams.”* Health, education and training, and child and family services end-users and providers cited the need for facilitators/navigators/ coordinators.

### ***Communication and information***

Interviewees identified communication and information gaps within and across all four jurisdictions. *“Urban Aboriginal people do not know what resources are available or don’t know that they are eligible.”* Furthermore, *“most status clients are familiar with the programs but the new ones do not understand the programs. This is especially true with the McIvor decision [meaning the Bill C-3 Gender Equity in Indian Registration Act which ensures that eligible grandchildren of women who lost status as a result of marrying non-Indian men will become entitled to registration (Indian Status) in accordance with the Indian Act.]<sup>11</sup> lots are coming on but they have no link with their First Nation community.”* By way of example, many pointed to the information gaps around health insured benefits. *“There is no centralized place to distribute information about how to access non-insured benefits.” ... “If only there was a list of health care professionals – for example dentists who would accept the band card -- understood that they would be reimbursed and not require people to pay up front.” ... “Uninsured Health Benefits – more and more drugs and services are being cut back. You used to be eligible for braces up until 16 years of age but now it’s 10 or 11, but nobody has the information. There’s no communication.” ... “The bands have access to family doctors who know which drugs are covered by FNIB and which are not. However, if they go to an after-hours clinic the doctor won’t know so they have to go twice because the pharmacist won’t fill the prescription.”* The reasons behind these gaps come as no surprise. *“Many departments have a First Nations branch – even NB power, but they don’t work together.”* A provincial Aboriginal portal has the potential

to address information gaps but the challenges around communication are both institutionalized and enduring.

### ***Culture***

Persons working at the system level identified gaps around cultural sensitivity and training.

*“Within government there is an expressed need for training around cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity and cultural safety.” ... “We need to integrate the First Nation world view: holistic health and wellness – and less on specific symptoms and diseases.” ... “We need to learn from their world view – the way that they communicate – their valuing of the elders.”* And on a more enterprising note, *“We need culturally relevant health materials from the National Aboriginal Health Organization’s website and to connect with culturally safe programs like Aboriginal Head Start. This is a potential industry.”* The need for culturally appropriate materials was cited across sectors.

### ***Colonization and Racism***

Interviewees were direct about the impact of colonialism and racism on their ability to access services generally. *“The status quo is not acceptable, especially when you consider the statistics on poverty, education, unemployment, incarceration, substance abuse, suicide, etc. These are all symptoms of a much bigger problem ... continued colonization and assimilation and the government failing to recognize that Aboriginal people have an inherent right to regain power over every aspect of their lives.” ... “Racism is everywhere.” ... “We have that feeling of being passed by – there is lots of talk about on-reserve but not about urban Aboriginal people.”* In the case of urban Aboriginal people, it’s not just that they are being passed by -- they are also statistically invisible and this has a direct negative impact on their ability to attract research and program funding.

### ***Data and identification***

The topics of data collection and identification make for a difficult conversation in the urban Aboriginal community as they are, in part, linked with issues around integration and colonialism.

That being said, today funders require the numbers in order to rationalize an investment in additional services and programs. Unfortunately there are limited data on a sub-population, namely Fredericton's urban Aboriginal people, linked with the most important factors associated with health disparities in Canada: socio-economic status (SES), Aboriginal identity, gender and geographic location.<sup>12</sup> Interviewees clearly understood and identified the gap. *“Just because there isn't any data doesn't mean that the problem doesn't exist or that nothing needs to be done about it.”* Going back to the demographic data presented in the profile, there are urban Aboriginal people living in Fredericton who are at risk in three out of four of these factors. A robust discussion around these critical gaps -- data collection and identification, as well as the impact of a reserve community situated geographically within the city of Fredericton on the numbers and provision of services, is very much needed but beyond the scope of this paper.

### **Disjunctions and Duplications**

The disjunctions and duplications identified by the interviewees are grouped around three themes: funding; the provision of services; and finally, partnerships and networks.

