

Winnipeg Urban Inuit Study, 2008

By

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I. INTRODUCTION

The objective of this study was to examine the adjustment of Inuit to the urban environment of Winnipeg. Several steps were undertaken in the preparation of this study:

- 1) A literature review was prepared at the onset of the project (see Appendix I.)
- 2) Informal consultations with two national Inuit organizations: Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami took place on an ongoing basis.
- 3) A lunch meeting was held to form an Inuit working group, who were representative of a cross section of the urban Inuit population in Winnipeg. A decision was made by that group to utilize a survey to gather information on the Inuit urban experience.
- 4) Survey questions were developed by the Inuit working group to ensure cultural appropriateness and to address relevant issues.

II. SURVEY DEVELOPMENT

Data collection was organized around four main categorical themes:

- cultural community,
- housing,
- healthcare and
- education.

Each theme contained questions that were identified as primary areas of concern by the Inuit working group. Survey questions were designed to be open-ended to encourage a variety of responses. A preamble describing the purpose of the survey and instructions for its use was also included (See Appendix 11).

Following is a description of the information focus of the four thematic categories:

1) *Access to community when first arriving in Winnipeg:*

Respondents were requested to describe how they became aware of available services. Questions were also directed at the potential need for improvement of information sharing and respondents were asked to identify what facilities & cultural activities they would like to have.

2) *Health care services and accessibility:*

Respondents were asked to provide information about their experiences accessing health care providers and services. Additionally, concerns related to obtaining a health card were explored. Finally, respondents were asked to relate their experiences with Kivilliq Centre.

3) *Housing availability and appropriateness:*

Respondents were asked to provide information about their experiences in accessing shelter. Additional information was collected regarding awareness of residential tenancy rights and an insight into an Inuit definition of appropriate housing was attempted.

5) *Experiences with educational opportunities:*

Recognizing that the urban migration experience is different for students due to the availability additional programs and support services, student respondents were asked to describe their experiences in terms of: housing, childcare, funding and isolation from their families of origin. Students were also asked about the availability of social connections with other Inuit students. Additionally, the survey explored the acceptability of a Nunavut grade twelve diploma by southern post secondary institutions.

III. DATA COLLECTION

In this section the method of survey delivery will be described. The selection and training interviewers will be discussed. The identification of respondents will also be described and issues pertaining to participation in the survey will be discussed.

The primary criteria for the selection of interviewers was that they self-identified as Inuit and that they had well-established contact with different factions of the local Inuit population. One woman was a student at Red River College and was in her twenties. The other woman had lived and worked in Winnipeg for several years. It should be noted that surveyors were given an honorarium for their work in contacting respondents and collecting data.

Surveyors identified respondents and expanded their networks of contacts by requesting that respondents suggest additional contacts.

Respondents were selected on the basis of their recent experience of residency in Winnipeg. Respondents were all over the age of eighteen. Their reasons for migrating to Winnipeg ranged from: those who wish to permanently reside to the city, those who were temporarily here as students, and those who attended post-secondary institutions in Winnipeg within the past two years and had either graduated or dropped-out before returning to their homes in the north.

Initially surveyors attempted to deliver the survey utilizing focus groups, which were to be conducted at the Red River College campus located on Princess Street. However attendance was extremely poor, therefore the collection procedure was modified to better accommodate the preferences of respondents.

E-mail was selected as the data collection method of choice, as well surveyors also carried out in-person and telephone interviews when Internet access was not unavailable or impractical. Each interviewer utilized the same questions, however respondents were instructed to only replied to question that were within the scope of their own personal experiences.

IV. FINDINGS

Of the 60 interviews sent to Inuit in Winnipeg and Nunavut, 20 were collected (33.3%). This analysis will include a discussion of the implications of the common trends that emerged around the aforementioned 4 categorical themes.

1) Community:

All Inuit stated that finding information about available urban services presented varying degrees of difficulty. The majority stated that they had to acclimatize to urban life through the process of trial and error on their own because there was insufficient support available when they first arrived in Winnipeg. Comments indicated that it was a scary experience, often accompanied by feeling lost, disoriented and very homesick. The exceptions to this were respondents who stated that they had friends or relatives already living in Winnipeg who were able to assist them in accessing available services.

The need for an orientation to basic services was reiterated when respondents were asked what should be included in an urban orientation package. Suggestions included: information on where to meet up with other Inuit, how to use metro transit, employment resources, housing, obtaining a health card, school and daycare registration for children, recreational activities and awareness of gangs and unsafe places to socialize.

The majority of Inuit surveyed appear to be Internet savvy and accustomed to functioning comfortably with this technology on a regular basis. When asked if they would use a website to obtain Winnipeg urban re-settlement information, respondents were favorable, some suggested that an on-line personal message board could be included on the site to facilitate communication between individuals.

When surveyed on the preferred cultural activities they would like to have in Winnipeg, respondents indicated that traditional activities such as: throat singing, drumming, sewing, Inuit games and square dancing would be welcomed. Suggestions were made for Inuktitut language lessons to ensure that urban Inuit children do not lose their language.

Interest was also expressed in Inuit representation and participation in local cultural and political events, such as Folkloramma, Aboriginal festivals and conferences.

