

**ROYAL COMMISSION INTERVENOR
PROGRAM 1993**

INTERVENOR REPORT

**SUBMITTED BY THE WINNIPEG
REGION OF THE MANITOBA METIS FEDERATION**

OCTOBER 20, 1993

The Manitoba Metis Federation as a political body and service delivery organization has been in existence since 1969. Originally representing both non-status and Metis individuals it now represents just those persons claiming to be Metis. This is a report concerning one of the seven Regions of the Federation, that being the Winnipeg Region.

The Winnipeg Region of the Manitoba Metis Federation represents approximately 7,000 adult members in the City of Winnipeg, as well as approximately 15,000 dependents of members. This is not an absolute figure but it reflects the organizational problems of identifying and enumerating a sector of the population which is highly mobile, not only within the city but also to and from the rural communities.

Metis migration into Winnipeg from the rural communities is expected to accelerate in the 1990's. This represents a tremendous challenge for our Region and the city to provide for meaningful economic opportunities for this increasing segment of the Winnipeg population. A critical issue that the Winnipeg Region must address in the 1990's is identifying how to ensure the participation of our membership in the future economic development of our community.

This report funded by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples will identify several issues of importance to urban Metis people, such as Sports and Culture, Economic Development, Education and Training. Throughout the report we respectfully make recommendations that we believe, if followed would result in the alleviation of some of the problems we are faced with.

SPORT AND CULTURE

The following segment was prepared by Mr. Rick McKay, Winnipeg Region Sports and Culture Director. Mr. McKay is member of the McKay fastball team in Manitoba.

The Metis people of Canada are a distinct group although they have been included in the term or category of "Aboriginal". However, the Metis have characteristics and features which are unique from other "Aboriginal" peoples and, therefore, require particular attention. The history of the Metis, First National and Inuit differ and this difference is one that should be known and shared by all Canadians. Here in Manitoba, the Metis people have much of their history connected to Louis Riel while the First Nations hold the Treaties as a sacred part of their history, particularly as it relates to the Euro-Canadians. These differences in history are very essential to the make-up and overall framework of the Metis and First National culture and the same must be recognized and respected.

The "Aboriginal" peoples of Canada nonetheless share a special relationship, one that must be maintained separate and apart from the relationship shared with the Euro-Canadian peoples. The relationship amongst "Aboriginals" is crucial in terms of identity and the sustenance of cultures which is unique only to the Aboriginal people of this country. The political and legal separations amongst Aboriginal peoples often inhibits cooperation and usually results in the further separation between First Nation, Metis and Inuit people. The Indian Act and Section 91(24) of The Constitution Act are two instruments that lay at the root of such separation. Although these separations have in large part become reality, an area in which such separation can be bridged is in the area of fitness, sport and recreation.

It is common knowledge that fitness, sport and recreation have

only positive effects on one's physical, mental and emotional well-being. It has been pointed out by Parks and Recreation that not only is regular physical activities one of the very best methods of health insurance for individuals, but relaxation, rest and revitalization through the opportunity of leisure is essential to stress management in today's busy and demanding world. More importantly, children's play is essential to the human development process. Socially, the community recreation reduces alienation, loneliness and anti-social behaviours as well as promoting ethnic and cultural harmony and building strong families. Sport, recreation and fitness also have the economic benefits of being a preventative health service and reducing the high cost of vandalism and criminal activity. In addition, the benefits of increased self-esteem, pride and self-worth are elements which most Metis children should possess and ones which they certainly can experience through participation in fitness, sport and recreation activities and programs.

Unfortunately, the true value of fitness, sport and recreation has not been fully acknowledged and consequently the need for the establishment and development of programs that encourage leadership, fairplay, respect and athletic skills has largely been set aside in face of other more pressing issues. In view of the economic situation of most Metis communities, this practice is not one that can be criticized; however, one must continue to realize that the need for fitness, sport and recreation programs still requires specific attention.

An examination of the history of the Metis in Manitoba as well as throughout Canada reveals that very little, if any, in terms of recreation and sport development has occurred. Recent interviews with Sports Canada officials as well as the Manitoba Sports Federation officials confirm that, at their levels, no initiatives are specifically directed at Aboriginal fitness, sport or recreational activities, let alone for the Metis people. It may be

that governments can point to the occasional financial contribution for sport development; however, this or any other contribution has been piece meal and results only in ad hoc organizations and thus fragmented and limited attempts of sport development and promotion.

