



**ELIMINATING  
RACISM:  
CREATING HEALTHY  
RELATIONSHIPS IN  
SASKATCHEWAN**

T.Wilson 2002

## **ELIMINATING RACISM: CREATING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS IN SASKATCHEWAN**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Racism prevents healthy relationships. It is a difficult and complex problem almost impossible to nail down and seems to be both systemic and pervasive. It can be deliberate or unintentional. It is destructive and cruel, and belittles and humiliates. It is difficult to prove because it is deep within a person's character. And it is quietly upheld in a society's history, institutions and policies.

**One of the main things that I hope people understand is that Canada does have a history of racism, and racism is a social, political and economic historical phenomena that is very real, and when we talk about the criminal justice system and how it relates to the Aboriginal and people of colour here in this country, we must understand that racism is at the very bedrock of this criminal justice system.** (Speaker, Saskatchewan Coalition Against Racism presentation)

The creation of this Commission in November 2001 followed highly publicized events that were called racist by many people. It is, however, usually impossible to point a finger at any one part of the justice system. In the course of the Commission's work complaints were heard about racial discrimination involving corrections and conservation workers, social workers, retail sales people and others. A consistent theme was found in the dialogues: racism is alive and well in Saskatchewan, and it is hurtful.

**Let people recognize clearly that every time they threaten someone or humiliate or hurt unnecessarily or dominate or reject another human being, they become forces for the creation of psychopathology, even if these be small forces. Let them recognize that every man who is kind, helpful, decent, psychologically democratic, affectionate, and warm, is a psychotherapeutic force even though a small one.**  
(Jevne, 2004)

The Commission heard that racism is taught at home, in the schoolyards and at work. Racism may be planted in children by parents who were not taught the true history of Canada or who may have had a negative experience with First Nations, Metis or non-Aboriginal people. Racism flourishes at school where peer pressure is a powerful incentive to treat others without respect. It survives in the workplace where poor leadership fails to prevent harmful behaviour. Subtle and unintentional racism is more difficult to recognize. It is made worse by wrong information.

Negative images can be accepted and internalized. Identifying and accepting negative images of First Nations and Metis people becomes part of socialization. It begins with the development of self and ends up being a permanent part of society. (Sellers, 1999)

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"I don't want you branding them youth offenders," I said. "Do you realize that you call a child something and they're going to try and live up to that name?"  
(Elder at Elders' Dialogue)

**Stacking up the labels: diabetic, problem gambler, alcoholic, substance abuser, family violence. It goes on and on and on, just a huge burden of labels that many First Nations' families have to bear. How can you get out from under that and how can you project a positive self image even if you don't have any of those factors when all the labels are around you in huge numbers? (Speaker, Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations Health & Social Development presentation)**

Although racism is often unintentional, it cannot be ignored. It affects all of us. As individuals we are related to one another and everything around us. This is illustrated in the prayer closing, "All my relations," commonly used by Elders.

Eliminating racism is difficult, almost overwhelming. Racism dehumanizes people and leads to victimization. We must bring racism out in the open, look into our own prejudices and understand some of the injustices it causes. We then may be able to come up with practices that can help us to understand one another and bring about fairness. We may be able to replace acts of racism with trust and caring, and then respect. We may try to settle conflicts among ourselves, rather than going to the police and the courts. That would return justice to the community. We need to unlearn racism.

At the Commission's Racism Roundtable, a participant said:

**It's going to take a many-pronged approach to eliminate racism in Saskatchewan. First recognize the problem, have people admit and agree that racism exists and get it out in the open so there's a forum, and go from there.**

At every community dialogue with the Commission, racism in the justice system was raised as a significant problem. Specific problems ranged from individual acts of racist behaviour to general complaints of systemic racism. Many people wish to see this problem disappear. They recognize a need for changes in attitude, behaviour and understanding. Many are sincere in their desire for a society that recognizes we are all part of one family. Therefore, while diversity is to be celebrated, fairness that achieves equality is simply "the right thing to do."

**Before we, as a society, can liberate ourselves from the grip of racism we have to acknowledge that it exists and that it is not something that has been blown out of proportion. Neither is it a figment of people's imagination. (Speaker, Canadian Race Relations Foundation presentation)**

First Nations and Metis people have the same right to be accepted, as do all human beings. All are born into this world innocent, ready-to-be loved, full of human potential. Unfortunately, this right can be, and has been, taken away soon after birth. A life lived with dashed hopes, failed dreams and frustrated aspirations has caused many First Nations and Metis people to be overcome with mistrust, low self-esteem and anger. One result can be a life of crime, poverty,



poor health and addiction, ending in suicide. For the good of our generation and future generations, whether we are victims or perpetrators, the responsibility for eliminating racism rests with all of us.

**In our teachings, the most important thing in our community is our children. Everything that we do as a community is inherited by them. And racism is something that's sad and prolific in our communities, it's something our children inherit. And maybe as a community together, what we do here can change that.** (Elder speaking at Racism Roundtable)

This Commission's vision is to help bring about *Meyo Wahkotowin*, working together to create a healthy, just, prosperous and safe Saskatchewan. *Meyo Wahkotowin* forms the big picture for the Commission. We hope that all people in Saskatchewan will look honestly at their attitudes. We hope they will attempt to erase their prejudices and challenge discriminatory practices that they do or see done. We must work to create healthy relationships, to engage "*opintowin*". There are references to racism in other chapters, particularly Chapter 5 - Policing.

### **Individual Racism**

"Individual racism manifests itself in people's attitudes and behaviour," said Dr. Karen Mock, executive director of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation. A definition on the University of Toronto website says, "Personal [individual] racism is the belief in one person's racial superiority over another."

Speakers at the dialogues raised many examples of individual racism, particularly with respect to their treatment by police, the judiciary and the prison system. It is based on belief that other races are inferior and therefore not entitled to the same rights, privileges and responsibilities as one's own race. Bias, condescension, prejudice and discrimination are aspects of individual racism.

An example of individual racism occurs when a landlord decides not to rent to a First Nations or Metis person because of an unpleasant experience a landlord might have had in the past. The landlord believes the tenant, because of race, might damage the property, and tells the First Nation or Metis person that the space is no longer available.

**My family still encounters doors shut because they can't get an apartment because of the colour of their skin or the stereotypes around that. Or can't get a job because of where they come from, or whatever.** (Speaker, Racism Roundtable)

### **Condescension**

Condescension is a form of individual racism, a behaviour that flows from an attitude that others are inferior and which can cause a believer to feel racially superior. It may be worse than open racism because it does not necessarily appear to be racist. It can be conveyed by a gesture or a tone. It allows racist acts to be done without conscious intention of perpetrators who may detect no racism in themselves.

When there is an Aboriginal person picked up, right away the cops look down on our people. They think that all Aboriginal people are drunks. Just because they wear the blue coats, or the blue clothes, like, the uniforms, they think they are somebody. (Speaker, Regina Friendship Centre Healing Program presentation)

A speaker at the Racism Roundtable gave another example:

Even going in a store, the way people treat you differently, you know, they don't expect you to be looking at this particular product because there's no way you could possibly afford it, so they don't help you, they help everybody else around you. It's the subtleties that make you start to doubt yourself and your own self-worth that are really harmful. (Speaker, Racism Roundtable)

At the community dialogues the Commission heard that some correctional and conservation workers exhibit racism by making unwarranted generalizations. Some discriminate in the performance of their duties.

Even the RCMP refuses to deal with it. They say that SERM has the power to do what they want with you, basically, they can make you put your hands on the hood all day if they want. There's nobody to police them, they have the right to do what they want. (Speaker, Beauval Community Dialogue)

During a tour of the Saskatchewan Penitentiary at Prince Albert, Elders working there gave the Commission an example of racism. This could be seen as individual racism, or systemic racism if the behaviour was part of policy or overall practice. Inmates told of verbal abuse from guards for participating in cultural ceremonies. An Elder described an incident where guards interrupted a Sweat Lodge ceremony to perform a head count. This is an example of the extreme disrespect shown by some staff at the institution. There should be a clear consequence for such behaviour.

### Systemic Racism

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A process of recognizing *systemic racism* and working to identify, challenge and reduce it in all its forms is known as *antiracism*.

“Systemic racism consists of organizational policies and practices which directly or indirectly operate to sustain the advantages of a certain social group or social race, and the disadvantages of others,” says Dr. Mock. Systemic discrimination uses policies and practices which have become well established in institutions, resulting in barriers to equality for minority groups.

The current justice system is not trusted or respected by many First Nations people because First Nations have had no say in its creation, no say in the development of policies or laws. First Nations have had to endure attitudes of the practitioners and more than any other group of people we

**are disproportionately affected by the system.** (Speaker, Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations Health & Social Development Secretariat presentation)

One example of systemic racism is the approximately 120-year history of residential schools. According to the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, residential schools alienated thousands of primarily First Nations but also Metis children from their families, language and culture. This created century-deep wounds, termed “residential school syndrome,” from which individuals are still healing.