The desire to situate an Inuit centre and residential facility separate from First Nations was universally expressed. When asked to describe preferred attributes of an urban Inuit Centre, respondents identified the St. James area, near Polo Park, as an ideal location in terms of proximity to their homes, bus routes and Kiviliq Centre, so that those visiting the city for medical reasons would also have a place to go. Connection with patients and escorts was identified as an area of major importance for urban Inuit. Respondents suggested various other features including: a child care program, meeting rooms, a space for arts & crafts creation and sales and a vehicle for ice fishing and hunting trips – all essential to sustaining Inuit cultural identity.

Notably, many felt that combining the centre with student and temporary housing would be an excellent fit. Having in-house personnel to coordinate services and provide information and referrals was also expressed as a preference.

2) Healthcare:

Responses were varied and inconsistent in this category, relative to the amount of time individuals had resided in the city as well as the circumstances that led to their arrival in Winnipeg. For instance, students were not concerned with obtaining a health card. Conversely, those who had come to Winnipeg for reasons other than education lacked the additional supports available to students, and expressed frustration with the unavailability of information about obtaining a health card or N card.

The majority of respondents stated that they use walk-in clinics because they been unable to access the services of a regular family doctor who is taking new patients.

Reimbursement for dental care was identified as a common concern, as was access to eye care; this was due mainly to up-front payment requirements at the time of service, which presented problems for those on limited budgets. Pharmacy coverage for prescription drugs was also a concern for many who had not acquired an N card to cover the costs. Respondents did not identify ambulance usage, crisis intervention services or addictions treatment programs as areas of concern, however this may be due to the fact that the methodology used did not allow for sufficient anonymity. Additionally, research did not explore HIV or other STIs as an area of concern.

When asked about Kiviliq centre, those who were familiar with the facility did not comment favorably about it. Concerns were expressed about cultural inappropriateness, and excessive charges being levied for access to the Internet or to partake in country foods. The complete lack of in-house recreational activities was also mentioned. The most frequent criticism was regarding inaccessibility to the facility – doors are locked at all times and entry is denied to all who are not patients or escorts or who do not know the name of the patient they are visiting. This practice is contrary to the Inuit cultural value of visitation of the sick.

3) Housing:

Urban housing was a key area of concern for survey respondents in terms of its availability, accessibility and affordability. Concerns were expressed about the shortage of appropriate short-term temporary housing for newcomers as well as the lack of affordable student housing.

Though all student respondents stated they had managed to find various forms of housing, many were dissatisfied with its proximity to their college or university, while others were dissatisfied with the isolation they experienced in their residences after

school and on weekends. Inuit students unanimously stated that a student residence would greatly enhance their urban educational experience and reduce their feelings of homesickness.

Respondents stated that services are needed to assist newcomers, particularly those that do not have assistance from Red River College. Housing repeatedly emerged as an important area of concern for Inuit arriving in Winnipeg, both in terms of receiving guidance about where to look for appropriate shelter and the availability of safe affordable temporary shelter while they attempt to find more permanent housing.

Another repeated area of concern was the appropriateness of available housing to the needs of children. Inuit are a very young populace; a large percentage of women have their children before the age of 20 and many are single parents. Therefore, Inuit women migrating to the city often need child-appropriate housing, which is situated near green space, child care facilities and schools.

Most respondents stated that they were not aware of their tenant rights when they first arrived and entered into rental agreements with landlords. However, most responded that they know how to access this information should the need arise.

4) Education:

The education component of the questionnaire revealed that the major barriers to post secondary education for Inuit students are feelings of isolation and loneliness. Other factors included the lack of safe, affordable, appropriate housing, lack of daycare, lack of awareness of student funding sources once they become Manitoba residents, and problems gaining admission to universities with a Nunavut high school diploma.

Connecting with other Inuit students was described as slow to happen upon arrival, as a result initial feeling of homesickness were intensified. Suggestions were made to provide Inuit specific elements to curriculum, rather than attempting to fit them into First Nations perspectives that are not part of Inuit cultural and spiritual traditions.

The strongest suggestion was to create an Inuit dorm where students could live together and feel connected to their culture and community. Welcome circles were mentioned as a positive opportunity to spend time with other Inuit and Red River College was commended for its inclusive efforts.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon this study, Winnipeg-specific recommendations for the continuation of an urban Inuit community development plan will be presented. The issues that Inuit face in Winnipeg in terms of urban isolation are not different for those faced by Inuit populations in other major urban centers, such as: Montréal, Ottawa, Toronto, Edmonton and Calgary. Much can be learned from the progress that has already been made by other Inuit communities in these urban centres. Similar measures should be considered in Winnipeg to ensure the preservation of Inuit culture in a southern urban setting. At this time they are as follows:

- 1) Continued support and funding for the development of Inuit community leadership in Winnipeg, particularly the continued development of an Inuit steering committee that could incorporate as a non-profit organization with charitable status.

