

**The Parity Process: Seeking Justice for Alberta On-Reserve
Women's Emergency and Second Stage Shelters**

February 2006

Aboriginal Policy and Research Conference

Presented by:

**Dorothy Sam, Director, Eagle's Nest Stoney Family Shelter
Jan Reimer, Provincial Coordinator, Alberta Council of Women's Shelters**

Prepared for the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters

by Kate Woodman, PhD

ACWS Research and Evaluation Specialist

I found a community that understood my pain and shame. It was a community willing to take me in, and teach me about my culture and heritage. I was accepted. I even got into an Aboriginal training program, partnered with a community college, and I got a diploma.

Kim Ghostkeeper, *Standing Together* (181)

Background:

The Alberta Council for Women's Shelters serves as a collective voice for the 41 women's shelters in Alberta.¹ Five of these shelters are located on-reserve; there are 44 First Nations reserves in Alberta. Together, through service provision, public awareness, research and policy interventions, we address the terrible realities of Alberta's domestic violence environment. Once again, Alberta leads provincially in domestic assault, homicide-suicide, stalking and is second in domestic homicide.² Further, the RCMP 2005 annual statistics media release indicates that of the 49 homicides registered in Alberta jurisdictions, 31 are identified as domestic violence related.

In keeping with the larger Canadian reality, Alberta's Aboriginal women and children are at great risk in situations of domestic violence. According to self-reported intimate partner violence, Aboriginal people are three times more likely to be victims than are non-Aboriginals.³ Additionally, the violence experience by Aboriginal women is more serious and more life threatening, with greater numbers of Aboriginal women fearing for their lives. It is alarming to note that a 1989 Ontario study identifies that eight out of ten Aboriginal women have been abused.⁴ Elsewhere, Aboriginal women with status, between the ages of 25 and 44, are "five times more likely than other women of the same age to die as the result of violence."⁵

Alberta has the third largest aboriginal population in Canada and conservative estimates suggest that 16,000 aboriginal women living in this province have been victims of domestic violence.⁶ Nearly half of all women and children admitted to emergency shelters in Alberta self-identify as Aboriginal.

¹ This includes emergency, second stage and seniors shelters.

² Rates are taken from two sources, ACWS data gathering and Statistics Canada, *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile, 2005* (see pages 15, 35, 57 and 63 for Alberta stats).

³ Ibid, 8.

⁴ Emma D. LaRocque, "Violence in Aboriginal Communities," *Violence Against Women: New Canadian Perspectives*, ed. K. McKenna and J. Larkin, Toronto: Inanna Publications (2002), 147. LaRocque notes: "While this study focused on northern Ontario, it is statistically representative of other communities across the country. There is growing documentation that Aboriginal female adults, adolescents, and children are experiencing abuse, battering and/or sexual assault to a staggering degree."

⁵ Aboriginal Women: A Demographic, Social and Economic Profile, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Summer, 1996. Also cited in Amnesty International's report, "Stolen Sisters: a human rights response to discrimination and violence against indigenous women in Canada," (October 2004), 23.

⁶ Karen Kleiss, "Horrorified kids saw mother knifed in heart," *Edmonton Journal* (21 October 2005).

As noted, all five on-reserve shelters in Alberta are part of the ACWS membership body. ACWS has dedicated elected positions on the volunteer governing board for First Nations shelters, in order to bring forward the perspective and needs of First Nations in Alberta. Likewise, the ACWS Aboriginal Advisory Board Committee was formed in order to give guidance to ACWS and non-Aboriginal member shelters on meeting the needs of the Aboriginal community and to provide a voice for their concerns. This committee has very successfully worked with urban and rural shelters, assisting them with integrating culturally sensitive practices and services for Aboriginal women and their dependants. At the 2005 AGM, the decision was taken to form an On-reserve Shelter board committee that is directly mandated to foreground the work and needs of this group.

Of the five on-reserve shelters, only two of them receive provincial fees-for-service for women in shelter not normally resident on-reserve. All five receive Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) funding, through the *Family Violence Prevention Program for First Nations*. Together, the five shelters provide a total of 65 emergency beds. During the 2004 – 2005 fiscal year, these shelters served over four hundred abused women, and over seven hundred dependants, representing 10% of the provincial total. Two of these shelters originally operate small second stage programs; however, one shelter had to close its program last year, due to lack of funding.