**It is often said that residential school systems and the generations of suffering brought to Aboriginal communities has been abolished. The so-called abolition of residential schools is nothing more than an illusion. When our prisons are spilling over with Aboriginal youth and when these prisons strip young people of their language, culture and identity, how can they honestly say that they have moved on? How can they tell us that they've improved? The residential school was never abolished, it only changed ship.** (Speaker, Youth in Care & Custody Network)

Cultural ceremonies such as the Sun Dance and Potlatch were forbidden under *Indian Act Amendments* of 1884. The prohibition was removed in the *Indian Act* of 1951. Being pushed underground over time, many of these traditions have been lost, and are only slowly being rediscovered through the teachings of Elders.

**There were laws to keep us from having Rain dances ... I remember the days when you couldn't hold a Rain Dance or a Sun Dance. You had to go hide in the bush and have it, because the police came around they could arrest you. They could arrest you for playing a drum. They looked at that as some kind of an evil sort of ceremony where we were doing witchcraft, because that Sun Dance brought out the pride in us, brought out the Spirit in us, and made us stand up and say, look, we're proud of ourselves.** (Speaker, Treaty Four Governance Institute Community Dialogue)

Various versions of the *Indian Act* are often given as examples of open racism. The racism First Nations people endure is built right into the legislation and policies governing this country.

**Back in the early 1860s in Regina, it was against the law for three Indians or more to communicate with each other in a group. It was called a riot, and that was Canadian law.** (Speaker, La Loche Community Dialogue)

**For example, at one time there were federal laws that suppressed the legal rights of First Nations peoples to assemble for political purposes or hire a lawyer to argue cases against the Crown.** (Saskatchewan Justice and Corrections and Public Safety, 2004)

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Backgrounder on the residential school system:

- The residential school system operated across Canada between 1800 and 1990, peaking in 1930 with 80 schools.
- Aboriginal children were often sent to residential schools far from their homes.
- The system contributed to loss of language and culture among Aboriginal people, as its key objective was assimilation of their children.
- The negative effects of these schools have been passed from one generation to the next.

For more information see Chapter 3.



*Marginal* - The status of groups who do not have full and equal access to the cultural, economic, political and social institutions of society.

The *Indian Act*, 1876 to the present, not only marginalized First Nations and Metis people, segregating them from mainstream society, it created greater division between First Nations and Metis people by instituting arbitrary status, non-status and Metis categories. It is fair to say that First Nations and Metis people have had little participation in, or influence over, creating the social policies that affect them, over the ongoing building of structures and systems under which they live, and have, instead, been controlled by government.

Undoubtedly, intentional oppressive acts such as those noted here, and others found in the *Indian Act* and elsewhere have done extensive damage to Aboriginal communities across Canada. (This and the preceding paragraph were taken from *A Structurational Analysis of Aboriginal Subordination in Canada*, an honours essay by Cora Sellers, department of sociology and social studies, University of Regina.)

A lot of our First Nations people, you know, they don't know basic things. They don't know their traditions. They don't know – they don't know the simple things like that, whereas the people, other people, other nations have retained that culture. Our culture, you know, was assimilated basically, you know, right down from the industrial schools to residential schools to – you know, right down to the justice system ... the whole system was set up basically to take the culture away from the people, and what better way than through our youth, through our children.  
(Speaker, Saskatchewan Coalition Against Racism presentation)

Roundtable participants and many speakers in the community dialogues clearly stated that racism and discrimination are related to many problems including the high level of imprisonment of First Nations and Metis people in Saskatchewan.

There's no question that there is a social, cultural and historical dimension to this problem. Aboriginal people are alienated from the criminal justice system, which has a long history as a tool of colonization in Western Canada, and there's no question that there is a cultural gap between the majority of those who administer the criminal justice system and those who are offenders and victims. (Speaker, Saskatchewan Justice and Corrections and Public Safety presentation)

The Canadian Race Relations Foundation discussed systemic racism and strongly suggested:

**The Canadian government should immediately implement effective strategies – and when I say Canadian government, and other levels of government, so this is applicable to Saskatchewan – to immediately implement effective strategies and measures to address and prevent acts of violence against Aboriginal peoples, in particular**



**Aboriginal women, by both police and civilians, in order to develop a comprehensive strategy to ensure the full documentation, investigation and resolution of any unsolved murders and deaths.**

This Commission encourages organizations, businesses and governments to examine their own cultures, practices and policies to identify and correct any practices that represent or could lead to racism. Accountability for and evaluation of racist behaviour must be built into their systems. In addition education and training needs to be available to everyone about subtle systemic racism and how to eliminate it.

### **RACE-BASED PRIVILEGE**

One theory is that ignorance is the cause of racism. If people had “the facts” they would change both their beliefs and their behaviour. This is too simple an explanation. In *Racial Healing*, Newkirk and Rutstein state, “We have found that it is actually more difficult for individuals to overcome the emotional attachment to the ignorance than to overcome the ignorance itself. Challenging one’s belief system usually provokes resistance because there is a natural desire to protect what makes one feel comfortable and secure.” They describe “a gradual process of chipping away” with “patient and unqualified love.” While this is surely effective, this gradual process means that while we wait for the changes to occur, the imprisonment rates and other problems remain high.

No one wants to be considered a racist. Many of us think of ourselves as non-racist. To acknowledge our true feelings requires deep reflection. It is troubling to consider the possibility that no one is completely free from racism. At the Racism Roundtable, one participant noted that some of the nicest people she knows have racist tendencies.

Many people resist the idea that they may have biases or may cling to stereotypes. Yet, all may acquire certain biases as part of their “socialization package.” Peggy McIntosh wrote an article, *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*, which deals with this socialization. A workshop of the same name states:

**It is often easier for white people to look at the disadvantages of racism for people of colour than to recognize the advantages of racism for white people. Focusing only on the negative consequences of disadvantage and marginalization sometimes permits people to feel compassion or pity for others, without having to come to terms with or challenge feelings of one’s own superiority.**

**To turn things around, and assess how white people benefit from discrimination on a daily basis, often results in painful reactions, excessive guilt, or denial. In discussions of systemic discrimination that also focus on systemic advantage, some major participants find it especially hard**

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Antiracism community education starts with government-community dialogue about *systemic racism* and leads to grassroots projects that aim to break down barriers by increasing critical understanding of racism.

to acknowledge the possibility that their individual achievements may not be based exclusively on their own individual merit, but also depend on the systemically structured advantages available to majority groups. This can create a situation of cognitive dissonance for participants, who have been socialized (as have most of us) to believe that Canadian society is tolerant and fair, and rewards individual excellence and hard work with material and social success.

There are many examples of “white privilege,” according to McIntosh: the ease of being able to shop without being followed or harassed; opening the front page of the paper and being able to see people of the white race widely represented; as white parents, being able to protect your children most of the time from people who don’t like them; doing well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to the race; never having to speak for all white people; being assured of not being singled out because of racial overtones; being able to choose a bandage, doll or a greeting card that reflects the correct skin colour; taking a job with an affirmative action employer without having coworkers suspect that it was given unfairly because of race.

We need to help people move towards that and to recognizing that race is a social concept and that it’s a way of keeping some people oppressed and others not. And that those who oppose equity programs, those who oppose changes to the system, are ones who want to preserve the status quo and their own group’s power and privilege.  
(Speaker, Canadian Race Relations Foundation presentation)

The University of Guelph’s final report of The President’s Task Force on Anti-Racism and Race Relations stated, “White privilege has never exempted white people from experiencing class prejudice, sexism, relatively low status, political oppression, religious discrimination, ethnic friction, poverty or discrimination on the basis of ability or sexual orientation. But it is essential to acknowledge that it has protected white people from humiliation and persecution based solely on their membership in the white race.”

### Facts on ‘Privileges’

Racism is increased by lack of accurate information. Misinformation exists in Saskatchewan concerning the entitlements and other benefits that come with being a First Nations person. An opinion column by Doug Cuthand in the December 5, 2003 edition of the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* on a report from the Centre for Research and Information on Canada said nearly two-thirds of Saskatchewan people believe it would be better to do away with Aboriginal Treaty rights and to treat Aboriginal people the same as other Canadians. The view seems to be that First Nations people enjoy “unearned privileges” not available to others. The article went on to say, “Without a proper understanding, this may create unfounded fear or discomfort so it really does point to a need for greater public education, more dialogue between First Nations and non-Aboriginal people.”

The bottom line is education and as Canadian people, whether we're Native or non-Native, [we need] to understand what our history is. Where did we come from? Why did our peoples end up in the community together? What did they bring? And then we have an equal place to start exchanging. (Speaker, Racism Roundtable)

a) *The Treaties*

Treaty and Aboriginal rights form part of the Supreme Law of Canada and are enshrined in the Constitution. According to the *Constitution Act, 1982*, Aboriginal people are defined as the "Indian, Inuit and Metis peoples of Canada." Unfortunately, there is very little public awareness of the Constitution and its implications, including Treaty entitlements.

The post-Confederation Treaty process began in the early 1870s and ran for the next 40 to 50 years, securing for Canada millions of acres of land to fill with mostly white settlers. The current value of this land is hundreds of billions of dollars. This does not include the value of a single drop of oil, a forest that has been harvested, one chunk of potash or any crops that have come from fertile soil. Many Canadians fail to see the value of the earnings on the land gained from First Nations and Metis people for so little as a result of the Treaties. Approximately one per cent of the land in Saskatchewan was given to reserves under Treaties. Settlers received access to farmland, security, and the peace and goodwill of First Nations."