- 2) The initiation of a feasibility study to further assess the need and viability of a Winnipeg Inuit cultural centre and a student housing facility with childcare.
- 3) The initiation of meetings with 3 levels of government, including Nunavut, to discuss two key areas of funding: housing for students and new arrivals & the development of an Inuit cultural centre.
- 4) Inuktitut language preservation through the provision of lessons for children and adults living in Winnipeg.
- 5) The provision of country food sharing opportunities in a convenient central location, on a regular monthly basis, in addition to Red River College gatherings, which may not be readily accessible to those who are not students
- 6) The provision of a multi-faceted urban orientation initiative that would be readily available to all Inuit coming into Winnipeg, with posters or signs at ports of entry and in high visibility areas to promote the following:
 - An information telephone line to provide personal contact (in Inuktitut, if requested) for newcomers and for those in need of referrals or emotional support. This service could be volunteer-driven, however funding would be required to establish the telephone service, advertise it, and train volunteers.
 - A welcome package which includes an informational brochure with directions on how to access basic services in Winnipeg such as schools, churches, recreational activities and local sites of interest, as well as information on obtaining a medical card, housing and utilizing public transportation.
 - As most respondents indicated that they frequently use the Internet, a website would be an excellent method of reaching the majority of Inuit

7) Inuit would benefit from greater exposure to, and participation in, urban Aboriginal cultural and political activities. However, Inuit are unique in many ways and express a strong desire to maintain their culture rather than be assimilated into a pan-Aboriginal perspective. Thus a culturally sensitive approach must be developed to accommodate this need. However, facilitation of the connection with local Aboriginal organizations will be beneficial in addressing student funding issues and employment initiatives in particular:

- The lack of information on available post secondary funding for Inuit who reside in Manitoba is a serious issue. This points to the need for effective strategies to better market the funding options that are currently available through the Manitoba Metis Federation and CHARD.
- Summer employment programs would benefit Inuit students by increasing awareness of Aboriginal services available in Winnipeg.

8) Facilitation for continued networking opportunities with national and urban Inuit organizations throughout Canada.

9) Immediate exploration of the feasibility of hosting a National Inuit conference in Winnipeg in 2008.

10) Exploration into an in-depth study specific to HIV and STIs as relevant to urban Inuit health.

VI. CONCLUSION

The Inuit have their own unique culture and traditions that are, in most ways, dissimilar from First Nations. Yet the value of improved connections with Aboriginal organizations in order to have a voice in local affairs and to access information on a wide variety of Winnipeg-based initiatives and benefits cannot be underestimated, however this must be undertaken with cultural sensitivity.

The plan to provide educational opportunities for Inuit in order to enhance inclusion in northern self-government and commerce is at risk due to the current student drop out rate of 50% (Ford 2006). This statistic makes clear that the needs of Inuit students are not being adequately addressed in order to counteract urban isolation.

Many Inuit women have children at a young age. As a result they arrive as students in Winnipeg with their children. The unavailability of daycare services, moreover the complete lack of culturally appropriate childcare, makes continuation of their education more difficult. Thus the necessity for Inuit childcare is urgent in order to ensure that Inuit women are included in government initiatives aimed at providing education and training for Inuit.

The vision of a Winnipeg Inuit Cultural Centre is central to the preservation and continuation of Inuit culture in southern Manitoba. As the trend to migrate to the south continues, urban centers across Canada must prepare to support the continuation of the Inuit culture and language or risk losing it forever. To this end we must protect and preserve the attributes that are interwoven into Inuit cultural identity, specifically: language, sharing of country foods, creation of Inuit art, hunting, fishing and community togetherness.

Without intervention, Inuit children growing up in Winnipeg will not be exposed to Inuktitut language, Inuit sewing, art, story telling, games, singing and drumming. Moreover they will not have the opportunity to experience the deep community connection between Inuit that has always been central to their survival as a people. It is unsettling to note that their ingenuity and downright toughness enabled the Inuit to survive under extremely challenging climatic conditions, yet without adequate support and respect for their unique culture, they may not survive the cultural pressures imposed upon them by a southern life that is rich in amenities.

APPENDIX 1.

Inuit Population in Canada
Literature Review

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Introduction

According to the 2006 Census, 50,485, people in Canada reported Inuit ancestry which represented 4% of the Aboriginal¹ population at that time (Statistics Canada, 2006). The word "Inuit" used here refers to persons who claimed a full or partial Inuit identity on the census. In 2001, most (86% or 36,650) of the Inuit population live in the Northern regions (i.e., Nunavut, Labrador, Nunavik in northern Quebec and the Northwest Territories). The remaining (14% or 8,420) live in non-Northern regions of Canada. Regarding Inuit population dispersion, Quebec had the second largest Inuit population (9,535) followed by Labrador (4,555) and then the Northwest Territories. In the Northern urban regions, Iqualuit has the largest number (3,000) of Inuit, followed by Arviat (1,785) and Rankin Inlet (1,680). In 2006 most Inuit (78%) lived in the Northern regions. An increase in the number of Inuit living in other areas was realized from 1996-2006 (i.e., 17% in 1996 to 22 % in 2006).

Of the 14% of the Inuit population that did not live in the Northern regions, approximately 12% lived in small and large urban communities (Siggner & Costa, 2005). Some researchers have stated that approximately 17% of all Canadian Inuit lived in urban centres in southern Canada by the early 1990s (Kishigami 1999a, b, c). According to Kishigami (2002), "during the 1980s many Inuit born in the Canadian Arctic began to move to southern cities" (Kishigami 1999 a, b, c; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1993; Frideres 1999: 235-247), (p. 8). The 1991 Census reports the Inuit

¹ Aboriginal refers to First Nations, Non-status and Métis people in Canada

population in 1,895 in Toronto was 1,895, 840 in Edmonton, 775 in Montreal, 725 in Ottawa-Hull, 630 in Calgary, 570 in Vancouver, 515 in Winnipeg, 360 in Halifax, 345 in Saint John's, and 260 in Victoria, (Kishigami, 2002). More Inuit women than men in lived in urban areas between 1981 and 2001.

