

SOCIAL COHESION? A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE URBAN ABORIGINAL STRATEGY AND ITS APPLICATION TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS IN WINNIPEG

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Abstract / Résumé

Aboriginal self-determination has been reasserted over the past few decades. The right of self-government is recognised in federal policy. Social welfare goals have been articulated in terms of developing greater social cohesion. Aboriginal people in urban areas have received significant attention given their disproportionate socio-economic marginalisation and the threat this poses to social cohesion. The Urban Aboriginal Strategy was introduced to help deal with this marginalisation.

Au cours des dernières décennies, on a réaffirmé l'autodétermination des Autochtones. Le droit à l'autonomie gouvernementale est reconnu dans les politiques fédérales. On a articulé des objectifs de sécurité sociale dans un cadre de développement de la cohésion sociale. Les Autochtones des zones urbaines ont bénéficié d'une attention importante en raison de leur marginalisation socio-économique disproportionnée et de la menace que cela fait planer sur la cohésion sociale. La Stratégie pour les Autochtones vivant en milieu urbain a été élaborée pour traiter une telle marginalisation.

The number of Aboriginal people living in cities is increasing, and this trend presents opportunities for economic and cultural growth and diversification in urban Canada.¹ Forty-nine percent of the population identifying as Aboriginal in 2001 resided in urban areas (Statistics Canada, 2003). Compared with the non-Aboriginal urban population Aboriginal people, however, face some acute cultural, social, and economic challenges. Education levels tend to be lower, unemployment rates higher, and incomes are on average lower than those of the non-Aboriginal population (Hanselmann, 2001). Aboriginal homelessness in major urban areas ranges from 20 to 50 percent of the total homeless population (Canada, Privy Council Office 2002 as cited in Graham and Peters, 2002). A homeless count in 2002 conducted by the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg revealed that over 75 percent of people in city shelters or on the street were Aboriginal people (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2004).

The Aboriginal right of self-determination, sometimes articulated in terms of self-government, has been re-asserted in settler societies around the world, including Canada, very noticeably since the 1970s (Sandercock, 2004; Walker, 2004). In negotiations of Aboriginal rights, nation- and land-based models have been privileged and normalised within federal government discourse, effectively marginalising many in urban Aboriginal communities (Andersen and Denis, 2003). This too is a trend that is not restricted to the Canadian experience (see Barcham (2000) for a discussion of this challenge among urban Maori in Aotearoa/New Zealand).

The Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS), housed in the Privy Council Office, was started in 1998 to improve policy and program development at the federal level, and with other governments, to deal with the growing socio-economic disparity between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in urban areas. The UAS coincides with a growing government focus on the goal of social cohesion, or the overall state of social bonds in a society (Jenson and Saint-Martin, 2003), and competitive urban centres (Government of Canada, 2004; Prime Minister's Caucus Task Force on Urban Issues, 2002). Groups that are disproportionately marginalised, scholars argue, threaten both social cohesion and the economic potential of city-regions (Bradford, 2002; Forrest and Kearns, 2001).

The empirical basis for this paper is an analysis of policies, documents and personal interviews. From this analysis an argument is advanced that while the UAS represents a positive step forward in federal intervention into urban Aboriginal policy and programming, it does not aim to substantiate the Aboriginal right of self-determination. In this way, it represents a step backward in Aboriginal affairs. Through its rationale

and implementation, the UAS has in effect contributed to the circumvention of Aboriginal rights to self-government and self-determination that have been recognised federally and internationally (Government of Canada, 1997; United Nations, 1994). In the next section literature on evolving Aboriginal rights and changing directions in social welfare policy is reviewed. The main body of the argument is then elaborated through a presentation of data on policy developments around Aboriginal rights in Canada during the 1990s, the emergence of and rationale for the UAS, and an examination of how the UAS homelessness initiative was implemented in Winnipeg.²

