

**THE ISSUES AND CONCERNS OF  
ABORIGINAL WOMEN**

TO

THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

**October 1993**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The issues and concerns as identified by Aboriginal women in this report do not rest with the political issues of self-government and land claims. Although these are important issues, Aboriginal women are more concerned with the daily problems they face at a community level.

Specifically, Aboriginal women are concerned with the social problems surrounding their lives. To many of the Aboriginal women who participated in this exercise these social problems are not mutually exclusive. Concerns regarding alcohol and drug abuse, the influx of family/community violence, sexual/physical abuse, suicides and increased mental and physical health problems are all related issues. One cannot change one variable without affecting the others.

Coupled with the social problems, Aboriginal women also cited the effects of lack of education, daycare and adequate housing as issues which are associated with their everyday struggles.

Clearly, Aboriginal women are seeking changes in the healing of their community and family lives. The solutions they have proposed such as:

- increased formal and informal educational tools;
- better treatment facilities;
- more research on solutions to the social problems they face; and
- improved daycare and housing,

may seem simplistic, however, they are realistic needs at a grassroots level.

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# **THE ISSUES AND CONCERNS OF ABORIGINAL WOMEN**

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Incorporated in 1974, the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is an aggregate of Native women's organizations across Canada. Operating as a non-profit organization, NWAC's primary mission is to enhance, promote and foster the social, economic, cultural and political well-being of Indian and Metis women of First Nations communities and Canadian Society.

In the Fall of 1992, NWAC received a grant from the Intervenor Participation Program (IPP) of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples to fund a series of approaches which would:

- educate and encourage Aboriginal women to participate in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples' (RCAP) consultation process;
- summarize the concerns of Aboriginal women; and
- highlight the issues that Aboriginal women would want RCAP to address.

The purpose of this report is to provide a synthesis of Aboriginal women's concerns and outline their solutions to these concerns.

It should be noted at the forefront, that this report is a compilation of data collected by two different NWAC National Co-ordinators over an eleven month period. It is not a result of research conducted by Beverly Blanchard & Associates. Beverly Blanchard & Associates were asked to provide a synthesis of the data collected.

## **2.0 METHODOLOGY & CONSTRAINTS**

Over an eleven month period, the data for this report was collected by three different approaches:

- i) a Social Animation Project;
- ii) a Survey on RCAP and Aboriginal Women; and
- iii) an Analysis of RCAP meetings.

### **2.1 Social Animation Project**

Out of all three approaches, the social animation project was the major focus of the research. Under this project, two social animators were to be hired for each of the provinces and territories. The role of these individuals was to go into communities and speak to Aboriginal women about the purpose and consultation process of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP). In addition, in communities where the Royal Commission was not meeting,

social animators were responsible for collecting Aboriginal women's concerns and solutions to these concerns.

To hire and train social animators, a workshop was conducted in January 1993 at which time approximately thirty individuals participated.

#### 2.1 a. Social Animation Data Constraints

It is the consultant's opinion that the quality of the social animation data is constrained by the following:

- social animation reports were only received from Alberta, Saskatchewan, N.W.T. and Yukon regions. Other reports representing individual groups (Mohawk women, Aboriginal women prisoners and Aboriginal female law students) were also included;
- in most of the social animation reports, we were unable to ascertain how many women were actually reached in each of the regions;
- social animators used their own methods to collect the information in their regions. The different approaches, however, have meant an inconsistency in the data collected;
- with the exception of the report from the Northwest Territories, many of the social animation reports often focused on one issue with limited detailed information in their content;
- some of the social animator reports reflected a specific target audience;
- there was no formal structure designed for the social animators use to acquire the type of information needed for a final report; and
- social animators in each of the provinces and territories had a limited financial resources, therefore restricting the actual scope of the information gathering.

#### 2.2 Survey on RCAP and Aboriginal Women

A survey instrument, consisting of twenty questions was developed to capture:

- Aboriginal women's concerns and solutions;
- Aboriginal women's awareness of RCAP; and
- Aboriginal women's opinion on specified issues (childcare, youth, policy and language).

The distribution of this questionnaire was conducted in two methods:

- i) A mailing through NWAC's network.
- ii) Placement of an advertisement in an Aboriginal publication called the Windspeaker.