Inuit represent only a small number of Aboriginal people in Manitoba. According to Hallett (2006) the 2001 Census “counted only 285 Inuit in Manitoba, not counting Status Indians who indicated Inuit identity” (p. 6). The latest Census completed in 2006 indicates that 255 Inuit lived in Winnipeg.

Accurate figures on Inuit and Aboriginal populations in Canada may not be available. The Canadian Press (2008), has reported that even though Aboriginal participation in the census has increased, a great number of Aboriginal people are still not counted due to high incarceration rates, homelessness or a refusal to fill out the form.

For this review, literature related to Inuit issues was examined with a focus on Inuit living in Manitoba and other urban centres. The review is first of all organized relative to the major issues mentioned in the literature beginning with Inuit identity and followed by key issues including demographic, mobility, educational, employment, income, health, housing and family concerns. Literature related to how these issues have been and are currently addressed follows. A discussion including recommendations on future actions concludes the review.

Literature Review

Inuit Identity

The Government of Canada via the Constitution Act, 1982 uses the blanket term “Aboriginal” to identify the Inuit population along the same lines as First Nations, Non-status, and Métis populations. The Inuit population however, is distinct from other Aboriginal people in Canada in terms of ethnicity, cultural traditions and language (Inuit Tapiriit, 2006). The common experience shared by members of all these cultural groups is exposure to colonization. Like First Nations, Non-status, and the Métis, Inuit cultural traditions, values and beliefs have been eroded by the colonial experience.

Widdowson (2005) contends that Inuit colonization “is generally perceived to have occurred through three interrelated processes - the undermining of traditional economic practices, the compromising of Inuit political autonomy with foreign government structures, and the destruction of Inuit cultures - so as to facilitate economic growth in southern Canada” (Widdowson 2005, p. 3). Eurocentric values and ideals were imposed on the Inuit in a way that undermined and devalued their hunting and gathering cultures in favour of “modern nation-states based on industrialization to justify the expropriation of Inuit lands and the integration of the Inuit into the global capitalist system” (Widdowson, 2005, p. 3). “The creation and maintenance of “Nunavut as a means to decolonize the Inuit, in fact, obscures the specific historical and material circumstances that led to Inuit marginalization – circumstances that are very different from those in many Third World countries. This has resulted in a vacillation between two policy

directions – one that attempts to reduce Inuit reliance on the Canadian state by encouraging them to retain their “natural” hunting and gathering lifestyle, and a second that advocates increased government intervention to ensure the eventual assimilation of the Inuit. With the disastrous relocations that occurred to maintain the Inuit as hunters and gatherers, the federal government gradually began to see the Inuit “traditional lifestyle” (p.6).

A study conducted on Inuit identity in the city Montreal provides valuable insight into issues pertaining to developing and maintaining an Inuit identity in Canada (Kishigami, 2002). “Given the urban setting, Montreal Inuit are unable to undertake traditional pursuits such as hunting and fishing. However, they do speak with their northern friends in Inuktitut, and sometimes share some country foods that have been sent or brought from the North. This meat and fish is either portioned out to other Inuit, or the Inuk who possesses it invites other Inuit to share meals. As there are very limited quantities of Inuit country food in the city, food sharing and invitations to meals occur only occasionally. Although some Inuit produce soapstone carvings or handicrafts in Montreal, there are hardly any other ethnic and cultural distinctions between urban Inuit life-ways and those of other city-dwellers. Most of the Inuit accommodate to existing urban institutions rather than maintaining their northern way of life in the city. Inuit women in Montreal tend to live with or marry non-Inuit partners, and their children tend not to speak Inuktitut or retain an Inuit cultural identity. The urban settings of multi-ethnic cities lack the social conditions for maintaining Inuit culture and language, (Kishigami, 2002).

Regarding language which is an integral component of culture because of its role in preserving and transmitting cultural values and traditions, statistics show an increase in traditional language use by the Inuit. The 2001 Census reported that Inuktitut was “the second most common Aboriginal language, up 8.7% from 29,400 in 1996” (Statistics Canada, 2001).

Research completed in 1996 and 1997, (Kishigami, 2002), “indicates that young Inuit raised in Montreal and Inuit whose spouse or a parent is non-Inuit begin to regard themselves as Aboriginals of Canada, Canadian of Inuit descent, or indigenous people of Quebec, rather than as Inuit (cf. Lambert 1986; Fienup-Riordan 2000: 151-168).

According to the 1991 Aboriginal census, 455 of the 775 Montreal Inuit listed multiple ethnic identities. Inter-ethnic marriages over one generation and city dwelling in multi-ethnic situations make Inuit's intergenerational succession of their language and culture difficult, and they lose their taste for country food” (cf. Fogel-Chance 1993; Sprott 1994; Fienup-Riordan 2000: 151-168; Lee 2000).

“Cultural identities of most Inuit living in Montreal have always been threatened by multi-ethnic situations under the domination of Québécois (French Canadian Quebec residents). As previously discussed, Montreal Inuit live and interact frequently with non-Inuit populations in this multi-ethnic city and lack conditions for fostering socio-cultural Inuit life-ways. Under these conditions, ethnic identity and ethnic symbols associated with them take precedence over cultural identity and cultural traits. In Montreal, cultural

identity and cultural traits are meaningful only when Inuit interact with each other” (Kishigami, 2002).