**The Treaties that were written, they're your Treaties too, from whatever direction you're coming from those Treaties are to make people get along with one another, to have respect for one another.** (Elder speaking at a dialogue with the Office of the Treaty Commissioner Elders on reforms to the justice system)

To distinguish the post-Confederation Treaties from earlier ones in the East, the western Treaties were given numbers rather than names and are referred to as "numbered Treaties." The "numbered Treaties" were signed between 1867 and 1923. For Saskatchewan, relevant Treaties are numbers 2, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 10. These Treaties helped establish Canadian sovereignty over the Northwest during a time of American expansion and opened the land for the railway and farming by immigrants. Doug Cuthand wrote in the *StarPhoenix*, December 5, 2003, that the real winner after the numbered Treaty negotiations was Canada:

**It's not often understood, but all Canadian citizens have Treaty rights. When Canada acquired the land for the three Prairie provinces, it received a chunk of land larger than Western Europe. This new land was rich in farm land, minerals and gas and oil. In 2002, the three Prairie provinces had a combined gross domestic product of \$223 billion. Now who got the best deal?**

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More information can be obtained from  
The Office of the  
Treaty Commissioner  
1150-606 Spadina  
Crescent East  
Saskatoon, SK S7K 3H1  
Phone (306) 244-2100  
Fax (306) 244-4600  
or at their website  
[www.otc.ca](http://www.otc.ca)



Several ongoing projects address the obligations of Treaty. However, it will take at least a dozen years to resolve these, as Brent Cotter, Deputy Minister of Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs states:

Many of you are familiar with this process by which the shortage of land that was not provided to a significant number of First Nations has been redressed in a framework agreement and then a series of individual agreements with First Nations to fulfill the land commitments from the treaties. In the course of a dozen years or so, as you can see, \$500 million, in excess of that, [across Canada, 30 per cent of which is provincial money] has been made available to First Nations to fulfill that shortfall by the acquisition of land and, although there have been bumps along the road, we are making good progress in enabling First Nations to fulfill that shortfall and to be able to use this pool of money, both in land and in economic development terms, to strengthen their First Nations economies.

*b) Education*

In the oral tradition of negotiating the post-Confederation Treaties, First Nations were promised, among other things, continuing education. Today this translates into funding for primary, secondary, and post-secondary education. However, there is a problem. The funding has been capped at two per cent annually while the population and demand for post-secondary education has increased sharply. This has resulted in more people sitting on waiting lists than are actually attending school. First Nations students are presently more likely to have to negotiate student loans, than they are to receive a "free ride" from their band.

*c) Health Care*

One of the basic responsibilities of the federal government is health care for First Nations people. This was negotiated in the post-Confederation Treaties. First Nations people with Treaty status do have some additional benefits, such as dental and eye care and limited counselling.

*d) Justice*

There is a misconception that Aboriginal people receive special consideration in sentencing. The Gladue decision, interpreting Section 718.2 of the *Criminal Code*, set a precedent that requires courts to consider social, economic and cultural background factors when sentencing Aboriginal offenders. Gladue takes into account the lasting effects of the residential school system and the resulting deterioration of family and culture that has led to so much dysfunction in the Aboriginal community.



### e) Employment

A representative workforce concept encourages the consideration of equally qualified First Nations and Metis people, but also encourages the hiring of women, visible minorities and people with disabilities. The approach by Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs is, "A representative workforce is one where Aboriginal workers are represented at all occupational levels (entry level, middle and senior management) in proportion to their numbers in the province's working age population. Although the primary goal of this strategy is to achieve a representative workforce, attaining that goal should not be considered a barrier to employment beyond proportional estimates. The achievement of a representative workforce requires changes in the workplace, improvements in the knowledge/skill attainment of potential Aboriginal workers, and a comprehensive and focused employment development strategy." It can inspire sensitivity to the needs of other groups, including First Nations and Metis people through day-to-day contact. The concept is of benefit to all employees regardless of superficial differences. It is also of benefit to Saskatchewan, as the demographics show a burgeoning population of young First Nations and Metis people at a time when there is an aging workforce about to retire.

### f) The Myth of Taxation

"Aboriginal people do not pay taxes," is a belief commonly held. That could not be further from the truth. The right to not pay taxes is land-based. Any Treaty beneficiary living off-reserve and purchasing goods pays the following taxes: property, PST, GST, alcohol, tobacco, income, environment, duty, capital gains, payroll and fuel. Such people pay, in effect, what every other Canadian pays. On-reserve there are exceptions for income, tobacco, fuel, GST and PST. However, given the high unemployment rate on reserves in Saskatchewan, this exemption for income tax is an advantage to very few.

Except for *Indian Act* exemptions on-reserve, First Nations people and corporations do pay taxes. The reason for this exemption is that First Nations land is held "outside" Canada and hence out of Canada's tax jurisdiction. Freedom from taxation and, incidentally, military conscription were also Treaty promises. The taxation promise has been weakened by court interpretation (*Benoit v. Canada*); wrongly, in the opinion of many Aboriginal people.

**Just talking about taxation ... this whole taxation thing came up one day because they're farm people, and one of them said to me, "Well, you're really lucky you don't have to pay taxes." Well, guess what, I probably pay more taxes in that community than anybody else because I have nobody at home with me ... When I talked to them about that they just assumed if you were Aboriginal you paid no taxes, period. They had no understanding, you know, that the people who don't pay taxes are such a small minority.**  
(Elder, Racism Roundtable)

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*Employment Equity* – a program designed to remove systemic barriers to equality by identifying and eliminating discriminatory policies and practices, remedying the effects of past discrimination and ensuring appropriate representation of designated groups.

Employment equity means more than treating individuals in the same manner. It also requires special measures and the accommodation of differences. Thus, the quality of the results is important, not necessarily the equality of treatment.



### *g) Hunting and Fishing*

In the Treaties, there were guarantees about the First Nations being able to preserve their way of life through hunting, fishing and trapping. The right to hunt and fish, basically, is limited to food gathering. It does not include commercial harvesting. The right to hunt and fish is set forth in the *Constitution Act, 1930* (the Natural Resources Transfer Agreement) and interpreted by R. v. Badger. The Act states:

**In order to secure the Indians of the Province the continuance of the supply of game and fish for their support and subsistence, Canada agrees that the laws respecting game in force in the Province from time to time shall apply to the Indians within the boundaries thereof, provided however that the said Indians shall have the right, which the Province hereby assures to them, of hunting, trapping and fishing game and fish for food at all seasons of the year on all unoccupied Crown lands and on any other lands to which the said Indians may have a right to access.**

Commercial fishing and hunting activity is licensed and regulated. While the amount of Crown land is not dwindling, the demands on Crown land have increased in regards to mineral, oil and gas, forestry, roads and infrastructure. These increased demands in turn, affect hunting and fishing.

### **METIS PEOPLE**

As noted by the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) in the Powley decision: “The term Metis in s.35 [of the *Constitution Act*] does not encompass all individuals with mixed Indian and European heritage; rather, it refers to distinctive peoples who, in addition to their mixed ancestry, developed their own customs, way of life, and recognizable group identity separate from their Indian or Inuit and European forebears.” They have endured repression, including attendance at residential schools, the denial of land claim settlements and the marginalization of their culture, history and rights, according to C. Blackstock in the *National Children’s Alliance Policy Paper on Aboriginal Children*.

Metis people do not have the same rights as First Nations people. Certainly the Metis faced, and still face, much the same racism and exclusion from mainstream society, as do First Nations people. For example, the Hudson’s Bay Company ignored a Metis land claim registered in Manitoba in 1810, and gave the land to Lord Selkirk to populate with immigrants.

An effort by Metis to be independent and govern themselves was lost at the Red River Rebellion of 1870. As part of the later peacemaking, Section 31 of the *Manitoba Act* offered the children of the half-breed heads of families residing in the province at the time of transfer 1.4 million acres. A one-time grant of land or money, known as scrip came later. This was a certificate or voucher and in theory could be used only to acquire lands listed in a Dominion Lands Office as open for

homesteading. Fraudulent practices were common. The result left the Metis landless, without a community and exempt from the *Indian Act*. The Metis became the “road allowance” people, forced to literally live on road allowances because they could not reside on reserves, could not afford land and were not accepted in towns. The Metis right and request for land in Saskatchewan has been recognized minimally.

**We need governance ... we need to have our own laws ... that will conform with what our beliefs and our values are, not how somebody else expects us to live. Like we're not puppets, we know what we want and we need to get ahead, we want to be independent but we can only do that by getting a land base, by having an economic base and by giving us the freedoms. I don't believe we have any freedom as Aboriginal people. (Speaker, Beauval Community Dialogue)**

In the case of *Regina v. Powley*, the Supreme Court found that the Powleys, as Metis, had an existing Aboriginal right to hunt not only because they were members of a contemporary Metis community at Sault Ste. Marie, but also because they had ancestral connections to an historic Metis community. It existed at Sault Ste. Marie at the date when effective European or Canadian control was asserted over the area and whose members historically hunted for food in the area around Sault Ste. Marie to such an extent that this practice was considered to be an integral part of their distinctive culture.