The existence of any such "development" has largely been as a result of local initiative versus assistance from external bodies such as the provincial or federal governments. Although there have been references made by governmental bodies regarding the establishment of organizations to facilitate the growth of recreation and sport in the Aboriginal communities, very little development has occurred. One initiative currently available to Aboriginal communities in Manitoba is the Northern Fly-In Sports Camp. This Sports Camp is a non-profit organization funded in part by Manitoba lottery revenue and is sponsored by the University of Manitoba, the RCMP and dozens of other concerned agencies. The Sports Camp is administered out of the University of Manitoba. It operates only in the summer months and although it provides for leadership training and recreation activities, it has no mandate or resources for developing ongoing opportunities for the athlete. In addition, the camp has received no official recognition and financial assistance from the Manitoba Sports Federation.

Nevertheless, the positive effects of such sport and recreation programs were recognized in the Manitoba Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, where in one community the decrease in youth crime was attributable to the existence of the Sports Camp in the community.

The high representation of Aboriginal people and particularly Aboriginal youth in conflict with the law is yet another major reason for concentration to be placed on sport and recreation programs. Boredom is often cited as the reason youth become involved in criminal activities.

The Metis youth have demonstrated that they have great athletic potential and simply require the opportunity to nurture and develop it. Thorean Fleury is an excellent example of this phenomenon. A second example is Laverne Kennedy, a twelve year old Metis girl who resides in Winnipeg. Laverne set her sights on pursuing a boxing career. Boxing regulations have recently been changed to include female boxers; however, Laverne has been set back because of the fact that there was no organization to assist her in the face of such obstacles.

Yet another problem that most Metis athletes face is lack of support. Support in terms of opportunities to enhance abilities as well as basic financial support to obtain the proper training and access to the required facilities. Metis youth often excel in athletics at the high school level. However, even at this level, the opportunity for development is limited. These students attend schools which tend to be more isolated and are therefore unable to expose such students to competitions or involvement with the mainstream sport and recreation programs. Often times the view of Metis and other Aboriginal children is that development of athletic abilities is a dream that is simply unattainable. Those Aboriginals that have become role models as a result of their achievements in the sport and recreation field are viewed as "lucky". These role models nonetheless provide inspiration to other Aboriginals and although the dream of most Aboriginal children is to become an elite hockey player or figure skater, reality is that the chances of these dreams becoming a reality are minimal. This does not mean that the capabilities do not exist; it simply means that the opportunities are limited.

There have been generous amounts of money provided to organizations in the non-Aboriginal community, none of which are directly available to Metis or any other Aboriginal group. For example, in 1990-91, the provinces and territories devoted a total of \$203,270 million to sport, recreation and fitness. The

Aboriginal peoples were not specifically identified as part of this allocation. As is usually the case, there was very little participation of Aboriginal peoples in any of the sport, recreation and fitness activities that these dollars were to provide for. The existence of a Manitoba Aboriginal Sport and Recreation Association would be in a position to access similar monies and make them available to Aboriginal children.

The concept of an Aboriginal Sport and Recreation Association is one that has been espoused on numerous occasions; however, it is only very recently that any initiative has occurred.

Such an organization or association would be better able to provide these children and youth with the opportunities and the tools to develop and build upon their own natural abilities in the fitness, sport and recreation field. The "Association" would offer all Aboriginal children, including Metis, access to further sport enhancement events. It would provide the opportunity to compete in the mainstream sport and recreation programs as well as network with other Aboriginal bodies. Not only would the Association act as a vehicle for the development of the athlete, it would act as a liaison connecting all Aboriginal peoples, thus maintaining the special relationship amongst Aboriginals. Furthermore, it would act as a liaison between the Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian peoples. At a time when the Metis, First National and Inuit peoples are struggling for the recognition of their governments, the Sports Association would also allow for the affirmation of Aboriginal autonomy. The Association would also promote and encourage those activities that are unique to Metis, First Nation and Inuit peoples.

The driving force behind Euro-Canadian sport is winning. In the Metis philosophy, winning is not the only choice. This Aboriginal Sport and Recreation Association would develop the concept of enjoyment of sport and recreation for the mere

satisfaction that it can bring to an individual or group of peoples. The focus of the Association would not be limited to training the gold medal athletes; however, it would allow for individuals or groups to enter into sport and recreation competitions which may provide them opportunities to better attain that goal. The overall focus is to allow access to sport recreation and fitness programs which would allow Metis as well as First Nation and Inuit children to become healthier, both physically as well as emotionally. The Association would simply provide opportunities to Metis and other Aboriginal children which non-Aboriginal children take for granted.