“In Montreal, the Inuit have difficulty sustaining their cultural identity primarily because they do not have the necessary opportunities to engage in activities in Inuit ways. Also, they interact with non-Inuit people in a multi-ethnic environment. Under these circumstances, cultural identity cannot always be the basis for a frame of reference for socio-cultural practices. Rather, ethnic identity will be much more important for urban Inuit living in multi-ethnic environments” (Kishigami, 2002).

“If Inuit living in Montreal are recognized as beneficiaries of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement or the Nunavut Agreement, they and their children may receive certain educational and medical benefits while residing in the city. As long as such benefits exist, some urban Inuit will intentionally retain their Inuit status even though they do not speak Inuktitut or maintain an Inuit way of life. In the future, a person officially classified as an Inuk, but without the cultural identity and lifestyle of arctic Inuit, will thus become common sight. These people will need ethnic symbols to indicate their difference from other ethnic groups and to keep their ethnic identity in the urban environment” (cf. Gans 1996).

As the frequency of interaction among Inuit from different regions has increased in the city, group amalgamation such as forming a Montreal group of Inuit from various arctic regions is occurring. Also, some persons who have a non-Inuit parent or ancestor express

multiple ethnic identities. Furthermore, some second and third generation urban Inuit have been assimilated into the multi-ethnic society of Canada, politically and economically dominated by French and English Canadians. Thus, it appears that urban Inuit are using ethnic identity as an adaptive tool in a multi-ethnic city. This phenomenon is rarely in evidence in contemporary arctic villages except those large enough to have heterogeneous populations, such as Iqaluit and Kuujjuaq, (Kishigami, 2002).

Demographic Issues

The Inuit population in Canada is younger than the non-Aboriginal population and even considerable younger than First Nations, Non-status and Métis populations. This demographic is related to higher birth rates and improving life expectancy in Inuit communities. The Inuit are even younger than the North American Indian population (median age 23.5) and the Métis (median age 27). Children under 15 years of age represented 4 in 10 of the Inuit population, while non-Aboriginal children represented one-fifth of their population. Median age for the Inuit is 20.6 years, while for the non-Aboriginal population it is 17 years older at 38 years. With such a young age structure among Inuit, as these children age over the next 15 years especially those in the North, they will be putting major pressure on the skill sets required for the labour force, on the need for jobs to meet the growing supply of labour, on the housing stock as new families form, and on the health system in relation to health behaviors and conditions associated with this population age group. Higher birth rates and lower death rates amount to a rapidly growing population. Indeed, statistics show that there was a 12% increase from 40,220 Inuit people in 1996, to 45,070 Inuit people in 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2003).

Mobility Issues: (Migration)

The Inuit population is highly mobile. The 2001 Census indicated that approximately one in five people of Inuit descent moved the year prior to the Census. With the hope of attaining a better standard of living, Inuit migrate to large urban centres seeking higher education or employment opportunities not available in their home communities. “The Inuit in large cities are the most mobile (37% moved between 2000-2001)” (Statistics Canada, 2004).

Educational Issues

Although the number of Inuit who did not graduate from high school decreased between 1981 and 2001 (i.e., 74% to 54%), significant disparities exist when comparing Inuit educational levels to mainstream populations levels. At the post secondary level, there was a slight improvement in terms of the number of Inuit completing college diplomas or certificates but there were no changes reported in the number of Inuit attaining a university degree (Statistics Canada, 2003).

Regarding gender differences, in 2001 it was reported that percentage wise, Inuit men had slightly higher (i.e., 57% versus 52%) educational levels than Inuit women.

Comparisons over a 20 year period indicated that relatively the same numbers of Inuit women completed university degrees while during this same time period (i.e., 1981-2001) figures showed a drop in the numbers of Inuit men with university degrees.

Regarding geographical differences, in 2001 very low numbers of Inuit living in rural areas completed a university degree (i.e., only 1%) while in urban areas 7% of the Inuit population completed a university degree, college diploma or certificate. In rural, northern areas higher numbers of Inuit have not completed high school (62%) in comparison to Inuit living in urban areas (37%). When compared to mainstream urban populations, the number of Inuit who have obtained a college diploma is almost the same (25% versus 24%). However, a huge gap does exist between these two groups in rural areas.

Employment and Income Issues

Research that compared employment and income rates over a twenty year period (i.e., 1981-2001) showed that in urban areas, the Inuit employment rate declined (66% to 63%). This is likely due to the fact that in comparison to Inuit men, more Inuit women lived in urban areas in 2001 than in 1981. Like other Canadian women, Inuit women have higher unemployment rates than Inuit men. Higher employment rates however, were reported by Inuit men living in urban areas when compared to Inuit women. In rural regions, Inuit men and women reported similar employment rates (59% versus 58% respectively) but nearly six in ten (59%) Inuit reported being employed. Both urban and rural Inuit men and women however, reported significantly higher unemployment rates than the mainstream populations in Canada.

