

This Committee's report, if implemented fully, will change this state of affairs. All sectors of Canada, the federal government and provincial governments can work together with Indian First Nations to put an end to this era of history and to create the new relationship the Committee calls for.

## Social Conditions

The extent of the social disintegration and deprivation arising from the history of relations between Canada and Indian peoples is evident in the publication *Indian Conditions: A Survey*. Published by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in 1980, it provides the sobering facts about social conditions among Indian people today. Officials from the Department of National Health and Welfare confirmed that conditions are not improving:

The infant mortality rate for Indian people in 1980 was 24.3, which is still two and a half times the national average;...our perception is that unless...the Indian Health Policy works, where we have more people taking responsibility for their own health, we cannot improve it simply by putting in more medical services....

[The situation] is still bad. Accidents, violence, and poisonings are the number one cause of death. They are three times higher than the national average. Rates of suicide, certainly in the young age group, are six times the national average. It is difficult. It is a tough problem, and it is almost out of our control. But we monitor it. There is a slow improvement, but not as fast as it should be. (Sub 6:36)\*

Some of these conditions are detailed in the accompanying table.

## Obstacles and Limitations

These social conditions clearly demand immediate attention. Yet Indian people are faced with an array of bureaucratic and legislative obstacles that limit their ability to act. Foremost among these is the complexity of governmental structures for dealing with issues of concern to Indian people. Moreover, the *Indian Act* itself restricts Indian initiatives.

### *Governmental Complexity*

Indian people must work through a complex governmental structure in order to meet even basic needs. Complexity at the federal level is further compounded by the need to deal, on some issues, with provincial authorities as well. The following list illustrates the range and number of federal departments and agencies confronting Indian people. Further details can be found in Appendix D.

---

\* The Committee has used the following system for citing witnesses' testimony. 'Sub' or 'Special' means the Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence of the Sub-committee on Indian Self-Government or the Special Committee on Indian Self-Government. (See Chapter 1 for an explanation of the difference between the Special Committee and the Sub-committee.) The figure before the colon indicates the issue number, while the figure after the colon refers to the page number. Thus, Sub 6:36 means that the testimony can be found on page 36 of Issue No. 6 of the Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence of the Sub-committee on Indian Self-Government.