

child welfare. While a mixture of provincial and federal services are provided, statistics in this area continue to reflect significantly higher rates among aboriginal people of infant mortality, violent death, physical handicaps, family violence, nutritional problems, and diseases such as whooping cough and tuberculosis. Aboriginal health concerns are too numerous to deal with in any adequate fashion here, but special mention might be made of the standard of health care available to aboriginal people and the importance of traditional holistic approaches to health care in aboriginal communities.

A study published in 1989 entitled "Lords of the Arctic: Wards of the State" by Colin Irwin provides considerable food for thought on the scope and magnitude of health issues facing the Inuit people of Canada. Studies such as this one demonstrate the need to understand and address the continuing socio-economic impacts of the cultural and psychological upheaval experienced by all aboriginal peoples as a result of European settlement.

#### **24. Childcare and Child Welfare**

The access of aboriginal people to quality childcare and child welfare programs varies considerably from province to province and the current role of the federal government is that of providing funds or programs to supplement what it regards as a provincial responsibility. Aboriginal people have a number of concerns with the present state of affairs. Provinces can only enact laws of general application in this area and do not have the constitutional authority the federal government has to specifically address aboriginal child welfare concerns in legislation. For this and other reasons, aboriginal organizations have been pressing the federal government to use its s. 91(24) legislative powers to provide an opportunity for aboriginal governments to legislate in respect to the welfare of their own children (through delegated federal powers in the absence of specific self-government powers entrenched in the Constitution).

The aboriginal population as a whole has a much higher proportion of children than the general Canadian population. Access to affordable and quality childcare has an obvious connection to the ability of parents to seek employment or upgrade their skills through education. This is especially true of single parent families, the majority