The Association must be structured to address the needs of all Manitoba Aboriginals and requires the co-operation and networking of Metis, Inuit and First Nation peoples, Manitoba Government and existing Sport and Recreation bodies. The Co-operation of such bodies would better ensure the necessary linkages, access and planning are available to Aboriginal children and youth. Furthermore, these bodies are required to properly encourage the development and identification of talent, educational needs and recognition of the benefits of sport, recreation and fitness.

Recommendation

That the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples pressure the provincial organizations for the support and the allocation of resources for Sport, Recreation and Fitness Programs and services in Metis Communities.

Recommendation

That the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples endorse and support an organization for the promotion and development of sport and recreational programs and services in Metis communities.

The Metis of Manitoba support the idea of this Sport and Recreation Association; however, if such an association is to truly represent and venture to benefit all Aboriginal peoples, then it must recognize the differences among Aboriginal peoples and ensure equal opportunities and access to the Metis people. Respect for cultural differences must not only be present between Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian but must also exist between Aboriginal peoples themselves.

We request that the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples support the initiative of the Manitoba Aboriginal Sport and Recreation Association. At the occasion of the launch of the Commission, The Right Honourable Brian Dickson made special note of the Terms of Reference of the Commission. He included in the Commission's examination of issues concerning Aboriginal peoples the examination of "the situation of Aboriginal youth".

Also pointed out in the document produced by the Commission entitled "Overview of the Second Round":

"Building respect and self-esteem among youth was identified as a priority and the request for youth centres and recreation facilities, as a focus for youth activity on reserves and in Aboriginal communities, was universal."

It is therefore obvious that the need for recreational facilities and opportunities for the Aboriginal youth has been identified by the Commission. We, therefore, respectfully request that you lend your support to meeting the need of Metis children and youth by endorsing the concept of an Aboriginal Sport and Recreation Association.

ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY FOR METIS PEOPLE

Business Development

Our forefathers were members of a commercial nation of entrepreneurs. We were the traders, the soldiers, and the freighters. We were the muscle that forged the west. Today, however, we have been left behind and do not fully participate in the Canadian economy. Limited by education Metis are rarely found in the professions or managerial class. A majority of Metis who enter the labour force are engaged in semi-skilled, unskilled and clerical jobs.

Metis people have one of the highest unemployment rates of any group in the country. Available data also indicates that the Metis population is much younger than the Canadian population as a whole. We have the highest percentage of our population in the under fourteen years of age group.

There are many reasons why the Metis people of today have not regained the commercial prominence that their ancestors enjoyed in the past, one of which is a lack of access to capital to generate development. A second factor is lack of management skills and access to management advice in our community which as a result leads to business failure for those persons attempting to establish a business. It is imperative that the entrepreneur be given courses in bookkeeping, employee management, computer operation, time management and marketing skills so that they may succeed in business.

Therefor it is very important that the Federal Government maintain a strong policy of job creation for Metis People and in particular our Metis youth so that we may break into the job sector at a higher level than what we currently participate and so that our people may start businesses of their own.

SOLUTIONS TO UNEMPLOYMENT

The Winnipeg Region of the Manitoba Metis Federation proposes that an economic strategy be adopted to ensure that our people participate and prosper in the economic development of Canada. This economic strategy should include the following important components.

These Are:

1. **A Small Business Incubator:** (officially titled and incorporated as the Winnipeg Metis Development Corporation, W.M.D.C.)
2. **Government Purchasing Policy:** to provide a "set-aside" contracting policy for Metis businesses.
3. **Revolving Loan Fund:**
 - A) to provide grants and loans for new and expanding Metis businesses.
 - B) to provide and/or administer the funds for the purchase of land and buildings.
4. **Education Programs:**

THE SMALL BUSINESS INCUBATOR

Small business will be the principal medium to sustain an economic strategy for Metis People. Small business is a powerful force in the world economy and represents the heart and soul of the free enterprise system. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business reports that 90% of all businesses in Canada are small, (under 25 employees) and create between 70 to 80 percent of all new jobs. It is reported that many people will work out of their homes in the future with the development of better communications and two way fibre optic cables.

