Foreword

Jerry White, Peter Dinsdale, and Dan Beavon

Introduction

The third triennial Aboriginal Policy Research Conference (APRC) was held from March 9–12, 2009 at the Westin Hotel in Ottawa, Ontario. This APRC, like those before it, brought researchers, policy-makers, and the Aboriginal community together to make connections, hear about leading research, and learn together. While focused on Canada, it also included indigenous peoples from around the world with more than 20 countries represented. Ultimately this conference hopes to facilitate better outcomes for Aboriginal people across the country and internationally. This conference is the largest of its kind in the world.

The conference goals were to promote interaction between the various actors in the Aboriginal policy field. Government representatives, researchers, academic institutions, Aboriginal organizations, and Aboriginal peoples all came together to present research, hear from others, and debate ideas. The APRC is structured to facilitate better policy development and the expansion of knowledge. The 2009 APRC accomplished all of this while providing an immediate forum and establishing foundations for ongoing deliberations to occur.

The Aboriginal Policy Research Conferences held in 2002 and 2006 planted the seeds for the success of the 2009 conference. In 2002, the Strategic Research Analysis Directorate of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) and the University of Western Ontario (UWO) held the initial APRC. The first conference established clearly that there was both a great demand and a need for a conference of this nature. Over 700 delegates attended, and the response of those participating was overwhelmingly positive. In 2006 the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) joined INAC and UWO as a co-chair to host the second APRC. While emulating many of the successful features of the 2002 conference, this conference expanded to include a greater emphasis on graduate students and more in-depth collaboration with the Aboriginal community. The revamped APRC was a tremendous success with over 1,300 participants attending. The 2006 conference also introduced international content with delegates from many countries attending. The United Nations used the conference to host one of its world consultations on indigenous well-being indicators.

Each of these conferences provided for greater numbers of partners to participate and collaborative opportunities to take place. We, the conference organizers, have learned from our mistakes and our successes to make important advances

with each event. Our aim for the APRC has been to evolve without losing our initial focus and mandate.

As we moved into planning the 2009 APRC, we had hoped to build upon previous successes. The timing of the conference turned out not to be ideal. In late 2008, Canada was clearly entering a recessionary period of unknown duration and intensity. There was great concern about the direction of the economy during the late planning stages of our conference and during the key registration period. This clearly had an impact on the conference. There were those in the government and elsewhere that cautioned us and encouraged drastic cutbacks and even cancellation. We took the prudent path, rejecting calls for cancellation, and in the end decided to proceed with a leaner conference, placing the focus on research and dialogue while maintaining our commitment to infusing culture into the process. In the end, the APRC did not suffer from these actions and feedback has been very positive.

Foundations for the 2009 Aboriginal Policy Research Conference

As with previous conferences, the 2009 APRC was developed to address the need to have an Aboriginal policy-specific process that provided opportunity for dialogue on a wide range of public policy issues. As in past years, a great emphasis was placed on partnering with the Aboriginal community in a new way. The three co-chairs sought to find as many ways as possible to ensure that the broader Aboriginal community was truly involved and cooperated in the delivery of the conference. Three specific actions were taken. Firstly, Aboriginal researchers were invited through a call for proposals process to present their research. This action opened up the APRC to a whole range of public policy actors who did not previously have a natural way to fully participate in the conference. Secondly, the co-chairs invited national Aboriginal organizations to be members of the planning committee and to present their best research at the conference. This helped to ensure that the research priorities of the APRC were reflective of the research priorities of the Aboriginal community at large. Finally, the 2009 APRC ensured that Aboriginal people helped to organize, facilitate, and present all aspects of the conference. This extended from the co-chair position to using Aboriginal businesses and suppliers where they were available. In total, the 2009 APRC represented a best practice for interacting with the Aboriginal community in a truly cooperative and respectful manner.

In addition, this APRC also sought to ensure that a strong focus on the public policy process and its drivers was reflected in the conference. The 2009 APRC provided a forum to hear about leading research on the public challenges of the day. All of our partners—Aboriginal and government—were able to present their research, policy, and programming responses to these challenges. Each of the actors had an opportunity to engage with each other and build bridges to new

understanding. APRC 2009 was no different than past APR conferences, as many workshops on clean water, residential schools, and urbanization of Aboriginal people reflected the headlines of the day and ensured the conference was timely and relevant.

