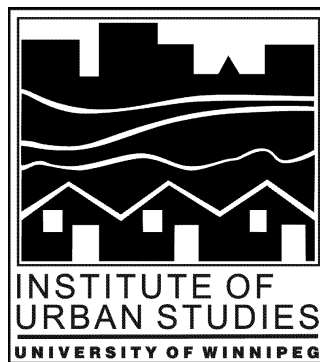


# *Focus Group Discussion Paper*

## *Final Report*

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On behalf of  
Western Economic Diversification Canada



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***Focus Group Discussion Paper***

Final Report.

Principle Investigator: Jino Distasio

**About the Institute of Urban Studies**

Founded in 1969 by the University of Winnipeg, the Institute of Urban Studies (IUS) was created at a time when the city's "urban university" recognized a need to address the problems and concerns of the inner city. From the outset, IUS has been both an educational and an applied research centre. The Institute has remained committed to examining urban development issues in a broad, non-partisan context and has never lost sight of the demands of applied research aimed at practical, often novel, solutions to urban problems and issues.

*This project was carried out by the Institute of Urban. The views expressed in this report are therefore those of the Institute of Urban Studies and the participants who participated. The views, opinions, and thoughts of participants are not assumed to be fact. Every attempt has been made to accurately reflect the information gathered and reported in the focus groups.*

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## **Executive Summary**

The material contained in the following report is based on focus groups conducted with key service providers in the city of Winnipeg. In total, seven focus groups provided a thorough overview of the most important services persons access upon arrival into the city. The preliminary findings suggest:

- A change in the demographics of persons accessing services has been observed over the last few years. This can be characterized by an increased number of single mothers looking for a range of necessary services.
- Overall, access to services has improved in recent years. This is the result of an increasing number of programs being provided.
- The delivery of services to those in need can be greatly improved through the creation of more visible locations. Storefront services are essential in ensuring people are aware providers exist.
- Storefront locations must also be centrally located and accessible by the community.
- There appears to be an increased number of “informal referrals” by various agencies. This is working well in providing persons access to services beyond their current programs. However, this remains dependent on the level of knowledge workers have of other programs.
- The provision of information must extend past the front doors of service providers. They must be able to connect with people in the surrounding community and also into various locations throughout the province. People must come into the city with a sense of what is available to them.
- Providers must take into account that persons need a range of services and the traditional delivery of single services is out-dated. Furthermore, services must be adaptable to meet the needs of the individual.

## **Policy Observations**

The report concluded that the provision of services to Aboriginal persons has steadily increased over the last decade. This has included more programs and the development of new agencies operating under various delivery mechanisms. The policy implication observed in the completion of this report include:

- The need to strengthen the connection between programs, with an emphasis on creating the necessary policies to ensure a greater level of coordination among various levels of government and community based organizations.
- Enhancing inter-departmental coordination is especially important to ensure that those in need of services are able to access a range of programs. This must focus on ensuring that information relating to programs is diffused accurately to various internal departments. This would be applicable to all levels of government offering programs as well as inter-governmentally.
- Although difficult to implement, efforts must continue to strengthen the knowledge of front-line staff to the programs, services and resources existing. This was observed to be a critical area as informal referrals appeared common place but dependant on the level of knowledge of individual workers. This objective could be best achieved through the implementation of a program, which has various agencies conducting presentations to staff in other organizations to make them aware of what is available.
- Health Care provider commented on the benefits of staff training in the area of cultural sensitivity. This is an area that should be pursued to ensure that all staff are aware of the cultural distinctions existing.
- A better mechanism needs to be examined to diffuse more information about existing resources to not only service providers but to communities from which people move.

## 1.0 Background

The provision of services to Aboriginal persons arriving into the city of Winnipeg is a critical area of concern for policy makers, service providers and the general public. Within this context, it is essential that better information be obtained as to whether the needs of newly arrived persons are being met, and the extent to which existing service provision could be enhanced to ensure that adequate access is maintained.

The ability to access essential services such as medical or housing is important in contributing to a higher quality of life. Equally, the inability to find necessary services can have a detrimental affect on the well being of residents. When one takes into account the stresses of moving into a new environment, finding needed services like medical, housing or a good neighbourhood further enhances the importance of not only the provision of the service itself, but also the support mechanisms in place to facilitate the connection between providers and users. To this point, it is essential that people be able to easily find needed services or be referred to others when necessary. This situation is heightened during the mobility process, as recent arrivals may not necessarily have adequate information on what services are available in the city.

The material presented in this report builds on the strengths of the larger *First Nations/Métis/Inuit Mobility Study*. This study is an ongoing examination of the key issues surrounding the mobility process, and the subsequent accessing of services within Winnipeg. As the coordinating consultant, the Institute of Urban Studies (IUS) has worked in close consultation with stakeholders to examine the mobility process from a number of perspectives. To date, this work has resulted in the accumulation of nearly 900 interviews with persons self-identifying as having recently arrived in Winnipeg. In addition, over 1000 services<sup>1</sup> have been listed by participants, representing a diverse set of interests including health, education, training, employment services, housing, and cultural/spiritual. In total, twelve distinct sub-sets of services were classified in preliminary reports.

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<sup>1</sup> The total number of services includes an accumulation of all services listed in survey one and two. Therefore, this includes the continued use of services over both surveys along with the addition of any new services.

The intent of the larger *First Nations/Métis/Inuit Mobility Study*, is to examine the characteristics of the population moving into the city including access to services, socio-economic status, issues relating to neighbourhood and housing, and the general satisfaction with the city. These issues will be examined over repeated surveys to gauge whether the expectations and access to services, along with adjustment to the city, improves as persons remain in the city over an extended period of time. It is anticipated that well over 1000 interviews will be completed prior to the conclusion of this report.

The present report, which examines service providers specifically, offers an essential layer in better understanding the complexity of the mobility process. By concentrating attention on key service providers and gauging their reactions to the issues raised, it is hoped that a more balanced perspective can be achieved.

## **1.1 Report Objective**

The primary objectives of the present report are to:

- conduct detailed interviews (within a focus group setting) with key service providers to assess reaction to the issues raised by respondents;
- assess current strengths and weaknesses in the provision of services to First Nations, Métis or Inuit persons; and
- examine potential areas of improvement and outline the gaps within the current system.

Given that the range of services listed was diverse, this report concentrates on the top service providers. This includes housing, education, employment training, health and social services. These categories represented over 60% of the services listed by respondents. Therefore, concentrating on these providers was deemed essential in providing additional information on important services and potentially, offer areas for improvement to the existing service delivery structure.

In total, seven focus groups assessed the above noted objectives.

## **1.2 The Report Structure**

The report commences with an overview of the key service providers (housing, employment training, education, health and social services). This is followed with a general description of the focus group structure. The report concludes with a detailed overview of the critical findings and observations obtained during the focus groups. In the discussion of the results, key observations are highlighted at the conclusion of each section. Each bulleted point highlights pertinent concerns raised. The bullet points can also be found, in sequential order, in Appendix D.



## **2.0 Services Accessed**

The respondents who participated in the *First Nations/Métis/Inuit Mobility Study* identified more than 1000 services they had accessed over the first two surveys. Respondents listed all services currently being used, rated their satisfaction, and detailed any problems they were experiencing. Respondents were also asked to identify services they were in need of but could not access. The issues and concerns voiced by respondents were used in the formulation of the present focus group template (see appendix to review template).

### **2.1 Service Sub-sets**

As noted, over 1,000 services were listed by Aboriginal persons who had recently moved to Winnipeg (approximately 850 were listed during the first survey and an additional 200 during the second survey). The types of services accessed were subsequently subdivided into the following twelve categories:

- Social Services
- Employment Services
- Medical Services
- Education Services
- Support Services
- Housing Services
- Aboriginal Services
- Transportation Services
- Legal Services
- Education for children
- Recreation Services
- Church Services

## **2.2 Services Selected for Focus Groups**

As noted, the service categories chosen for the present focus groups were based on selecting the most frequently cited services and consist of the following:

- Social Services
- Employment Services
- Medical Services
- Education Services
- Housing Services

It should be noted that within each service category, numerous sub-groups were identified and contacted for participation in the focus group. Within the social services category, a focus group was conducted with Employment Income Assistance representatives under employment services, two focus groups were conducted with service agencies that fell under employment and information (Partners for Careers) and under employment and education (West Broadway Employment Centre). With respect to education services, a focus group was conducted with the University of Winnipeg's Aboriginal Access program. A one-on-one interview was conducted with a researcher studying Aboriginal health, as well as a focus group with Public Health Nurses from Central Winnipeg was conducted to gain information on community health. Two other focus groups were conducted with Kinew Housing and Manitoba Housing. The intent of the focus groups was to examine the issues of subsidized housing from both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal housing perspective.