In 2000, the median income of Inuit individuals was considerably lower than the mainstream Canadian populations. "Inuit income is \$4,000 less in rural areas compared to those in urban areas. In 2000, the Inuit median income (\$18,118) lagged behind the

non-Aboriginal income (\$30,023) by \$12,000. In 2000, Inuit men have median incomes which are \$3,000 higher than those of Inuit women. However, in rural areas, the gap is not as wide, but in urban areas Inuit women have much lower incomes than Inuit men (\$17,957 versus \$26,138)” (Statistics Canada, 2003).

Holistic Health Issues

Inuit physical health statistics indicate that in comparison to First Nations, Métis and Non-status individuals the number of Inuit people reporting incidences of rheumatism and arthritis (the highest reported diseases in Inuit population) are considerable less as Inuit figures are on par with mainstream populations. Regarding these two diseases however, when compared to Inuit men, women’s rates of arthritis and rheumatism are higher (12% versus 7%). The next highest reported disease is high blood press although the numbers of Inuit women with asthma is nearly as high (approximately 8% for both). As well, one in twenty Inuit individuals reported heart problems. Only 2% of Inuit reported having diabetes, a disease prevalent and at epidemic proportions in First Nations, Métis and Non-status cultures. Inuit women reported higher rates of diabetes than Inuit men.

The Inuit are clearly at higher risk for obesity than mainstream populations in Canada especially if World Health measures based on waist size and a body mass index (BMI) are used. Research indicates that Inuit women in particular have higher average waist sizes when compared to other non-Inuit populations nationally and international (Young, 2006)

Suicide rates in the Inuit population are significantly higher than suicide rates in mainstream populations. Some literature indicates that “the rate of completed suicide among Inuit in Canada has been alarmingly high in recent years (Boothroyd, Kirmayer, Spreng, Malus, & Hodgins, 2001, p. 749).” Indeed a case-study showed the number of suicides completed by Inuit living in northern Quebec between 1982–1996 was significantly higher than the rest of the Canadian population with the exception of First Nation, Métis and Non-status individuals. In most cases of suicide, single males aged 15 to 24 years were the subjects. Hanging and gunshot injuries were the two main mechanisms used to complete the suicides (i.e., hanging in 39 cases [54.9%]) and gunshot (in 21 cases [29.6%]).

Housing Issues

The Inuit are living in substandard housing and are five times more likely than mainstream populations to live in housing below the adequacy level which is measured by houses in need of major repairs. In the 2001 census, Twelve percent (12%) of Inuit households were reported to be living in inadequate according to national standards and were unable to afford safe, acceptable housing. Furthermore, Inuit households are very overcrowded (as measured by the National Occupancy Standard) especially in comparison to mainstream populations, (Statistics Canada, 2003).

Family Issues

The nuclear family structure is not common amongst the Inuit. In 2001, the number of Inuit children living with a single parent, relatives and non-relatives was higher than that

of mainstream Canadian children in all areas. According to the 2001 Census nearly half (46%) of all Inuit children living in large urban centres lived under single parent circumstances. One in four Inuit children lived with a single parent or, other relatives or non-relatives in rural settings while 28% of Inuit children living in smaller cities lived with a single parent (Statistics Canada, 2003).

Inuit Initiatives

Inuit Organizations in Winnipeg

Kivalliq Inuit Centre is a medical boarding home for Inuit patients coming to Winnipeg for treatment (Pauktuutit, 2006).

Inuit Organizations in Manitoba

Inuit Organizations in Canada

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) is the national Inuit organization in Canada, representing four Inuit regions – Nunatsiavut (Labrador), Nunavik (northern Quebec), Nunavut, and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region in the Northwest Territories. We live in the Canadian Arctic, the largest geographic part of Canada.

<http://www.itk.ca/>

Inuit Circumpolar Conference - Founded in 1977 by the late Eben Hopson of Barrow, Alaska, the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) has flourished and grown into a major international non-government organization representing approximately 150,000 Inuit of Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and Chukotka (Russia). The organization holds Consultative Status II at the United Nations.

<http://www.inuitcircumpolar.com/index.php?ID=1&Lang=En>

National Aboriginal Health Organization's Ajunnginiq Centre is an online resource that lists many Inuit initiatives related to Inuit health (NAHO, 2007,

<http://www.naho.ca/inuit/e/>).

NAHO's work is strengthened by its three centres: [the First Nations Centre](#), [the Ajunnginiq \(Inuit\) Centre](#) and [the Métis Centre](#). Each of these centres advances the health and well-being of First Nations, Inuit and Métis by focusing on the distinct needs of their respective populations and promoting culturally relevant approaches to health care.

National Inuit Youth Council

In partnership with Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami we work to open communications between the regions and improve the lives of Inuit youth in Canada.

The National Inuit Youth Council (NIYC) represents the interests of Inuit youth in Canada. Across the Inuit regions of Inuvialuit, Kitikmeot, Kivalliq, Qikiqtaaluk, Nunavik and Nunatsiavut, there is an estimated 45,000 Inuit living in 53 communities. Inuit youth make up a clear majority of the overall population. <http://www.niyc.ca/news.php>

Pauktutit Inuit Women's Association: Pauktutit fosters greater awareness of the needs of Inuit women, advocates for equity and social improvements, and encourages their participation in the community, regional and national life of Canada.

Pauktutit leads and supports Canadian Inuit women in policy development and community projects in all areas of interest to them, for the social, cultural, political and economic betterment of the women, their families and communities.

http://www.pauktutit.ca/about_e.asp

Recommendations

Inuit Population SWOT Analysis

Cultural traditions form the basis of Inuit values and beliefs which in turn influences their behavioral outcomes.