#### 2.2 a. RCAP Survey Constraints

The constraints regarding the information gathered by questionnaire are as follows:

- there is difficulty in determining the regions that these responses represent which also makes it difficult to ascertain the accuracy of Aboriginal women's concerns by region;
- some of the wording in some of the questions used within the survey are biased and do not necessarily represent an accurate reflection of Aboriginal women's concerns; and
- the survey sample does not factor out male respondents.

#### 2.3 Review of Scheduled Hearings of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

The final method of data collection involved a review of the scheduled Royal Commission hearings. Although there was an attempt to review the RCAP hearings in person, budgetary constraints only allowed for a review of the Commission's data. It is evident that very little information was collected under this component of the project.

#### 2.3 a. Hearing Review Constraints

Similar to the other data collection techniques used and based on the availability of Commission data, the hearing review constraints are as follows:

- there is little evidence which demonstrates how the hearings were to be evaluated; and
- it is difficult to ascertain how many Aboriginal women were contacted about their experiences with the Commission;
- therefore, the data used to write this report cannot represent a global picture of Aboriginal women's concerns but can be viewed as a glimpse into the community - a snapshot.

## **SOCIAL ANIMATION PROJECT FINDINGS**

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the social animation project was to educate and encourage Aboriginal women to participate in every aspect of the consultation process of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP). Social Animators were hired in each of the provinces and territories with the intent that these individuals would go into the communities and encourage Aboriginal women to:

- identify their issues and concerns;
- to become aware of the process used by RCAP; and
- make submissions to RCAP.

Prior to the hiring of social animators, the initial National Co-ordinator organized a workshop for all potential representatives. Approximately, 25-30 individuals were in attendance and a strategy was adopted for the process.

Under the direction of the replacement National Co-ordinator in April of 1993, formal contracts with all social animators were signed. In addition, it was agreed that the social animators were best able to determine how they would fulfil their mandates in their own regions. As an example, some of the social animators chose to:

- send out questionnaires;
- travel to communities; and
- hold workshops on specific topics.

Upon the completion of the project in each of the provinces and territories, each of the social animators were required to submit a written report of their activities.

This section of the report is a consolidation of the reports received by the social animators. Separate reports from specific target groups (Aboriginal law students, Mohawk women, and Aboriginal women incarcerated in Pinegrove Penitentiary) have also been included.

### 2.0 SPECIFIC CONCERNS OF ABORIGINAL WOMEN

#### 2.1 Alcohol/Drug Abuse and Related Issues

A prominent issue of the social animator reports was the escalation of alcohol and drug abuse and its effects in the communities. The Aboriginal women continually cited that alcohol and drug abuse have compounded the influx of many other social problems, namely, physical/sexual abuse, family/community violence, suicides, etc. As one report stated, many of the social problems are a result of dysfunctional family situations. This ripple effect has demonstrated the need for



serious changes in the social service policies.

## 2.2 Lack of Education

There exists an additional concern for the lack of education and training for Aboriginal women. Many of the Aboriginal women, especially in Northern communities, recognized the importance of achieving higher education. Aboriginal women want the opportunity to participate in the economy, but without assistance in the form of daycare and better housing, the participation is blocked. In addition to formal educational systems, daycare and housing, Aboriginal women also cited the need for more workshops, conferences and training on issues related to the problems at the community level.

While aboriginal women stated the importance of encouraging youth to stay in school, it was clear that in addition to formal education, Aboriginal women felt that concerted efforts must be made to find ways to bring together positive communications between the elders and youth to be somehow re-connected.

## 2.3 Inadequate Housing

There is a need for adequate housing for both on-reserve and off-reserve Aboriginal women. Many health related problems exist which are a direct effect from the conditions that many aboriginal women and their children live in, such conditions that can be compared only to third world conditions.

The poor health and social conditions of aboriginal people must be addressed as part of the housing crisis that exists today. There are well documented cases of overcrowding, lack of adequate water and sewage facilities, and the existence of unacceptable housing stock especially in comparison to non-aboriginal Canadians as a whole.

Current studies exist that notes that health problems among Aboriginal people can be attributed to poor housing conditions ranging from psychological and physiological effects to specific diseases. In a December 1992 report of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, documentation exists to support the claims by Aboriginal women that "the most serious health problems facing Canadian Indians are injuries resulting from accidents and violence, and, in order to reduce these problems, attention must be paid to factors such as the physical and social environment in the home and community".