**Some of the suggestions and solutions that I would like to make are to provide proper resources to help settle issues such as the bombing range, the Metis land claims, the Metis war veterans. Government needs to make that commitment so that we can regain the trust and respect of governments and their agencies. (Speaker, Beauval Community Dialogue)**

Legally, First Nations, Metis and Inuit people have not been treated as equals by their fellow citizens, but as their inferiors, virtually since others began coming to the Americas. Some legal differences remain in place. Political differences have created hardships for the Metis organizations. A comment was made to the Commission about a lack of fair distribution of casino funds to the Metis Nation – Saskatchewan.

Simply treating everyone equally cannot solve the problems related with racism. Given the history of First Nations, Metis and Inuit people, treating people fairly and justly requires allowing for the differences. Steve McArthur, representing the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations Health and Social Development Secretariat, saw it this way:

**We are of the opinion that honourable, fair, respectful and equitable relationships are required for justice to prevail.**

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The recent Powley decision, by the Supreme Court is an example of the promise of a better tomorrow and the patience and stamina of the nation to wait while courts reaffirm Metis rights to land and resources.  
(Submission, Metis Family & Community Justice Services Inc.)



## **COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITY**

Many times the Commission was pleased to hear people acknowledge the need for individuals to take responsibility for stopping racism and express their personal commitment to do so. At the same time, departments of the Saskatchewan government and other organizations recognized their responsibilities.

The issues of racism and the need to build trust between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples go beyond justice system staff or officials. There is a pressing need to promote trust, harmony and cooperation between all Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in the province. As a growing percentage of the provincial population is Aboriginal, relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples will become increasingly important to the health and strength of our communities and economy. While there is a role for justice officials to play in addressing this issue, it must become an issue of vital concern to all provincial citizens. (Saskatchewan Justice and Corrections and Public Safety, 2004)

A speaker at the Racism Roundtable made the following recommendation:

We have to individually make a commitment that we will stop racism where we see it in our daily lives, whether it's a family member, a relative, a friend, an acquaintance, a co-worker. If somebody says something that's off-colour or crosses the line, it's inappropriate, it's racist, we have to stand up and say, "that's not acceptable, it's not appropriate and you cannot be saying those kinds of things." We all have to make a personal commitment to stop it wherever we see it. (Speaker, Racism Roundtable)

## **THE ECONOMIC COSTS OF RACISM**

The economic costs of racism are tied to the whole social system. They can be seen in the justice system through the high numbers of First Nations and Metis people who are imprisoned. This is covered in Chapter 9 - Aboriginal Justice in Saskatchewan 2002 – 2021: The Benefits of Change.

## **Education System and Racism**

Racism can be a factor in driving Metis and First Nations youth out of the schools and, consequently, out of the job market. As a result, the potential contribution these youth might make to the Saskatchewan economy is lost. With no education there is usually lost work opportunity. A poor job yields little in income taxes. Such earners often become a cost since they may need welfare or may enter the criminal justice system – both high costs for the taxpayer.

A speaker at the Business/Economic Development Roundtable wanted a strong message to go to youth:

**Learning leads to earning.** A job at the end of schooling would be the payoff. Go in and tell them, “Don’t drop your high school sciences and your maths and all these things but when you do that these are the jobs you’re eliminated from.” We have to go in the schools and we have to go early and teach them all these things about culture and when we talk about keeping them in high school so that they can get meaningful jobs, not just entry-level jobs or jobs in the area of Aboriginal trouble, social work and all these ... [but] supervisory, middle management, senior management. Not just union jobs, you know, we promote all of it.

According to a report from the Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy (2004), “Education is important for the cognitive and social development of a child. A high level of education can make a big difference in a child’s life in terms of economic stability and social inclusion in the future. Conversely, the lack of education contributes to a detachment from the labour force and, usually, dependency on the welfare system.”

**And I was in Grade 4 ... Whenever somebody talked about an Indian, whenever our teacher brought up an Indian topic or we were studying Indians, they would all look at me, and I was like, “Oh, my God.” And I was so humiliated ... Another incident happened with my teacher, we were all in class and every time we did an exam and I didn’t know how to divide, I’d leave that out because I just didn’t know how to divide and I was too shy to ask anybody, ask my teacher for help. Which is typical, Indian people not wanting to ask for help, but I didn’t. So what he made me do, he’d write this question on the board and he’d call me up in front of everybody and I had to go up to the board and do this question. I had no idea how to do it. So he’d leave the classroom and all these other kids would be saying, “Dummy, you’re stupid.” You know, saying all these horrible things ... not once did he show me up there how to do it ... I’m 37 years old and I have that fear of numbers.**

(Speaker, Saskatchewan Native Theatre Dialogue)

According to the final report from the Minister’s National Working Group on Education entitled *Our Children – Keepers of the Sacred Knowledge*:

**Systemic racism, racist remarks and racist attitudes have a profound affect on academic success. They may also contribute to a lack of parental support for students to stay in school. Whatever the impact, too many First Nations students are exposed to racism in different forms**

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Currently, the province has 8.8 per cent equity employment with a goal of 12 per cent of the workforce being Aboriginal. Also noted was that of the 8.8 per cent, “94 per cent of those people have a job that can’t feed a family: part time, temporary and casual.” (Presenter, Aboriginal Employment Development Program, at Business Roundtable)

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You can access the report *Our Children – Keepers of the Sacred Knowledge* at [http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ps/edu/fnre/ouchi\\_e.pdf](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ps/edu/fnre/ouchi_e.pdf)

throughout their elementary, secondary and post-secondary school experiences. Teachers who hold low expectations for First Nations students are possibly the most pervasive example of racism that many students encounter.

The report stated further, “a multi-purpose strategy on racism can assist students to deal with racism, to equip teachers, administrators and support staff with tools to reduce racism, and to encourage school boards to address racism directly in the curricula and school policies.” The Commission certainly supports this.

#### First Nations and Metis Content in the Classroom

Now, today, just like the Eagle Feather one of the Elders used to use, there's two-way education in that school where I'm working. One side is the white man's education and the other side is Indian culture. If you learn those two educations your education will be balanced. (Elder, speaking at a dialogue with the Office of the Treaty Commissioner Elders on reforms to the justice system)

In 1999 the Aboriginal Education Provincial Advisory Committee produced its action plan for the years 2000 to 2005. The committee is working towards improving the learning environment for First Nations and Metis students. The goal is to include First Nations and Metis content and perspective in each area of study in every classroom in Saskatchewan. In nine of its seventeen recommendations, the committee dealt with providing accurate and relevant First Nations and Metis content. (Warren, 2004)

This Commission suggests other areas the committee could consider:

- Collaboration at the policy level of all education authorities to promote mandatory First Nations and Metis studies, so that all students have access to this education.
- Development of programs and resources to support teachers wishing to invite First Nations and Metis resource people into their classrooms.
- Development of a transparent, accountable method to monitor and measure the success of including First Nations and Metis content.

#### Teaching Treaties in the Classroom

The Commission attended a workshop hosted by the Office of the Treaty Commissioner (OTC) entitled Treaties As a Bridge to the Future. At that time, *Teaching Treaties in the Classroom* was announced. This Commission soundly supports the project.



Since then, Saskatchewan's Office of the Treaty Commissioner has been singled out in a new United Nations report as an example of using innovative, community-based educational programming to fight racism. The UN report advocates adopting – on an urgent basis – an intellectual strategy against racism with tools like the OTC 'educational initiatives'. "Intellectual strategy" refers to promoting improved understanding between Canada's various cultural and ethnic communities. According to the UN Commission on Human Rights, there needs to be a dual strategy implemented to combat racism and discrimination in the long-term. This strategy should include two components:

**an intellectual and ethical strategy targeting the fundamental cultural, ethical and mental roots of the culture and mindset of discrimination, through the promotion of a cultural pluralism that is based on the contrasting notions of unity and diversity, i.e., one that, while respecting characteristic identities, cultures and spiritual traditions, also strives for unity by promoting interaction and cross-fertilization between the various communities; (Diene 2004)**

As of April 2004, the "Teaching Treaties in the Classroom" kit was distributed to 80 per cent of all schools across Saskatchewan and 2,600 teachers have experienced "in-service" training. The objective is to provide the kit to every school in Saskatchewan by 2004.

The Commission approached Saskatchewan Learning on the possibility of implementing *Teaching Treaties in the Classroom* to the primary grades throughout Saskatchewan. Craig Dotson, Deputy Minister, Saskatchewan Learning, responded in a letter as follows:

*Teaching Treaties in the Classroom is an important initiative and Saskatchewan Learning is pleased to support this work in partnership with the FSIN and the OTC as it is consistent with the government's interest in providing a broad public communication strategy in Aboriginal education and learning supports for all students. We believe that the instructional materials prepared by the OTC will deepen student pride and understanding of the role of treaties in building Canada. Its implementation is proceeding well.*

**The OTC's mandate will expire on March 31, 2005. Future expansion of the Teaching Treaties in the Classroom initiative will depend upon further extension of the OTC mandate.**

The Commission recommends in Chapter One that the OTC's mandate be continued.