Of the two on-reserve shelters that receive provincial funds, contractual obligations require them to submit hard copy shelter demographic data to the Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying office (PFVB) of the provincial government's Alberta Children's Services (ACS). This data is entered into the HOMES database, the data collection system used by ACWS member shelters and various programs funded by ACS.⁷ The remaining three shelters are currently recording their demographic information in hard copy only and submit numbers to ACWS at calendar and fiscal year ends. However, the differences between the two forms of data must be noted: those shelters on HOMES complete substantially more fields, producing comprehensive shelter profiles, than those still using pen and paper.

The issue of data collection is a key component of ACWS work with on-reserve shelters. It is an especially potent issue for First Nations service providers. The chronic lack of valid and reliable data is a serious barrier to policy and program development and impedes social transformation on-reserve. Information is empowering and ACWS is fully committed to assisting on-reserve shelters in registering with the HOMES database. The five shelters all participated in an

⁷ The HOMES database system is owned and managed by the Canadian Outcomes Research Institute (www.HMRP.net/CanadianOutcomesInstitute). Currently, ACWS has agreements with all of the Alberta shelters registered with HOMES, for the purpose of accessing their data to generate provincial analysis on domestic violence in Alberta.

October 2005 two-day HOMES training ACWS organized for its membership and are now ready to implement the program. It is hoped that by 1 April 2006, the two provincially contracted on-reserve shelters will be using the database independently and no longer relying on the provincial government. This is an important change, as the government only collects and inputs PFVB required fields. For instance, turnaway data, which PFVB is not currently collecting, as well as several questions on police services provided and the Exit Survey, are all vitally important statistics disclosing the family violence situation and shelter capacity on-reserve. Access to this data, as either sectoral or integrated into provincial summaries, is valuable indeed.

The goal at ACWS is to have the other three on-reserve shelters HOMES compatible within the next year. All five shelters are already online and using computers for email and various administrative functions. The impediments to their HOMES use are the registration and high speed internet access fees. But the benefits are self-evident. Once all five have HOMES access it will be possible to profile accurately the situation of their work and identify priority areas for intervention. The information collected will be comprehensive and a national best practice indicator. With it, ACWS will be able to inform efforts to educate and prevent violence against women on-reserve in Canada. Finally, it will substantially increase shelter data security as information will be stored on a highly secure server located off-site.

Along with data collection development, ACWS works together with the five on-reserve shelters and the On-reserve Shelter board committee on a variety of other capacity building initiatives, as well as on-going member support. For instance, *Pathways: a transportation program* (Alberta government funded) is a one year intervention initiative managed collaboratively between ACWS and the on-reserve shelter directors. *Pathways* is made up of three components. The first provides emergency transport funds to on-reserve women and their dependants, fleeing family violence. The research component includes an environment scan to identify jurisdictional barriers. This analysis will assist the development of policy options to assist on-reserve shelters in their protection and preventative work in family violence. In this component, ACWS is also tracking the misapplication of Alberta Works policy for Aboriginal women when they leave reserve, fleeing family violence. The third component is skills based and to date all five on-reserve shelters have been trained in Dr. Jacqueline Campbell's *Danger Assessment* tool.⁸ This risk assessment method enables shelter staff to safety plan with women in shelter and assesses with them their need to relocate. ACWS has also organized an upcoming roundtable for the shelter directors with Alberta Works and INAC officials to increase awareness of financial support mechanisms currently available and provide a context for networking between the on-reserve service providers and government stakeholders.

⁸ For more information on this lethality and risk assessment tool, see www.dangerassessment.com.

ACWS has worked collaboratively with Portage College in establishing a crisis intervention worker program that is provided through distance learning. Through an ACWS bursary provision (funded by IODE), on-reserve shelter staff has access to this education and a number of them are now students in the program. The program goes far in standardizing education and capacity for front line shelter workers. Further, because of the distance learning format, barriers to increasing education for remote locations have been overcome.