But the important role of small business is fraught with crises over sudden drops in productivity, loss of markets and perennial cash-flow problems. As a result, thousands of small business will fail; 80% will fail within the first five years. To deal with this problem it is imperative that we do more with what we have.

Mutual support; making the most of our limited resources by sharing them has always been a vital part of the Metis tradition. We believe that this concept of the few skilled and professional leaders providing organizational and management skills to the many is best achieved through the medium of the "small business incubator". The incubator concept also strengthens the capabilities of the Metis entrepreneurial group through more effective use of local, provincial and federal resources.

The "small business incubator" concept was developed in Europe as a mechanism to help small business during their fragile start-up period in four essential areas necessary to reduce their level of risk:

1. Shared space with rents geared to revenue;
2. Shared services, janitorial, secretarial pool, material

purchasing etc;

3. On-site management support services e.g. accounting, feasibility and marketing studies; and
4. Assistance in capitalization and marketing.

The growth of this new economic concept in the world and especially in the United States has been phenomenal. There are approximately one thousand small business incubators in the United States today and the numbers are also increasing in Canada and in Europe.

Many American states are taking a very active role in the development of incubators and provide support through financial grants, research, market information, technology, training programs, loans, consultant services and other forms of technical assistance. Millions of dollars in state grants have been provided to establish incubators. Pennsylvania alone has 22 small business incubators and is planning more. Other states are setting up legislation to promote incubators. The incubator concept is vital to the development and success of Metis entrepreneurs and will be an essential component of our future economic strategy.

Government economic programs are often seen merely as short term make work projects, unsupported and fragmented and do not address the long term needs of the community. More coordination and support services are needed to ensure success for the native small business -- we believe that the Small Business Incubators concept will meet this need.

SET-ASIDE CONTRACTING

The policy of selective government purchasing as a national strategy to aid the disadvantaged is not new. It has been firmly

established in the United States since 1953. Billions of dollars in government contracts have been given to minority groups for the acquisition of buildings, equipment, capital and management support service. This U.S. set-aside program has been a phenomenal success and provides positive testimony to the need and the wisdom of this kind of economic strategy for the disadvantaged of the nation.

The question really is: Should government purchasing of material and services continue to be based on open competition or should it be used as a national industrial strategy to create new jobs and training for our economic disadvantaged people. The MMF Winnipeg Region proposes that Canada can follow the American model by developing and implementing our own government purchase policy that will enable the Metis people to make a giant leap forward in their quest for economic development.

Selective government purchasing has been advocated by Canada's Premiers. A brochure promoting the advantages of the Western Diversification Initiative Fund states: "The Federal government agrees in principle with the Premiers' suggestion that Federal procurement can be a powerful tool of regional development in Western Canada."

In 1980, the Task Force on Employment Opportunities for the 80's recommended a system of contract compliance for government procurement under which the Federal government would give preference to those companies which had programs to assist special needs groups such as native people.

RECOMMENDATION

The principle of selective government contracting to meet special needs has obviously been accepted in Canada. The MMF Winnipeg Region advocates a firm policy in selective government

purchasing that will provide the catalyst to ensure the viability of the Metis small business incubators and the development of jobs and Metis entrepreneurs.

REVOLVING LOAN/THE NEED FOR CAPITAL

The problem we have today is that not many of our people have access to capital to start businesses and to create jobs. The banks do not lend us money because they say we do not have the necessary skills to be business people, and do not have the prerequisite investment of capital. Access to community controlled capital is required.

"Many Metis are eager to work in their own business but lack the equity and business skills which would enable them to get started. The Louis Riel Capital Corporation is seen as a step towards the self-sufficiency of our people. It lends money to Metis clients who otherwise would not be able to get capital from a bank."

Claire Riddle
Vice-President
Winnipeg Region

The Louis Riel Capital Corporation (The Capital Corporation) is a good first step towards giving our people the opportunity of going into business for themselves. Money is available for Metis people wanting to expand a existing business or start a new one.

The fund administered by the Board of Directors of the Capital Corporation who work to ensure that loans which are provided create

the most for business and job development. The funds are used for the financing of new businesses and the expansion of existing businesses. Once the loan is paid back the funds are then reinvested in new Metis clients in need of capital.