In total, seven focus groups provided the information from which this report is framed. Furthermore, these focus groups are strongly felt to represent a cross-section of the most frequently used services by Aboriginal persons recently arriving in the city.

### **2.2.1 Concerns and Issues Raised**

With regard to service use and access, respondents raised a number of issues. This includes how respondents initially found out about services. To this point it was felt that a high percentage of respondents were informed about services by word-of-mouth; however, according to providers,

this may not necessarily be the case. It is thought that perhaps more respondents were referred to a service by an individual (from an agency), which should be classified as referral, but they may have indicated this as word-of-mouth. Additionally, when referring an individual to a service a pamphlet (located at the agency) may have been used but not captured in the survey results. This is an important point as many providers indicated pamphlets and directories are critical tools for assessing what is available.

Concerns amongst providers were also raised with regards to overall satisfaction levels. It is thought that satisfaction levels may actually represent two distinct issues. First, they may represent respondents' satisfaction with accessing services. The harder services are to access the lower the satisfaction levels may be. Secondly, satisfaction levels may also represent how satisfied respondents were with the actual service. This satisfaction level would be based on the service meeting the respondents' needs. Here the greater the feeling of the service meeting the respondents' needs the higher the level of satisfaction may be. Providers felt these concerns were not accurately accounted for in the larger mobility study.

Additionally, a number of issues were raised by respondents related to specific services. The following is a sample (A complete list can be found in the appendix.):

- **Education:** Lack of educational funding available.
- **Employment:** More Aboriginal employment agencies and more Aboriginal workers within the whole employment services spectrum.
- **Health:** More treatment programs are needed.
- **Housing:** Little affordable housing available, and can't afford housing in better condition.
- **Social Assistance:** The application process is too lengthy – one must wait a long time to see a caseworkers and for assistance (money).

## **3.0 Description of Focus Groups**

Focus groups acted as an important tool for assessing the thoughts of service providers in an open and sharing environment. The use of focus groups yielded secondary information related to the broader issues and helped establish commonalities among issues raised. Examining issues with service providers worked well to help flesh out some of the issues cited over the first two surveys while addressing some of the gaps identified by respondents.

### **3.1 Objectives**

The purpose of conducting the focus groups was to consider the opinions of service providers. The focus groups allowed researchers to analyze the thoughts and experiences of service providers, and the reasons for these thoughts. For the most part, focus groups are considered primarily a qualitative endeavor, generating a broad perspective on a range of issues. This open and flowing format allows researchers to engage participants and probe issues in greater detail than traditional survey mechanisms.

#### **3.1.1 Format**

The administrative component of the focus groups consisted of one moderator and a note taker. The role of the moderator was to keep the discussion flowing and ensure participants were aware that there were no right or wrong answers. The focus group structure assessed the following;

- Gaps in the provision of services.
- The mobility experience in greater detail.
- Accessibility issues (why are people not accessing services and what needs to be done).
- Addressing gaps that respondents indicated.

### **3.1.2 Template**

A focus group template consisting of questions was developed to facilitate the direction and consistency of each focus group (see appendix). The template consisted of a few main questions with sub-questions to allow for more in-depth probing. The question themes were:

- issues and challenges of accessing services,
- strengths of the service providers with accessing services,
- gaps in the current system,
- ensuring continued access to services,
- strategies to improve access to services,
- and demographic and accessibility changes over the past few years.

### **3.1.3 Settings**

The focus group settings were consistent. They were conducted at a number of locations including lunch at a hotel or university to boardrooms at the location of the service providers. Each focus group consisted of three or more persons, plus the moderator and note-taker. The majority of focus groups were tape-recorded to allow the Institute of Urban Studies to refer back and ensure consistency in examining the results. For the most part, each focus group lasted approximately 1 ½ hours.

## **4.0 Discussion of Results**

The discussion of the results commences with an introduction and then proceeds to discuss the questions in sequential order (please refer to the appendix for the focus group template).

### **4.1 Overview**

During the course of conducting the focus groups, participants raised a number of critical issues. This included thoughts on what is needed to improve current services to the changes that have taken place over the last few years. The following sections synthesize the findings into key themes and issues raised. The responses for each focus group have been summarized and can be reviewed in the accompanying appendix. Although the discussions have not been transcribed word for word, every attempt has been made to ensure the summaries are an accurate representation of key issues raised.

### **4.2 Changes Over the Years**

Towards the end of the focus group, participants were asked to discuss what they felt has changed over the last few years within their respective service areas. This included asking whether the people accessing services have changed (i.e. younger or older), have the services themselves improved, and has general access to the services changed. For the most part, there were commonalities within the responses amongst the providers. This included lengthy discussions on the changes in the demographic profile of those accessing services. It was generally felt that there has been an increase in the number of single mothers accessing services from housing to health. This was perhaps the most significant finding with respect to changes which have occurred over the last few years. This issue also points to a need to ensure single mothers have the ability to find services necessary for themselves and their children.

In addition, many providers noted that there has been improvement in the number of services being offered by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies. However, ensuring that those in need of services are connected to providers remains an outstanding concern. To this point, many

providers felt that there are adequate numbers of services being offered but perhaps the key issue is how persons in need of services are connected to providers. This issue remains one of the more difficult concerns of both the focus groups and the larger study.

- **This issue of ‘access to services’ has been highlighted as an area of concern and one that must continue to be improved. Assisting those most in need is of utmost importance.**

### **4.3 Issues and Challenges in Accessing Services**

The first segment of the focus group asked participants to discuss the issues and challenges facing the agency in the provision of services to recently arrived Aboriginal persons. This question was deemed a core component of the focus group and one in which important observations have been drawn.

For the most part, the issues and challenges facing recently arrived Aboriginal persons fell into a number of key areas including access, levels of funding, transitional supports and the visibility of the service itself.

Access to services was deemed an ongoing challenge. It was felt by many that those most in need of services are often those who are the most difficult to reach. To this point, providers agreed that it is simply not possible to assist all persons in need. However, improvement to the accessibility of services is essential to ensuring that there is the opportunity to find a service that is required. This is an important consideration as many providers felt that access has generally improved over the last few years. However, with respect to health services, providers pointed to increasing pressure within the system. Most notable was the lack of both doctors and frontline staff which have caused some clinics to limit access to services as some only accept persons from specific postal codes.

A limiting factor in the provision of services remains the level of funding. Although many providers felt there have been improvements in the system, there is not enough funding to

provide essential services at a sustainable level. As an example, in the provision of affordable housing, recently arrived persons face waiting lists that are in the hundreds. This is a critical issue facing both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal housing agencies. It was further noted that demographics are also a concern as larger families are more difficult to assist, since there is simply not enough larger three-bedroom units to accommodate larger families. Funding in housing was deemed to be a core concern of agencies struggling to provide affordable housing. This includes ensuring that units are adequately maintained and offer reasonable comfort to occupants.

Funding was also cited as critical in education services. Providers indicated that the level of support offered to students is inadequate and contributes to poverty amongst students. This is a major concern for students recently arriving in the city who are not accustomed to budgeting for housing, food and educational supports (books and supplies). It was felt that this creates a stressful environment for students and can compromise their studies. With respect to this issue, Employment Income Assistance<sup>2</sup> (EIA) also flagged this as a major concern as they felt that students are not aware that, in most cases, they do not qualify for assistance while in the city to study. EIA suggested that more information was essential to ensure students are prepared and able to undertake studies.

Another issue and challenge is with respect to the visibility of the service. Many felt that some services need to be more visible (i.e. better locations, more advertising etc.). This issue was felt to contribute to the fact that some persons are simply unaware that the necessary supports exist. An example given was the single window initiative offered by the Winnipeg Housing and Homeless Initiative (WHHI). In this example, it was felt that by housing more services in a central location, persons would have a higher likelihood of finding a range of services. Visibility was also related to the physical location of services – being more centrally located and in areas where they can be accessed by passer-bys and such. A positive example of this is the ongoing work of an employment and training center. They feel that they have integrated well into the West Broadway neighbourhood by actively looking for ways to disseminate information about their programs. Furthermore, they are content that their location and word of mouth reputation

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<sup>2</sup> Employment and Income Assistance is the Province of Manitoba's social assistance or welfare program.



has contributed to overcoming some of the problems of having a less visible location (this provider was located in the basement). As noted, geographic location has also become an issue for health providers as they restrict access to those persons residing in certain areas. Although this relates to resources, their inability to accept all persons is an issue.