The conference demonstrated yet again that the original cross-cutting design remains relevant today. Stakeholders from across Canada and the world came together to interact. The structured dialogue that the APRC provides allowed for all public policy actors to work through some of the most challenging issues. The 2009 APRC provided an opportunity to learn lessons from past conferences and apply them. There were clearly some challenges to growing the conference in a difficult economic environment and remaining committed to its original vision and mandate. We believe that the 2009 APRC succeeded.

Aboriginal Policy Research Conference 2009

The goals for the 2009 Aboriginal Policy Research Conference were as follows:

- to expand our knowledge of Aboriginal issues
- to provide a important and neutral forum where these ideas and beliefs can be openly discussed and debated
- to integrate research from diverse themes
- to highlight research on Aboriginal gender issues
- to highlight research on urban Aboriginal issues
- to allow outstanding policy needs to shape the future research agenda

In pursuing these goals we sought to make some improvements upon past conferences. Three innovations took place at the 2009 conference. As previously mentioned, this APRC sought greater collaboration with national Aboriginal organizations. After the 2006 APRC, some organizations felt the conference could be strengthened with greater, more in-depth collaboration—and they were right. Organizations were brought on as partners and involved in planning and preparations for the conference. In addition, these organizations were provided with opportunities to present their research.

In addition, a greater international focus was present at the 2009 APRC. Many countries around the world are dealing with the same issues we face in Canada. A larger number of international delegates came to participate in the 2009 conference. Representatives from the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues also participated in our sessions.

Finally, we sought to deepen our commitment to and support of Aboriginal students at this year's conference. A new scholarship for Aboriginal graduate students, which will be delivered through the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, has been developed. The scholarship is named after Gail Valaskakis, a tremendous Aboriginal policy advocate who touched all who knew her. The Gail Valaskakis Memorial Aboriginal Policy Research Conference Bursary will

provide $7,500 over three years to Aboriginal graduate students. It is a fitting tribute to a remarkable woman who was our friend and conference partner.

In addition, the NAFC reached out to the private sector to find resources to bring Aboriginal students from across Canada to attend the conference. After a call was sent out, over fifty youths were brought to Ottawa. Graduate students were also provided with the opportunity to participate this year; a specific call for papers was made to graduate students to present their research at the 2009 APRC. All ten graduate students that were selected in the cross-Canada competition won a scholarship from the conference!

The 2009 APRC also saw the first ever Cinema N' Chat series during which Aboriginal films and films about Aboriginal issues were shown with some commentary from the filmmakers or special guests. The films ran concurrent to the conference and allowed APRC attendees to explore this medium and learn from the films and their makers. This is one example of the variety of activities that take place during the conference to help facilitate dialogue; among the other activities were dozens of dance, music, singing, and art performances presented around the clock. We had visiting artists from several other countries performing at plenary sessions, evening socials, and in the hallways.

These new innovations were not the only improvements made at the 2009 conference. As in past years, two calls for papers were sent out for interested parties to present at the conference. A call for papers for the academic community was overseen by UWO. In addition, the NAFC conducted a second call for papers by Aboriginal communities wishing to present research at the conference. In the end 60 academic and 30 Aboriginal community researchers were selected, and their work complemented our partner's papers.

The 2009 APRC also saw expanded partnerships. As previously discussed, a new category of Aboriginal organizations was brought on board as planning partners. In addition, we reached out to government organizations to become financial and planning sponsors. As a result 20 government partners and 20 Aboriginal partners helped to make the conference a success. It should be noted that the 2009 APRC saw Ontario come on board as a funding and planning partner, the first province to do so. It is the co-chairs' hope that this type of partnership will be expanded at future conferences.

So how did we do? Despite some of the challenges we faced, the 2009 APRC was our most successful yet. Over 1,300 delegates attended the conference. Over 150 workshops and 459 research presentations were provided. Plenary sessions and pre-conference workshops added to the wide range of discussions that took place. Numbers are only part of the story—feedback from participants was enthusiastic concerning relevance, quality, and opportunity to make connections with others concerned with like issues.