However there still can be some improvements made to this structure. The biggest source of discontent with the Capital Corporation is the rate of interest that it must charge. A brief explanation as to this should be given so that one can appreciate the financial strains that the Corporation is under.

The Capital Corporation has to pay for all its overhead costs out of the capital that is given to it by Industry Science and Technology. From this pool of capital rent, salaries, travel costs, loan administration costs, audit, legal, bookkeeping and Board costs must be supported. Banks pay for these costs, and create profit, (considerable profit), by administering service charges on accounts and deposits that they administer, as well as from the margin at which they lend money out to clients above what they pay on interest on deposits. That is they currently may pay three percent interest on accounts but collect nine percent interest on loans. This six percent margin gives them their profit. The Louis Riel Capital Corporation on the other hand has to pay all its overhead costs exclusively from the interest it collects on its loans. It is not authorized to take deposits of money.

The net result is that clients in need of money are forced to pay thirteen percent interest rates. If market rates rise to eighteen percent then the capital corporation will be lending at relatively favourable rates compared to the institutional lenders, however, currently it is not competitive.

The rate of interest seems to have resulted in a rift being formed between the Board and the community who cannot understand why it lends at such high rates of interest. Many people in the

political arena choose to use the rates of interest charged as political fodder for their campaigning at the expense of the Capital Corporations integrity and make irresponsible statements that they would automatically lower the rates of interest if elected, when in fact they could not do so and ensure the future viability of the loan fund. Many board members who were chosen to sit on the board and generously have donated their time for its cause have become disillusioned as the community calls for lower interest rates and the government departments who oversee the program at the same time take issue with the risk exposure of the loan portfolio.

There are two solutions to this problem. One is that the capital corporation should be authorized to not only lend money but to invest directly in clients businesses as shareholders. This would result in the capital corporation being more of a friendly investor taking profits when profits arise but not necessarily demanding an interest payment every month regardless of the cash flow situation of the client.

This relationship between the capital corporation and the client could be achieved if the Capital corporation was permitted to take shares in the client company. Perhaps these shares could be ones in which a cumulative dividend would be owed to the Capital Corporation every year but would not necessarily have to be paid every. If the Dividend was not paid in a year then it would accumulate and would be an outstanding debt to be paid the following year. If the client made a large profit in a year the Capital Corporation would also be entitled to a share in those profits.

If the Capital Corporation were to invest in such a fashion it would also demand a say in the how the business was operated, as it would have a vested interest in the creation of maximum returns on

its investment.

What would also be required is increase staff that could operate as consultants/business managers to the various businesses that they operate. These consultants would have the duty to ensure that the companies in which the Capital Corporation has invested are being run as profitably as possible. At least three consultants with expertise in the primary production sector of the economy, service sector, and manufacturing would be needed.

A second method by which the Capital Corporation could lower its rates of interest is if the Capital fund held in trust by the Directors could be "topped up" from nine million to eighteen million. Studies have shown that far more funds could be utilized by the Metis community in Manitoba. With more capital available to the Corporation it could support itself with lower interest rates than the 13 percent currently being levied on the clients.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Federal government should increase the Capital available to the Louis Riel Capital Corporation to allow it lend out at lower rates of interest.
2. We recommend a fixed quotient of federal and provincial government contracts should be given to Metis governments and Metis individuals already in business to allow them to expand production and create more jobs in our community.

EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The objective of Metis self-government in economic development cannot be achieved in the absence of educated and technically trained individuals within our Metis communities who must administer and operate the sophisticated bureaucratic systems that our political leadership will require. We will need more trained managers, engineers and technicians that we now have. We have identified the problems and the road blocks but unless governments are prepared to work with us on this vital issue then our deliberations will have taken us no further.

To meet this challenge it is imperative that the universities and vocational colleges are made more accessible to our Metis Youth through extensive scholarships, bursaries and subsidization of promising young high school students. Universities can also be extremely helpful in providing the linkage with the Metis communities and governments and indeed private industry. Indeed we believe it is incumbent upon our universities and colleges to get involved in our community economic development by providing the specific manpower training that we now need. By admitting more Metis youth to these institutions it is hoped we can salvage our wasted human resources.

A constitutional entrenchment of educational entitlements is not the solution. The social and economic isolation of the Metis people since 1880 have been in a large measure due to the restricted access of educational services to our people. What is required now is a firm government policy that will provide the education programs to ensure a successful Metis economic development.