Evolving Aboriginal Rights and Changing Social Welfare

Scholars have written about the emergence or strengthening of 'indigeneity' (Maaka and Fleras, 2000) and 'Aboriginality' (Denis, 1997) over the past few decades, referring to the "politicisation of 'original occupancy' as basis for entitlement and engagement" (Maaka and Fleras, 2000: 89). Pursuing rights of self-determination and self-government has been central to indigeneity internationally (Maaka and Fleras, 2000), and Aboriginality in Canada (Denis, 1997). Self-determination refers to the inherent right of Aboriginal/Indigenous peoples to continue governing their own affairs through the reform of relations within the settler state they are located within (Daes, 1996). In the Canadian context, self-determination has amounted in practice to the right of self-government (Green, 1997) that has been evolving at the federal level since the 1970s. Self-government typically refers to the delegation—through negotiation—of administrative authority from the state to Aboriginal institutions (Ekstedt, 1999). It is helpful to think of self-government as a right that is subsumed by the more fundamental and basic right of self-determination.

Jane Jenson (1993) argues that in recent decades the Canadian 'universe of political discourse,' where social actors fight for representation and legitimacy, has expanded considerably for Aboriginal peoples. Up until the mid-1980s, the top-down project of securing the 'right' to self-government was the focus of most attention (George, 1992). The focus after that point, and indeed the focus today, has been on models of self-government and the creation of self-governing institutions (George, 1992).

In the urban setting, a model of self-government centred on a 'community of interest' is perhaps the most popular and is one of the models put forward by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996a). This model is characterised by a set of self-governing Aboriginal institutions in sectors such as housing, health, education, justice, to name a few, and can also include the development of umbrella organisations

that represent the interests of these institutions collectively as well as the urban Aboriginal population that they serve. A distinguishing feature of this model of urban self-government is that its constituency is a self-selecting community of Aboriginal people, often without regard to status or Aboriginal nation (i.e., status-blind), rather than a community that is circumscribed by a land-base (e.g., reserve)(Peters, 1992).

An increased recognition of historic and contemporary grievances (in many ways inextricable from one another) of Aboriginal peoples in Canadian (Jenson, 1993) as well as international political discourse is occurring alongside an international movement toward a 'new humanism' (Ekstedt, 1999). The new humanism is a trend toward democratising international politics, with a particularly acute interest in resolving grievances of minority groups within nation-states. This movement is based on the premise that fundamental rights and equal opportunities are important for social and economic order (Ekstedt, 1999). This 'rights'- and 'opportunities'-based movement is distinct from what John Ekstedt (1999) refers to as 'old humanism,' which was premised on the doctrine that the state had a duty to use its authority—directly or indirectly through relationships with institutions such as the church—to provide for those less fortunate. This might also be called a 'charity' and 'needs'-based approach that calls upon mainstream institutions to 'do for' those in perceived need. The pursuit of self-government and self-determination challenges settler societies to accept that these rights are inextricably linked to efforts aimed at meeting needs and aspirations of Aboriginal peoples.

While Aboriginal rights have changed political discourse in Canadian society in the recent past, changes have also been occurring to the social welfare state in Canada. Jane Jenson and Denis Saint-Martin (2003) use the concept of 'social cohesion,' a pre-occupation of state decision-makers and policy communities in many democracies around the world (but particularly in Europe and North America), as a broad rubric within which to explore changing social welfare. Social cohesion, they argue, has a widely agreed upon meaning. It is a "characteristic of the social unit, a macro-level concept that refers to the overall state of social bonds within any society (small, medium or large)" (Jenson and Saint-Martin, 2003: 78-79). They argue that social cohesion has been a concern of policy communities largely on account of the rise to prominence of neo-liberal state discourse and activity since the 1980s. Policy communities learned during that time that if the role of the state in social welfare retrenches too far, considerable strain on social relations in political communities ensues, characterised by a rise in poverty and a marked polarisation in incomes (Jenson and Saint-Martin, 2003). The

increasing polarisation in incomes in Canada has been noted (Yalnizyan, 1998).