## Equity Plan for Schools

The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission recommends that every school division with an Aboriginal student enrollment of five per cent or more have an equity plan in place.

"This equity program is on a voluntary basis only ... It believes all school divisions benefit from equity plans, whether or not they have large numbers of Aboriginal students, and continues to promote the adoption of plans."

The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission noted, "17 school divisions with over 79,000 students have education equity plans in place. In addition, Regina Public School Division has an approved employment equity plan, enabling them to hire Aboriginal teachers preferentially. This then brings the total number of K-12 students affected by equity plans to over 100,000."

The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission requests school divisions with approved plans to supply brief, annual reports. Continued approval of equity plans is dependent on these reports. The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission is adding an equity section to its main website and plans to post all the reports.

## Training for Teachers

In 2002, the Aboriginal Education Unit, Saskatchewan Learning, was expanded to include three additional staff who play a strong role in providing professional development to teachers across the province. The professional development provided encompasses Aboriginal awareness (culture and history), incorporating Aboriginal content and perspectives across the curriculum, creating learning environments that support Aboriginal students' learning at the school and school division level and Native Studies curriculum implementation. A comprehensive professional development strategy is under development that will encompass pre-service and in-service professional development in relationship to Aboriginal education. Teacher training institutions, boards of education and provincial education partners and Aboriginal organizations will be key partners in the strategy. (Personal communication, Craig Dotson, Deputy Minister, Saskatchewan Learning, January 12, 2004)

In 2003, at least 50 professional development workshops were delivered to pre-service and in-service teachers.

We need to share our lifestyles, our values. They need to know why a feather is important to us, why the Sweetgrass is important, why the Ceremony, and the Sweats, the Round



**Dances, they're happening all over. We need to invite our white brothers and sisters to come to those and to take time to explain.** (Speaker, North Battleford, Community Dialogue)

### **Aboriginal Teacher Education Programs (TEP)**

The Saskatchewan Teacher Education Programs (TEPs) provide role models and reduce cultural barriers for Aboriginal youth in Saskatchewan. The programs also serve the wider goal of education equity in the K-12 system by increasing the proportion of First Nations and Metis teachers. Since the inception of the TEPs, which includes the Northern Teacher Education Program in La Ronge; the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program in Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert; the Indian Teacher Education Program at the University of Saskatchewan; and the First Nations University of Canada teacher education program, close to 2,000 teachers have graduated with a Bachelor of Education degree.

Significant advances have been made by local boards of education in hiring First Nations and Metis teachers from the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, the Gabriel Dumont Institute and the two universities.

**While Saskatchewan has far to go to ensure an equitable teaching force in provincial schools, the trend is improving. In school divisions that have equity programs in 1989-90, 4.1 per cent of teachers were Aboriginal. In 2000-01, 6.4 per cent of teachers were Aboriginal. Aboriginal students represented 15.7 per cent and 20.2 per cent of the total student population in these divisions for the two corresponding years. With respect to the entire student population of these divisions, representation improved from one Aboriginal teacher for every 456 students in 1989-90 to one Aboriginal teacher for every 239 students in 2000-01.** (Craig Dotson, Deputy Minister, Saskatchewan Learning, January 12, 2004)

The challenge faced by schools requires teachers to respect differences, have a willingness to learn and teach about other cultures, and promote respect and belief in individuality and "oneness." A sincere, accurate and thorough understanding of the history and cultures of First Nations and Metis people needs to begin in the early grades. Many initiatives undertaken now will soon be reflected in the achievements of policy makers or members of the business community.

### **EMPLOYMENT ISSUES**

A common recommendation of previous reports and commissions referencing First Nations and Metis people and racism is to increase the number of Aboriginal people in justice and other areas. This can lead to greater understanding of the needs of First Nations and Metis people and to acceptance. It also leads to a more representative work force. It can give First Nations and Metis people the



opportunity to influence changes to policies and structures that affect them. There are a growing number of young people who are about to reach employable age. Increasing the numbers in important jobs today will encourage First Nations and Metis people to fill these jobs in the future. People have to see themselves reflected in the system to feel like they are welcome in it and have the right to belong. Internal policies must be in place to prevent racism. In recent years, many organizations have developed such policies.

At the Business/Economic Roundtable, Saskatchewan Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs (GRAA) said that 47,000 First Nations and Metis people will come of age and enter the workforce in the next seven years. Through partnerships developed with the Aboriginal Employment Development Program (AEDP), a program of the Aboriginal Affairs division of GRAA, barriers that limit or discourage First Nations and Metis participation in the workplace are identified. Once they are identified they can be removed to improve access for First Nations and Metis people as well as non-Aboriginal Canadians.

AEDP promotes the need to stay in school to obtain a permanent job. It promotes a workforce strategy defined as, "Aboriginal workers being represented at all occupational levels in proportion to their numbers in the province's population." To assist AEDP, the province initiates contact with schools and talks to the youth. They are told "we need the skills to pay the bills when we get older."

At the Business/Economic Roundtable, AEDP representative Wayne McKenzie said he believed the quota system should be removed and workplaces should hire on the basis of merit.

**As an Aboriginal person and as a Canadian, I can't have 100 per cent access to the opportunities of this province ... Why is it that you get 100 per cent access and I get a quota? What happened?**

**In each of our workplaces the people will know that we got there, not because you lowered the standards, it's because we got good information from you, we went out and got the necessary skills. When the vacancy came, we competed and won the competition.**

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This message is inconsistent with employment equity, but it was qualified. The view is that a need exists to open up the hiring for all jobs at all levels and, at the same time, ensure programming is in place for youth to assist them with getting the education they need for employment.

The director of one government department was frustrated at not being able to designate a position, which required working with Aboriginal people, as one to be filled by an Aboriginal person because, nationally, his organization had met its quota. That quota did not account for the higher percentage of Aboriginal people in the Prairies.

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*Equal Opportunity Programs* are made up of policies, guidelines and actions to remove discrimination and ensure equity and full participation in education and employment, health care and housing, as well as the services, goods and facilities available to the general community.



More than one speaker at dialogues and roundtables felt unions are a roadblock to the participation of First Nations and Metis persons seeking employment. The most common concern was that unions protect their mainly non-Aboriginal membership, even when they display racist attitudes or a poor work ethic, and by doing so limit the opportunities for others to get in. For example, internal job postings rather than external competitions prevent those outside the union being able to compete for jobs for which they are qualified. The Aboriginal Government Employees Network felt that the small numbers of First Nations and Metis members within unions limit their ability to make changes to policy and agreements. Instead, issues of the non-Aboriginal majority received attention. For example, because of the aging workforce, many are concerned with pensions. Concerns such as this override those of the First Nations and Metis employees.

It is worth noting that AEDP now involves unions in signing partnership agreements – these are called tripartite agreements, wherein the employer, the union or unions in the workplace, and GRAA, agree to work towards the same goals that will support the hiring and retention of First Nations and Metis people in the workplace.

At the Business/Economic Roundtable it was suggested that there be union-management-Aboriginal agreements in place so First Nations and Metis people can get jobs in unionized workplaces and come to understand collective agreement rights. A union member said,

**Our union is working hard at ensuring that we have representative language so that they can get the meaningful jobs. We have to go out and tell them to get the education so they can get those jobs. Everyone is a stakeholder no matter what your background is.**

The FSIN in 1997 challenged the organized labour movement to become more active on Aboriginal issues:

**In particular, in terms of employment opportunities and training, we would like to see a specific body established from the main unions in the Province of Saskatchewan with the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations to discuss how we can better work together at all levels ... We need to identify the barriers to First Nation participation in the union movement and mechanisms so Aboriginal people gain entry to the skilled trades, which are mostly unionized in Saskatchewan.**

Entities like the FSIN Corporate Circles of Saskatchewan are taking a proactive role in assisting businesses in Saskatchewan to eliminate barriers to hiring and training First Nations and Metis people. It is a collaborative approach to employment and development between the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT) and Metis Employment and Training of Saskatchewan Inc. (METS).

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Organizations interested in participating in making the Corporate Circles of Saskatchewan into a productive strategy can contact Myrna LaPlante at (306) 477-9217 or [laplantem@siit.sk.ca](mailto:laplantem@siit.sk.ca) or Gabe Lafond at (306) 668-7671 or [glafond@metsi.sk.ca](mailto:glafond@metsi.sk.ca)

[The Corporate Circle] is a place where Saskatchewan business leaders, presidents, Chief Executive Officers can meet with FSIN Chiefs on a regular basis to discuss new and innovative ways to provide increased economic, employment and educational opportunities for First Nations people.

The agenda includes:

- Entry level employment opportunities.
- Mid to high level employment opportunities.
- Training opportunities for employees new to the workforce.
- Training opportunities for employees with experience in other sectors of the work force.
- Investment opportunities in existing businesses.
- Investment opportunities, with a partner, in new businesses.
- Opportunities for Aboriginal business to become suppliers to new and existing companies.