Strengths

Key strengths of Inuit initiatives include:

- Recognition of the need to strengthen Inuit families ((Pauktutit, 2007)
- Recognition of the need that “national policy and programming must support holistic, multi-dimensional initiatives that rest on core Inuit values and culture” (Pauktutit, 2007, p. 2)
- Recognition that the biggest challenge “is to identify and act upon those elements of Inuit society that require immediate attention and will sustainable outcomes” (Pauktutit, 2007, p. s).
- Recognition of the “need to invest in the parenting skills that will provide the social network that will strengthen community life” (Pauktutit, 2007, p. 2)
- An increase in traditional language use by the Inuit prevails (Statistics Canada, 2004).

Key Issues (Weaknesses) and Recommendations:

1. Inuit identity is fragmented. Therefore Inuit identity as a conceptual and cultural term needs to be clarified through research based on an Inuk perspective. Research questions/hypothesis based on the following issues need to be developed.

- Most urban Inuit women live with or marry non-Inuit men fragmenting Inuit identity further. Therefore, young Inuit living with a non-Inuit parent tend to self-identify as Canadian, Indigenous of Quebec, or Aboriginal rather than as Inuit. (Kishigami, 2002). Kishigami (2002) contends “Inter-ethnic marriages over one generation and city dwelling in multi-ethnic situations make Inuit’s intergenerational succession of their language and culture difficult, and they lose their taste for county food” (p.4.).
- Inuit people living in urban settings do not have an opportunity to relate with other people from their culture on a regular basis which further weakens cultural identity.
- Urban Inuit adapt (i.e., assimilate) to Multi-ethnic settings weakening cultural identity.

2. Inuit Health status is negative. - An analysis of Inuit holistic health issues based on an Inuk perspective and focusing on urban dwelling Inuit is needed. Some major concerns include:

- Diet - Inuit people living in an urban setting have little or no access to traditional Inuit food (i.e., meat and fish);
- High suicide rates (Pauktuutit, 2007);
- “The legacy of the residential school system, poverty, rising suicide rates, poor diet, growing concerns over contaminants and climate change, insufficient health care, and such infrastructural problems as inadequate and overcrowded houses and limited access to health and social services have undermined the overall health and well-being of Inuit” living in the North (Pauktuutit, 2007); and
- What are the conditions like for urban dwelling Inuit?

3. Family Structure is changing to such a degree that it poses a major concern for Inuit families. A deeper understanding of the predictors, causes and consequences of the current Inuit family structure in urban communities is needed. Research questions should be formulated in relation to the following issues:

- Most urban Inuit are living in a single female parent situation.

- Violence against women and children in the North is rampant (Minich, 2006).
- High teen pregnancy rates exist among the Inuit (Pauktuutit, 2007).
- The average age of all Inuit is 20 years (Pauktuutit, 2007).

4. Migration to urban centres may contribute to negative behavioral outcomes. A deeper understanding of the predictors, causes and consequences of current migration patterns is needed. Research questions should be formulated in relation to the following issues:

- migration to urban centres “is attributed to necessity, such that women leave violent situations, youth leave to pursue higher education, or families leave to pursue employment opportunities” (Minich, 2006, p. 3).

5. Racism and Discrimination is another major concern but the extent of the problem is not known. Research is needed so that more adequate information is available in this area. As needed, Inuit specific programs should be developed to foster the creation and maintenance of a strong cultural identity and healthy self-esteem in order to address issues related to racism and discrimination. Research questions should be formulated in relation to the following issues:

- The “subtle and systematic enforcement of beliefs and attitudes that fail to see Inuit thrive in their homelands is a serious concern” (Minich, 2006, p. 3).
- A clash of modern and traditional, colonial legacies and paternal ideologies.

6. Education, Training and Employment are mentioned in the literature as a major concern. but the extent of the problem is not known. Research is needed so that more adequate information is available in this area. As needed, Inuit specific programs should be developed to increase the success rate of Inuit as they pursue education, training and employment opportunities. Research questions should focus on:

- Identifying the scope and magnitude of the problem in terms of education, training and employment issues;
- Predictors of success; and
- Antecedents of negative outcomes.

7. Inuit knowledge transmission is weak. Very little academic work has been carried out by Inuit and on the topic of Inuit concerns in urban centres. A great deal of work has been done by non-Inuit anthropologist and historians in the Northern regions. This deficit should be addressed by fostering and promoting participatory action research in urban Inuit communities. Research questions should be developed by Inuit community members.

Policy research also needs to be conducted utilizing a participatory action approach where members of urban Inuit communities are involved in all aspects of the research process. The literature search utilizing Academic Search Premiere, recovered 44 articles when the key words *Inuit, urban* and *Canada* were used. When the key words *Inuit* and *Canada* were used, 621 articles were found. Most of these articles pertained directly to Inuit living in the North and the sub topics included: climate/environmental issues, housing, infectious and other diseases, health issues, gender issues, language and land claims.

Opportunities

A number of key Inuit organizations (see list of organizations section) in Canada are moving forward with initiatives designed to address some of the aforementioned issues.