During the 1990s to the present, policy communities have been concerned about getting a handle on what the political, social, and economic costs might be of failing to attend to social cohesion, or in other words, the costs of social exclusion and marginalisation. Given the increasing interest in social cohesion as a new medium for investing in social welfare and the importance of 'managing the margins' of society in order to engineer cohesive societies, it is not surprising that Aboriginal issues have come to the fore. "In the space of one generation, Indigenous peoples have moved from the margins to the centre of national stages, once the cost of exclusion from society proved detrimental" (Maaka and Fleras, 2000: 108). The tendency, however, has been to view those within the marginalised Aboriginal population as the architects of their own misfortune rather than as victims of systemic racism (Brodie, 2000).

Following the financial crises of the 1970s, and furthered along by the reactionary neo-liberalism of the 1980s and '90s, it became common to criticise social welfare expenditures as inefficient and as a hindrance to market performance and economic growth, as well as for their promotion of welfare dependency. Over time, and in response to this neo-liberal critique of social expenditure, policy communities have been pointing to the productive value of social spending, albeit perhaps in a different way more suited to the times. Policy communities are concerned with determining ways to redesign state investment in social welfare in such a way as to best suit what is often identified as the (post-industrial) new knowledge economy (e.g., Dunning, 2002). Slowly, a model of 'social investment' is gaining currency that seeks to facilitate the integration of citizens into the market (Giddens, 1998; Jenson and Saint-Martin, 2003).

Security in this model is supposed, in theory, to derive from the capacity of individuals to adapt to change. It comes from equalising everyone's life chances, with some acceptance of periodic fluctuations in job and income security. Vulnerable groups in particular are the supposed targets of social investment in order to prevent long-term (and generation-to-generation) social exclusion, which would threaten social cohesion (the ultimate goal of social policy). "The reasons for targeting spending at the margins of society are found in notions of social justice, to be sure, but also in the fear that these marginal populations are a threat to social cohesion, that is to the enterprise as a whole" (Jenson and Saint-Martin, 2003: 87).

Anthony Giddens (1998) notes that if the state is going to assume the role of creating 'positive welfare'—in effect providing assistance tar-

geted at activating people's autonomy and ability to participate in the economy—an active civil society must also be cultivated to contribute to social welfare. He and others (e.g., Turner, 2001) argue that in pursuing social goals, the state needs to capitalise on an active civil society, particularly the voluntary sector, and adopt community-based approaches that are more effective as well as more democratic.

Discussion in the policy community around social cohesion and social investment as a goal and intervention strategy by the state is occurring alongside the focus of attention on the importance of city-regions (e.g., Donald, 2001) and the Canadian urban system (Bourne and Simmons, 2003) as the primary generators of the knowledge economy and receptacles of poverty (Bradford, 2002; Lee, 2000). In the 2002 Speech from the Throne (Government of Canada, 2002), for example, competitive cities are discussed as being vital to individual and national well-being and Canada's ability to attract talent and investment. The following analysis shows that while Aboriginal rights of self-government and self-determination are recognised in federal and international policy, the federal government's UAS seems more in tune with evolving state goals around social cohesion and urban competitiveness than with substantiating Aboriginal rights at the urban scale. As will be argued more fully later on, goals of Aboriginal self-determination and social cohesion should, however, be seen as complementary.

Aboriginal Rights and the Urban Aboriginal Strategy

Methods

The analysis presented in this section is drawn from a document and policy analysis, combined with semi-structured personal interviews carried out in 2002. Where excerpts from documents and policies are used as empirical evidence, the type of document and the reference are included. Interviews were conducted with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal stakeholders at the UAS in Ottawa and in the housing and homelessness sector in Winnipeg where the UAS homelessness initiative was being implemented. Interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed, and analysed with the assistance of NUD*IST qualitative data management and analysis software. To build up an analysis systematically (Jackson, 2001) interviews were first coded to reflect categories of data that would be meaningful for analysis (e.g., homelessness community planning process) and to reflect concepts that were being discussed by participants (e.g., rights/charity). Material coded to reflect particular concepts was then analysed for variations and nuances in meaning (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). Data from the analysis of interviews and policies/documents are woven together into a composite narrative, elaborating the central argu-

ment of the paper, that while the UAS represents a general advance in urban Aboriginal policy and programming, a significant shortcoming is that it does not aim to substantiate the right of self-determination.