HOUSING

As 1990 draws to a close, an atmosphere of desperation has descended on two very different segments of the Winnipeg community - disadvantaged families and landlords/home owners. Disadvantaged families face a dearth of adequate, affordable housing. Meanwhile, there are 5,000 empty housing units in Winnipeg, a city that has one of the least expensive housing and rental costs in the country. In theory it should not be possible that this great demand for housing could go unfilled by the extraordinarily large surplus of housing. But in Winnipeg, it has become clear that a large gulf exists between theory and reality.

Government programs, both provincial and federal, have tinkered with the dynamics of the community in a drive to solve these two problems. Unfortunately, the continued tinkering has only exacerbated the situation. The province of Manitoba has spent \$72.5 million between the years 1987-89 in the construction of low-cost housing. During that time period, it has opened up 1379 units. Meanwhile, a multitude of federal and provincial programs geared to the private housing market helped spur the construction of an average of 1,430 multiple housing units annually between 1984 and 1988. Given the low cost of housing in Winnipeg, there should be more than an adequate supply to meet the demand for affordable housing - that's the theory.

In 1989, Knew Housing Incorporated, a non-profit housing corporation for Metis and Indian people, established the Native Homefinders program to assist families wishing to find decent and affordable accommodations. Today, Homefinders has 2,000 applications on file searching for comfortable, affordable housing. Most of these families live on welfare assistance where their housing subsidy - even by Winnipeg standards - can't pay the rent for what we would consider to be a nice place.

Despite the public perception, there are hundreds of families who want to leave their sub-standard - slum - housing in favour of some of the better 5,000 vacant apartments and houses but they simply cannot afford it. Their rental allowance is fixed and there are no discretionary funds in the system to pay for upgrading to better accommodations.

Yet these people do move. The City of Winnipeg's Ad Hoc Committee Report on Housing reports that 1,500 welfare families move every month in Winnipeg. The Homefinders staff have found that most of these migrant families, desperate for better living conditions, have rented beyond their ability to pay. According to our experience, the shortfall ranges between \$50 and \$150 per month.

Despite not having the money to pay for their new surroundings, the migrant families do stay, for a few months at least. To make up the rent shortfall, they invariably take from their food allowance. To feed themselves and their children, they are forced to join the growing lines at the soup kitchens. The improvement in their living conditions is only temporary. In a short time - three to four months - they can't find enough money to pay the rent and they are evicted, falling back into slum housing, where they stay until they again make the temporary leap, only to repeat the futile struggle.

WELFARE CYCLE

The constant migration of poor families is devastating in social and economic terms. They are so busy looking for a decent place to live, they can't find or keep a job. Repeated failure lowers their self-esteem - a major contributor to family violence and alcohol and drug abuse, which carries its own steep cost. And their children also pay a high price. With the constant movement, it's possible children can attend three or four different schools

in one academic year - if they don't drop out completely. Pauline Clark, Superintendent of Inner City Schools, writes:

"Since 1974 there has been an increasing concern expressed by the school staffs and principals of Inner City Schools about the high mobility of students within the Inner City. In some of our Inner City Schools more than 50 per cent of the students may move up to six times during one year. It has been our experience that the reason for the high rates of student mobility appear to be very closely related to factors of socio-economic status and the availability of low cost housing. Many families have great difficulty in finding affordable and appropriate housing within the Inner City of Winnipeg."

The failure and low self-esteem the children witness daily in their parents' lives remains with them forever. They too become trapped in the welfare/slum housing cycle. Instead of such conditions being viewed as only temporary, it becomes a way of life. That's the reality in Winnipeg.

Traditionally, governments have responded to low-income housing programs through the creation of government-owned public housing. In many cases, this has only served to place low-income people in ghettos throughout the City. Ironically, the growth in public funded low-income housing occurs while federal and provincial governments also commit funds to bring more private sector housing into the market. However, this spending has not benefited the low-income tenant.

The two housing efforts work at cross-purposes: low income and fixed income tenants are priced out of the ungraded housing as rents increase. All that's accomplished is millions of dollars are spent each year on a still inadequate number of public housing units, while millions more are spent in the private sector on new

units that do not cater to the people in most need - those who can't afford it.

The end result is that a public housing component has been created which instead of being complementary to the private sector, it now rivals and threatens to displace it. There has to be a better way.

