

directly with the needs of disabled Native persons without first dealing with the general problems of poverty, unemployment, poor diet, poor health habits, and poor education, all of which are the normal fare for many Native communities.

Native Persons Are Divided Into Those Who Have A Special Relationship With The Federal Government And Those Who Rely On The Provinces

Native people in Canada may differ significantly among themselves in matters of origin, language, customs, institutions, wealth, leadership, and in their respective histories of association with Non-Native people. But from the standpoint of their relationship with the Federal Government, Native people, fall into two categories: those who have a special relationship with the Federal Government and those who rely upon the Provinces for their services. It is important to understand this distinction, because it determines, in large part, the scope and limitations of any attention that particular Native communities and individuals can expect from the Federal Government. As well, this relates to the recommendations made in the OBSTACLES report and in this follow-up document. In some instances, recommendations will call for actions which benefit all Native people, and other actions will apply only to those Native people who have a special relationship with the Federal Government.

Special Relationship: Status Indians And Inuit

Two groups of Native people, numbering over 335,000 persons, have a special relationship with the Federal Government as a result of proclamations, treaties and Court decisions over the past two hundred years. Under the Indian Act, 315,000 *Status Indians* are registered by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Their special relationship with the Federal Government is based on the Royal Proclamation of 1763, the British North America Act, and various treaties signed between individual bands and government officials. Over two-thirds of the Status Indian population occupy reserve lands in approximately 600 isolated locations throughout Canada, with most communities having fewer than 500 persons. Services to these reserves are delivered through local governments consisting of chiefs and band councils.

There are approximately 20,000 *Inuit* people residing in the Canadian north. Their special relationship with the Federal Government is based on a Supreme Court ruling in 1939 which gave them access to most of the Federal Government services provided to Status Indians. The Inuit have a tradition of strong community life, and a rich cultural heritage. Where they live within communities which also have Non-Inuit people, they participate actively in the political, economic and social affairs of the general community.



“The adverse living conditions which are a daily experience for many Native persons mean that it is practically impossible to deal directly with the needs of disabled Native persons without first dealing with the general problems of poverty, unemployment, poor diet, poor health habits, and poor education.”