#### ***Funding***

Interviewees cited funding disjunctions between government agencies and the urban Aboriginal organizations, and explained how these disjunctions impact their ability to access services across jurisdictions. *“Governments invest in projects rather than programs and people. Investing in a series of projects addresses the symptoms, not the cause.”* ... *“Local service providers are heavily reliant on government funds, primarily through contracts and contribution agreements with the provincial and federal governments. The funding base is so uncertain.”* ... *“This [uncertainty] impacts planning, our ability to partner as well as program continuity.”* ... *“Just as we start to make progress, the funding stops.”* These disjunctions also make it difficult for urban Aboriginal service organizations to plan for the long term, build relationships and partner.

Interviewees cited seemingly insurmountable, systems-level disjunctions. *“There is a gap*

*between what the Feds are responsible for and what [urban] First Nations are receiving because of a lack of understanding. Urban Aboriginal people flow in and out of Federal jurisdiction but we're ignored when we're out of the community.*" Interviewees also cited funding disjunctions between urban Aboriginal people and their home communities, which impacted their ability to access services across jurisdictions. *"Reserves claim that they service their members off-reserve but the reality is that services may not be delivered. Sometimes it's totally impractical. It also varies by band."* ... *"She was told that she was going to lose her transportation allowance for dialysis because the band had received monies to take them to the hospital and back – but the band is four hours away. It doesn't make sense."* ... *"Healthcare can be too expensive, or the band doesn't have the facility for seniors for example."* ... *"Urban Aboriginal people are not a priority or perceived to be the band's responsibility so they don't see the need to coordinate services for that group."* At the same time, there are key Federal funding streams that the communities are eligible for but for which NBAPC is not. *"The Health Services Innovation Fund was for reserve only."* Legislative restraints such as these contribute to divisiveness and arguably disjunctions in service.

Funding mechanisms for urban Aboriginal people around post-secondary education can also contribute to disjunctions. *"The Feds give the money to the bands who distribute it to their members living on and off-reserve. There are no guarantees. The money could run out or it might have to be used for other things."* Finally, funding disjunctions within the system itself make it challenging to support services across jurisdictions. *"At the director level you define your boundaries. There are real restrictions as a result of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (A.A.N.D.C) funding and reporting requirements – it maintains silos except for special initiatives like homelessness."* ... *"We're competing for funds so we don't communicate at the director level."* Successful submissions to Canada's major funding agencies require partners and inter-sectoral collaboration. It appears that A.A.N.D.C requirements diminish the urban Aboriginal organizations ability to meet these funding criteria.

Identification of these challenges around funding disjunctions led to reflections on how to

address them. *“We have a history of relying on government funding to fix the problem but we can’t fix the jurisdictional problems. We have to find a new business model.”* As was expressed time and time again, funding disjunctions result in individuals falling through the cracks.

### ***Provision of services: mobility and income assistance***

A familiar ‘disjunction’ refrain was the impact of the artificial divide, between on and off-reserve, regarding one’s ability to access services. *“On-reserve child welfare and income assistance are administered by the band. Off-reserve they are administered by the province.”*

Another prominent disjunction theme is the system’s lack of cultural sensitivity regarding historic mobility. *“It takes a village to raise a child. Extended family members are very involved, particularly grandmothers and aunties.” ... “The population is very mobile and family structures are very fluid but the system doesn’t take this into account.”* A combination of fluid family structure and increased mobility can result in significant disjunctions around a young mother’s ability to access income assistance.

The espoused hardships around securing and sustaining income assistance take many forms. *“If a single mom has her children in a provincial daycare and is receiving supplemental income but moves back to the reserve to live with her mom, she loses that supplement.” ... “If you’re Aboriginal [living on-reserve] and working you do not have to pay taxes which sometimes increases the amount but that can work against them if they are on income assistance.” ... “Sometimes band royalties can impact the amount of income assistance a mom can receive in a single month.”* This makes budgeting challenging.

When these funding complexities are coupled with mobility it can sometimes put young moms and their children at risk. *“Moving on and off-reserve interferes with her [the young mom’s] ability to collect income assistance. This is a big issue for single moms. She moves off-reserve to be with her boyfriend and then they break up so she goes back to live with her mom and has the baby. But then they get back together again so she and the baby move back into town. But the address changes [for social assistance] can’t keep up with the status of the relationship. Some of*



*these single moms get into a bad situation and can't leave because they have no support."*

Unfortunately, many of these moms end up without any systems-level support.

