

Akwesasne

Although jurisdictional problems confront Aboriginal people across Canada, their impact is magnified on the Akwesasne reserve near Cornwall, Ontario. This reserve straddles two countries (Canada and the United States), two provinces (Ontario and Quebec) and one state (New York). While the people of Akwesasne do not recognize the boundaries that divide their reserve, they must constantly struggle with the social and economic barriers that different jurisdictions impose.

Governments have recognized the jurisdictional disadvantages and problems experienced by the Mohawk people of Akwesasne and in 1988, created a Special Akwesasne Task Force. Representatives of the members—Ontario, Quebec, Canada and the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne—jointly agreed in 1990 to spend \$25 million to deal with the social, economic, health and recreational needs of the community. This Committee, however, is concerned that guarantees must be in place to ensure inter-departmental co-ordination among the federal departments with responsibility for the areas covered by the Memorandum of Agreement.⁹ We also wonder about the level of accountability for federal / provincial cooperation. A federal / provincial territorial / band action plan (as proposed in Recommendation three of this report) is acutely needed to deal with the situation of the people of Akwesasne. The

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9. The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development is responsible both for the Task Force and for the Agreement; therefore, Health and Welfare Canada only participates on the Task Force when health issues are on the agenda. Given the ad hoc and fragmented approach that this Committee has seen in the nature of the administration of federal programs, we are concerned that the failure of comprehensive government action may continue to impede effective service delivery at Akwesasne.