Expanding Aboriginal Rights in the 1990s

In 1993, the newly elected federal government committed itself to recognising the inherent right of self-government without re-engaging in constitutional debate that ended with the failure of the Charlottetown Accord in 1992 (Wherrett, 1999). The 1995 Inherent Right policy, passed by the federal government, asserts that self-government rights can be provided for under Section 35 of the Constitution Act of 1982 in new treaties, as part of comprehensive land claim agreements or as additions to existing treaties. And, "[f]or groups without a land base, the government is prepared to consider forms of public government, the devolution of programs and services, the development of institutions providing services, and arrangements in those subject matters where it is feasible to exercise authority in the absence of a land base" (Wherrett, Parliamentary Research Report, 1999: 8).

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples finished its work in 1996, advancing discourse on the special place and circumstances of Aboriginal peoples in the Canadian federation. The 'Urban Perspectives' chapter outlines the Commission's view that both the provincial and federal governments have specific responsibilities to provide culturally appropriate services to off-reserve (urban) Aboriginal people, to the extent required in order for them to achieve a standard of living that approximates that enjoyed by the average Canadian. The Commission also advocated for the design and delivery of programs and services by Aboriginal institutions in urban areas where the population was large enough to support them. As such, Aboriginal service institutions would be manifestations of the 'community of interest model' of self-government in urban areas. Examples include Aboriginal housing organisations, schools or school boards, health and wellness organisations, economic development enterprises and an urban umbrella organisation within which the direction and co-ordination of all these components could take place. The Commission noted that Aboriginal institutions not only provide much needed services with improved outcomes, but also act as vehicles supporting Aboriginal identity. They also provide employment opportunities and the possibility of incubating new enterprises.

Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan (Government of Canada, 1997) was the official policy response to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. It expands on the federal inherent right policy passed in 1995 to include a specific reference to urban Aboriginal self-

government taking into account the Royal Commission's discussion of appropriate models in urban areas. With respect to the inherent right of self-government in general, Gathering Strength reads (Government of Canada, 1997: 13):

The Government of Canada recognizes that Aboriginal people maintained self-sufficient governments with sustainable economies, distinctive languages, powerful spirituality, and rich, diverse cultures on this continent for thousands of years. Consistent with recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the federal government has recognized the inherent right of self-government for Aboriginal people as an existing Aboriginal right within section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

With respect to self-government off-reserve, and specifically in urban areas, the policy notes that agreements to implement new processes of self-government for Aboriginal groups off-reserve that would lead to direct control of programming by Aboriginal institutions (or governments) are negotiable (Government of Canada, Gathering Strength, 1997: 14):

Self-government processes for Métis and off-reserve Aboriginal groups exist in most provinces. In these processes, the federal government is prepared to consider a variety of approaches to self-government, including self-government institutions, devolution of programs and services, and public government. All of these initiatives provide opportunities for significant Aboriginal input into program design and delivery, and should ultimately lead to direct control of programming by Aboriginal governments and institutions. New approaches to negotiations in the recent past have led to agreements on processes being reached with the land-based Métis Settlements General Council in Alberta and with the urban-based Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg.

At the international level, the Government of Canada and Canadian Aboriginal leaders contributed to what is perhaps the most influential international covenant on Indigenous rights. It bears mentioning in this discussion on the expansion of Aboriginal rights discourse in Canada because it has had an impact on the terms of debate in Canada (Ekstedt, 1999; Wherrett, 1999). The Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations, 1994) was completed after 12 years of negotiations between governments and Indigenous groups. Following its completion in draft form, the United Nations Economic and Social Council

passed a resolution in 1995 to establish a working group of the United Nations Human Rights Commission (which includes the Government of Canada and Aboriginal leaders) to elaborate the draft document (Wherrett, 1999). In the broadest sense, the rights of self-determination and self-government are asserted throughout the document, ranging from autonomy and control in local affairs and services, to the determination of political status and citizenship.

Circumventing Self-Government in the Urban Aboriginal Strategy

As shown above, the discourse on Aboriginal rights of self-determination and self-government has expanded considerably in the 1990s. This has occurred in federal government policy and at the United Nations. The federal and provincial governments have also undertaken to formalise an alternative discourse, however, deploying the language of 'partnerships' in Aboriginal programming.