Income assistance does come bundled with a case manager, however, *"Single moms moving on and off-reserve lack case management."* ... *"These girls who move on and off-reserve are dealing with different people in two different systems, in two different locations. They get tired of telling their story over and over. It's very humiliating."* The disjunctions caused by the on/off reserve dichotomy invariably led to comments on the way things should be. *"You should be able to access what you need despite being on or off-reserve – status or no status."* ... *"We need on and off-reserve welfare workers in the same building and working together."* ... *"We need a services roadmap for people who are in the welfare system – who to talk to and where."* It is easy to imagine these kinds of disjunctions being addressed in an Aboriginal Family Resource Centre environment.

### ***Provision of Health Services***

When asked about disjunctions in health services delivery, many of the same themes emerged. *"Access to services shouldn't be where you come from. Nor should it be about whether you're status or not."* ... *"The discourse around status and benefits keep the discourse away from equitable access."* In addition, urban Aboriginal people face a particular disjunction when it comes to accessing health across jurisdictions -- as a population, they are invisible. *"All our programs and services are there for all residents of New Brunswick."* ... *"There aren't any data relating to the specific needs of the urban Aboriginal population."* Yet the 2006 Statistics Canada data indicate an increased incidence of low birth weights<sup>13</sup> and diabetes<sup>14</sup> in this sub-population between 2001 and 2006.

There are disjunctions between the funding and partnership opportunities afforded communities and those for which NBAPC is eligible. For example, bands are involved in improving access at the systems-level but NBAPC has not been included in these conversations. *"There is the provincial First Nations Advisory Committee, UNBI, and Horizon Health First Nation Liaison*

*Committee and so on, all to enhance the interface between the on-reserve, provincial Department of Health and the Regional Health Authorities – but there is nothing designed specifically for urban Aboriginal people.” Interviewees suggested how to bring urban Aboriginal people’s health needs to the fore. “NBAPC has to connect and build relationships with the Community Health Centre, Public Health and mental health so they know about the urban Aboriginal population.” There are also disjunctions around who delivers health services. As previously noted, some urban Aboriginal people return to their home community for health care.*

Many commented on health service disjunctions around immunization. *“I went to Public Health for my immunization but they said, you are a status Indian, you need to go to your band.” ... “My daughter needed her immunization. Public Health said my band would do that. The band nurse was on maternity leave. I called another band, they said they would be happy to do it – bring her on down.”* Many interviewed commented on the generous reciprocity amongst bands.

After reflecting on the disjunctions experienced across sectors, several interviewees cited the same solutions. *“We need Aboriginal people who understand what is going on in these positions.” ... “We need one structure where programs funded by the federal government are under one department – one central agency for Aboriginal services [health, education, justice, family services and so on]. Now each department has an Aboriginal file but they need to be integrated.”* These voices have been added to the call for precisely this action.<sup>5 15</sup>

### ***Partnerships and networks***

The importance of partners and networks in addressing urban Aboriginal needs and poverty is generally well documented.<sup>5 14</sup> Understandably, each organization has its own mandate and membership but there are a number of additional factors that contribute to disjunctions in service at the systems-level and at the level of the end user. One of those disjunctions is very practical. Presently the five, core urban Aboriginal services are located in five different areas of the city. It is not possible to walk from one service to the other. This is problematic. Research has demonstrated that the co-location of services is foundational to successful ISD<sup>16</sup>, as well as

building community<sup>14</sup>, and supporting Aboriginal language and culture<sup>17</sup> – objectives common to a number of the core urban Aboriginal service providers.

A more difficult dynamic to talk about that has a sustained disjunctive impact on the partnerships and networks required to provide seamless access to services across jurisdictions is the active practice of exclusion. The Federal government excludes based on status, the provincial government excludes based on location and the bands exclude the NBAPC -- *“the Chiefs won’t attend if NBAPC is there.”* There are historical reasons why these tensions persist. Moreover, recent rulings such as Bill C-31 and the McIvor Decision have exacerbated divisiveness. *“The off-reserve are disconnected from their community but can vote so they can be a very powerful lobby and can swing the outcome of the elections on a reserve. In some cases this contributes to the tension between on and off-reserve.”* The inherent politics and tensions across and amongst jurisdictions work against supporting integrated service delivery.