The final challenge raised was lack of transitional services. This issue was raised by a number of persons and was defined as the lack of supports extending past the service they were trying to access (i.e. many people need a host of services and there is not enough connection between providers to either refer people to other services, or have the necessary information on what is being offered). Two important examples were found in education and employment. With respect to education, it was felt that institutions must be prepared to provide students with not only educational services, but a range of supports that extend beyond the classroom and reach into the community in which students live. The example given was that schools must not only consider the needs of students but also their children and the adjustment process for those persons moving in from smaller communities. A second example raised was that some persons do not have the ability to access what they need nor do they have knowledge of what is available to them. Therefore, attempts must be made to ensure providers do a better job of referring persons in need or that a better transitional infrastructure be established (like the single window).

- **The establishment of more single window agencies who can offer a range of services is essential in contributing to a higher quality of life.**
- **Higher visibility and connection with the community is essential in ensuring people are aware of what services are available.**

#### **4.4 Current Strengths of the Service Providers**

Providers were asked to discuss what they felt their current strengths were in the provision of services to recently arrived Aboriginal persons. A number of common issues were raised with respect to current strengths. This included the necessity to match services required to each individual i.e. each person is unique and providers must recognize that each person has a diverse set of requirements that need to be addressed. For example, a strength of the education service is

in their ability to not only focus solely on education services but to also help with other issues outside of the classroom (such as finding a job or housing). It was felt that it was important to “replicate a small community feeling” in the provision of educational services. According to health providers, this is important as it was felt that “Aboriginals experience a culture shock when they first arrive in the city.” This relates to the fact that many arriving from small communities are accustomed to having the majority of services in one central location. When they are suddenly faced with having to search for services in multiple locations, this can create additional stress and confusion for some persons. Other providers cited their strengths were in the creation of positive environments that were informal but provide essential services and supports for those in need. In the provision of housing, it was felt critical to match persons with not only the type of housing but also the neighbourhood people want to live in. One agency felt their strength was in ranking housing need to ensure those most in need were prioritized. Therefore, if a person was in a crisis and required immediate housing, their needs would be met.

- **For the most part, strengths must include extending assistance outside of the immediate area and being able to refer persons to a range of services. This can include providing information to have more direct contact with other agencies.**
- **A core strength of service providers must be to adjust to meet the needs of a diverse client base and that services must include a strong referral comment to match people to a range of services needed.**

#### **4.5 Responses to Issues Raised**

In the larger *First Nations/Métis/Inuit Mobility Study*, respondents were asked to list critical issues with the services they were accessing. These issues were then categorized and presented in the focus groups to gauge the reactions of providers and to get a sense of whether the issues were accurate (from their estimation). As the issues raised were unique to each type of provider, they have been listed in the appendix.

In general, service providers tended to agree with the issues raised by respondents. With respect to educational services the two issues raised were lack of funding and student housing. These issues were confirmed in the focus group. In fact, lack of funding (for students) was cited as being an area of concern given that it impacts a student's life and their ability to access other services such as housing. It was pointed out that the students who receive funding have not seen an increase for many years. This has resulted in students taking on part time jobs and expending energies away from learning. The lack of affordable housing was also seen as a problem and one, which is not only about the units available but their location and perhaps even the ability to live in closer proximity to other students.

Housing issues were also important and providers responded to the five points raised by stating they concurred with the issues. For the most part, the agencies consulted suggested that an ageing housing stock and an increased demand are making it difficult to provide housing to those most in need. Both housing agencies noted that the rental housing market in Winnipeg is a contributing factor to the issues facing Aboriginal persons as it too is experiencing a high level of demand. At present, the vacancy rate is just over 1%, which makes finding housing more difficult. However, it was suggested that affordability remains a key problem and connecting people with affordable units (based on family size etc.) is problematic as not enough larger units are available (3 bedrooms).

With respect to long wait lists and safety concerns, both agencies have been taking steps to improve these conditions but they still face challenges. It was suggested that some persons do not want to live in certain subsidized projects because they are afraid for their safety or they are located too far from needed services.

Housing was perhaps the most important service being accessed by recently arriving persons and given the importance of housing, it remains one of the most difficult services to ensure all persons are satisfied with the current level of support from various agencies. Again many of the problems stem from a lack of supply of housing and issues relating to choice of location (many persons want to live in certain neighbourhoods).

For health providers, it was felt that more treatment programs are required. Furthermore, being in close proximity to services remains essential. It was also noted that medical services provided in other parts of the province provide more services from one central location (i.e. they are better able to connect persons to services needed simply because they are housed in one location). Although this is not a practical solution for the city of Winnipeg, better directories and referral mechanism can help reduce the stresses of having to search for services in multiple locations.

- **For the most part, providers agreed with the comments of participants and cited the need to expand resources to correct some of the problems highlighted.**

#### **4.6 Gaps in the current provision of services**

Following the discussion of key issues raised, providers were asked to identify gaps in the current provision of services. This included asking whether other program areas were needed or what could be done to help facilitate greater access and use of existing services.

The current gaps identified included such issues as lack of referrals and outreach, the lack of a central registry or more integrated approaches to delivery of services.

With respect to lack of referrals, it was felt that more could be done to connect persons to services they need. To this point, referrals were seen as a critical method of ensuring persons find the right services and are informed of additional services. It should also be noted that 20% of all services listed by respondents were found by referral.

A second gap was in outreach. More outreach was seen as a way of connecting those persons most in need with services. However, outreach services have not been an area that many providers have been expanding into. This remains an important area for continued improvement.

An example of a gap raised is housing -- where it was felt that a central registry is missing. This was a critical observation as providers felt that if someone could register once for housing, this would alleviate the number of places a person would have to visit. An example of this was if a

single mother applied for housing at one location (and is told her name will be put on a wait list), she must then go across town to register yet again with another subsidized housing program. This example, although simple, becomes stressful and problematic if the single mother has her children with her and she has to take the bus to multiple locations. Furthermore, this situation is heightened during the winter months.

Employment Income Assistance noted two critical gaps. The first is the issue of students coming into the city and attempting to access EIA benefits while undertaking studies. This is a problem because most students do not qualify for assistance and from the perspective of EIA, there is a need to address this issue by providing more detailed information on the various services in communities to ensure that individuals are aware of all the requirements prior to coming into the city. A second gap was in the provision of services to persons coming into the city to access medical treatment. In many cases, it was felt that persons are coming into the city for an extended period of time but there are not currently enough supports for these persons (shelter or EIA assistance). Both items raised by EIA point to the need to clarify policy issues and concerns and secondly to ensure individuals have access to adequate information prior to coming to the city.

Health providers further note that more needs to be done to ensure access is seamless. It was felt that a mentorship program for recently arriving persons would be helpful in curbing the frustration that many face when trying to locate a range of necessary services.

- **Gaps in the current provision of services are related to the need to help connect people with a range of services – providers must work together to be better informed as to what options exist.**
- **Providing information and support must extend outside of the city and reach those potential persons considering moving.**
- **Providing increased support to students and those in need of medical services and related supports were two areas identified as requiring additional due diligence amongst providers to ensure their unique circumstances are adequately dealt with.**

## 4.7 Concerns with Access

Service providers were asked how they ensured there was continued access to their services i.e. how did they help facilitate better connections (advertising, more outreach etc). The results of this question pointed to a number of issues including increasing visibility on the internet, more referrals, visiting communities, developing newsletters, and having more visible locations.

With respect to increasing presence on the internet, it was felt that this is an important area to continue to improve but also that one must acknowledge that not all persons will have the ability to use this method. Therefore, although this is a critical area to improve, it remains one that must be balanced with more traditional methods (pamphlets and directories). More referrals was also seen as a way for ensuring agencies are connected to those who need services. This was seen as a way of creating informal networks of diverse providers who must become better aware of the range of services currently available. As an example, EIA stated that their employees do a tremendous job on providing referral information on an “informal basis”. This includes having staff aware of existing programs in the community in order to provide applicants with the needed information to not only access EIA but other programs that may be of benefit. The role of the informal referral community is one that must be encouraged and strengthened. For the most part, providers acknowledged that there are adequate supports and programs but connecting people to the multitude of programs remains difficult and sometimes dependant on the level of knowledge existing employees have. Furthermore, the learning curve for new employees may result in a lack of knowledge about programs existing beyond their front doors (pamphlet and directories may help).

Other issues to facilitate increased access were related to ensuring that information is available – this includes pamphlets and newsletters, which could be distributed to the local community (surrounding neighbourhoods), and also to rural communities and reserves. The transfer of information is an essential part of the process of connecting and exposing persons to the services which exist in the city. Most providers agreed that they must work more effectively to connect with surrounding communities to ensure residents are aware of what services they offer prior to their arrival in the city.