Additionally, ACWS has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the RCMP and Children's Services in Alberta which provides a framework for local working agreements between member shelters and their local detachments. For on-reserve shelters this process holds great promise in improving relationships to enhance police response and clarifying jurisdictional issues between on-reserve shelters, band police and the RCMP. One tragic example highlighting the need for monitoring and improving these agreements to ensure the safety of Aboriginal women is the recent death of Brenda Moreside (February 2005) in northern Alberta. The RCMP chose not to respond to her 911 call in which she said her former partner was breaking into the home and would kill her. The RCMP response to this indicated the perpetrator (a convicted murderer) could break into his own house, if he wanted to. Ms. Moreside was murdered within two hours of the call; the RCMP investigated the scene two weeks later. ACWS analysis revealed that 25% of all Alberta calls *not responded to by police* are located in this northern command area. We will be monitoring this situation closely to see if this pattern continues and if the RCMP implementation of promised policy changes is effective.

In terms of ACWS research and on-reserve shelters, under the initiative of the ACWS Aboriginal Advisory Committee several objectives were identified. This committee designed a research framework to address a pressing problem: the financial discrepancy between provincial and INAC funded shelters. The research methodology included data collection through interviews with on-reserve shelter management; surveys of comparably sized shelters receiving core provincial funding; budgets of on-reserve shelters receiving INAC funding; and a comparative review against the framework of the ACWS recommended funding and staffing model. This work resulted in *A Comparative Review and Evaluation: seeking parity between on-reserve shelters and shelters funded by the Province of Alberta*.⁹ This brief became the basis for an advocacy campaign and is central to this current analysis.

The parity gap:

ACWS's policy research identified an unacceptable gap in funding provision to on-reserve shelters. The analysis covered matters of staffing, administration, operations, facility and maintenance costs and the results are alarming. During the interviews conducted with the on-reserve shelter directors, the key observation concerned funding; this is the primary issue facing these shelters and it undercuts their sustainability.

⁹ The lead researcher for this initial report was Tasha Novick (ACWS), produced February 2005.

The data supports this: there is a 50% difference in funding levels between provincially supported and on-reserve shelters. On-reserve shelters receive on average \$200,000 less in annual operating funds than provincially funded shelters of the same size and this difference totals to one million dollars per year (see Table 1). In concrete terms, this means that an on-reserve crisis counselor earns about \$23,000/year as compared to the nearly \$38,000/year of the provincial counterpart (see Table 2). The gap identified in the February 2005 report has widened due to: inflation; contract adjustments for provincially funded shelters; the addition of one outreach position; and most recently, the provision of early learning resources for all off-reserve shelters (March 2006). *The difference for the outreach worker and associated costs is \$54,000/year.* Since the report no additional funding has been provided to on-reserve shelters by INAC; in fact, there have been no increases from INAC since 1994.¹⁰

Table 1: Funding Comparison

On Reserve Shelter	INAC Funding	Province of Alberta Funding	Disparity (Feb 2005)	Disparity (Feb 2006)
A*	165,460	398,903	234,443	288,443
B	261,292	398,903	137,611	191,611
C	262,000	404,142	142,142	196,142
D	282,000	484,726	202,726	256,726
E	308,000	640,686	332,686	386,686
Total required to address disparity			\$1,049,608	\$1,319,608

* Provincially Contracted shelters start at 9 beds.

Table 2: Salary comparison

Position	INAC Funded	Province Funded
Executive Director	40,900	61,528
Administrative Assistant	25,125	32,975
Crisis Counselor	22,623	37,876

The funding crisis that ACWS research has clarified is consistent with similar findings in other sectors. The Amnesty International report, *Stolen sisters: a human rights response to discrimination and violence against Indigenous women in Canada*, identifies the following: “. . . on average Indigenous run child services programs receive 22 percent less funding than provincially-funded counterparts serving predominantly non-Indigenous communities. The study also found that there was not enough emphasis on funding early intervention programs so that children’s welfare and safety could be assured without removal from their families.”¹¹ The fact is that this chronic funding failure destabilizes urgently needed programs. The federal government has failed to develop strategic, multi-year financial support systems that are administered efficiently and effectively; this is not longer tenable.