The federal government views the Métis and off-reserve Aboriginal populations which live south of the 60th parallel as a shared responsibility with provincial governments, with primary responsibility actually residing with the provinces (Privy Council Office, *Analysis of Urban Aboriginal Strategy-Internal Document*, 2002). Provincial governments, on the other hand, have traditionally argued that they have no special or constitutional responsibility for Aboriginal peoples, regardless of their status or place of residence (e.g., on- or off-reserve), and that the federal government holds responsibility for all Aboriginal peoples. Provincial governments have tended to implement programs that attend to 'all citizens equally' (Hanselmann et al., 2002; Privy Council Office, 2002). They have also expressed that the federal government is failing in its responsibility for Aboriginal programming (Privy Council Office, 2002).

The impact that the deteriorating socio-economic circumstances of urban Aboriginal people have had on cities has changed the political climate, however, particularly in western provinces. These deteriorating circumstances have caused some provinces to engage unilaterally in enhanced urban Aboriginal programming (Hanselmann et al., 2002) and to enter into partnerships with other levels of government and Aboriginal authorities to target programs specifically at the Aboriginal population. In Manitoba, for example, the federal and provincial governments signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 1999 to co-operate on urban Aboriginal issues.

In the late-1990s, senior (western) federal ministers reacted to the fact that the widening disparity in socio-economic conditions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal urban residents in cities like Winnipeg,

Regina, and Saskatoon was having a dramatic impact on the welfare of urban communities. The ministers challenged the federal government to address some of these issues, while still recognising that the federal government "could and should not take full responsibility for issues facing urban Aboriginal people" (Privy Council Office, Analysis of Urban Aboriginal Strategy-Internal Document, 2002: 11). The UAS, based in the Privy Council Office under the leadership of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-status Indians, was started in 1998 to respond to these issues. The UAS was to be guided by two key principles, namely, 'local determination' and 'partnership' (Privy Council Office, Analysis of Urban Aboriginal Strategy-Internal Document, 2002). The 2004 Speech from the Throne (Government of Canada, 2004) made a specific commitment to expand the UAS with 'willing provinces and municipalities,' reflecting the partnership approach that is central to this strategy to address the disproportionate socio-economic hardship experienced within the urban Aboriginal population. This is ultimately aimed at strengthening social cohesion and the competitiveness and vibrancy of urban centres (Government of Canada, 2002), by bringing Aboriginal residents to a level of parity with respect to their involvement in urban life. As an interview participant from the UAS notes:

The Government of Canada's position is that our primary responsibility is for First Nations people on reserves. And so if we were to just strictly adhere to that, we wouldn't have an Urban Aboriginal Strategy. So what we're saying now is, and this is the language that we're using with the provinces: "Let's put jurisdiction aside, let's see how we can work together to address these issues." What we're saying is: "We've got a responsibility, like every other government, and it's a shared responsibility." So we want to work with those who are interested in working with us in addressing some of these needs. But it's more in terms of social cohesion, kind of making sure that our cities are strong and vibrant, and more specifically, ensuring that this one population is part of the bigger process. (Interview, Aboriginal, Policy Advisor, Urban Aboriginal Strategy, Privy Council Office)

Or put in another way, as articulated in the following passage, the justification for the UAS is not based on distinct Aboriginal rights, but on pursuing socio-economic parity between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal citizens in urban areas.

...policy differentiation on the basis of Aboriginality should be positioned not as the granting of extra rights and entitlements, but more the allocation of additional resources to

certain groups of disadvantaged people on the basis of socio-economic and spatial criteria to assure equal access to basic opportunities and services enjoyed by all. This leads to a much more philosophical question in terms of the future treatment of Canada's urban Aboriginal population when the socio-economic chasm between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people has disappeared, that is, will it be necessary or preferable to continue policy differentiation on the basis of one's Aboriginality? (Privy Council Office, Analysis of Urban Aboriginal Strategy-Internal Document, 2002: 11)

A reading of the UAS rationale (Privy Council Office, Analysis of Urban Aboriginal Strategy-Internal Document, 2002) and the following interview excerpt further suggest that the pursuit of Aboriginal self-government in the urban context has little value in and of itself, apart from whatever demonstrable value it may have for addressing the disproportionate Aboriginal socio-economic needs.

