

growing in importance as a channel for improving services to *all* Native persons in urban centres, regardless of their status. Canadian society has changed dramatically over the past twenty-five years in respect to urbanization of the general population, which also includes Native people. The Friendship Centres represent a new kind of relationship which is developing between the Federal Government and Native people in a changing national society.

Facts Of Life and Death For Native People in Comparison With The General Canadian Population

It is virtually impossible to develop reliable data on the living conditions and lifestyles of Native people because the information that does exist pertains only to Status Indians and Inuit. Little is known about the more than one million other Native people who consider themselves Non-Status Indians or Metis. Nevertheless, the information that is available gives some idea of the adversities which all Native people encounter in their reserves and communities, and in urban centres throughout Canada. Although the Federal Government, has done much during the past twenty years to provide resources needed to improve living conditions in Native communities and reserves, the following facts indicate that much improvement is still needed:

Population Increase: The Indian population is increasing rapidly. It has undergone a forty per cent increase during the past twenty years, and this has resulted in a greater demand for social services, education, housing and jobs.

Birth Outside Marriage: The proportion of Indian births outside of marriage is more than four times the national rate. The proportion of Indian children in care has risen steadily to more than five times the national rate.

Education: The number of Indian children who attend school until the end of secondary level is 20 per cent, compared with the national rate of 75 per cent.

Language: Almost one in every four Indian children who enters school speaks neither English nor French.

Juvenile Delinquency: The proportion of Indian juveniles who are considered delinquent is three times the national rate.

Housing: Although Indian housing conditions have improved over the past twenty years, nearly 19 per cent of on-reserve homes have two or more families living in them, affecting forty per cent of the total Status Indian families.

Facilities: In 1977, fewer than 40 percent of Indian houses had running water, sewage disposal or indoor plumbing facilities.

Pollution: At least twenty Indian communities, involving almost 10,000 persons have recently faced environmental hazards with industrial and resource development, including the dangers of mercury and fluoride poisoning.

Income: Although more Indians are working, and working more consistently than ten years ago, the average income is one-half to two-thirds that of the national average.

Unemployment: Indian unemployment is about 35 per cent of the working age population, and in some areas it reaches as high as 90 per cent.

Prisoners: Natives are over-represented in proportion to their population in Federal and Provincial penitentiaries. In Manitoba, Saskatchewan and the North, Native persons represent more than 40 per cent of the prison population.

Death Rate: The death rate for Indians, despite remarkable improvement over the past ten years, is two to four times the rate for Non-Indian people, depending on location.

Death Causes: Accidents, poisoning and violence account for over one-third of deaths in Indian and Inuit populations, as compared with 9 per cent for the Canadian population as a whole.

Death From Fire: Death from fire for Indians is seven times the rate for the rest of the Canadian population.

Suicide: Indian deaths due to suicide are almost three times the national rate, and are especially high in the 15 to 24 year old age group.