¹⁰ See INAC, Departmental Audit Evaluation and Review, “Evaluation of the Family Violence Prevention Program for First Nations,” assisted by Rosemary Trehearne and Associates (June 2005).

¹¹ The Amnesty International report is commenting upon the *First Nations Child and Family Services Joint National Policy Review*, (June 2000).

Violence against women is not only a moral, legal and health issue, but, in light of the investments needed for its alleviation and remedy, it is a costly economic issue. The reduced capacity for work of those affected by violence means still lower wages and increased vulnerability to poverty. Domestic violence creates an enormous social burden to impoverished peoples living on reserves in Canada. Yet, as a result of the impact of family violence on communities, more medical and community support services, police and judicial services and low-cost housing are required, if the goal is to reduce the impact of violence and care for the victims. In spite of this, federal and provincial government policy provides fewer resources to First Nations communities to prevent and resolve this issue.

Ironically, the severity of the problem has proved empowering. ACWS and the on-reserve shelter directors engaged the Chiefs of Treaties 6, 7 and 8 and garnered their support. During their Special Assembly on Health (March 2005), they resolved unanimously to support ACWS's intervention work on behalf of member on-reserve shelters. As participants in the policy campaign, the Chiefs have done much to bring public awareness to the inequity and their support is on-going. This kind of community collaborative response strengthens the process by including key stakeholders and increases the efficacy of the campaign. It is also an example of best practice, in terms of a provincial council, ACWS, working with First Nations Chiefs.

In this context, it should be noted what services on-reserve shelters provide to women and their dependants fleeing family violence. First, shelters provide emotional support and safety, the key concerns of family violence victims.¹² Additional priorities are to provide information about the violence being experienced and safety planning. Because the on-reserve shelter staff are certified in Danger Assessment, they are able to assess the severity and potential lethality of the woman's situation and enable her to keep herself and her dependants safe. Shelter staff also assist the woman with the bureaucracy of engaging police, health, education (for children), financial aid, housing and other community demands she faces. The complexity of this issue must be foregrounded. On-reserve shelter staff is required to be familiar with the policies and procedures of various band services and their interface with provincial services. As well, they need to know the policies and procedures of provincially funded programs.

While resident in shelter, dependants may need to be connected to local education services, or, alternatively, be tutored by shelter staff during their stay. Unfortunately, neither INAC nor Health Canada have recognized the significant needs of children exposed to family violence within the shelter funding approach. Indeed, in the recently released Federal Early Learning and Child Care Initiative, not one penny was provided to on-reserve shelters to assist them with the enormous child care requirements they face.

Alarming, the security risks for on-reserve shelters are also potentially greater than other emergency shelters. In INAC's review of the *Family Violence*

¹² Leslie Tutty, "Effective Practices in Sheltering Women Leaving Violence in Intimate Relationship: Phase II," draft report prepared for YWCA Canada (January 2006), 49.

Prevention Program for First Nations, negative impacts of the *Program* have been acknowledged. Point three reads: “the hostility of some men, including political leaders, towards the shelter and prevention activities, this hostility often reflected in threats of harm to the shelter and project staff [sic].”¹³ This INAC evaluation report was completed in 2001 and in spite of this identification of risks to on-reserve shelter staff, no action has been taken. In fact, the report was not even released publicly until four years after its completion. This is simply despicable.

The needs of women and their dependants in residence are numerous, as are those of women being served by the shelter’s outreach program. On-reserve shelters are providing comprehensive services on reduced budgets and without a system that ensures sustainability or security. Women shelter workers perseverance in continuing to provide their much needed services, in spite of all these barriers, is a testament to their courage, tenacity and skill.

INAC funding framework:

INAC’s *Family Violence Prevention Program for First Nations* is one component of their Social Policy and Programs Branch.¹⁴ Announced in 1988, one purpose of the initiative was to provide women and their dependants with shelters and projects to assist them. INAC identifies the *Program’s* objective: “to financially assist First Nations in establishing and operating shelters designed to arrest and offset high levels of family violence among populations living on reserve. The program encourages First Nations to actively participate in addressing the issues of family violence and to design and deliver their own initiatives to alleviate the problem.” In 1999, INAC received \$12 million for *Program* funding. Since 1995, INAC continued to support initiatives combating family violence, using its own budgeted funds. According to one source, INAC currently spends \$17 million annually on its *Program* for First Nations across Canada. Of that sum, \$7 million is allocated to prevention programs, with \$850,000 allocated for Alberta.¹⁵ An additional \$10 million goes to operate 35 shelters across Canada, providing 506 beds.