For the most part, ensuring continued access was seen as starting with the basics (better referral systems to passing out information to the local community). From this, creating more visible locations i.e. storefronts in areas where a greater number of Aboriginal persons might pass by would also help strengthen the delivery of programs. Central locations is an area of concern in the provision of services. All providers pointed to the problems facing persons coming into the city from small communities. In many cases, town offices were focal points for residents who could access most services in a given area from one location. When they move into the city, they are faced with the daunting task of having to seek out services in multiple locations. This is a stressful situation to be in and one which causes many problems in terms of the time and effort necessary to find the services most frequently accessed. However, it is important to note that many providers stated emphatically that they were moving to more integrated approaches in which persons can access multiple services from one central location. A good example is EIA's central location. At this "one stop" location, individuals are assessed to determine which programs are best suited to their needs. Eventually, the Province of Manitoba is expecting to integrate an ever-greater range of services including housing and health.

- **Ensuring access to service is a critical concern and one which must include the dissemination of information to surrounding neighbourhoods and also Manitoba communities.**
- **The move to more developed and integrated services is an important step in ensuring more people have access to a "range of services."**
- **High visibility locations are essential in exposing people to existing services.**
- **The informal referral process must be encouraged and strengthened as this process is only as good as the knowledge levels of its staff.**

## 4.8 Solutions and Strategies

The final area examined was that of identifying solutions and strategies for improving the current provision of services. Many of the solutions and strategies related to increasing program funding and/or the provision of a greater number of affordable housing units. These issues were seen as being critical in ensuring more persons have access to much needed housing. This included students who are struggling to find decent and affordable shelter.

Other strategies identified by providers included the functioning of programs and the need to concentrate more on the requirements of the individual. Many providers pointed to the issue of being more attuned to what a particular person needs and that providers must tailor a range of services to match each person. The education provider stated that it is important to consider what they called the “responding to the depth of needs of students”. This referred to a “bundle of services” students need but are not necessarily attached to the institution. To this point, they felt it is important to move beyond the traditional model of simply providing academic support services. This new philosophy must include how providers can extend services past their front doors....and examine novel ways of reaching people in the community. An employment center used the term “cross-pollenization” which refers to the need to germinate the seed of service information in a variety of locations. It is within this context that a greater number of providers will have the ability to assess the needs of individuals in order to develop and understand the range of services that may be of benefit. This informal referral method may help connect a greater number of persons with a range of services from a diverse set of providers.

Many of the solutions inferred the need to create a more centralized delivery mechanism. Such an organization would provide a host of services, which could be housed within one location. Many referred to this as a way to become more integrated in their delivery of services. Examples included both EIA and Manitoba Housing, who are both moving to provide a more integrated delivery method. In fact, the goal is to ultimately house the services of both these agencies under one roof. A second example of a more central or integrated approach was also from housing. It was felt that the delivery of supportive housing should include a central registry from which individuals could apply for assisted housing across numerous programs. A novel inclusion in this



example was that it should include private sector housing (which would provide shelter at affordable rates).

Within the integrated approach, the need for convenient locations was also stressed as being paramount to ensuring continued access to services. This certainly reinforces the earlier contention that services must not only be accessible but they must be located in central locations which are visible to a large number of persons. Delivery services within the community is an example of being more visible.

Health providers added a number of important suggestions to improve the current health services environment. This included developing the aforementioned mentorship program which would work with recently arriving persons to ensure they are able to access as many services and supports necessary. This is an important and simple method of connecting an arriving person with someone currently residing in the city. This personal connection is seen as vital in providing a familiar voice who can help connect a person with services and advice about living in the city. Health providers raised the issue of developing a better understanding of Aboriginal culture amongst health care workers. This has been seen as a critical component of staff training and one that ensures that staff are sensitive to the Aboriginal culture. The health providers noted the significant benefits of this training which they credit as greatly increasing the level of Aboriginal awareness.

- **Creating programs that better address the range of services is critical in being able to tailor programs to the needs of the individual is important.**
- **Increasing the “informal referrals” amongst a diverse range of providers could provide individuals access to a range of needed services.**
- **The centralization of services into a more integrated model of delivery would help ensure that persons have the ability to access multiple services in one location.**
- **The issue of location is also critical as it must be highly visible and accessible to the community.**
- **Building better awareness of the Aboriginal culture is critical for frontline staff.**

## 5.0 Conclusion

This report has assessed the views of service providers in the city of Winnipeg. In total, seven focus groups were conducted with a range of providers representing the most important services listed by respondents in the larger Mobility Study.

The findings in this report point to many significant issues. Most important, providers have noticed a change in the demographics and socio-economic circumstances of persons accessing services. This change has been characterized by an increase in the numbers of single mothers accessing supports to students needing a greater level of assistance in education and related services.

The service providers agree that the provision of services to recently arrived Aboriginal persons is one in which a “range of services” must be provided. It appears that the provision of a single service is no longer the most effective mechanism for the delivery of complex programs and one in which formal and informal linkages exist. Therefore, it was suggested that there is a need to facilitate a more informal referral method (in essence to cross-pollinate the seeds of service information in many agencies). However, this method remains highly contingent on ensuring support staff are well informed on the related programs and services that exist. This will be no easy task but many organizations have undertaken the first steps by producing detailed service directories which could form a vital link to frontline staff and those seeking services.

Within the discussions of services and issues, providers remain vehemently optimistic that positive changes have taken place over the last few years. They further contend that there are many great agencies extending much needed services to Aboriginal persons arriving into the city. In the end, it may be more about finding those most in need of services which will be the greatest challenge. It was felt that those most vulnerable and susceptible to falling through the crack will continue to do so unless providers can reach them through outreach and proactive measures. One such measure is increasing visibility in the community i.e. bringing the services to the community and ensuring that all those in need are aware of their existence and what it is they are trying to do.

In final thought, there appears to be a great need to provide a range of services to an increasingly diverse client base. How governments and policy makers respond to the needs of Aboriginal persons arriving into the city of Winnipeg will be important. It will set the tone for creating a better quality of life and ensuring that those seeking to access services will be connected to providers. However, this connection must not be formed upon arrival into the city. Moreover, it is a connection that must be formed in rural communities, towns, reserves and remote locations within the province. Whether this connection is facilitated through a greater access to technology or by more traditional methods, it must be made to ensure that when persons arrive into the city they have the help they need, a place to sleep and access to the necessities of life.

## **Appendix A**

### **Issues Raised Regarding Specific Services**

#### **Education:**

- Lack of educational funding available.
- Student housing is needed.

#### **Employment:**

- Aboriginal agencies or Aboriginal workers should provide more employment services.
- Aboriginals lack the education and experience that others have when it comes to finding jobs.

#### **Health:**

- More treatment programs are needed.
- Need to live close to medical services for treatment.
- Aboriginals fall through the cracks in the health care system.

#### **Housing:**

- Little affordable housing available, and can't afford housing in better condition.
- Discrimination in regards to who will rent to Aboriginal persons.
- Manitoba Housing is slow to make repairs.
- There are long waiting lists for Manitoba Housing.
- Housing, in general, is in poor condition and unsafe.

#### **Social Assistance:**

- Feel embarrassed or nervous when applying for social assistance.
- Long process- must wait a long time to see a caseworker and for assistance (money).
- Staff does not respect people applying for social assistance.

## Appendix B

### Focus Group Template

**Brief Introduction:** Review the study and the overall objective. Cite some results (the numbers of interviews and some of the key issues).

1. As I have noted, this study is concerned with understanding the access and use of services in the city of Winnipeg by Aboriginal persons recently arriving in the city.
  - What do you consider to be the most important issues and challenges for Aboriginal persons arriving in the city and accessing (insert service type)?
  
2. What do you consider to be your organizations/department's present strengths in assisting newly arrived Aboriginal persons in accessing (insert service type)?
  
3. With respect to (insert service type), respondents identified:
 

(insert comments related to service type)

  - What is your reaction to these issues raised by respondents? Are there any other issues that you can identify as being important?
  - Can you think of any gaps in the current system i.e. what other programs are needed or currently missing that would be of benefit to persons looking for (insert service type)?
  
4. How do you ensure there is continued access to (insert service type) i.e. better advertising, more outreach, better methods to connect with people who need (insert service type)?
  - Respondents told us, they found (insert service type) primarily by:

<b>Service Type by Information Source</b>							
<b>Percentage</b>							
Service Type	Pamphlet	Word-of-mouth	Referral	Directory	Media	Walk-by	Other
Education Service	18.8	51.0	19.8	1.0	8.3	1.0	0
Employment Services	6.4	61.0	20.3	0	8.7	3.5	0
Health Services	4.5	40.5	27.0	4.5	0	17.1	6.3
Housing Services	0	75.6	12.2	4.9	0	0	7.3
Social Services	2.0	74.6	16.7	1.6	0	1.6	3.6

<b>Service Type by Satisfaction Level Percentage</b>			
<b>Service Type</b>	<b>Very Satisfied</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>	<b>Not Satisfied</b>
Education Service	32.7	43.9	23.5
Employment Services	24.6	48.0	27.5
Health Services	45.0	38.7	16.2
Housing Services	22.0	26.8	51.2
Social Services	9.8	42.4	47.8

- What is your reaction to this? Is this what you expected?
5. What solutions or strategies would you offer for improving access to (insert service type)? (probe for newly arrived persons and those who remain in the city).
  6. With respect to some of the issues we've raised, how would you characterize the changes in (insert service type) over the last few years?
    - have they improved,
    - have the people accessing the services changed (age or otherwise)
    - what about issues of access i.e. more or less accessible?
  7. Can you think of any other issues or thoughts?