ANOTHER WAY

Based on current information, we find that the construction costs of a two-bedroom apartment is \$81,000.00. The monthly carrying charges on this investment totals approximately \$1,100.00 (mortgage, maintenance, administration, taxes and insurance). The average rental allowance for a family on welfare to be accommodated in this two bedroom suite is \$360, leaving a further government subsidy of \$740 for this family in public housing.

Yet, our own findings show that the average rental shortfall for welfare families seeking accommodation into private housing is \$100 per month. Thus a new government program aided at helping welfare families into improved, private housing could place seven families for the same dollars that can only place one family into public housing.

RECOMMENDATION

We recommend that an agency be established whose mandate is to match low-income families and singles with decent shelter at a cost they can afford. Such an agency would be established as a pilot project - on a one- to three-year term - funded, if possible, by all three levels of government but if not, by the province alone. The expectation is that at the end of its term, the pilot project would become a permanent, fully-funded agency.

We propose that Homefinders becomes the delivery mechanism for this new program. Homefinders already possesses the staff, structure and knowledge of the city's housing stock that would eliminate the need for both start-up costs and time. The new program would be legally incorporated as a non-profit housing group, governed by a board of directors composed of responsible community members operating under bylaws which require accountability for the operations of new corporation.

The board of directors would ensure that placements with qualified property owners are spread throughout the city. The board would ensure that Homefinders placements never constitute more than a small percentage of available units within each multiple complex. Rents for private market placements will be set out in an agreement between the landlord and the Homefinders agency.

The benefits of a subsidy program working with the private market are many, including:

- Reduced government costs.
- Stabilizing low-income families in the community enhances their chances for economic and social improvements.
- The private housing market is provided with an immediate incentive to upgrade and maintain properties in good condition.
- Reduces the economic costs of for additional housing bureaucracy, inspection services and special court systems.

MANY BENEFITS

The key to the program's success is inspection and monitoring. An extensive list of private landlords would be kept with a description of the accommodation available, condition of the property, location, accessibility to schools, community centres,

shopping and other facilities, and other relevant data which would ensure the tenant is placed in the most suitable accommodation.

The process will be supplemented with home visits to all tenant applicants. Tenants who have demonstrated an inability to maintain their accommodations in an acceptable fashion would not be allowed to participate.

The new program could become the front-line tool in the fight against slum housing. The program will not be accessible to landlords with sub-standard housing. While we can still force landlords to improve housing conditions through the regulatory power of provincial health by-laws, such a method carries a high price tag.

Instead we can offer landlords a "carrot" - the opportunity to increase their occupancy rates only if they improve their properties. If successful, the new program reduces the need to increasingly rely on the expensive "stick" of regulation and bureaucracy.

Today, government financial restraints are forcing Canadians at all levels to develop less expensive and improved methods of providing decent and affordable housing to the disadvantaged. But surrounded by thousands of vacant apartments, the answer should no longer be resolved by more costly public housing.

The private sector is on the front lines on these issues. We too have had the experience and the frustrations, and suffered the financial problems that go with the territory. We are also taxpayers, anxious to contribute to an alternative to the entrapment of the financially disadvantaged in sub-standard housing. Our brief is submitted in that spirit.

SELF-DETERMINATION

Self-government to us does not mean we want out of the existing government system, our people have been saying we have waited for over one hundred years just to be let in. The Metis of Winnipeg want the right and the ability to shape the institutions that affect our lives. We are less concerned with working from outside societal institutions than making the existing and new institutions and programs responsive to our needs.

For several generations we had to tolerate a government decision making process that did not consult us before designing programs that directly effect our day to day lives. For instance in many cases the eligibility for programs, housing, grants or loans are drawn up people who do not know us as a people or know the way we live.

"Metis self-government means we would have input in developing and implementing policies. We have to stay in public government because we require use of the roads, daycare and other services. We have to live and work with everyone else, we just want a say in how government is run."

Deanna Lejambe

"I think self-determination is the way to go."

Margaret Skrabek

Even though most of us may agree that we want equal representation on the institutions that serve us, we are still faced with a problem. The problem is we lack the skilled people who

are going to run the programs in our communities.

"Presently we don't have enough professionals to run our own government".

