

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When the Commission on First Nations and Metis Peoples and Justice Reform was established in November of 2002, it was given a broad mandate. The Terms of Reference directed the Commission to “include in its scope of consideration all components of the criminal justice system including, but not limited to: policing, courts, prosecutions, alternative measures, access to legal counsel, corrections including community corrections, youth justice, community justice processes, and victims services.”

As the Commission began its work it became obvious that justice and all that term evokes is much more than policing, courts and the myriad of institutions that have been developed. The Commissioners learned that the issues facing First Nations and Metis people – and the reasons they come into conflict with the justice system - are rooted in failures in the areas of education, health and economic development. Therefore, it is logical that the solutions to the problems of First Nations and Metis communities will be found by examining a wide range of areas. It was with this desire to address the issue of First Nations and Metis people and the justice system from a holistic point of view that the Commission undertook its mandate.

This report reflects the Commission’s work in what it identified as eight critical areas. These areas include: Leadership, Community Promotion and Crime Prevention, Victimization and Violence, Restorative Justice, Policing, Justice Institutions, Racism and Children and Youth.

Much has been written about the negative aspects of First Nations and Metis people and the justice system; high incarceration rates, high crime rates, conflict with police, and a growing concern about the future of Aboriginal young people. This Commission acknowledges that the status quo is not acceptable. Change is necessary. The report contains a paper developed by University of Saskatchewan professors Isobel Findlay and Warren Weir. This document, *Aboriginal Justice in Saskatchewan 2002 – 2021: The Benefits of Change*, clearly demonstrates the positive changes that will occur once reforms in the areas of restorative justice, education and economic development are implemented.

An important concern of this Commission has been the need to ensure that its work will be taken seriously and that recommendations it has presented will be implemented. As directed in the Terms of Reference, the Commission outlines in this report short and long-term implementation strategies.

This report is presented to the people of Saskatchewan with the sincere hope that it will provide assistance in returning the responsibility for justice to the community.