The Urban Aboriginal Strategy really, at the core, is intended to address a gap in socio-economic needs between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. And in saying that, our focus is on practical results. So, we've steered clear from the self-government, and a number of Aboriginal organisations have criticised us for that.... What we want to do right now is just address the gap and part of the research that we want to test is, well, is self-government an important component of actually addressing the gap? We don't know that. (Interview, Aboriginal, Policy Advisor, Urban Aboriginal Strategy, Privy Council Office)

Urban Aboriginal Strategy Homelessness Initiative in Winnipeg

Katherine Graham and Evelyn Peters (2002) and Calvin Hanselmann (2002) argue that the community-centred model of engagement that is central to the implementation of the federal government's Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI) provides an example of how the federal government could directly engage Aboriginal people in urban areas in the future.³ In theory, this kind of model could combine Aboriginal self-determination objectives with the federal goals of investing in an active voluntary sector to achieve social welfare goals and increase social cohesion (Giddens, 1998; Government of Canada, 2001). This part of the section examines the UAS homelessness initiative that was implemented alongside the SCPI, showing that while the model has promise, the implementation of the initiative has not occurred in a way that substantiates Aboriginal self-determination.

In addition to the SCPI money directed at resolving homelessness in Winnipeg, the federal government, through the UAS, allocated an additional \$10 million to specifically address Aboriginal homelessness. It was stipulated that the funding was to be administered in the same way as SCPI funds, using the same application process and parameters. The SCPI requires that a community plan to address homelessness be developed by community stakeholders. Homelessness project proposals are then submitted to the SCPI administration by local organisations, or groups of agencies, for review. If proposals are compliant with the (Winnipeg) community plan and otherwise acceptable, the federal government invests funding toward the capital costs.

Several proposals were submitted in Winnipeg for Aboriginal homelessness projects. Two principle criteria that project proposals must meet in order to receive SCPI or UAS homelessness funding are those of 'partnership' and 'sustainability.' The criteria were initially developed for the mainstream SCPI program and applied subsequently to the UAS homelessness program.

Interview participants raised the concern that creating broad community partnerships for Aboriginal initiatives can be difficult because of the special relationship that Aboriginal peoples and organisations have with the federal government, and the distrust that can exist between mainstream and Aboriginal institutions and service users.⁴ Furthermore, demonstrating long-term program sustainability after the initial capital investment by the federal government can be more difficult for Aboriginal organisations because they are under-staffed and under-financed in many cases, and do not have the financial capacity or partners necessary to demonstrate sustainability. As a result, there is a risk that the organisations that will end up delivering the Aboriginal-specific programs through the Aboriginal homelessness funds will be non-Aboriginal organisations that have the capacity to 'do for' the Aboriginal community. This perspective was expressed several times by Aboriginal housing experts.

There is no Aboriginal organisation that can guarantee sustainability. So, it's not going to happen. Who are the people getting funding? Well-established organisations like the Salvation Army, pity groups. Related to the word partnership is sustainability. So how are you going to get sustainability from an Aboriginal group, organisation, when historically they were never allowed to have any kind of economic base, or any kind of real estate? And you want them to have partners with the rest of society. And you want them to have sustainability. Ah, it doesn't make sense to me. (In-

terview, Aboriginal, Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Professional, Manitoba Métis Federation)

The mainstream social housing groups are looking to take over the projects. They want to run everything. They want to serve the native people. "We'll look after the Aboriginal people." That's basically what they're saying. (Interview, Aboriginal, Urban Native Housing Provider)

These perspectives point to concerns over charity and need-based Aboriginal programming versus programs designed to meet Aboriginal needs and aspirations through processes that facilitate self-government and self-determination.