INAC approved the development of on-reserve shelters in two phases: the early 1990’s and 1997-1998. This represents quite a lag behind non-reserve communities, where the first shelters were opened in 1973; the numbers of shelters continue to grow across Canada and currently there are 543 providing residential services.¹⁶ The 1994 INAC *Program* directive does not include funding for any new on-reserve shelters; growth has been capped at 35. Concerning second stage housing, INAC’s contribution is only social assistance, including rental payments for apartment residents. This fact discloses INAC’s

¹³ INAC, 21.

¹⁴ This INAC Branch also includes Child and Family Services, Social Assistance, Assisted Living, National Child Benefit Program and other services. The INAC *Program* is a part of the larger federal government *Family Violence Initiative*.

¹⁵ Karen Kleiss, “Fleeing to shelter on reserve was first step for woman trying to escape violence,” *Edmonton Journal* (22 October 2005).

¹⁶ Data from the latest Transition House survey (2003/2004), conducted by Statistics Canada.

lack of strategic investment into family violence prevention and the safety of women and children on-reserve.

Yet, concerning the need for shelters on-reserve, the INAC evaluation report states: "Not only is there a clear need for family violence services for First Nation people, there are also several strong arguments for the provision of these services *in and by* First Nation communities. The higher incidence and severity of family violence in First Nation communities suggests a need for a more intensive response than that which is likely available from non-Aboriginal services."¹⁷

This is a welcome assessment. But while the INAC *Program* remains under perennial review, the province of Alberta has added 50 additional emergency shelter beds to core funded shelters (2005). Clearly, the facts speak to an INAC *Program* that fails to provide adequately and that was established without the transparent checks and balances of a results based system. The consequence is a *Program without*: a funding formula; long-term funding agreements; national guidelines; follow through on identified policy directives (such as inflation increases); a consistent data gathering system; research, documents, communication; special provisions for dependants in shelter (such as Children Exposed to Family Violence training for staff); outreach or public education; or, a family violence prevention strategy.

The report concludes that, as one point, "the funding allocation methodology for family violence projects needs to be reassessed" (#3). As well, the two resulting recommendations cover information sharing, leadership, document creation AND the design of "appropriate indicators to measure program results." All of this is needed and required for any well designed program, if the goal is efficiency and effectiveness. However, what is missing is the call for an adequate funding formula that takes into account the realities on-reserve shelters face (such as isolation) and benchmarks against which any new program might be evaluated. As a result, there is no way of knowing when the next phase may begin and when the funding crisis of on-reserve women's emergency and second stage shelters will come to an end. In his letter to ACWS addressing the funding inequity, former Minister of Indian Affairs Andy Scott indicated that the *Program* would be reviewed *and renewed* by April 2006. As of the writing of this research (February 2006), there has been no public discussion or input process to inform the review, other than the release of their weak and sometimes inaccurate audit evaluation cited above.

The consequences of this kind of bureaucratic system are felt concretely at the five on-reserve shelters in Alberta and across Canada. Currently in Alberta, on-reserve shelter staff provide food to the shelter residents from their own homes; executive directors take cuts in pay in order to cover staff salaries; shelters close down second stage beds; women and their dependants in crisis are turned away because the shelter is full; shelter staff pay their own way to trainings provided in Edmonton; trained staff leave to take up work elsewhere; modern systems of data collection are beyond reach; and so on. In an already stressful sector, the

¹⁷ Ibid, 9.

pressure arising from lack of funds places an unreasonable burden upon the shelter staff and affects service provision to the women and dependents resident. In short, the situation is untenable. When observed from the vantage point of Canada's international commitments, the situation facing on-reserve shelters is in violation of those agreements.