These same tensions also have a negative trickle-down effect. *“NBAPC could have made a submission to the Aboriginal Health Transition Fund but it didn’t have partners.”* ... *“There isn’t enough integration among urban Aboriginal service organizations.”* ... *“We’re doing on the ground work, not high level – we’re not positioned, not political.”* ... *“Off-reserve there’s no data, we’re not organized, groups are not working together.”* The foundational role of partnerships in successful integrated service delivery is well documented<sup>15</sup> – but it is also well understood on the ground. *“The way forward is all about relationships and partnerships. Look outside the box for innovative problem solving. We need to build partnerships.”* Local institutions such as UNB and STU are ideally positioned to bring potential partners together.

In the non-Aboriginal community, government agencies (for example Horizon Health Network), will bring all the service organizations together around a specific project like a community-wide health and well-being needs assessment for example. This enables informal sharing amongst the service organizations around what they are doing, whom they are working with and funding streams to be accessed. By way of contrast, there is no systems-level organization that brings the

core urban Aboriginal service organizations together. This points to the need for a local iteration of the proposed national Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network which recognizes that partnerships and networks are foundational to long-term sustainability and growth.

### **OPPORTUNITIES: BUILDING ON SUCCESS**

There is an opportunity for improving access to services across jurisdictions, which leverages the business acumen of Skigin-Elnog Housing and the vision of Under One Sky Head Start. The desired end result, as proposed by numerous interviewees, is an Urban Aboriginal Family Resource Centre.

#### **Skigin-Elnoog**

Skigin-Elnog's first initiative in 1973 focused on winterizing the homes of off-reserve Aboriginal people by adding insulation, plastic and weather stripping. Today, Skigin-Elnoog operates a province-wide, three-tiered rental assistance program involving 229 rental units for off-reserve Aboriginal people. Skigin-Elnoog programming has expanded to include: a Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program; the Federal/Provincial Emergency Repair Program; the Energy Efficiency Retrofit Program; and, a Home Adaptations for Seniors Independence Program.

There is more to the story. In the fall of 2007, Skigin-Elnoog began delivery of the home ownership component which assists modest income families to own a first home. In the words of one interviewee, "*The mortgage program to help urban Aboriginal people buy houses was very successful -- it lifted folks out of poverty.*" In the fall of 2008, Skigin-Elnoog received a National Housing Award from CMHC for Best Practices in Affordable Housing.<sup>18</sup>

#### ***Skigin-Elnoog's factors for success***

There is much to be learned by looking at the key factors for Skigin-Elnoog's success. NBAPC, the umbrella organization for Skigin-Elnoog, had a governance structure and mandate that met

the provincial and federal agencies' criteria. Skigin-Elnoog's general manager had a vision and was relentless in pursuing it. Skigin-Elnoog was also under exemplary management and leveraged those competencies into a province-wide business. Also, Skigin-Elnoog remained committed to meeting the needs of its sister urban Aboriginal agencies Gignoo Transition House and Under One Sky. On an as-needed-basis, Skigin-Elnoog provides housing for Under One Sky's clients who are, for the most part, single moms. This, however, is not just a story about buildings.

The life transforming impact of warm, safe, secure housing is well documented. Stable housing has been seen to decrease residential migration, contribute to a sense of community and enable women to focus on education and employment.<sup>5</sup> Skigin-Elnoog is well positioned to leverage its management skills, construction expertise, and track record with federal and provincial funders to make an Aboriginal Family Resource Centre a reality.

### **Under One Sky Head Start**

Under One Sky came about through the concerted efforts of a coalition comprised of: the Fredericton Native Friendship Centre, the MAWIW Tribal Council, the Union of NB Indians Training Institute, the Aboriginal Women's Council and NBAPC. Under One Sky is the only off-reserve, Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) funded Aboriginal Head Start program in NB. Under One Sky services Aboriginal children ages three to six and their families. The program focuses on the six components of PHAC's Aboriginal Head Starts located across Canada: culture and language, education, health promotion, nutrition, social support, and parent involvement.