## **SUPPLEMENTARY CONCERNS OF ABORIGINAL WOMEN**

### 3.1 Inadequate Medical and Dental Care

For Aboriginal women living in rural communities the access to medical and dental care is limited. For Aboriginal women living in these communities proper medical and dental care for

their children and themselves is extremely important.

### 3.2 Aboriginal Self-Government

For Aboriginal women in Saskatchewan, the emphasis of the discussions was on the issue of self-government. Aboriginal women were concerned that there was still inadequate information on the subject of self-government. Specifically, Aboriginal women are concerned about the:

- structures of self-government;
- amount of federal and provincial intervention;
- accountability of aboriginal leadership;
- financial management by aboriginal people; and
- the advantages and disadvantages of self-government.

## **PROPOSED SOLUTIONS BY ABORIGINAL WOMEN**

### 4.1 Alcohol and Drug Abuse and Related Issues

Those Aboriginal women that offered comments, it could be summarized that better treatment facilities were seen as part of a solution to the major problems surrounding alcohol and drug abuse. Facilities should be:

- closer to the community;
- addressing the underlying illness not just the symptom; and
- providing for family healing,

Aboriginal women felt that the points noted could be useful in decreasing the abuse of alcohol. Since alcohol was seen as a primary issue in many of the reports, some Aboriginal women felt there should be a ban on alcohol in all communities.

For rural communities, there is a need for the establishment of information networks. One report stressed the need for a toll free referral line which would tell an Aboriginal women where information and assistance could be obtained. A newsletter distributed among communities was also suggested as a method for informing and exchanging information.

In the case of family violence, particularly sex offenders, stiffer penalties must be enforced. There must be more assistance provided for the victim. Many of the Aboriginal women stressed the need to have more Aboriginal people in the "helping" professions.

## 4.2 Lack of Education

Aboriginal women want to increase their knowledge base and have identified a need for workshops and training in the following areas:

- personal development (self-esteem, self- confidence.etc.);
- alcohol/drug abuse;
- family violence;
- mental health;
- programs to deal with dysfunctional families;
- self-government; and
- land claims issues.

Aboriginal women are looking for workshops, seminars and conferences that will address issues at the community level.

In addition to informal educational programs, Aboriginal women want assistance in attaining higher education. The assistance would come in the form of:

- increased daycare facilities for their children;
- better housing for their families; and
- greater financial support to obtain a higher education.

There was a need to work with Aboriginal youth to become proud of their nationhood. Some women suggested that although some progress has been made in school curriculum, there is still a need to have the history books that are used in schools re-written by aboriginal people to reflect the true role of Aboriginal peoples' historical role. It was also suggested that youth programs need to be developed to:

- encourage Aboriginal youth to stay in school;
- provide youth with recreational programs; and
- teach Aboriginal languages and culture.

It was also suggested by some participants of the project that more cross-cultural education programs for non-Aboriginal peoples need to be developed. These women suggested that bridging the information gaps would assist in the healing process.

Finally on the subject of education, land claim and self-government issues need to be fully explained. It was suggested that the advantages and disadvantages of these subjects need to be discussed openly.

## **CONCERNS/SOLUTIONS OF SPECIFIC GROUPS**

### **5.1 Aboriginal Female Law Students**

For Aboriginal female law students, the issues of major concern deal with the following:

- a) gender, race and class bias in the legal profession;
- b) lack of female Aboriginal role models in the legal profession; and
- c) lack of research data available on Aboriginal female lawyers.

The solutions which were presented would require changes within both the law profession and the educational systems. Solutions are as follows:

- a) Ensure equitable representation of Aboriginal women in the judiciary and educational systems;
- b) Federal, provincial and territorial governments should employ more in-house female Aboriginal lawyers and law students. The government should act as both a permanent employer and training ground for Aboriginal women;
- c) Representation of Aboriginal female lawyers should be increased in private sector companies hiring in-house lawyers;
- d) A scholarship program to assist in off-setting the costs of obtaining a higher level of education in the legal profession should be established;
- e) Further collection of statistics on Aboriginal women in the Saskatchewan pre-law course should be administered; and
- f) Reassess the methods of gaining access to law schools.

### **5.2 Mohawk Women**

The concerns of the Mohawk women have been presented separately since emphasis of data collection was not necessarily on issues and concerns, but the consultation process of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

Public hearings at Ahkwesa'hsne and Montreal were the focus of the social animator's report. Follow-up conversations with women who attended the Kahnawake hearing also provided the basis for this report.