<b>Information Source for All Services Accessed</b>		
<b>Information Source</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Pamphlet	46	5.5
Word-of-mouth	497	59.8
Referral	160	19.3
Directory	18	2.2
Media	28	3.4
Walking-by/ in neighbourhood	57	6.9
Other	25	3.0
Total	831	100.0

## Appendix C

### Focus Group Notes

#### **Focus Group 1: Education Services**

Important issues and challenges for Aboriginal persons arriving in Winnipeg and accessing education services:

- Housing is a major issue with students. They have a hard time finding apartments in appealing areas and often the small amount of funding they receive limits their choice even more.
- Students who move to Winnipeg from other communities to attend school often leave their support systems behind and end up feeling isolated in Winnipeg.
- Not only do those students attending university have to adjust to a new life, but also if they have children they must deal with transitional issues, which can put added pressure on the parents.
- Band funding often does not cover the students' expenses. Funding also tends to come at the last moment; therefore, students end up registering late due to the lack of notice that they have been sponsored. The University of Winnipeg stated that they have lost students due to the lack of funding available to students (\$675 per month for a single student, this amount has not increased since the 1970s).

The University of Winnipeg's present strengths in assisting newly arrived Aboriginal persons in accessing education services:

- The program is designed to meet the needs of the students. There is more than just a focus on academics, but also a focus on the whole person and they provide whatever supports the students need (i.e. support with socio-economic conditions, along with academics).
- There is a specific focus on Aboriginal students and understanding the challenges and issues they face. Therefore, a transition year program has been created which saves seats for Aboriginal students in specific courses that are thought to be of interest to Aboriginal students. This is done because the university realizes that Aboriginal students often end up registering at the last moment because of funding issues, and without the transition year program the courses they wish to register in may be full.
- The university tries to meet each individual's unique needs. They do this by adjusting and adapting the student services model to fit the Aboriginal students, and then they develop an individual education plan for each student.
- The university tries to replicate a small community and provide the supports Aboriginal students are accustomed to back home.
- The University of Winnipeg is becoming the university of preference by Aboriginal students. This may be linked to the university's connection to many Aboriginal organizations that refer students to the University of Winnipeg.

Reaction to respondents comments (lack of educational funding available and student housing is needed):

- The comments students made are valid; however, another key point is that students are not familiar with the added costs of living in the city (e.g. having to pay a damage deposit before you can move into an apartment, transportation costs, etc.). These addition costs cut into their rent money and restricts their budget.
- With regards to funding, the amount of funding a student receives has not increased since the 1970s. In addition, the money distributed to bands has been frozen, so the funding problems will only get worse as the years go on.
- Due to the small amount of funding available to students, students must often spend large amounts of their time trying to manage their finances (managing the unmanageable budget situation). They are running around to different creditors trying to figure out how to pay their bills and wasting energy that should be spent on studying.
- MMF is also problematic because they are reluctant to sponsor university students and if they do it is often just in the students' last year of studies, but they will fund Red River College students.

Gaps in the current system:

- Bursaries and scholarships are available, but there are a limited number of students who can access them. What are the rest of the students supposed to do? What are non-status Aboriginal students to do? Additional financial resources exist but they are not enough, an expansion of these dollars are needed.
- Two issues exist with regards to the distribution of financial resources:
  - a) bands either need to be encouraged to provide more funding up front, or
  - b) money needs to be provided through the Millennium Scholarship fund to provide aid to the students when they come to the school.

Ensuring continued access to education services:

- For three years the University of Winnipeg has been aggressively participating in career fairs and visiting schools in all parts of northern Manitoba as well as in Winnipeg (the university is connected with Children of the Earth School). They participate in information sessions with the community and inform potential students about what the university has to offer. Additionally, enrollment services actively recruits students.

Reaction to satisfaction levels with educational services:

- Satisfaction levels can be based on two different things. One, is the satisfaction with the way in which the services were delivered. It is expected that satisfaction with how the university delivers the services would be higher because students appreciate how staff go out of their way to help them. The second thing is satisfaction with the results of the services delivered. This may have lower satisfaction levels due to budget constraints not all goals can always be achieved. Students appreciate that the staff is trying, but students are frustrated they cannot always get what they want (an expanded range of services).

Solutions and strategies to improve access to education services:

- Must improve the depth of services and look at the whole person, not just academics. Tutoring addresses the academic side, but mentoring goes beyond this and builds



relationships and gives students experiences to prepare themselves for work and life situations. This is an area that should be expanded.

- With regards to housing there is plans for an Aboriginal house, but the problem is that there is two to three times the demand for housing than what exists in the University of Winnipeg's supply. The university has 8 houses, a couple of floors at Lions Manner, and one small apartment building. The university is working towards a housing registry program that would help students find housing in the community. But this will not solve the problem because all the housing in the community will be above what is affordable for students receiving band funding.

Characteristics of the changes occurring in education services:

- Education services have become more accessible in the last few years because of the efforts of the University of Winnipeg and enrollment services. However, the question is does the university have the support services not only to keep the students at the university, but also to keep them happy?
- Two problems exist: a) band funding is not going to increase, it has not since the 1970s; b) in September credit cards are pitched to students, which often adds to their financial problems by creating extra debt.
- Time and money management create problems. Students can work to supplement the finances they receive from the band, but then they must manage work and courses. If their grades fall then they may not be eligible for band funding the following year. This all comes back to the notion that more funding dollars need to be made available to Aboriginal students.
- More students are coming to the university from all areas, but how big can the university grow and still provide the same environment?

Other thoughts:

- The university is also starting to promote their services to students who are eligible to enroll in the University of Winnipeg Collegiate. Here the focus is on attracting a group of students to create a unique setting where these students would provide the support for each other. This would lessen the impact of leaving their families and friends back home.
- Aboriginal students can receive support when they are living in the city, but once they leave the city they are on their own.
- If a central housing registry was put in place the City of Winnipeg would have to oversee it.

## **Focus Group 2: Employment and Education Services**

Important issues and challenges for Aboriginal persons arriving in Winnipeg and accessing employment and education services:

- People must often schedule appointments, but at the West Broadway Employment Centre drop-ins are welcome.
- Another issue is that there is a lack of assistance with regards to job searches from their caseworkers with social assistance.

West Broadway Employment Centre's present strengths in assisting newly arrived Aboriginal persons in accessing employment and education services:

- An informal and friendly setting.
- They refer within the organization and between organizations.
- Three projects exist under the West Broadway Development Corporation. They are the training centre, which provides formal computer training to social assistance recipient based on a 22-week period. The students then participate in a work placement focused to their individual interests. There is also the job resource centre and a community learner network is being established.
- Another strength is that the West Broadway Employment Centre is not limited to West Broadway residents, it attracts people from across the city.

Reaction to respondents comments (Aboriginal agencies or Aboriginal workers should provide more employment services, Aboriginals lack the education and experience others have when it comes to finding jobs, lack of educational funding available, student housing is needed):

- There needs to be more money so the West Broadway Employment Centre can go out and talk to employers. Additionally, more workers are needed. The West Broadway Employment Centre receives an average of 500 visits per month which are presently managed by one person.
- Funding is a problem for students. Many of the students want to continue on with their education, but there is no financial resources available to them. West Broadway works in partnership with Red River College, but many students cannot afford the to take the night school classes offered there. Other people cannot even get into the West Broadway training program because it is only for people on social assistance.
- Not many people accessing the West Broadway computer training centre have mentioned a need for student housing, but those in the program tend to be upgrading more so than actual students. However, West Broadway has worked with the University of Winnipeg on the issue on student housing. The apartment building at 290 Langside has small one bedroom apartments, which may be ideal for students.
- Operation Go Home also keeps a database of housing in the inner city.
- It would be beneficial to know if the University of Winnipeg through their Aboriginal Student Centre has housing information available to students.

Gaps in the current system:

- An Aboriginal Liaison Officer for the community would be beneficial. West Broadway is presently looking for funding for this position which would cover both outreach and advocacy work for the community.