On Sept. 13, 2007, the United Nations ratified *A Declaration on the rights of Indigenous peoples*. This shows a commitment on the part of the international community's regarding protecting the rights of Indigenous people. "The declaration outlines the rights of Indigenous people, both individually and collectively, to self determination, participation in society and freedom from discrimination. It also outlines Indigenous rights to maintain their spiritual, linguistic and cultural identity, rights to lands and resources, and the right to continued survival as Indigenous people (Windspeaker, 2007, p. 8). The declaration however, is not a legal document.

Threats

Policies related to the day to day lives of Inuit need to be developed in a manner that reflects and honours Inuit culture. Current policies:

- are still for the most part, based on mainstream perspectives and a Western worldview;
- focus on Northern Inuit communities at the expense of urban Inuit;
- data and expert opinion often are not even made available to Inuit (Minich, 2006) and
- few culturally relevant FNIHB and other social and economic programs are available to the Inuit (Minich, 2006).

Conclusion

“The growth of the Inuit population in recent years appears to be affected primarily by the fertility and mortality of the population, rather than by non-demographic factors. Inuit are demographically the youngest Aboriginal population group in the country. Most Inuit live in small rural communities (66%), mostly in Labrador, Northern Quebec, Nunavut & Northwest Territories.....About one in five Inuit are moving in a year, but of those movers 66% tend to move within the same community rather than between them” (33%)’ (Statistics Canada, 2004).

“Advances in education for the young Inuit adults improved, BUT the gap with the non-Aboriginal population is not closing fast. Employment rates for the Inuit population have improved in rural areas but not in urban areas – there is still a large gap between the Inuit and non-Aboriginal populations. In 2000, the median income of Inuit individuals remained at 60% that of the total non-Aboriginal population.

Although there may be some cultural reasons for this, twice as many Inuit children do not live with two parents in rural (primarily northern) regions (25%), while this is even more prevalent among Inuit children who are living the large cities in the south (46%).

Adequate and suitable housing is a much greater issue for Inuit households compared to non-Aboriginal households (Statistics Canada, 2004). Inuit culture is rich and has sustained its members for centuries. Further breakdown in cultural traditions pose a significant risk to the well-being of Inuit. Research and policy development based on Inuit perspectives is needed to address the key issues discussed in this review.

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Children who are native speakers of minority languages often experience stagnation or decline in that language when exposed to a majority language in a school or community situation. This paper examines such a situation among the *Inuit* of arctic Quebec. All 18 participants in the study were native speakers of Inuktitut, living in home environments that were functionally monolingual in Inuktitut. Half lived in communities with relatively high exposure to the majority language (English), while the other half lived in communities with low exposure. One third of each group were in Grade 3 (first year of school exposure to majority language), one third in Grade 8/9 (sixth year of school exposure) and one third were adults. Each participant narrated a 24-page wordless picture book (Frog Story) in Inuktitut. Narrations were analysed for story length, lexical diversity, grammatical complexity and narrative structure—all measures that are expected to increase or show improvement with increased language ability. Results are

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APPENDIX II.

INUIT in URBAN AREA

Many of us have dealt with difficult transitions to urban life. This affects the majority of the Nunavut students, because of it many are not able to complete their courses. This affects those who have relocated to find a better life just to find it overwhelming due to a lack of information about resources. This even affects the patients and their escorts. This affects all Inuit, emotionally and physically.

This survey is an important first step in understanding the needs of the Inuit here in Winnipeg. We have divided it into 4 areas: Community, Housing, Health and Education. We need to have your answers **so your comments can be included**. Please answer any questions you wish to speak our about and return it to: one of thee-mail addresses or in person to one of us.

Samantha Tugak-Brown 219-5190 sakitnaaq2@hotmail.com

Or

Simona Issakiark-Baker 832- 6500 [baker si@yahoo.ca](mailto:baker_si@yahoo.ca)

Or

Kate Bloy 981-6031 kbloy@mts.net

IF POSSIBLE PLEASE FORWARD THIS TO OTHER INUIT PARTICIPANTS BY
PUTTING THEIR NAMES AT THE END OF THE LAST SHEET.

Thank you for taking the time to participate.

COMMUNITY:

When you first arrived, how did you find out about urban services available to you?

What should a welcome to the city include? If there was a directory, what should be in it?

Are you aware of online sites to connect with Inuit community - would you use it?

What cultural activities would you like to have here in the city?

What would an ideal Inuit Centre look like? Where would it be located? What services and activities would it provide?

HOUSING:

How do you access housing in the city?

Did you have any problems finding appropriate housing when you moved here?

Are you aware of your tenant rights?

In the future, what would appropriate housing look like?

HEALTH:

What were your experiences in terms of getting health card identification?

What has been your experience when attempting to access the following services for yourself or others? Please comment on any of the following:

A family doctor or specialist?

Dental care?

Eye examination and glasses?

Pharmacy?

Ambulance ?

Crisis intervention services?

Individual or family counseling?

Addictions counseling?

How does Kivalliq Centre meet/ or not meet our needs? Could it be improved?

EDUCATION:

What has been your experience with the following arrangements when coming to Winnipeg to obtain an education?

Childcare

Housing

Funding

Isolation:

Were you able to connect with other Inuit students?

How often were you able to have contact with your family?

Did you experience any difficulties with your Nunavut grade 12 credential in terms of obtaining entrance to educational programs?

What has been your experience at Red River community college?