In most cases, the Mohawk women who participated in some way with the RCAP hearings felt that the Commission was not dealing with some of the critical issues at the community level. Specifically, Mohawk women felt that the issues of drug/alcohol, community and family violence and AIDS required more discussion. In addition, many people do not have a clear understanding of the Commission's goals and mandates; and there was skepticism about the objectivity of the Commission.

With regards to the process used by the Commission, many of the women felt that:

- there was insufficient time to prepare for the presentations, as had it not been for the social animator in this region, most of the presenters would not have known about the hearings; and
- there was insufficient time allotted to make presentations.

### 5.3 Aboriginal Women in Pinegrove

Information presented regarding the over-representation of aboriginal women in the Pine Grove Correctional Centre, appears to be a compilation of a literary review on criminal justice, discussions with inmates and personal opinion. What is presented below are common issues throughout.

Aboriginal women comprise approximately 7% of the general population in Saskatchewan, but account for 94% of the provincial prison population. This over-representation of aboriginal women is due to an erosion of a number of stabilizers within the Aboriginal community including:

- cultural erosion;
- loss of a sense of community;
- physical/sexual abuse on reserve;
- alcohol/drug abuse on reserve;
- demands of providing for the family; and
- lack of employment opportunity.

This social and economic situation of women is coupled with systemic barriers in the legal system, such as:

- the stereotyping of aboriginal women;
- legal representation by an over-burdened system;
- cultural barriers; and
- cultural bias and insensitivity at all levels of the judicial system.

The combined results are higher incarcerations for Aboriginal women.

Recommendations to improve this situation were concerned with re-evaluating the goals of the justice system to emphasize rehabilitation and provide tools to allow women to make choices. The following recommendations were suggested to achieve this:

- maintaining positive family and community relations;
- recognition & integration of Aboriginal spiritualism in the rehabilitation process;
- emphasis on relevant occupational and vocational skills to increase employment opportunities upon release;
- cultural sensitization of the judicial system;
- increased attention to health issues, including counselling for physical/sexual abuse, alcohol/drug abuse;
- equality with men's prisons in areas including access to halfway houses and community training programmes;
- increased access to pre and post-release services;
- employment equity in the police force;
- creating non-economic alternatives to fines to allow aboriginal women avoid prison.

## CONCLUSIONS

According to the 1991 Statistics Canada report, alcohol and drug abuse were the two major social problems facing Aboriginal communities. Family violence was the third. The data collected for this report clearly reflects that issues of concern to Aboriginal women deal with the major social problems as identified by Statistics Canada.

There is enough of a consistency amongst the reports to suggest that Aboriginal women are very much concerned with the effects that alcohol and drug abuse are having on their communities. It affects their day to day living with increased:

- family and community violence;
- sexual and physical abuse;
- suicides; and
- mental and physical health problems.

Problems are community-wide and intergenerational. Many recognize that this is a symptom of a greater picture in which dysfunction at both the community and family level plays a critical role.

According to the many Aboriginal women who participated in the social animation project, the current approaches to these concerns are proving to be ineffective in Aboriginal communities. There is a need for new solutions and approaches to these social problems to be developed. Approaches must be culturally appropriate and meet the needs of the community.

In many of the reports, Aboriginal women stressed that in order for Aboriginal peoples to move forward, there must be healing at the community and family level. For the healing to take

place it must begin with some of the solutions that have been offered.

## **ROYAL COMMISSION ON ABORIGINAL PEOPLES QUESTIONNAIRE FINDINGS**

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

It was decided that the use of a questionnaire would allow Aboriginal women the opportunity to input into the RCAP process. A questionnaire was designed and placed in Windspeaker, an Aboriginal publication. In addition, the RCAP questionnaire was distributed to every organization and individual on the NWAC mailing list.

### **QUESTIONNAIRE FINDINGS ON THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

As of July 1993, 251 responses were received by the Native Women's Association of Canada. What follows is a summary of the responses.

### 2.0 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

#### 2.1 Respondents Profile

Of the 251 respondents, 87% classified themselves as Indian and a majority of the respondents (54%) lived on Indian land. On average, 75% of the respondents were female and the majority of respondents (30%) were between the ages of 26 to 35 years. No responses were received from individuals over the age of 61.