Ultimately, it is the new knowledge and learning that come out of these discussions which will speak to the success of the 2009 APRC, and we believe that it is

the very structure of the APRC that will help to ensure its success. The workshops were developed in such a way as to encourage broad reflection on a host of areas and how they impact each other. Justice, social, economic development, health, governance, infrastructure, demographic, and urban issues, among others, are all part of the same story. We are chasing the answers to important questions, and as the conference unfolded we could see progress being made.

Building a Collaborative Environment

As in past years, at the 2009 APRC we sought to ensure the conference environment helped to support our goals. Elders opened each session. Drummers helped to set the overall tone and mood of the conference. Fiddlers, throat singers, and dancers demonstrated the vibrant First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures that thrive in Canada. These were not side events or additions to the conference, but critical pieces that helped to ground conversations and support our collective efforts.

Ultimately, all of these efforts are made to help ensure that we create a better policy and research environment. Policy-makers require solid, evidence-based research to make decisions. Policy-makers also need to ensure that decisions are being made in a collaborative way that addresses the articulated needs of communities. The 2009 APRC provided the policy/research nexus, in a supportive environment, for this collaboration to take place.

The next conference will be in 2012; we hope you will be involved.

Proceedings

The co-chairs have decided that we will continue our tradition of publishing the best papers from the conference in our book series, Aboriginal Policy Research. Volumes 6 through 10 of the series do not represent all of the work discussed at the conference, but a cross-section. The following section describes what is included in this volume of the series. Consider these proceedings our invitation to you to join in the next journey.

Introduction to Aboriginal Policy Research: Exploring the Urban Landscape

Jerry White and Jodi Bruhn

This is the eighth of ten volumes presenting a small number of the high quality papers that were presented at the Aboriginal Policy Research Conferences of 2002 (Volumes 1 and 2), 2006 (Volumes 3, 4, and 5), and 2009 (Volumes 6 through 10). A number of the papers were delivered at sessions sponsored by the Aboriginal Policy Research Network, centred at the Office of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-status Indians. Held on one day of the 2009 APRC, these sessions focused specifically on issues affecting Métis, non-status Indians, and urban Aboriginal peoples. The papers selected for this volume focus on urban Aboriginal issues and experiences; however, it should be stressed that the identity categories are not mutually exclusive. The 2006 Census of Canada informs us that a full 69% of Métis and 45% of those reporting North American Indian identity, including non-status Indians, are urban dwellers.[1]

Addressing experiences and issues affecting urban Aboriginal peoples, this volume by no means presents any systematic treatment. Rather, its contributions mark forays or explorations of the urban landscape—in some cases, the first of their kind. The exploratory character of some of the essays reflects the still nascent character of the urban Aboriginal research agenda today.

The research area is still beginning to take shape, but, fortunately, it is not brand new. This volume has an important precedent in the form of *Not Strangers in These Parts: Urban Aboriginal Peoples* (Newhouse and Peters 2002). This book, drawn largely from papers delivered at the 2002 Aboriginal Policy Research Conference, marked the first sustained attempt to address Aboriginal experiences and issues that are specifically urban. Eight years later, remarks the editors of that volume made still apply. For example, it is an often-overlooked fact that all major Canadian cities are located on traditional Aboriginal territories, and that many of them emerged on gathering spots or settlement areas used by Aboriginal peoples. Further, it remains true that the idea of urban Aboriginal persons and communities does not easily coexist with long-held images of an essentially rural, "authentic" Aboriginal life. It is worth reiterating how those images arose: it was government policy, rather than an inevitable and permanent incompatibility of Aboriginal cultures with urban life, that placed Aboriginal people outside of Canada's cities for much of this century.[2]

Since at least 1951, Aboriginal people have been returning to cities—indeed, many Métis never left. By the 2001 census, 49% of the Aboriginal identity population lived in urban centres. By 2006, that number had risen to 53.2%, or over 600,000 people.[3] Even if the percentage is slightly lower due to reduced participation in the census by First Nations people living on reserves, it is still substantial. It is an undeniable fact of the urban landscape that "generates new mental images, research frameworks, and policy challenges."[4] The key is to begin seeing urban Aboriginal peoples not simply as objects of public policy or victims of colonization or displacement, but "both as individuals and as communities, with interests, aspirations, needs, goals, and objectives that they wish to pursue within the urban landscape."[5]