Under One Sky is licensed for six children in the morning and six children in the afternoon. There are 23 families on the waiting list. *"All but two of the families are single parent households." ... "All but two of the 12 moms are under 25 years of age. One mom has five children and another is pregnant with her fifth." ... "The families have all the trappings of poverty."* Under One Sky is unusual in that it provides children with transportation to and from the Centre as well as a hot lunch.

Although attendance at Head Start is free, parents must commit to attending eight out of 10 parent sessions. Transportation to and from these evening sessions as well as on-site babysitting are provided by the Center. *“The focus of the parent sessions could be crafts, nutritional bingo or a fund raiser for their annual group outing to a Pow wow in another province. There is almost 100% attendance.”* Through these monthly meetings, the Centre has created a trusted community for young moms and their families. In addition, the Centre has made it possible for a number of the older children in these families to become certified babysitters. Once qualified, these babysitters become a valued resource for that community.

Just as Under One Sky invests in its children, it invests in its staff. Presently one staff member is enrolled in St. Thomas University’s Native Studies’ two-year Maliseet Immersion Teachers Program. A second staff member is standing by to follow in her footsteps. Through education of its staff, Under One Sky anticipates that it will have an immersion program in place within three years. The Centre’s philosophy around its evolving language immersion program is simple, *“Culture is embedded in the language so if you have the language you don’t need to have [teach] ‘culture’.”* Under One Sky has identified the need to make language important to families, *“It starts at Under One Sky if not before with outreach programs for new moms.”* This last comment speaks to the Centre’s vision moving forward.

In addition to helping these young families create a community and connecting them with Gignoo Transition House, Skigin-Elnoog Housing, the Fredericton Friendship Centre and NBAPC, Under One Sky wants to extend their programming and *“get at the formative years with children and parents”* ... *“Offer a parenting class, parents need to know that they are worthy and have choices.”* ... *“Have a multipurpose room where parents can meet with a lawyer for legal advice, or where parents can meet with a nutritionist or fitness instructor.”* Moreover, the Centre wants *“to build a daycare”* and to *“continue our support for those children through an after-school program.”* ... *“We want to build a big enough space so the support for these children and their families can continue after they leave the Centre.”* The payoffs related to

engaging parents early-on and the sustained support of a trusted community are well documented.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, as pointed out by the Centre’s Director, “*the kids come in at two years of age so parents have three years of involvement with the centre. That involvement with the child will continue when the child goes into the school system.*” As we now know, parental engagement is foundational to success at school.<sup>18</sup>

### ***Under One Sky Head Start’s factors for success***

So what are the factors for Under One Sky’s success? The Centre came about because of a clearly identified need. The Urban Aboriginal organizations and the organizations representing the on-reserve populations came together in support of the project recognizing that “*these children are our leaders of tomorrow.*” Collectively, they also had the capacity to write the application. The manager has made it the centre’s mandate to invest in staff as well as children. The manager also recognizes the value and importance of sustaining networks and establishing partnerships. Dr. Jessica Ball, in her work supporting Aboriginal communities around customized and culturally sensitive ISD, notes that success happens when there is a hook and a hub.<sup>15</sup> Applying her Hook & Hub model, Under One Sky is the hub and the children are the hook. One can easily imagine Under One Sky and Skigin-Elnoog leveraging their combined success, vision and leadership into an urban Aboriginal Family Resource Centre enhancing urban Aboriginal people’s access to services across all four jurisdictions.

## **PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS**

The urban Aboriginal organizations could contribute to access across jurisdictions by: cross appointing board members; aligning and sharing resources; partnering and networking; and exposing each other to promising practices. More specifically they might:

1. Come together and collectively pursue an Aboriginal Family Resource Centre. Enlist the guidance and support of national Aboriginal agencies, for example the Ottawa Inuit Children’s Centre<sup>20</sup>, foundations and others including local community partners, local universities, all

levels of government and their respective departments to assist in realizing this vision.

2. Establish a cross-jurisdictional/inter-departmental working group to evolve and deploy a strategy for graduating urban Aboriginal youth from school with Level 2 certificates.

3. In concert with the relevant government departments and in particular Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, commission a body of research to better understand the potential as well as the needs of Fredericton's male and female urban Aboriginal people between the ages of 14 and 24.