#### 2.2 Awareness of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

Of the 251 respondents, up to 60% of the respondents had no knowledge of or have never heard of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

#### 2.3 Issues of Concern

When asked what the five main issues of concern to Aboriginal women are, over 50% of the respondents identified the following:

- violence against women
- education
- employment of women
- child abuse, and
- child care

Other areas which are ranked in order of responses are:

- self-government
- housing
- suicide
- sexual harassment
- human rights
- social issues
- substance abuse
- Aboriginal language
- life skills development
- Indian Act
- justice issues
- elders; and
- economic development

With regards to issues within the community, the top three issues identified were:

- education
- violence against women, and
- affordable housing

For the 50% of Aboriginal women who responded that are living off reserve, the importance of the issues changes somewhat as affordable housing becomes a major concern. Education and substance abuse were the two other issues identified by the respondents.

## 2.4 Aboriginal Youth

Questions were asked which included the involvement of Aboriginal youth. When asked whether Aboriginal youth should be consulted and involved in proposing solutions to their problems, 100% of the respondents stated yes.

However, it is interesting to note that when asked if Aboriginal youth should be involved in all discussions on the following issues: education, human rights, economic development, drug & alcohol addiction, judicial systems, suicide, community development, aboriginal women's issues, leadership, self-government, child abuse and social issues, just over 55% of the respondents said yes and another 42% did not respond to the question.

Data extracted from the questionnaires also reflects that over 75% of the respondents commented that the leading cause of suicide among Aboriginal youth today is substance abuse in the form of alcohol or drugs.



## 2.5 Policy Issues

When asked about the participation of Aboriginal women in government policy discussions, just over 90% of the respondents felt that Aboriginal women should be involved in all discussions which are important to Aboriginal peoples.

On a more specific basis:

- 100% of the respondents felt that Aboriginal women should be involved in all discussion on treaty and Aboriginal rights.
- 86% of the respondents also felt that an Aboriginal Marriage Act should be developed, and
- 83% believed that Aboriginal women must be involved in reforms to criminal justice administration.

Although 21% of the respondents did not answer the question dealing with off-reserve citizens having the same right as on-reserve First Nations citizens, 68% did believe the rights should be the same.

## 2.6 Childcare Issues

When asked about child care issues, over 75% of the respondents felt that there should be Aboriginal child care legislation to protect the rights of Indian children either within their own homes, or when they are put up for adoption or taken from their home of birth.

In addition to legislation, it was felt by the majority of respondents (94%) that Aboriginal women should be involved in establishing child care legislation and facilities.

## 2.7 Aboriginal Languages

The final question in the questionnaire dealt with the issue of Aboriginal languages. In the vast majority of the responses, 80% felt that Aboriginal languages should be preserved and Aboriginal peoples right to language should be explicit in the Constitution.

# **REVIEW OF SCHEDULED HEARINGS OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

As part of the strategy of the Native Women's Association of Canada, a report was to be developed based on an analysis of the scheduled hearings of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, submissions by Aboriginal women, analysis of research done by the Royal Commission on women's issues and other materials received by the Native Women's Association of Canada.

Budgetary constraints forced this portion of the project to be restricted and information available for an accurate analysis is limited.

## 2.0 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

It is our understanding that the first round of Public Hearings of the Royal Commission resulted in testimony from approximately 785 organizations and individuals. During this round approximately 22 Aboriginal, Inuit and Metis women's organizations appeared before the Commission. Speakers expressed concern regarding adequate political representation and a fear that self-government may create further inequities in the current system of Band Council governance.

The second round of Public Consultations began in October 1992 and during this time, we understand that the Commissioners heard from more than 600 organizations and individuals.

The concerns expressed by Aboriginal women during the second round of hearings were similar to those voiced in the first round. National concerns focused on the exclusion of Aboriginal women's organizations from constitutional discussions and local concerns focused on Bill C-31 and violence against women and children. Aboriginal women also commented extensively on issues such as self-government, self-sufficiency and treaty rights.

The commission's publication **Overview of the Second Round** published in April 1993, claims that 40% of the individuals appearing before the Commission in the first round and 50% in the second round of the hearings were Aboriginal women.

## **SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

It is interesting to note that the concerns of the majority of the respondents in this information gathering exercise were not about constitutional issues or judicial reform. Most of the concerns were about the daily problems Aboriginal women face at the community level.