Aboriginal people live, work, study and create in Canada's cities. Some do it successfully. Others suffer, experiencing ill health, unemployment, poor housing, reduced education outcomes, and higher incarceration rates than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Their needs have provided impetus to the development of urban Aboriginal service institutions, such as friendship centres, urban Métis locals, Aboriginal educational and health institutions, and urban offices of First Nations that attempt to provide basic services for their members.[6] In cities, many Aboriginal people cultivate their indigenous identities and contribute to emergent urban Aboriginal cultures, blending elements of indigenous traditions with urban popular culture. Some of these people also assert collective rights as urban Aboriginal peoples—including a right to self-government in an urban milieu.

Pressed by the now undeniable numbers of Aboriginal people in cities and seeking to alleviate the socio-economic hardship experienced by many, federal, provincial, and municipal governments have begun to respond with urban programs or strategies, despite abiding jurisdictional disputes.[7] Increasingly, they require reliable research to guide their efforts. It was for this reason that the Office of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-status Indians created the Aboriginal Policy Research Network in 2007. The network was established to stimulate research on issues affecting Aboriginal people living off-reserve and to encourage dialogue among researchers and policy-makers on issues affecting Métis, non-status Indians, and urban Aboriginal peoples. The papers presented at the 2009 APRC sessions were prepared in response to an ongoing call for papers.[8] Many of them now appear in this book.

This volume is divided into three sections. Part One: Governance is devoted to issues of urban Aboriginal governance, from the foundational aspects of achieving a constitutional or legislative base to the day-to-day dimensions of the governance of Aboriginal organizations based in Canadian cities. Part Two: Service Delivery addresses general questions about how programs and services should be delivered and by whom, and touches on specific sectors, including health, child welfare, and education. Part Three: Justice focuses on three pressing issues involving social justice and criminal justice systems: the trafficking of Aboriginal women and girls

in Canada, incarceration and the Aboriginal offender, and preventing Aboriginal youth gang involvement.

Chapter 1 in Part One: Governance is by legal scholar Brad Morse, who explores potential legal frameworks for providing real jurisdiction to urban Aboriginal governance institutions. Morse takes as his central case First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples living off a recognized land base, especially those in the more populous southern urban centres. On one hand, these peoples have been hard pressed simply to survive as distinct peoples. On the other, they have created a plethora of informal organizations and incorporated non-profit societies that have operated for well over four decades, seeking to fill voids in terms of important services that have been neglected by federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments. Since the early 1960s, the friendship centre and Native court worker movements, among others, have also attempted to represent the political goals of these constituencies.

Morse foregoes any discussion of an expansion of *Indian Act* reserves as the vehicle to address Aboriginal governance in cities, outlining instead a number of other potential legislative avenues. In the short term, these could include formal recognition of Aboriginal service delivery organizations, which could occur along the lines of existing provincial legislation acknowledging the role of non-governmental organizations for linguistic and religious groups. Beyond this, bilateral or tripartite agreements might serve as catalysts for federal or provincial frameworks to provide recognition for Aboriginal governance institutions with specified law-making and adjudication powers. Ultimately, Morse submits, should Aboriginal people in a particular city wish it, parties could negotiate enabling legislation that would bring existing institutions and agencies together to form duly elected Aboriginal governments.

Morse's paper is significant for its suggestion that urban Aboriginal self-government, now limited to self-administration, could come into being incrementally—and further, that it could occur chiefly through political negotiation rather than via a judicial finding of a treaty or Aboriginal right to urban self-government.