4. Explore mentorship opportunities offered by regional and national urban Aboriginal organizations as well as local community organizations, for example UNB's Community Health Centre<sup>21</sup> and Fredericton's Supportive Housing Network.<sup>22</sup>

5. Finally, UNB and STU Aboriginal programs and institutes could invite the core urban Aboriginal organizations and urban Aboriginal professionals into the fold and support them in developing networks and partnerships with the universities' practice and research communities, the city of Fredericton and beyond.

## **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following policy recommendations will involve the cooperation of the urban Aboriginal community as well as the support and cooperation of related provincial and federal government departments and agencies. In addition to long term goals around sufficient and sustained block funding and streamlined reporting – and pooled funding controlled by the urban Aboriginal population, there are a number of achievable short term “wins”.

1. Establish a provincial, web-based portal that offers a single point of entry for ‘granular’ information about federal, provincial, band, municipal and local urban Aboriginal resources, services and programs. Cite names, addresses, locations, phone and e-mail addresses. This level



of granularity is required in order to be truly useful. Service NB (<http://www.snb.ca>) and the Saint John Human Development Council (<http://www.sjhdc.ca>) are national leaders in this arena – bring them on-board as foundational partners.

2. Leverage Under One Sky into an Aboriginal Family Resource Centre that provides culturally appropriate access to health, education and early childhood development, and social services. Evolve the Aboriginal Family Resource Centre as a spiritual and cultural focal point for the urban Aboriginal community and its extended family. The creation of an Aboriginal Family Resource Centre affords the opportunity to build on the community's current successes as well as leverage existing partnerships and expertise within its own community and the broader community of Fredericton.

3. The government is implementing a universal income assistance program. Legislate universal protocols for accessing income assistance on and off-reserve.

4. Establish as appropriate: health, social development/child and family services, employment and training, as well as education and early childhood development coordinators or facilitators. Co-locate them in the Aboriginal Family Resource Centre.

5. Through deliberate, institutional and broad community-based support for STU's work on mother-tongue medium education, support Under One Sky in its goal to become a Maliseet immersion program.<sup>23</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

This paper contributes to our understanding of the challenges around accessing services across jurisdictions and explores what might constitute culturally appropriate ISD. It has also put forward practice and policy recommendations that would improve urban Aboriginal peoples' abilities to access services across jurisdictions. Clearly, success moving forward is predicated on:

fostering and strengthening relationships that enhance services for Aboriginal people; and breaking down the extant silo mentality that prevents cooperation between and amongst service providers. What's encouraging about this picture is that the urban Aboriginal people and the city of Fredericton, with a little help from the province, have everything at hand to address many of the gaps and disjunctions/duplications cited. Taking action on these gaps and disjunctions is only a matter of political and community will. Furthermore, the proposed provincial portal and Urban Aboriginal Family Resource Centre, as well as the key take home messages around optimizing communication, networks and partnerships, and identifying and leveraging local resources and capacity -- will be of interest to urban Aboriginal communities right across Canada.

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## APPENDIX A: GUIDE FOR KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

### Promising Practices: Providing “Services Across Jurisdictions” For First Nations living in Fredericton, NB

1. Please confirm your name and the position that you hold within your department/agency/organization.
2. Can you please provide me with an overview of the health/education services/programs that your department/agency/organization provides for aboriginal peoples living in Fredericton?
3. Do you have reports, papers or quantitative data that you could share on these services/programs (cost, utilization, comparative data, and so on)?
4. Are your programs/services provided across jurisdictions (band, provincial, federal, other)?
5. If so, can you please map out for me how this works? In what ways are your programs/services integrated across jurisdictions?
6. In what ways are these programs/services -- delivered across jurisdictions, *successful*?
7. In what ways are your programs/services -- delivered across jurisdictions, still a *work-in-progress*?
8. Can you summarize the *barriers* to ISD across jurisdictions?
9. Can you summarize the *enablers* to ISD across jurisdictions?
10. Do you have any *practice* recommendations?
11. Do you have any *policy* recommendations?
12. Are there any policy/practice/research *gaps* around ISD across jurisdictions that you would like to bring to our attention?
13. Other comments?