Throughout this exercise most of these women emphasized the problems that come with alcohol and drug abuse within their communities. All of the concerns which have been expressed in this report are not mutually exclusive. All of these concerns are related, however, to many Aboriginal women where alcohol and drug abuse have created the framework for increased:

- family/community violence;
- physical/sexual abuse;
- suicides; and
- mental and physical health problems.

Coupled with the social issues are additional problems such as:

- lack of education;
- inadequate housing;
- lack of affordable and accessible daycare; and
- access to medical and dental facilities.

What follows are a series recommendations which Aboriginal women who responded to this process propose as part of the solutions to their concerns. It is highly recommended that the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples seriously consider these proposed solutions.

## 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

### Recommendation No. 1

**DEVELOP ABORIGINAL PROGRAMS BY ABORIGINAL PEOPLES WHICH ADDRESS THE ISSUES OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE AND THE RELATED ISSUES OF FAMILY/COMMUNITY VIOLENCE, SUICIDES, PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL ABUSE.**

Aboriginal women are greatly concerned about the effects that alcohol and drug abuse are having on their communities. More programs need to be developed to assist in eliminating this problem. Specifically, Aboriginal women are looking for:

- better treatment facilities;
- community workshops, seminars and conferences dealing with the issues of family/community violence, suicides, physical/sexual abuse, etc.;
- financial resources to assist Aboriginal women in becoming community healers; and
- counselling and other services to be made available to Aboriginal communities.

### Recommendation No. 2

**ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES ARE NEEDED TO ASSIST ABORIGINAL WOMEN IN OBTAINING HIGHER EDUCATIONAL LEVELS.**

Aboriginal women want to increase their knowledge base and they want the opportunity to obtain higher levels of education not only for themselves, but, also for their children. In the informal area of education, Aboriginal women have identified a need for workshops and training in the following areas:

- personal development (self-esteem, self-confidence etc.);
- alcohol/drug abuse;
- family violence;
- mental health;
- programs to deal with dysfunctional families;
- self-government; and
- land claims issues.

In addition to informal educational programs, Aboriginal women want assistance in attaining higher education. The assistance would come in the form of:

- affordable and accessible daycare facilities for their children;
- better housing for their families; and
- greater financial support to obtain a higher education.

It was also suggested that youth programs need to be developed to:

- encourage Aboriginal youth to stay in school;
- provide youth with recreational programs; and
- teach Aboriginal languages and culture.

### Recommendation No. 3

**THE CURRICULUM MATERIALS USED TO EDUCATE OUR CHILDREN SHOULD BE RE-WRITTEN TO ACCURATELY REFLECT THE TRADITION, CULTURAL HERITAGE AND HISTORY OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLES AND BE INTRODUCED INTO THE CURRICULUM AT THE JR. KINDERGARTEN LEVEL**

For Aboriginal youth to become proud of their nation, the history books need to be re-written to reflect Aboriginal peoples' true role.

#### Recommendation No. 4

### **TO ESTABLISH A MECHANISM THAT WILL PROVIDE INFORMATION AND RESOURCE MATERIAL ON ISSUES OF SELF-GOVERNMENT AND LAND CLAIMS**

Self-government and land claim issues need to be fully explained. The advantages and disadvantages of these subjects need to be discussed openly and people require information on the:

- structures of self-government;
- amount of federal and provincial intervention;
- accountability of leadership; and
- handling of financing.

#### Recommendation No. 5

### **THAT A MECHANISM BE DEVELOPED BY ABORIGINAL PEOPLE FOR THE PURPOSES OF CONDUCTING RESEARCH AND EXPLORING INITIATIVES THAT CONCERN THE FUTURE OF ALL ABORIGINAL PEOPLE AND ESPECIALLY ABORIGINAL WOMEN AT THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL**

This process conducted by the Native Women's Association of Canada represents only a small glimpse into the concerns of Aboriginal women. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples should engage in solutions more aligned with the needs of the community. Further research at the community level needs to be conducted.

#### 3.0 CONCLUSIONS

This research has provided an opportunity to outline the major issues facing Aboriginal women. Although problems did exist in the production of this report, the voices of Aboriginal women who did participate in this process must be heard.

Clearly, Aboriginal women at the grassroots level have solutions to many of the problems facing Aboriginal communities and these solutions need to be addressed by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the various provincial and territorial governments.