Chapter 2 examines the issue of "making space" for urban Aboriginal governments from another perspective. Julie Tomiak's article presents the results of a qualitative study drawn from interviews with Aboriginal organizations in Winnipeg and Ottawa. Seeking political arrangements that could either facilitate or hinder urban Aboriginal self-determination in these two cities, Tomiak finds that issues of jurisdiction, access, representation, and funding still constrain local and regional First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and Aboriginal organizations from achieving these ends. Notably, constraints exist despite the recent proliferation of collaborative relationships between governments and Aboriginal organizations. Thus far, Tomiak argues, these relationships have been one-sided and have failed to create sufficient space for Indigenous authority and decision-making power in cities. This serves to exacerbate the marginalization experienced by many Indigenous people in cities. Tomiak calls for the issues themselves to be reframed so

that urban Indigenous peoples are no longer seen as deficient and out of place, but as constituting legitimate communities with inherent rights.

In **Chapter 3**, Christa Rust makes the case that in order to make positive change, we need to develop some way to measure that change. Sustainability indicators are key to developing the resiliency of a community. Her study is set in Winnipeg, where the First Nations population is growing rapidly and faces many critical challenges. She concludes that "the dynamics of these challenges are poorly understood and, as a result, most policy responses are ineffective." This chapter reports on the progress that has been made in the joint research project of the Assembly of Manitoba Indian Chiefs and the International Institute for Sustainable Development. Of particular interest is that the search for effective indicators has included the integration of the medicine wheel. The use of this age-old circle, which represents an integrated and holistic way of seeing, knowing, and learning to examine the social, environmental, economic, and cultural dimensions of sustainability, is unique and relevant to policy development.

In **Chapter 4**, Suzanne Dugré and Daniel Thomas use a case study of Val D'Or, Quebec, to ask an important question: can we understand and improve the relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations in urban centres? Dugré and Thomas attempt to discover which policies put forward by urban and regional institutions contribute to tensions and which can actually ameliorate them. The outcomes they look for are improved exchanges between Native peoples and the non-Aboriginal population, and they try to employ a "cultural lens" to their examination and analysis.

The urban landscape has a social component, and the flow of activity is directly related to services and the delivery of those services. Part Two: Service Delivery examines some policy issues related to services. In **Chapter 5**, Nicholas Spence and Jerry White focus on how to maximize program and service provision to urban Aboriginal peoples through an examination of the roles and capacities of universal and Aboriginal-specific providers. They make recommendations on who should do what, point out the importance of partnerships between providers, and examine the central role of friendship centres. Spence and White conclude that for services to be effective and truly help the population, they must be sensitive to the history, culture, life course, etc., of the people. The problem is that virtually every service, from skills upgrading to housing to health care, has to be delivered in a more effective way than it currently is.

Chapter 6 turns specifically to the health services sector. The article by sociologists Thibault Martin and Eric Diotte is based on a larger research study conducted among health professionals and Aboriginal patients suffering from complications of diabetes in Manitoba and Quebec. Dealing primarily with First Nations people who move to urban centres from rural communities, the authors argue that a reason many Aboriginal people move is to find treatment for health issues, and for chronic issues, such as diabetes, in particular. Paradoxically, however, a number of factors limit the full access of these people to crucial

health services once they arrive in an urban area. These factors include significant ones of mobility and cultural difference, among others. Arguing that federal and provincial government programs are ill-equipped to understand and overcome the factors that effectively exclude Aboriginal people in urban centres from care, the authors suggest that the only viable means to improve their health outcomes is to devolve full authority over health to Aboriginal institutions. This could occur in a similar way to what has already taken place in such First Nations as Eskasoni in Nova Scotia, Kanawake in Quebec, and the Nisga'a Nation in British Columbia. As in these First Nations, heightened government autonomy would allow urban Aboriginal people more freedom to create services and institutions capable of meeting their particular health needs. It would also help reduce the marginalization of these people by granting them more autonomy from dominant institutions in this critical service area.

Chapter 7 also addresses health issues, but shifts the discussion from formal health service delivery institutions to more formative influences, such as neighbourhood and community. Statisticians Dafna Kohen and Lisa Oliver note that most First Nations children in Canada grow up in communities where children of Aboriginal ancestry are in the minority and face dramatically different socio-economic and cultural living conditions than non-Aboriginal children. Drawing on evidence from the 2006 Aboriginal Children's Survey and census data, the authors seek to determine whether the neighbourhoods where Aboriginal preschool-aged children live exert an influence on their mental health. This study examines the association of neighbourhood socio-economic factors, including level of education and proportion of renters, as well as community organization factors, such as community safety, involvement, and perceptions of community facilities with the mental health outcomes of First Nations preschool-aged children.