Frustration with racism around employment issues is reflected in this quote:

And like the jobs, like where I used to work in a big company, it was a mean company. We went through so many natives in like one month than we did with white people in maybe like five years. Aboriginal people were like bugged, taunted, teased, everything that you could think of, like, at the workplace, but they'd do it like behind closed doors where people couldn't see. (Speaker, Saskatchewan Native Theatre Dialogue)

Recruitment must include a means of identifying potential employees who harbour racist attitudes. A report from the Metis Family & Community Justice Inc. suggests a need for “assessment tools that will be used to monitor and screen out ... employees who exhibit racial intolerance.”

#### BENEFITS OF RECREATION AND CULTURE

We have a rec program now that we just got funded for ... our kids are now getting involved in other sports that they can play with other kids in the community. (Speaker, Prince Albert Youth Activity Centre Dialogue)



The Commission heard from Saskatchewan Culture, Youth and Recreation about the benefits of recreation, sports, art and culture in reducing racism and building understanding among diverse cultures.

Westland (1991) found in a review of the literature on leisure and mental health that “virtually all play situations provide ample testimony to the fact that once the game starts, social distinctions disappear and the ‘status’ of the participants is determined by their ability to play the game.” (Speaker, Saskatchewan Culture, Youth and Recreation presentation)

In its report, *“The Impact of Culture/Arts, Sport and Recreation on Antisocial Behaviour in Youth: Evidence and Analysis,”* Saskatchewan Culture, Youth and Recreation stated:

**Providing support and guidance to youth is not only to their benefit, but benefits the entire community. Finding opportunities to help youth develop strong social skills allows them to grow into productive, fulfilled adults.**

Through community-based culture/arts, sports and recreational activities youth are provided an opportunity to build positive relationships helping to reduce antisocial behaviour. Youth involved in antisocial behaviour likely have low self-esteem and little self-confidence. By participating in recreational activities, youth can increase both their self-esteem and self-confidence and gain, in addition, a sense of accomplishment.

### **SASKATCHEWAN’S MULTICULTURALISM POLICY AND RACISM**

In 1989 *“Multiculturalism in Saskatchewan, The Report of the Task Force on Multiculturalism”* was presented to the Ministers’ Committee on Multiculturalism. Unfortunately, at the time it received little attention although it contained some excellent recommendations, including some related to First Nations and Metis people. Dr. Karen Mock, in her presentation for the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, urged the Commission to consider this report. The Commission found the recommendations still relevant and deserving support. Among other things, the report suggested:

- 6.1 that the multicultural policy of Saskatchewan recognize the Aboriginal peoples as the original multicultural society in this province.
- 6.2 that government departments and agencies consult with the Aboriginal community when developing programs that will affect this community.

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The Impact of  
Culture/Arts, Sport and  
Recreation on Antisocial  
Behaviour in Youth:  
Evidence and Analysis can  
be obtained from  
<http://www.cyr.gov.sk.ca/assets/pdfs/CYR-ImpactOn-behaviour-research.pdf>

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*Multiculturalism* is a federal policy in Canada and is used to describe the composition of Canada both historically and currently. It is an ideology that holds that cultural, linguistic, racial and religious diversity is a beneficial, integral and necessary part of Canadian society and identity.

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*Multicultural Education* is designed to create and enhance understanding of and respect for cultural diversity.

- 6.4 that the Department of Education [now Saskatchewan Learning] provide adequate financial and human resources for the development and production of materials suitable for use in northern schools.
- 6.5 that the Aboriginal community be encouraged to promote a positive image of its people by documenting and disseminating information on its successes and contribution to the development of Saskatchewan.
- 9.1 that the Government of Saskatchewan recognize the importance of meaningful employment to all individuals and vigorously support employment enhancing programs.
- 10.1 that multicultural components be integrated into training programs for media personnel.
- 14.1 that provincial and local governments ensure that the multicultural diversity within their jurisdiction be reflected in their appointments to boards, commissions and committees.

Five years later, in 1994, the Saskatchewan government developed a race and cultural relations policy. It states, in part, “For Indian and Metis peoples, the government is committed to preventing and overcoming identified inequities and barriers based on racial and cultural differences.” This policy recognizes that, “all citizens of the province should understand and appreciate the history, culture and status of Indian and Metis peoples. A promotional and educational approach should be taken to develop understanding of and appreciation for Indian and Metis cultures.” Elsewhere the policy stated, “Preventive measures to avoid racial and cultural conflicts are important.” Despite the existence of the race and cultural relations policy and the work of the Committee on Multiculturalism, however, racism remains prevalent.

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#### **Recommendation 7.1**

**This Commission endorses the report *Multiculturalism in Saskatchewan: Report to Ministers' Committee on Multiculturalism*. This Commission recommends that the Executive Director of Saskatchewan Culture and Heritage report, in writing, to the Implementation Commissioner, and shall clearly indicate progress made in carrying through the recommendations put forward in this Multiculturalism report.**

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#### **CULTURAL AWARENESS TRAINING PROGRAMS**

On June 28, 1985, Parliament passed Bill C-31, an *Act to Amend the Indian Act*. Indian women who had lost status as a result of marrying a non-Aboriginal man were allowed to regain status.

The term cross-cultural training is familiar to most people even though it, generally, is “one-way” rather than “cross.” It often perpetuates thinking that suggests that discrimination and prejudice is one way, from non-Aboriginal to Aboriginal. It is not. Acts of discrimination and prejudice exist from Aboriginal to non-Aboriginal people, between First Nations and Metis, between persons with Treaty and those who have obtained Treaty rights through Bill C-31.

Political juggling and power struggles to gain the upperhand result in hypocrisy and blocking of actions and programs that could eliminate racism.

Cross-cultural training most often focuses on giving participants accurate information on the history of First Nations and Metis people in Canada along with some cultural practices. It has also been an aid to increased sensitivity to the needs of First Nations and Metis people. On the other hand, these sessions often leave out addressing the mentality of racism.

Of cross-cultural and race relations sensitivity training, Judge Patricia Linn, chair of the Saskatchewan Indian Justice Review Committee, said in her 1992 report:

**When we speak of cross cultural training we do not mean a day or two of classroom lectures during an employee's initial job training followed by occasional "workshops" in later years ... We envision cross cultural training to be ongoing throughout the service of an employee, and include a strong Aboriginal component to familiarize participants with both the history and the contemporary situation of Saskatchewan Indian and Metis peoples. Also, cross cultural and race relations training must include an evaluation component to determine whether the training has had an impact.**

The submission from the Metis Family & Community Justice Services Inc. argued there needs to be a more inclusive worldview of the background and realities of the Metis people.

**What is required is more than merely understanding our history; rather it is about who we are today, where we came from and where we are going. This process has to engage both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people from every cross section of society; coming together committed to exploring and breaking down the barriers created by racism.**

This Commission agrees.

### **Oneness and Hope**

The Commission agrees with both comments but believes that training to eliminate racism must go further. Because racism is a learned belief and an acquired attitude, more needs to be done to improve race relations by promoting the unity or "oneness" of human kind as a part of the core learning process. A common statement by Elders in the community is that one must listen, "not only with our ears but with our heart."

According to an address by Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "We are all members of one human family and inequalities in enjoyment of the most basic human rights are not only wrong in themselves, they are a major cause of social upheaval and conflict."

We all have to come together in order to be able to survive. Children at a very early age need to have an understanding of how it is that we are all part of the human family. One idea proposed to the Commission at the Racism Roundtable for reducing racism and other unhealthy attitudes and beliefs is to remove the word “racism” and change it to “oneness.” The concept of “oneness” should not perpetuate the denial of racism but ensure we reach the goal of equality and equity.

Another concept given to the Commission is “hope.” An act of hope according to Dr. Ronna Jevne is:

**To hope is to search. To hope is to notice the gaps between where we are and where we want to be, and to ask of ourselves, “How might the futures we face be more hopeful?”**

The Commission believes that concepts of oneness and hope need to be incorporated into future training, with the goal of assisting people to closely examine their own racist attitudes and replace them with acceptance and mutual respect.

### **Coordinated Approach to Cultural Training**

In Saskatchewan many cross-cultural and race-relations training packages are delivered by numerous individuals and organizations with varying qualifications and experiences. This is an improvement on the situation a few decades ago when this kind of education was extremely rare. The Commission believes, however, that experienced educators could accomplish more if a coordinated approach were adopted. Moreover, a problem with well-intentioned in-service training needs to be addressed.

**What happens in policing or in corrections or in the judiciary? They won't use outside proper experts in racism and anti-racism. You know, they will say, “Karen, can you teach us what you do in a couple of days?” And they want to go do their own thing. Police training police. I said, “Well, could I learn in a few days how to be a police officer?” They don't see the kind of work that we do as defined as professional expertise.**  
(Speaker, Canadian Race Relations Foundation presentation)

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*Network – A group of people with common interests sharing information.*

A standard for excellence needs to be developed by training experts to determine what should go into quality training packages. At a minimum, a network should be established among trainers to exchange information and resources.

