

threats to human health will be a major focus of Canada's northern foreign policy.

### **Provision of Adequate Housing for Northern Canadians**

Canada's north suffers from a serious shortage of housing. Experience shows that inadequate or crowded housing contributes to a range of social and health problems, including physical and mental health problems, poor school performance associated with insufficient sleep or inadequate quiet space to do homework, and increased absenteeism from work. Canada is by no means alone in confronting northern housing problems. This fact, together with Canada's long experience in innovative northern housing design and construction, creates opportunities for co-operation with Canada's Arctic neighbours in the housing area.

### **Provision of Quality Education for Northern Canadians**

Too many northern Canadians, particularly Aboriginal peoples, do not complete their schooling or even acquire the basic literacy and numeracy skills required to meet the demands of modern life. Many leave school without the language or cultural knowledge of their own people. Yet meeting the challenges faced by northerners today depends on education and on continuing education for adults. Canada has taken significant steps in this area, including connecting northern schools through the Internet. Although the demographic problems faced by some Arctic countries in delivering education in the north are less severe than in Canada, all face the problems of servicing remote communities. Further, there are few communities anywhere in the Arctic large and diverse enough to provide the range of education available in the south. There is, accordingly, good reason for co-operation on some aspects of education among the Arctic countries.

### **Alleviation of Community Social Problems**

Most northern communities in Canada suffer from crippling social problems: poverty, high youth suicide rates, teenage pregnancy, alcohol and substance abuse, crime and domestic violence. These are a persistent legacy of the period when colonial governments imposed their ways on Canada's Aboriginal peoples. Through the Statement of Reconciliation in *Gathering Strength*, the Government has indicated its commitment to working with territorial governments, Aboriginal peoples and northern organizations in support of social change contributing to strong communities. Again, though, Canada is not alone in experiencing severe social problems in its northern communities. While conditions vary, several of Canada's circumpolar neighbours face comparable or even worse problems in this regard. There is, accordingly, considerable scope for co-operation in attacking these problems.

### **Protection and Nurturing of Northern Cultures**

As acknowledged in *Gathering Strength*, attitudes of racial and cultural superiority during the period of displacement and assimilation led to a suppression of Aboriginal culture in Canada. Again, with its Statement of Reconciliation and Statement of Renewal, the Government has taken a major step in the healing process. The nurturing of northern cultures, though, includes a critical international dimension. Through work by the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, Inuit living