The authors conducted a multi-stage regression analysis, adding family and neighbourhood variables sequentially to examine the impact of neighbourhood organization, structural features, and family characteristics both separately and together while controlling for child age and gender. They found that neighbourhood characteristics such as neighbourhood safety, community involvement, and the perception of community facilities are indeed associated with mental health outcomes for First Nations children living off-reserve, albeit mediated by family-level factors (above all, family level of educational attainment). Of the neighbourhood structural features considered, higher levels of education, as well as the proportion of residents who rent rather than own their dwellings proved important.

Chapter 8 is the exception among articles in this volume in dealing explicitly with rural, off-reserve settings; however, its conclusions regarding the promotion of Aboriginal child welfare in northwestern rural Alberta dovetail well with Kohen and Oliver's findings on the role of the community in promoting mental health among First Nations children, most of whom are urban dwellers. In a context where the abiding effects of colonialism result in increased numbers of Aboriginal children in the child protection system, Judy Gillespie and Dennis Whitford

advocate the promotion of child welfare through community-oriented policy frameworks to evoke broader social change and collective well-being. Specifically, they present "community networking" as a viable approach to supporting child welfare. This approach, they submit, requires the following: a formal structure, grounding in Aboriginal values and traditions, leadership and guidance from Aboriginal community members, and inclusiveness and respect for cultural diversity. The policy message in chapters 7 and 8 is that thriving neighbourhoods and communities play a critical role in supporting the well-being of Aboriginal people living off-reserve, in rural or urban areas.

Moving from health and child welfare to provincial education systems, **Chapter 9** addresses discourses surrounding the education of Aboriginal youth. Tracy Friedel calls on us to critically examine mainstream discussions of Aboriginal culture, and makes the case that discourses around culture actually contribute to the gap in educational achievement of Aboriginal youth. Education policy-makers and practitioners seek not only to improve the performance of Aboriginal students so they can better participate in Canada's economy, but also to manage the difference that Indigenous students represent in the schooling context. To a large extent, a focus on promoting Aboriginal culture has been used to overcome the education gap. Prevalent in education research since the 1970s and in policy since the 1980s, the focus on culture has been premised on two separate streams of thinking: a theory of cultural discontinuity on the one hand and ideas related to liberal multiculturalism on the other. Friedel joins Verna St. Denis and others in arguing that there are significant problems with the way in which a simplified stereotype of Aboriginal culture has been used while addressing educational inequities. The chief problem is that it covers over important structural barriers to improving educational outcomes, such as racism. In the face of the persistent educational achievement gap and the ongoing prevalence of racism in the lives of Aboriginal students, the author calls for a critique of how "culture" and "cultural difference" is engaged in public schools and for a more direct emphasis on policy measures that deal with the issue of race and problem of racism.

Justice and social justice are important urban themes in Canada. The three chapters of this volume included in Part Three: Justice examine dimensions of these issues. In **Chapter 10**, Anette Sikka discusses the trafficking of Aboriginal women and girls. She suggests that certain activities that exploit Aboriginal women and girls could be construed as trafficking under the Criminal Code of Canada, but that long-entrenched stereotypes have prevented law enforcers and policy-makers from doing so. In Canada, the term "trafficking in persons" tends to evoke images of young Eastern European or Asian women deceived into sexual slavery or prostitution, rather than the prospect of trafficking within domestic borders. Media, law enforcement, and various levels of government have adopted and maintained these images in documentaries, training programs and educational materials.

Pointing out the history of Aboriginal peoples in Canada and the resulting economic and cultural circumstances in which many Aboriginal women find themselves, Sikka indicates how some exploitation of their labour or sexuality could be legally defined as trafficking. She cites interviews with Aboriginal sex workers and help agencies in the Prairie Provinces to indicate how the intersection of race, gender, and poverty faced by many Aboriginal women and girls leads to exploitation. The history of the colonization of Aboriginal peoples by white settlers and the characterization of Aboriginal women as available sexual objects has led to an inability of the criminal justice system to acknowledge Aboriginal women and girls as victims of sexual exploitation, which includes particular types of trafficking in persons. The consequence is the exclusion of Aboriginal women from the same programs, services, and campaigns that were designed to provide redress for these crimes.