One source of information on the development of professional standards can be found in the paper, *Race Relations Training in Canada, Towards the Development of Professional Standards, (Mock & Laufer, 2001)* It reviews the area of guidelines and standards and indicates there are strong views both for and against regulation.

**Should there be a body responsible for professional standards? Then where does the mandate come from and how is it implemented in terms of ensuring standards are maintained ... There needs ... to be a more organized and strategic plan to**

develop, train and create greater awareness and sensitivity to the issues of racism within the general public. Standards are necessary in terms of input and process and outcome, to ensure that trainers are competent, but together with that we need programs and leadership at a macro level.

The Commission believes that a network to distribute First Nations and Metis cultural awareness would benefit everyone, as the makeup of this province's workforce will be changing significantly in the next few years. The network would ensure that proper and effective cultural awareness training is delivered to clients throughout Saskatchewan.

**As we look to the future in our province, we realize there will be a significant impact on the labour force as the booming young Aboriginal population starts to take its rightful place in the workforce. Unfortunately there are many misconceptions around Aboriginal issues that lead to resentment, racism and alienation, leading to low retention levels of Aboriginal employees. Therefore it is vital to inform the people of Saskatchewan about the real or true facts surrounding Treaties and the way that Aboriginal people fit into the Constitution of Canada. (Submission by John Lagimodiere)**

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#### **Recommendation 7.2**

This Commission recommends that the governments of Canada and Saskatchewan, specifically Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and Saskatchewan Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs, in consultation with representatives from the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and Metis Nation – Saskatchewan:

- a) create a directory for Saskatchewan of First Nations and Metis people who are recognized and respected as trainers/facilitators on cultural awareness and the promotion of healthy relationships between the First Nations and Metis cultures and the non-Aboriginal population; and
  - b) that the directory be made available to organizations, government departments, and members of the justice system wishing to provide cultural awareness training to their employees; and
  - c) that the list be reviewed and updated on an annual basis.
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Understanding and attitudinal change can take place if learning opportunities are present and acceptable. This is especially true if the learning is to be presented in a respectful way, is based on historical fact and stresses the building of healthy relationships. All justice personnel, as well as others, must be educated so they can replace negative or racist views and feelings with positive ones.

Nevertheless, the most excellent training on antiracism can be blocked if it never goes beyond making a minimal impact. Training programs must have adequate resources and be incorporated into the culture of organizations and governments.

### **MEDIA PORTRAYAL OF RACE**

The Commission often heard concern about negative portrayal of First Nations and Metis people by print and electronic media. At the same time the Commission was aware of positive efforts being made. The formation of the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) is one. There are also public service announcements on radio and television and in print that spotlight achievements of First Nations and Metis people in our province. Nevertheless, there are accounts of criminal activities, substance abuse and other aspects, which create a poor image of First Nations and Metis people. This can influence their treatment negatively both in the justice system and among members of non-Aboriginal society.

Dr. Ronna Jevne mentions the role media play in justice:

**The media plays a hefty role in making hope, hopelessness, justice and injustice visible to the community. We are fed crime and punishment in 45 second clips. The offences of the majority of offenders are not newsworthy and we are left to generalize from the minority who receive media coverage about the larger population of offenders. We are often not informed of the contextual/cultural information. The counterbalance is that on occasion, it is the media that brings injustices, including social injustices, to the foreground.**

A speaker at a dialogue in the Rainbow Youth Centre in Regina stated that young people must be portrayed more positively as there seems to be fear among older people of youth. He said:

**It doesn't matter who the youth are, they're afraid of them because the media has made them out to be these bad people.**

The Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations stated:

**Media has a responsibility to put together a proper picture in a lot of these atrocities. I think they have a responsibility. When the Elder talks about what we have to do together, media needs to do their work also. They don't necessarily have to paint a black picture of what developments occur to First Nations people, First Nations leaders, but I think they have a responsibility to tell the story the way it is. A case in point, we had a serial killer in our community here, John Martin Crawford. Sure, the media did their job, but not good enough. We hear stories about Clifford Olsen and Paul Bernardo, but John Martin Crawford doesn't reach that level of notoriety ... and why is that? Complacency, or it is,**

**"Just Another Indian."** So journalists, you have a job to do too, to help us in actually bringing about realities that exist in First Nations areas. (Speaker, Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations presentation)

Muriel Stanley Venne, representing the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women, discussed systemic discrimination against Aboriginal women in the justice system and in society. Venne referred to information put forward by Constance Deiter-Buffalo that in December 1995 the RCMP said 470 Aboriginal women were reported missing. Venne felt the number of missing Aboriginal women was exceptionally high, and that there was a lack of effort by police to locate them due to their First Nations ancestry.

How the Saskatoon case of Darrell Night was presented in the media in early 2000 was also seen as a problem, and possibly racist. It was not until Night's allegations about police misconduct that media interest in the deaths of two other Aboriginal men, Lawrence Wegner and Rodney Naistus, was aroused, argue researchers Connie L. Braun and Storm Lee Sanders. They found bias in the reporting:

**In at least six articles, the suspended officers are presented in a favourable light. They are depicted as "veteran officers" with a clean record of service in the community. Several articles characterize their behaviour since their suspension as forthright, truthful (willing to participate in polygraph testing), and cooperative. In addition, a sympathetic portrayal is evident in the officer's appeal hearing regarding their pay while suspended.**

Although a handful of published articles highlight positive characteristics of Wegner, Naistus and Night, Braun and Sanders found that many more stories contained unfavourable images, which led to further victimization of the men and their families in the media:

**There are approximately 34 articles that portray the victims and Aboriginal peoples in a negative and/or derogatory manner ... In the first articles that reported the case, "drugs," "drug use," and "drug activity" are referred to 17 times as indicative of the victims' lifestyle. This gratuitous use of negative language dominates the new coverage and blurs the factual components of the case. (Braun & Sanders, 2001)**

A speaker at the Racism Roundtable gave a positive view of the media:

**Anyway, there was an article by a reporter, a really good one. She questioned everything in that whole situation. I thought, wow, how did you get it through your bosses, why did they even print this? She's obviously new. I hadn't seen her name before. Anyway, she questioned what really took**

place that night ... what motivated it, whether it really was such a beating, all of those things. The stuff that we all question when we see an article like that.

**Just because it's not bad news, doesn't mean it's not news.**  
(Speaker, Saskatchewan Youth in Care and Custody Network)

It is fair to say that the media have to make a profit and it seems the public is willing to buy more papers if stories are sensational. Nevertheless, steps have been taken by the media to address issues of racism. The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission supports this.

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To find out more about the Cultural Diversity Task Force go to its website at [www.cab-acr.ca/english/culturaldiversity/default.shtml](http://www.cab-acr.ca/english/culturaldiversity/default.shtml)

**The Commission will expect all conventional television licensees (at licensing or licence renewal), to make specific commitments to initiatives designed to ensure that they contribute to a system that more accurately reflects the presence of cultural and racial minorities and Aboriginal peoples in the communities they serve. Licensees are expected to ensure that the on-screen portrayal of all minority groups is accurate, fair and non-stereotypical.**

A task force has been created with representatives from the broadcasting industry and community groups. It will examine ways to improve the representation of Canada's cultural diversity on television.

This Commission, however, believes that the media in Saskatchewan could play a more positive role in combatting racism and benefit from publishing the First Nations and Metis perspective more often. It is also felt that the media could benefit from feedback from First Nations and Metis communities. The Commission also encourages the First Nations and Metis communities to continue to promote a positive image of their people by documenting and disseminating successes and contributions to the province such as that provided by Eagle Feather News.

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#### **Recommendation 7.3**

**This Commission recommends that media outlets in Saskatchewan create an external community editorial board, including First Nations and Metis representatives, to review stories in the media and provide feedback to the producers and editors of stories on the portrayal of First Nations and Metis people.**

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#### **EXAMPLES OF CURRENT RESPONSES TO RACISM**

Donna Scott, Chief Commissioner for the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, said in their 2002-2003 annual report:

**The condition of First Nations and Metis peoples has become arguably one of the most pressing human rights issues in our province. The increased urbanization of**

**Aboriginal peoples has resulted in widespread discrimination against them in the areas of public services, housing, education, justice and employment.**

It has developed a handbook, *The Rights Path*, which spells out human rights issues for urban Aboriginal people such as:

- Children's Rights.
- Education Rights.
- Family Rights.
- Employment Rights.
- Social Assistance Rights.
- Housing Rights.
- Health Care Rights.
- Criminal Justice Rights.
- Seniors' Rights.

Other efforts to remove racism from society are:

- The Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and the Canadian government established the Office of the Treaty Commissioner (OTC) in 1989. The OTC indicated that as of September 2003, its Speakers Bureau has talked to almost 28,000 Saskatchewan residents. It also has developed a curriculum on the history of the Treaties with a training program for teachers.
- The Institute for the Healing of Racism is a program that allows participants to grow by learning from each other about racism in a non-threatening environment.
- Community schools offer cultural supports and learning opportunities. Currently there are 98 community schools throughout the province funded by Saskatchewan Learning.
- The Aboriginal Elders and Community Workers in Schools Program supports and endorses Elder knowledge and traditional teachings within the school program.
- Native Studies 10, 20 and 30 curricula are established social sciences subjects offered in Saskatchewan schools.
- The National Parole Board, Prairie Region, conducts Elder-assisted parole hearings and also holds community-assisted hearings in First Nation and Metis communities.