Canada's global commitments:

Canada's international reputation is bleak concerning the treatment of Indigenous peoples. In November 2005 the UN's Human Rights Committee released a scathing report, judging Canada's compliance with the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR)* as inadequate and noting that many of the recommendations made in Committee's 1999 remain unimplemented.¹⁸ The focus of the new report is Canada's treatment of Aboriginal peoples, especially Aboriginal women and women prisoners. The Committee observes Canada's failure to protect Aboriginal women's human rights in terms of the discrimination practiced in matters of reserve membership and matrimonial real property on reserve lands. It notes the unacceptable numbers of Aboriginal women dying violent deaths and the failure of police services to "recognize and respond adequately to the specific threats faced by [Aboriginal women]" (sec. 23). It comments upon the lack of statistical data on violence against Aboriginal women. It observes the deleterious effect of reduced social funding, especially in terms of the impact upon Aboriginal peoples.

Others have frequently observed that similar notices have been made against Canada concerning the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). But perhaps the most troubling aspect of this current report is of Canada subversion of the democratic process when the Committee states "[its] observations have not been distributed to members of Parliament and that no parliamentary committee has held hearings on issues arising from the Committee's observations" (sec. 6). The Human Rights Committee further observes that Canada needs to establish procedures to ensure the implementation of the *CCPR*. Without parliamentary debate and discussion, or the establishment of benchmarks against which the federal government can be held accountable, the capacity for public involvement is severely undercut. Clearly, these observations on Canada's human rights performance under *CCPR*, as they concern Aboriginal people, are directly tied to the issue of on-reserve shelter infrastructure funding. Further, international acceptance of violence against women as a human rights issue is well established.

In keeping with the above, it is important to note that Canada has still not ratified the *Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women*. This treaty provides a framework to strengthen legal and institutional remedies; Canadian ratification would positively impact the situation of Indigenous women in Canada, with respect to matters of family violence. This treaty includes the provision of specialized shelters and social

¹⁸ United Nations, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Human Rights Committee, "Concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee: Canada," *CCPR/C/CAN/CO/5*, (November 2005).

services for the victims of violence; education and training programs; gathering statistics and other relevant information. This treaty goes beyond simple state condemnation of violence against women and creates obligations for concrete interventions. Public pressure must be brought to bear on the Government of Canada to ratify this treaty. This is a focus for Amnesty International's work in Canada and collaboration of the women's emergency shelter community with this advocacy would increase the potential for results.¹⁹

Attending to Canada's international commitments provides another avenue of intervention and policy development for family violence and on-reserve shelter realities. Canada must be held accountable for the implementation of these agreements *in Canada*.

Seeking collaboration in the parity process:

Along with finding a voice within the Canadian government system, on-reserve shelters have faced obstacles with the Assembly of First Nations (AFN). Quoted in an *Edmonton Journal* article, AFN representatives told the *Journal's* editorial board, "they didn't want to 'cherry pick' an issue such a domestic violence, just because it's 'sexy'."²⁰ The article goes on to quote Phil Fontaine, the national chief, as saying that shelter operations are beyond the scope of the AFN, which exists simply to set national policy frameworks.

ACWS wrote to Chief Fontaine immediately following the *Edmonton Journal* article, to raise concerns about this approach to family violence and the situation being faced by on-reserve shelters. ACWS noted that the comments quoted, occurring as they did while Alberta hosted the World Conference on the Prevention of Family Violence (WCPFV, Banff, Alberta), were especially unacceptable. International experts identify intimate partner violence as a pandemic; it is offensive for Canadian officials to name the same matter as "sexy."

Chief Fontaine replied to our letter 7 February 2006. He noted the AFN's active role in lobbying for core funding for the Okanagan Nation Transition Emergency House (Penticton, BC). He challenged Simon's article, stating "It erroneously portrays AFN leadership as lacking in passion and moral leadership on critical issues relating to women and family violence."²¹ Most importantly, he states he is prepared to work with ACWS to ensure Canada fulfills its commitments under CEDAW and to participate in advocacy for all on-reserve shelters in Canada. ACWS welcomes this offer of assistance and hopes that together achievements will be made to bring parity to all on-reserve shelters across the country.