A mainstream housing organisation was in the process of accessing a second round of homelessness funding. In the first time around it accessed funding through the SCPI program. This second round of funding was going to be received through the UAS homelessness program. The director of that organisation noted that half of the population his organisation serves is of Aboriginal ancestry and so he would be using the UAS funding to serve Aboriginal people. As a condition of accessing the Aboriginal homelessness funds he would need to dedicate all units developed with those funds to Aboriginal clients. Confirming remarks made above by another participant, he noted that a lot of the other (Aboriginal) groups had not been demonstrating that their proposals would be sustainable beyond the initial capital investment from the federal government. This opened the door for his organisation to access the funding in order to serve the Aboriginal population.

This is the first year we've accessed any of the Aboriginal money and I think the reason why it went better for us is because we spent a long time the first time around on the SCPI funds. The concept is the same. We're just getting money from the pot that's designated to half the people that we're working with. A lot of other groups are not dealing with the sustainability stuff, but they still want the funds. Even though the funds have a string attached that you build in sustainability or that you address those issues. Fifty-five percent of it [project funding], or whatever, is urban Aboriginal funding and we'll just go and make sure that 25 of the 44 units, you know, are Aboriginal. (Interview, Non-Aboriginal, Director, Lazarus Housing)

Participants expressed that Aboriginal leaders must also be involved in the planning process. The original community plan created to guide the administration of the SCPI and UAS homelessness programs in Win-

nipeg was not well received by many in the Aboriginal community. It was perceived to have been drafted without sufficient input from Aboriginal community leaders. The Aboriginal Reference Group on Homelessness and Housing was subsequently formed to remedy the problem and provide planning expertise targeting the Aboriginal population. A second planning document was created, this time with the participation of the newly formed Aboriginal Reference Group. A participant explained the importance of including appropriate Aboriginal leadership in community planning processes such as these.

And so the first document that was produced was virtually in the absence of Aboriginal leadership. You can't do, I mean, the days are over where you did things for us without our participation. That's gone. People have to understand that we need to be at the table, and legitimate representatives of our people. And that includes our political organisations, and it includes our community members that we acknowledge as our leaders. And so the second document, I don't know who woke up. I think that the [first] document might have been shown to some Aboriginal groups and they said: "What's this?" Because they produced that second document and in that [planning] group they included what was called an 'Aboriginal Reference Group' and that was how the second document was produced. (Interview, Aboriginal, Speaker, Mother of Red Nations Women's Council of Manitoba)

As a means of instituting self-government, Aboriginal organisations expressed that they would like to have control over adjudicating proposals aiming to address Aboriginal homelessness. In the Winnipeg case, the same panel of community stakeholders that adjudicated proposals for the SCPI was responsible for selecting UAS homelessness project proposals. A participant who chaired the community planning process for the homelessness programs in Winnipeg noted that instead of submitting project proposals to a panel of mainstream community stakeholders for approval, Aboriginal organisations expressed a desire to have control over a portion of funding.

I actually chaired the second-stage housing component. It was a general [community homelessness] plan intended to appeal to all groups at large. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. Now after that came out, there was a little bit of concern on the part of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and the Manitoba Métis Federation. As it turns out, they would prefer to have seen a chunk of money for their own use. Where they

would almost have their own committees approve their own applications. (Interview, Non-Aboriginal, No Attributions)

Conclusion

Canadian and international discourse on Aboriginal rights has expanded during the 1990s. A parallel trend of bypassing Aboriginal right claims altogether when they pertain to urban Aboriginal issues is also taking place. The process of inter-governmentalism to deal with 'complex' Aboriginal issues that threaten social cohesion and the vitality of urban economies and which, by virtue of this threat, are of shared importance to all levels of government is gaining considerable advantage over rights discourses (Hanselmann and Gibbins, 2002). The goals of expanding Aboriginal rights and strengthening social cohesion are not, however, mutually exclusive. Pursuing urban Aboriginal initiatives that recognise rights of self-government and self-determination will in fact contribute to social cohesion for at least two reasons.

The first is that initiatives for Aboriginal people that are designed, delivered, and governed by Aboriginal people are more popular and have better program outcomes (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 1999; Distasio and Carter, 2003; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996a). In a direct sense, satisfying the right of self-government also better addresses the disproportionate need within the Aboriginal population for social welfare goods such as housing, thereby addressing the disparities between Aboriginal and mainstream society that arguably challenge social cohesion and the competitiveness of our cities. If the goal of policy communities is to ensure that no group in society is excluded from the economy and urban society too deeply and for too long, then it makes sense on that basis alone to pursue more rather than fewer measures of Aboriginal self-determination.