- There are problems with social assistance. The people who would benefit the most from the computer training program (with strong work ethics and a desire to learn) do not qualify for the program if they are not on social assistance. Instead those people who end up enrolled in the training program tend to be the chronic social assistance recipients who lack the motivation to succeed.
- Pre-employment planning programs are needed to teach people proper work skills and how to budget. Budgeting skills need to be taught before they enter the workforce. Also people do not understand employer-employee relationships, employees often a raise or extra training even though they have not shown a commitment to the job.
- Subsidized wage programs may also be beneficial. A person with a family cannot live off of a minimum wage job, but if their wage was subsidized it may encourage them to continue to work and gain experience, so they can obtain a better paying job in the future.

Ensuring continued access to employment and education services:

- The West Broadway Development Corporation puts out a newsletter (The Broadcaster).
- The organization is well linked to the community and many other organizations (including social assistance) that refer people to them.

Solutions and strategies to improve access to employment and education services:

- Information sessions at specific locations (i.e. the universities) would allow them to get the word out about the resources available in the West Broadway neighbourhood.
- Increased interaction with employers is needed to sell the services that exist.
- A resource book listing all of the services in the West Broadway neighbourhood would be beneficial to many people.
- On a very informal basis the Aboriginal Centre will refer people to the West Broadway Employment Centre.

Characteristics of the changes occurring in employment and education services:

- A cycle exists. Someone gets a minimum wage job, then cannot afford their rent, so they come back to the West Broadway Employment Centre looking for more training to get a higher paying job, they once again feel as though they have failed and become discouraged.

### **Focus Group 3: Employment and Information Services**

Important issues and challenges for Aboriginal persons arriving in Winnipeg and accessing employment services:

- It is hard for people to find the services if they are not obvious (i.e. if they are not in store front locations). Services tend not to be visible; therefore, they are hard to access.
- People often do not have the capacity to find resources. People don't know where to start or where to go to look for services.

Partners for Careers' present strengths in assisting newly arrived Aboriginal persons in accessing employment services:

- Partners for Careers has a large scope of information from community to employment and training information.
- Partners for Careers is non-bureaucratic. Therefore, anyone from any walk of life can feel comfortable using their services.
- Partners for Careers is part of a larger network. Not only do they have information, but they can also refer people to other services, additionally they do a lot of out reach work.

Reaction to respondents comments that more Aboriginal people should be involved in delivering employment services and that Aboriginal people often do not have the education or experience to find jobs:

- Lots of employment services exist, but many people do not know about them; however, the statistics show that the word is getting out.
- Many organizations including Aboriginal organizations and the government are taking new approaches to recruiting. They are focusing on targeted training for long term positions, and most have an Aboriginal focus.
- Networks are getting stronger and broader. Companies and organizations are connecting to networks that get the word out.

Gaps in the current system:

- There is a lack of access to literacy programs, and long waiting lists.
- There is a lack of service visibility.
- Some services, such as the Aboriginal Centre, do not refer people to other services. (The Aboriginal Centre does not even refer to other organizations within the building.)

Ensuring continued access to employment services:

- Increase advertising. Partners for Careers has advertised in all Aboriginal newspapers.
- Increase referrals. Corrections, youth centres, and family service are all examples of organizations that refer clients to Partners for Careers. Partners for Careers also participates in referring people to other services they may need, which they qualify for. Often people are not informed about the criteria for certain programs, and waste time and energy with programs they do not qualify for.
- Need high visibility locations.
- Need in-take or settlement centres for Aboriginal people (i.e. Aboriginal transition centres for new arrivals).

- Partners for Careers publishes and distributes a guide for living in Winnipeg. There has been a constant increase in demand for these guides.
- Organizations need to share resources. Resource centre maintenance must be a focus along with the expansion of single mandate organizations.

Solutions and strategies to improve access to employment services:

- There needs to be a cross-pollination of resources. Each service should be promoting other services that exist.
- Need to correct the mis-management of resources. Too much old information is being distributed.

Characteristics of the changes occurring in employment services:

- There are more events with an Aboriginal focus.
- There is a large cross-section of people who access this service, from youth to adults, as well as those employed, unemployed, and underemployed.
- More out reach exists from the non-Aboriginal community into the Aboriginal community.
- Partners for Careers does out reach outside of Winnipeg as well. They talk to people who may be thinking of moving to Winnipeg. Their guide is circulated within and outside of Winnipeg. They also talk to Social Assistance workers to inform them about their services and their guide.

Other thoughts:

- Partners for Careers would like to move to a higher visibility area (i.e. Portage Avenue) and by being linked with job bank terminals across the city.

## Focus Group 4: Housing (Aboriginal) Services

Important issues and challenges for Aboriginal persons arriving in Winnipeg and accessing housing services:

- There is no new housing being purchased or added to the housing stock, due to a lack of money. But even so more houses may not solve all the problems.
- At any given time Kinew Housing has between 800 and 1,000 application on file, which are kept for 2 years. The waiting lists are long and they are constantly turning people away. Waiting lists tend to be 6 months to over a year depending on the neighbourhood the client wants.
- There is less housing available and less that is affordable.
- Affordable housing programs don't necessary assist people coming into the city with employment income assistance.
- Some people need emergency housing, but Kinew cannot help them, so they are often referred to another organization.

Kinew Housing's present strengths in assisting newly arrived Aboriginal persons in accessing housing services:

- Once they are housed, Kinew Housing provides affordable decent housing to Aboriginal and low income people. The housing units are subsidized based on social assistance rates or 25% to 27% of the tenant's income.
- Their stock consists of 400 units made up of three small apartment buildings (with 8, 9, and 13 suites) and the rest are single family dwellings located throughout most of the city.
- Kinew housing tries to match families with areas of the city they want to live in.
- Kinew housing has a maintenance staff that maintains the housing and gets them ready for new tenants.

Reaction to respondents comments (little affordable housing available, can't afford housing in better condition, discrimination in regards to who will rent to Aboriginal people, Manitoba Housing is slow to make repairs, there are long waiting lists for Manitoba Housing, housing is in poor condition and unsafe):

- Kinew Housing agrees there is not a lot of affordable housing.
- Safety tends to be a big issue. People will turn a house down, not because of the house, but because of the area. However, often it is the perception that an area is unsafe, when in reality it may not be.

Gaps in the current system:

- A central registry is needed. This would allow people to apply to many different programs (not just housing programs, but education, employment, health, etc.) without having to visit many locations and agencies. It could link all agencies.
- People are not informed. They don't know how to access services.
- A short term solution may be to subsidize existing landlords. There may be a high demand for housing now, but in 20 years this demand may be far less, so adding new housing to the stock may not be the answer. Instead if landlords are subsidized when there is the need it could solve problems for the short term.

- People need more money for housing. The most a family on social assistance will receive for housing is \$397 a month. This means they must cut into the food budget to pay for rent.

Ensuring continued access to housing services:

- Kinew Housing gets some referrals from social assistance, which will continue, but they do not advertise.
- They tell applicants to check in every 6 months because they only keep applications for 2 years. Most applicants leave a few different phone numbers and Kinew Housing can usually track them down.

Solutions and strategies to improve access to housing services:

- Create a central registry.
- Need to tie in landlords. There are many good landlords with affordable rents that people are not being linked with. There needs to be a linkage created with the private market.

Characteristics of the changes occurring in housing services:

- There tends to be a lot of young single mothers in need of housing. Girls who are in their young twenties with two or three children already.
- The housing situation has maybe gotten a little better.
- Compared to the 1970s the discrimination may not have been at the same level as it is now.

Other thoughts:

- Some people don't want to live in the North End or central Winnipeg because of their perceived image of safety, but at the same time many families want to live in these areas because the parents grew up there and are comfortable there.

## Focus Group 5: Housing (non-Aboriginal) Services

Important issues and challenges for Aboriginal persons arriving in Winnipeg and accessing housing services:

- Pressure in the private housing market sector is reflected in the public housing sector. The vacancy rate for Winnipeg's private housing market is approximately 1%, which is reflected in the long waiting lists for subsidized housing units.
- Another issue is people do not know where to go for housing assistance. The Winnipeg Housing and Homeless Initiative (WHHI- single window) is still not completely visible to the public. But progress is being made. Community groups refer people to WHHI or the Manitoba Housing Authority (MHA), also Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) which deals with the shelters and transitional housing refers people to different housing programs and connects with community groups.
- Large families have a difficult time finding suitable housing. Manitoba Housing's public housing portfolio has roughly 50 five bedroom homes, which at the time of construction was adequate to fulfill the need, but it is no longer the case.