Lawyer and criminologist Michelle Mann explores the recent *Tackling Violent Crime Act* and the Corrections Review Panel Report entitled "A Roadmap to Strengthening Public Safety," in **Chapter 11**. As Mann points out, the rate of incarceration for Aboriginal people in Canada is 1,024 per 100,000 adults, while the rate for non-Aboriginal persons is 117 per 100,000. With one-twentieth the population, we see ten times the rates of imprisonment. Obviously there is a critically important policy issue at the root of this discrepancy. The grossly disproportionate incarceration rate of today will only get worse given the rapidly growing younger Aboriginal population.

Mann reviews the recently passed *Tackling Violent Crime Act* (Bill 2 2008), and concludes that the changes to the criminal code that flow from this Act will have a disproportionate impact on Canada's Aboriginal peoples. She shows how in the case of *R. v. Gladue*, the Supreme Court of Canada stated that the criminal code options for alternatives to incarceration were necessary to ameliorate the serious problem of Aboriginal overrepresentation in prisons and to encourage judges to undertake a restorative approach to sentencing. She concludes that the new Act undermines this line of reasoning and will exacerbate the current serious situation. She also explores the key themes of "A Roadmap to Strengthening Public Safety," and concludes that these too may impact Aboriginal offenders. Finally, Mann's paper brings together the implications of the Act and the panel recommendations for Aboriginal offenders as a basis for further policy and program direction.

In **Chapter 12**, Mark Totten takes us in a different direction with his look at pathways into gang involvement for Aboriginal youth. Quite rightly, Totten starts from an understanding that there is a virtual epidemic of Aboriginal youth gangs and the violence that is associated with these organizations, including both murder and related suicide. The author advocates the implementation of evidence-based crime prevention models. His particular tactic is novel, as he calls for public health approaches to the problem, given his recognition of the endemic issues of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, childhood abuse, and a range of related mental health issues. The program and policy approaches we utilize, in Totten's words,

"must be gender-responsive—they must address the unique needs of girls and boys separately." This is a hard-hitting piece of work that relies on the words of the gang members and their associates; it opens a window to this world and makes a passionate call to develop effective policy.

There are important issues affecting the urban Aboriginal population in Canada. They are not a homogenous group—there many different First Nations, as well as Métis and Inuit peoples, in our cities. Despite being different, they do however face similar problems. Many of these issues are outlined in the research presented in this volume. The challenge is to develop a better understanding of the roots of these issues, learn from successes, build active partnerships, and develop effective policy initiatives that fully address the needs of Aboriginal people living in urban settings.

Endnotes

1 Canada Census 2006, cited from Andy Siggner, "Statistical Profile of the Aboriginal Population Living in Non-Reserve Areas," presentation prepared for the Office of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-status Indians (March 2008).

2 David Newhouse and Evelyn Peters, "Introduction," *Not Strangers in These Parts: Urban Aboriginal Peoples* (Ottawa: Policy Research Initiative, 2003), 6.

3 Siggner, "Statistical Profile of the Aboriginal Population Living in Non-Reserve Areas."

4 Newhouse and Peters, "Introduction," *Not Strangers in These Parts: Urban Aboriginal Peoples*, 5–6.

5 Ibid., 9.

6 David Newhouse, "The Invisible Infrastructure: Urban Aboriginal Institutions and Organizations," *Not Strangers in These Parts: Urban Aboriginal Peoples*, 243–53.

7 First developed in 1997, the Urban Aboriginal Strategy now includes thirteen cities, encompassing 26.8% of Canada's Aboriginal population. Although it is a federal strategy, it relies on city-based steering committees that include participants from municipal, provincial, and federal governments, as well as Aboriginal representatives and service delivery organizations, to determine community priorities and fund community-based projects.

8 A summary report of the sessions, along with copies of all papers of the Aboriginal Policy Research Initiative, can be found on the website of the Institute on Governance at <www.iog.ca>.