Brian Gibault

Before we can effectively govern ourselves we need education. In order to train our people we need access to funds. At this point the Metis want control over education and training money so that our children may have a chance to go to school.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. We recommend that the Royal Commission support the concept of Self-determination for the Metis people.
2. We recommend that the governments, federal, provincial, and civic, be more open to the appointment of Metis people to more prominent positions with the government and the community.
3. We recommend that the Royal Commission support the establishment of a trust fund that would be capitalized by the Federal and Provincial governments and managed by the Winnipeg Region. This trust would function to give donations and scholarship to students attempting to get a higher education.

TRAINING

It is important to recognize that not all Metis people want to go into business, many just want better jobs.

"I wish I could have more education to have a better career."

Debbie Lambert

"Today only 36% of aboriginal children are graduating from grade 12".

Audreen Haurie

Many of our members expressed concerns that when they attempted to upgrade their skills they were unable to get better training because the training institutions did meet their needs.

"The people who design these programs should come and talk to us first before they begin. I don't understand how they think they can help uneducated, unskilled people if they don't have our input into how the system should operate. They should ask these people to make a list of their frustrations and come up with new ideas for training and education."

Winnipeg Region Member

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. We recommend a steering committee be set up for the purpose of coordinating Metis employment and employment training in all three levels of government, and in all different branches of government.
2. We recommend literacy upgrading and job training programs be established that would upgrade the skills of Metis individuals to the requirements of Employment Equity employers.

A NEW RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE METIS AND THE REST OF CANADA
AND METIS HEALING

HEALING

For many years it was hard to describe yourself as being Metis. We were made to feel that somehow we were not to be proud of our ancestry or our history. History saw the Metis as a threat or a bother and we had to struggle to maintain our identity over the decades, but it was through that struggle to maintain and create our culture that we promoted and nurtured ourselves to become stronger.

Even though we can be proud of the fact we kept our identity in a hostile environment we still have to admit that many wounds were struck. Metis people in trouble with the law is a problem of major proportions, the results of which can be seen in the disproportionate number of Metis people who are in jail.

A few of our Metis youth find the food and recreational facilities in jail better than what they had on the outside. Some achieve a social status they never had before. To many of our young people going to jail or joining a gang is a right of passage to manhood.

We believe that the reason many of our youth seem lost with no direction, and ultimately in trouble with the law is because they are not aware of their identity. Many of our children are lost to foster homes, youth centres, prostitution, drugs and alcohol. The family unit needs support to keep the family together.

"Our identity is vague to other Canadians and to sum
extent ourselves"

Rick McKay

"My white friends say your white and my Indian friends
say your Indian"

Charlie

"To help Metis youth with identity we should teach them
in seminars, not wait until the education system does".

Brian Gibeault

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. "We need Metis home advisors to help the troubled families, the mentally ill and the youth".

Bev Roach

2. The Winnipeg Region requires a community centre for the families, meetings and cultural classes. The Centre could welcome the Metis moving to Winnipeg and in so doing develop the spirit, unity and continuity of our culture.
3. We would like to see present programs for native youth greatly enlarged.
4. More effort is needed to keep Metis youth out of gangs and their influence. In furtherance of this goal we recommend that a Metis and Aboriginal Sports Directorate be established that would provide Metis youth with the ability to develop their fitness and to access sport enhancement events as an alternative to spending their time on the street.

Rick McKay

Sport Directorate Officer

THE METIS PEOPLE AND THE REST OF CANADA

We are not so naive as to think all of our problems rest simply with ourselves, many of our problems are imposed upon us by an intolerant society. Racism is rampant in this city of a province that has the highest concentration of aboriginal people in Canada. Our integrity, skills and knowledge is downplayed because of stereotypes that persist in society.

We believe a concerted effort led by the Metis community and government must take place whereby the rest of society is educated as to who we are. As part of this Intervenor Program we conducted a survey and discovered that most adults do not have any real understanding of who the Metis are, this leads to misunderstandings of what we want and what our aspirations as a people really are.

Recommendations:

1. We recommend that school curriculums be changed so that Metis history be taught in all schools to develop awareness between the Metis and Non-Metis children.
2. There should be more Metis police officers in urban police departments.
3. Police officers should participate in more programs with Metis youth.
4. We recommend a cultural education program be a prerequisite for law enforcement officers, correctional workers and the judiciary.

CONCLUSION

We wish to thank the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples for allowing us to participate in the Intervenor Program and for giving us, the Metis people of Winnipeg, a chance to be heard. The many recommendations coming out of this paper we believe, if followed, would lead not only to a betterment in our quality of life but a betterment in the quality of life for all Winnipeg people.