Manitoba Housing's present strengths in assisting newly arrived Aboriginal persons in accessing housing services:

- Family Services and Housing has a new initiative of integrated service delivery, which will allow them to take in applications for many services (employment income assistance, housing, child care, etc.).
- Housing is provided based on ranking system. Those who are most in need will receive housing the quickest when a unit comes available. Those living in a crisis shelter or temporarily with friends and family are seen as having the highest level of need and are the first to be housed.
- Manitoba Housing will also coordinate transfers. If a client is already living in subsidized housing in a community outside of Winnipeg they can apply to be transferred to a subsidized unit in Winnipeg. However, these people are already housed so they are no longer a priority, but no one will be turned away. If someone is planning on moving into Winnipeg they can apply for subsidized housing from their home community and be notified when a unit is available in Winnipeg and move at that time.

Reaction to respondents comments (little affordable housing available, can't afford better housing, discrimination regards to who will rent to Aboriginal persons, Manitoba Housing is slow to make repairs, there are long waiting list for Manitoba Housing, housing is in poor condition and unsafe):

- It is a fact there are long waiting list, but this true for all subsidized housing programs, not just Manitoba Housing.
- Discrimination should not be occurring in government housing, this is probably more true of the private market.
- It is a reality that the housing stock is in poor condition because it is aging. There has not been new public housing added to the stock since the 1980s. On a positive note, the Affordable Housing Initiative has been implemented to provide funds to renovate the old housing stock and add new housing. However, most of these funds will go to non-profit groups and co-ops to fix up their aging stock and build new units.



#### Gaps in the current system:

- Government initiatives may not be the answer, community driven programs should be the focus. Programs like the Welcome Wagon (or a spin-off of the immigration support model) where there is a coordinated effort to support new arrivals to the city. The Salvation Army and Aboriginal Friendship Centres may be doing this in an informal way.
- Some gaps in the system may be addresses through the integrated service delivery approach, but these integrated services are government services, and there is only an informal link between government housing and other housing organizations. What is needed is for example to have Manitoba Housing application forms available at different housing organizations to reduce the travel needed to access this program. Another option is to have a central registry like BC Housing does. A large database would allow people access to many different subsidized housing programs which puts everyone into a large pool in which people could be drawn from by a number of different housing programs.
- There is a gap with regards to housing persons with disabilities. However, this is being recognized and a new program is focusing on building more units to accommodate disability needs, as well as renovating and converting existing units.

#### Ensuring continued access to housing services:

- In general there is not a lot of public advertising. Basically the only campaign is “at your service Manitoba”. With regards to the housing sector the private sector does not want the public sector to advertise because it draws clients away from the private sector. The only time the public housing sector will advertise is in high vacancy communities, but Winnipeg is not a high vacancy community.
- Another way to guarantee continued access is through internet access and having applications available on-line, but not everyone has access to the internet, although it would facilitate easier access to the application process.
- The establishment of service delivery centres will increase access. The centres will have information on both government and community organizations, and in-take workers will be able to refer people to all different programs, outline all available services, and give people direction.

#### Solutions and strategies to improve access to housing services:

- Increase knowledge of programs. This applies to community groups who deal with housing, different levels of government involved in an integrated model, and in-take workers.
- More housing is needed. Even though Winnipeg is a slow growth community it is attracting Aboriginal people to the city and away from the reserve and rural communities. But once Aboriginal people arrive in Winnipeg they continue to be mobile as demonstrated in the high turnover rates of Aboriginal children in Winnipeg schools. Some of this high turnover may have to do with those living in subsidized housing in the suburbs. Many people find the suburbs very isolated and lacking a sense of community which causes them to continue their mobility.

#### Characteristics of the changes occurring in housing services:

- Over the years applicants have changed. There are a lot of single mothers applying for housing, as well the number of single non-elderly people (single people in their 40s and 50s),

and students are also increasing. However, there is less of demand from seniors than 30 years ago, meaning there are vacancies in senior blocks.

Other thoughts:

- Manitoba Housing encourages the development of tenant associations. Any tenant associations established within Manitoba Housing projects receive funding of \$24 per year per suite. Additionally, the project is provided with a housing unit to set up operation which allows them to bring services to the community (e.g. bring in Child and Family workers or community police officers). For example, Lord Selkirk Park is at full occupancy with over 300 people, and have five to six units for groups to run programs out of (e.g. lunch programs for the neighbourhood children).

## Focus Group 6: Employment Income Assistance

Important issues and challenges for Aboriginal persons arriving in Winnipeg and accessing Employment Income Assistance:

- One issue is that people need to get a sense of the system. Often people do not know where to go or who to talk to. Also, they may lack the information they are required to provide (documentation, custody papers, etc.), or do not realize those people receiving Employment Income Assistance are expected to have a fixed address. Others have the wrong idea of how the system works, and do not realize those people who are employable are expected to become employed and will not be assisted.
- When it comes to students there is often confusion. Employment Income Assistance does not financially assist students. The band funds students, but students often do not receive enough assistance to cover their housing expenses and therefore come to Employment Income Assistance for help, but Employment Income Assistance only assists employable people, and while students are in school they are not employable. Employment Income Assistance is faced with this jurisdictional dispute as to who should have responsibility for students.
- There are also issues surrounding people coming to Winnipeg for medical treatment. These people come for an unknown length of time and do not stay in Winnipeg permanently; therefore, it is the view of Employment Income Assistance that these people are the responsibility of Medical Services because they are not Winnipeg residents.
- Many Aboriginal people do not realize that the in-take processes are different between Employment Income Assistance and the band. With Employment Income Assistance people are asked to make a commitment and are asked what they are going to do when they come on the program.

Employment Income Assistance's present strengths in assisting newly arrived Aboriginal persons in accessing their services:

- As of April 1, 1999 Employment Income Assistance established one centralized location to access services and one responsible body to deliver the service. There is one telephone number that people can call and one centralized in-take location where people will receive information and initial assistance.
- Staff are respectful and understanding, they realize these people are at low point in their lives. Staff also understand the cultural differences and are well informed about the services offered in the Aboriginal community (i.e. staff receive presentations from Aboriginal agencies about the services they offer) and can refer applicants to other services they may need, even though this is not done in a formal process referrals are still made. Staff tries to take a holistic approach and anticipate the clients' needs (for example, if a family may need child care then they can refer them to this service).
- At in-take a risk assessment and crisis analysis is done to see what is needed at the moment, but once the service area is determined the file is transferred to case management which will look at what the client requires and referrals will be made at that time.

Reaction to respondents comments (feel embarrassed or nervous when applying for social assistance, long process- must wait a long time to see a case worker and for assistance, and staff do not respect people applying for social assistance):

- It is not unique to the Aboriginal community that they feel nervous or embarrassed when applying for employment income assistance. They are nervous because it is new and unknown to them; also it is often a result of a crisis, which can make this time even harder. Therefore, staff tries to be sensitive to this.
- The in-take process in the past took upwards of two weeks, but now the turn around time is closer to three days in cases of crisis or where they need temporary assistance to tie them over. The turn around time has been shortened as a result of streamlining the system.
- Staff make a strong effort to be sensitive and soften the process for all applicants; however, some of the questions applicants are asked can be very personal and the applicants may feel as though the workers are not being sensitive, but the questions must be asked. Often in Aboriginal communities people do not have to justify themselves, but in the city it is a different environment. However, if a lack of respect does occur then Employment Income Assistance works to improve it.
- Employment Income Assistance tries to actively recruit Aboriginal workers and have Aboriginal representation in all the offices, but they receive very few applications from Aboriginal people for these positions.

#### Gaps in the current system:

- There is a gap with regards to education funding. Students do not receive enough funding (\$675 per month for a single student with no dependents) to cover their living costs. But there is an active recruitment of students by institutions to come to Winnipeg to increase their education. Employment Income Assistance does not have student in-take and cannot financially assist these students that are coming in.
- There is a lack of accurate information getting to communities. Students are not informed that Employment Income Assistance does not support students while they are involved with on-going studies. Also applicants seem to have the wrong notion about Employment Income Assistance. They do not always realize that people are expected to move towards becoming employed and not simply stay on employment income assistance. Also, not everyone will be accepted onto the employment income assistance program, some people are referred to their employment center, while others will receive assistance only temporarily.
- Whether Employment Income Assistance is involved or not there is a gap with people moving to the city for medical services. Often people do not know how long they will be staying in the city which make the transition all the harder.

#### Ensuring continued access to Employment Income Assistance:

- Employment Income Assistance does not advertise. Their telephone number is in the phone book and other services are informed and refer people to Employment Income Assistance.
- Employment Income Assistance is developing a new website. This will better facilitate referrals and increase access to information. For example, Corrections refers to Employment Income Assistance.
- Plain language fact sheets have also been developed and sent to agencies that were requested by the community and are helpful to the community.
- Employment Income Assistance does not turn anyone away, anyone can fill out an application.
- The Pre In-take Orientation was setup in 1996 to help prepare those people applying for employment income assistance. They are informed about the requirements and prepared for

the interview so they are aware of the questions that will be asked. They are also told about other services that exist which they may be able to make use of instead of going on employment income assistance.