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More information on *The Rights Path* can be requested from the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission offices Saskatoon – 1-800-667-9249 Regina – 1-800-667-8577

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You can contact the Institute for the Healing of Racism at:  
[http://www.bcca.org/rel/race\\_unity](http://www.bcca.org/rel/race_unity)

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Weyerhaeuser's program Planting Dreams makes a donation for each seedling planted to support community school programs, with special emphasis on pre-kindergarten initiatives.



- All federal prisons and most provincial correctional centres offer cultural programming with the help of Elders.
- The Nutana Collegiate Circle Helpers training project holds weekly talking circles to teach students the protocol for working with Elders.
- The Wanuskewin Heritage Park exhibits Aboriginal life in a positive light and is a testament to what can be accomplished when community and government work together.
- The Saskatchewan Coalition Against Racism is to be praised for its efforts in confronting racism in this province. This group exists on a shoestring budget and the passion of committed volunteers. It performs advocacy work on behalf of individuals and families facing racism.
- Working, Living & Playing Together is a project sponsored by SaskSport to eliminate racism in sport and recreation. The message from this committee is one of inclusiveness and full, non-discriminatory participation with boards, leaders and athletes.

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More information on Working, Living & Playing Together can be found at [http://www.Ersr.org/html\\_site/index2.html](http://www.Ersr.org/html_site/index2.html)

### **SASKATCHEWAN'S CENTENNIAL 2005**

As Saskatchewan nears 2005, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its entry into Confederation, it faces significant challenges. These include future labour shortages and fears of deepening divisions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents. (Scott, 2003)

The Commission agrees with Chief Commissioner Donna Scott that Saskatchewan's centennial is an opportunity to promote cultural awareness with the people of the province, which would highlight anti-racism and healthy relationship activities.

Saskatchewan has set the following goals for its centennial:

- Improve links between and among diverse communities in the province to increase understanding and integration.
- Provide the people of Saskatchewan with opportunities to focus on the future while acknowledging the past.
- Increase the pride of Saskatchewan's people in their province to increase:
  - Investment in the province
  - Recruitment of new business and new residents to the province
  - Retention of business and residents in the province
- Provide the people of Saskatchewan with a legacy from the centennial year.



A solution to racism proposed by the Metis Family & Community Justice Services Inc.:

Part of the solution to stop racism is not only to recognize racism in Saskatchewan but to embrace it with all its problems. Only then will it be transformed into a situation that can be changed. This transformation needs to come from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. An interchange of ideas on our differences and similarities needs to occur. Community forums that bring together a broad cross-section of society to speak openly about race relations, experiences and realities of all its members, help address the gap in information. This will add to cultural awareness and allow us to embrace our community mosaic. Another solution could include an interchange between communities through work placements and secondments within schools.

#### **Saskatchewan Centennial 2005 Grant Programs**

In April 2003, the Saskatchewan government launched a number of Saskatchewan centennial grant programs, funded through the Community Initiative Fund (CIF). The fund helps communities and organizations develop and support centennial projects and put in place community services focused on vulnerable children, youth and families. Two centennial grant programs are:

- CIF Celebrating Community Centennial Grant Program – funds are available to support unique projects which create new, lasting, bonds among people from diverse communities.
- CIF Aboriginal Participation Initiative – composed of programs for Aboriginal people in the North, and in urban communities, as well as funds for province-wide initiatives. The Aboriginal Participation Initiative contains preventive sport, culture and recreation programs and services for Aboriginal children and youth.

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Guidelines and application forms for Saskatchewan Centennial 2005 grant programs can be found at [www.saskatchewancentennial.com](http://www.saskatchewancentennial.com)

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#### **Recommendation 7.4**

This Commission recommends that the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation take a lead role and work with other relevant government departments, agencies and non-governmental organizations, along with representation from the First Nations and Metis communities, to coordinate and host an anti-racism conference to coincide with March 21, 2005, the annual day on which Saskatchewan supports the Elimination of Racism and the centenary of Saskatchewan. This conference should be offered by videoconference, wherever possible, to ensure northern communities can participate.

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#### **Recommendation 7.5**

**This Commission recommends that the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities and Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association jointly, along with representatives from the Government of Saskatchewan, Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, and Metis Nation – Saskatchewan, establish a committee to coordinate anti-racism activities in the year 2005.**

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Some additional measures the centennial office could include in its campaign are:

- Public service announcements depicting the unity and harmony of humankind, the difference between rude and acceptable behaviour, and myth-breaking around so-called First Nations and Metis privileges.
- Essay writing and poster making contests for youth on oneness, hope and anti-racism.
- Raising the profile of proactive First Nations and Metis members of the business and academic communities including front line justice/health workers.
- Promote activities between communities that celebrate culture, history and diversity.
- Co-sponsor conferences on issues like housing, policing, poverty, education, recreation and racism to build networks and community consensus on major issues.
- Thought provoking press releases and editorial briefings promoting International Day for the Elimination of Racism, National Aboriginal Day, Black History Month, Louis Riel Day and local Treaty days.
- Advertising and extending invitations to all citizens of Saskatchewan to First Nations and Metis celebrations.



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#### **Recommendation 7.6**

This Commission recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan design and implement a media campaign which includes the use of public service announcements as much as possible, by September 2005, with the assistance of First Nations and Metis people, to achieve the objectives below:

- Provide all citizens of Saskatchewan an opportunity to reflect on the contributions of First Nations and Metis peoples over the last 100 years of this province's development;
- Establish a broad-based understanding of how to build and maintain constructive and positive relationships among First Nations, Metis and non-Aboriginal people; and
- Assist individuals and communities to identify and eliminate inequities and barriers based on racial and cultural differences.

**This public education strategy must go beyond 2005 and must include an evaluation component.**

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In addition to celebrating the past, the future of Saskatchewan must be considered. Increasing the number of immigrants to Saskatchewan is a result of a significant campaign by the provincial government. With the different nationalities arriving, the centennial is an opportunity to educate people about xenophobia.

In a document by the International Labour Office of the United Nations, *International Migration, Racism, Discrimination and Xenophobia*, countries were encouraged to put in place a plan of action. Such plan should promote respect for diversity and multiculturalism and combat negative stereotypes and misinformation regarding those from other lands. The Commission feels this matter should be included in the education campaign for Saskatchewan's centennial and beyond.

To minimize cost, secondments from the provincial and federal governments, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and Metis Nation - Saskatchewan could be assigned to work with a coordinator on a three to five year program to extend the work of the strategy. Funding for cost incentive projects and programs might be secured from government programs and from the business community in the form of cash or in-kind donations.

#### **CONCLUSION**

In all its forms, racism is heavy-handed and high-handed. It involves compulsion, harassment and coercion. It hounds and torments. It has led to genocide, environmental destruction, slavery and theft. It causes anguish and anxiety in its victims. Racism is harsh, ruthless and merciless. Whether individuals or an entire people, the oppressed are weighed down physically and depressed mentally. Racism is unjust.

*Xenophobia* is the fear or hatred of strangers, people from other countries or of anything that is strange or foreign.

According to the submission by the Metis Family & Community Justice Services Inc., recognizing racism and taking responsibility for it is key to beginning the healing of First Nations and Metis people and the justice system in Saskatchewan. The report further stated that allegations of racism must be validated. To ignore them would be an injustice to all community members who have told stories of racism to the Commission.

To create healthy relationships with everyone, regardless of ancestry, Canadian citizens must commit to eliminating racism. Many commissions, including this one, have identified racism as the critical cancer that must be removed if the relationship between the justice system and First Nations and Metis people is to be rebuilt.

To create healthy relationships with others of different ancestry, racism must be understood as a monster to be attacked, reduced and, ideally, eliminated. Altering societal attitudes takes, at minimum, a generation. It is an ongoing task. Men and women, young and old, who have helped, over time, to make this changing path of life a little easier, must be praised. Compared to some years ago, one cannot help but acknowledge the greater acceptance of First Nations and Metis people and their cultures by the mainstream and governments. Because lives continue to be lost to the justice system, we cannot be complacent.

Coordinated action, shared goals and objectives, and a variety of innovative tools and strategies are needed to make this province a world leader in the creation of safe, healthy, just and prosperous communities. Given a sincere desire to leave a *Legacy of Hope* for the future, especially for the children and youth, it is not enough to simply state it once. The *Legacy* must be renewed from time to time to continue the progress.

**It is important to speak out against racist acts or comments. Each of us has an important role to play in this struggle [against racism]. The keys to eliminating racism are education, courage and action. I encourage you to think about this pressing problem and to become part of the solution we should all be seeking. (*Racism: Speak Out To Stop It*, a handout by CAW)**

We must find ways to lift each other up – “*opintowin*.”

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#### **Recommendation 7.7**

**This Commission recommends that every person, and especially those in leadership positions, make a commitment to eliminate racism where it is present in day-to-day life.**

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