Second, recognising self-determination as a pre-cursor to partnership between Aboriginal and mainstream society (Maaka and Fleras, 2000) is an appropriate means for strengthening co-operation on issues of shared importance, such as those concerning social welfare. In other words, the overall state of social bonds in urban society—the level of social cohesion (Jenson and Saint-Martin, 2003)—stands to improve through the substantiation of self-determination in urban areas.

Scholars and Aboriginal people in urban areas have argued that the federal government has a responsibility for leadership in urban Aboriginal policy and programming by virtue of its historic relationship with Aboriginal peoples (Graham and Peters, 2002; Walker, 2003; Walker, 2004). A model such as that used to implement the UAS homelessness program alongside the national SCPI program is an example of how the

federal government might intervene to ensure that Aboriginal rights are protected in social welfare initiatives designed at the community level in urban areas. This idea is supported by the work of other scholars (Graham and Peters, 2002; Hanselmann, 2002). This paper critiqued the way that the UAS homelessness program was implemented, however, for its ineffectiveness in protecting the rights of self-government and self-determination. Rather than rationalising the allocation of funding according to the Aboriginal rights of self-government and self-determination, the UAS funds were allocated to organisations that were able to address Aboriginal 'need.'

In many ways the weaknesses identified in the implementation of the UAS homelessness program in Winnipeg are a reflection of the flaws in the rationale behind the UAS generally. The UAS is not based in the evolving Aboriginal rights of self-determination and self-government that are central to contemporary Aboriginality/indigeneity (Denis, 1997; Maaka and Fleras, 2000). Rather, it seeks only to address the urgent 'problem' of Aboriginal poverty, essentially managing this margin of society in pursuit of greater social cohesion (Hanselmann and Gibbins, 2002). While there is certainly a great disparity between the socio-economic conditions of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal households in Canadian cities, addressing this urgent 'problem' based on 'need' perpetuates an old model of charity (Ekstedt, 1999) that opens the door for mainstream institutions to 'do for' Aboriginal people. It is argued here that while the model of intervention used for the UAS homelessness initiative (i.e., government assistance in addressing local needs through community-based initiatives) could work well for injecting Aboriginal rights into local design and delivery of social welfare, the rationale for such interventions would need to be two-fold: 1) to address the disparity in socio-economic circumstances between Aboriginal and mainstream society, and 2) to do so through means that assure Aboriginal self-determination and self-government as dimensions of programming. Developments in the substantiation of self-government that have occurred in Canada, but which have privileged and normalised nation- and land-based models of community and governance (Andersen and Denis, 2003), will need equally to be realised in urban areas.

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Notes

1. The term Aboriginal peoples is used to refer to descendants of the original inhabitants of Canada. It refers to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, as per the Constitution Act of 1982. The term Aboriginal people is also used to refer to people of Aboriginal ancestry irrespective of the national group to which they belong.
2. The population of the Winnipeg Census Metropolitan Area (i.e., the urban core and adjacent urban and rural fringes) in 2001 was 671,274 (Statistics Canada, 2001). Winnipeg has the largest urban Aboriginal population in absolute terms (55,970 identified as Aboriginal in 2001) and the second largest in relative terms (at 8.2 percent of Winnipeg's population in 2001) when compared with other large Canadian metropolitan areas (Peters, 2005). Winnipeg also has one of the most well-developed sets of urban Aboriginal institutions in Canada (Peters, 2000), including a variety of social, cultural, economic development, political, and housing and homelessness service organisations.
3. The SCPI is a federal initiative to address homelessness in urban centres. It supports community-based proposals for homelessness programming, primarily through funding contributions, which vary across urban centres according to local priorities and community plans.
4. Juxtaposing Aboriginal with mainstream is a purposeful simplification of Canadian multicultural society. It is not meant to imply that there is either a homogenous mainstream society or a homogenous Aboriginal society.

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