- Employment Income Assistance also conducts out-reach. They will go out to a community and do in-take, as well as presentations and meet with the band. Additionally, Indian and Northern Affairs is familiar with Employment Income Assistance's policies and rate structure, which they then distribute to the bands so they are familiar with how to access services.

Reaction to satisfaction levels:

- People often expect to be given employment income assistance, so if they are turned down they become dissatisfied with the service. Satisfaction may be looking at two different things: a) satisfaction with the service and service delivery, and b) satisfaction with the amount of assistance they receive.

Solutions and strategies to improve access to Employment Income Assistance:

- Continue to hire Aboriginal staff. Employment Income Assistance has taken a proactive approach by looking at people receiving employment income assistance and hiring them for entry-level positions. However, Aboriginal people often do not want the job because they do not want to have turn to down people (or family members).
- To increase participation in the Aboriginal Internship Program.

Characteristics of the changes occurring in Employment Income Assistance:

- Over the last few years it is thought that Employment Income Assistance has improved. They have assumed responsibility for the City of Winnipeg Social Services and developed one central entry point with the establishment of an integrated service delivery system.
- Those who require employment income assistance are people who have barriers to self-sufficiency. Those people without these barriers tend to be employed now.
- Agencies tend to be changing their focus and trying to move more people into employment.
- Persons with disabilities had the highest caseload growth. Their needs cannot be addressed through trying to employ them.

Other thoughts:

- The issue that over half of the respondents in the survey were living temporarily with friends and family may not be negative. They may not want to live alone because of the feeling of isolation, and may be choosing to live with friends and family because it is part of their culture.

## Focus Group 7: Health Services

Important issues and challenges for Aboriginal persons arriving in Winnipeg and accessing health services:

- There is a lack of family doctors taking new patients. A new arrival may see a doctor, but because they do not have a family doctor there is no follow-up or continuity.
- Aboriginals experience a culture shock when they first arrive in the city. They are used to all services being located together and now they must go out and search for services for themselves. A mentorship is needed for individuals making the transition to the city which could better facilitate their access to services. This is needed because Aboriginal people are not aware of the system. They do not know how or where to access services. Once the person gets initial access to health services then it gets a little easier.
- Front-line workers either are not aware or do not have the time to make sure people are getting connected.
- There can be a 6 to 8 week wait for home care services due to the lack of available staff. If a person who requires home care does not have friends or family in the city, what do they do for those 6 to 8 weeks?
- With regards to mental health services in Winnipeg there are no culturally specific supports for Aboriginal people with mental health issues. They simply don't exist.
- The Community Health Clinic had to restrict their new referrals to people who live in postal code R3A,B,C, and E, therefore, if someone comes in from another postal code they cannot be taken on as a new client due to staff limitations. The patient may be given initial care, but the clinic will not assume any ongoing care.

Health service's present strengths in assisting newly arrived Aboriginal persons in accessing their services:

- The Baby First program works with high risk moms to connect them with available resources. Mothers can enter the program if they have a child 3 months old or younger. During the first year of the child's life Baby First workers see the mother and child once a week, during the second year they are seen once every two weeks, and once a month for the third year. The program also encourages them to continue on and attend Healthy Start. If the mother is already part of a Baby First program in another community (e.g. Brandon or Portage la Prairie) they can be transferred to Winnipeg if they are moving to the city. There are five Aboriginal workers involved in the Baby First program in Winnipeg, which moms can request. The workers also go into the home, bringing the service to the mother and child.
- Public Health nurses also make in home visits. This once again brings the service to the home and connects with people.
- The clinic is connected the Health Sciences Centre's interpreters. The WRHA has interpreters that community services can access as well. This allows for access to nurse's aids who speak a wide range of Aboriginal languages.
- The staff provide an accepting, warm, and welcoming environment.

Reaction to respondents comments (more treatment programs are needed, need to live close to medical services for treatment, Aboriginals fall through the cracks in the health care system):

- Medical services has the Southeast referral system and transportation, but once the patient is discharged the medical services are stopped. Medical services needs to follow-through with their services a little more.
- In northern communities medical service coordinates everything for the Aboriginal people, but when a person moves to the city medical services stops their role as coordinator and the person is on their own. Health care is provided very differently on reserves than in the city.

Gaps in the current system:

- A mentorship program is needed to help new arrivals with the initial arrival and familiarize them with the city and the programs and services that exist. This may also help to reduce the frustration that many new arrivals experience and could prevent any problems or conflicts from arising.
- Many community agencies function on grants (e.g. psycho-social agencies); therefore, it is hard to do long term planning. Agencies tend to disappear because they loose their grant.
- Aboriginal people have a different mentality due to living on the reserve. On the reserve most things are paid for, but when they get to the city they don't realize that they are responsible for paying for things.
- It is hard for a single young person to get housing. Single people end up living in rooming houses and surrounded by drugs and alcohol, which can cause them social and economic problems.
- More services and supports are available to help immigrants to make the transition, than there are for Aboriginal people (even though in a way Aboriginal people coming from reserves are like immigrants). An immigrant type of transition model may be beneficial to try with the Aboriginal community. It may also help to reduce the amount of isolation Aboriginal people feel when they first arrive in the city and leave their support networks behind.

Ensuring continued access to health services:

- Health services already cannot keep up and have had to put restrictions on who they take. So, they do not undertake campaigns to promote their facility because they are already full, even though the people who they are trying to serve may not know about their services.
- Health services tries to stay connected with the patients even if they are referred to another agency. Health services tries to keep an accurate record of patients' address and telephone numbers as they move, but it is hard to do.

Solutions and strategies to improve access to health services:

- Mentorship as discussed in the section on gaps.
- The WRHA staff are doing a better job of educating their staff about Aboriginal people and the issues they face. A two day workshop called Aboriginal Awareness is available to staff.
- We can learn from the model of new comers to Canada. Immigrants coming into Canada register, but Aboriginal people moving to the city do not have to register and are constantly moving, so the model would be harder to implement with the Aboriginal community. Even if there was a telephone number that Aboriginals who have recently arrived in the city could call to get information, it would be an improvement.

Characteristics of the changes occurring in health services:

- Over the past five years there have been improvements made. The interpreter program is new for Aboriginal people. There has been an increase in the number of Aboriginal people working in the health care field as support staff. Also, the Baby First program started 4 years ago and has been a benefit for Aboriginal families moving to Winnipeg. In the Métis community they are going to have their own Child and Family Services. This will be very beneficial because more families will be willing to deal with Child and Families Services since they will be familiar with their culture.



## Appendix D

The following section contains a complete listing of all the highlighted bullet points. They are presented here in the order they appeared in the report.

- This issue of ‘access to services’ has been highlighted as an area of concern and one that must continue to be improved. Assisting those most in need is of utmost importance.
- The establishment of more single window agencies who can offer a range of services is essential in contributing to a higher quality of life.
- Higher visibility and connection with the community is essential in ensuring people are aware of what services are available.
- For the most part, strengths must include extending assistance outside of the immediate area and being able to refer persons to a range of services. This can include providing information to have more direct contact with other agencies.
- A core strength of service providers must be to adjust to meet the needs of a diverse client base and that services must include a strong referral comment to match people to a range of services needed.
- For the most part, providers agreed with the comments of participants and cited the need to expand resources to correct some of the problems highlighted.
- Gaps in the current provision of services are related to the need to help connect people with a range of services – providers must work together to be better informed as to what options exist.
- Providing information and support must extend outside of the city and reach those potential persons considering moving.
- Providing increased support to students and those in need of medical services and related supports were two areas identified as requiring additional due diligence amongst providers to ensure their unique circumstances are adequately dealt with.
- Ensuring access to service is a critical concern and one which must include the dissemination of information to surrounding neighbourhoods and also Manitoba communities.
- The move to more developed and integrated services is an important step in ensuring more people have access to a “range of services.”

- High visibility locations are essential in exposing people to existing services.
- The informal referral process must be encouraged and strengthened as this process is only as good as the knowledge levels of its staff.
- Creating programs that better address the range of services is critical in being able to tailor programs to the needs of the individual is important.
- Increasing the “informal referrals” amongst a diverse range of providers could provide individuals access to a range of needed services.
- The centralization of services into a more integrated model of delivery would help ensure that persons have the ability to access multiple services in one location.
- The issue of location is also critical as it must be highly visible and accessible to the community.
- Building better awareness of the Aboriginal culture is critical for frontline staff.