In consonance with the above, it is important to note that the Native Women's Shelter Network Committee of the Quebec Native Women's Association's has

¹⁹ Amnesty International, "Stolen Sisters," 5.

²⁰ Paula Simons, "Aboriginal victims need power to break free," *Edmonton Journal* (25 October 2005).

²¹ Phil Fontaine, National Chief, "Letter to ACWS," unpublished, 7 February 2006.

prepared a "Statement of the Condition of Aboriginal Women's Shelters."²² This fact sheet sets out the lack of parity between INAC and provincially funded shelters in Quebec. The results are in agreement with the ACWS report on Alberta on-reserve shelters. The Quebec report delineates that the 5 Aboriginal women's shelters receive a base funding of \$150,000 each, in comparison with the \$250,000/shelter of comparable provincially funded counterparts. It also notes that recent increases to provincial shelters in Quebec were instituted, whereas the five Aboriginal women's shelters received no similar benefits. As a result of these findings, the Quebec Native Women's Association has developed an advocacy campaign to achieve parity between Quebec's Aboriginal shelters and their provincial counterparts. The report identifies a funding gap of \$200,000/shelter that the organization seeks to resolve.

Similar patterns emerge in the findings of the Provincial Association Against Family Violence for Newfoundland and Labrador.²³ Although this report does not identify parity issues, it states: "The literature makes it increasingly clear that services for abused women and their children [in Labrador communities] can be effective only when skilled, experienced, motivated women are provided with the resources they need to take leadership of programs. This point is stressed not only by women's groups in this province, but also by shelter coordinators and Transition House Associations across the country. For some time . . . groups struggle to secure funds to do the most basic work to respond to women's needs in Labrador."²⁴

The first recommendation in this report concerns financial commitment and the third recommends the reopening of the Hopedale shelter [Labrador], which was closed for lack of basic operating funds. Labrador's Aboriginal and northern communities, remote and neglected, lack sufficient resources to provide sustainable support to organizations working in the family violence sector. They face an immediate need for emergency transportation and shelter services to provide women and their dependants, who are fleeing family violence, with the preventative and remedial care they need.

ACWS seeks justice:

Since the development of the initial ACWS parity report (February 2005), an advocacy process has been developed and is moving forward. First steps included letters to former Minister Andy Scott (INAC), Deputy-Prime Minister Anne McLellan and Prime Minister Paul Martin. These letters were followed-up with meetings with Anne McLellan and INAC representatives. Unfortunately, very little effective response was garnered from this communication. In June 2005 ACWS organized a media campaign to build public awareness and attract government attention. Subsequently, ACWS received letters from Scott and

²² Sheila Swasson. "Statement of the Condition of Aboriginal Women's Shelters." Unpublished fact sheet prepared with the Quebec Native Women's Association and the Native Women's Shelter Network Committee, (2005).

²³ Kimberly Dreddy, senior writer, "Moving Toward Safety: Responding to Family violence in Aboriginal and Northern Communities of Labrador," Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Association Against Family Violence Report, 2002.

²⁴ Ibid, 16.

McLellan promising intervention. Additional media conferences were supported by extensive coverage of on-reserve domestic violence in the *Edmonton Journal*. These reports, occurring at the same time as the WCPFV (October 2005), increased awareness and support for the parity process.

ACWS has extended the research and contacts, presenting results at key policy forums for family violence, both public and private. These include discussions at an ACWS organized ad hoc national shelter meeting at the WCPFV, a formal presentation at the University of Manitoba's RESOLVE Research Day on Family Violence and at the Aboriginal Policy and Research Conference (Ottawa). Letters to editors, forthcoming letters to the newly formed Conservative federal government, meetings with key government officials at all levels—all of this continued work is being undertaken in order to resolve the terrible funding injustices endured by on-reserve shelters in Alberta and across Canada.

Conclusion:

On-reserve shelters are facing enormous disparity in contrast to their provincially funded counterparts. A simple review of contrasted funding reveals that ACWS member shelters funded by the Federal Government receive hundreds of thousands of dollars less per annum than shelters of an equal size funded by the Province of Alberta. The feedback from respondents in this study only touches upon the barriers already faced by the staff and clients of on-reserve women's shelters. Geographical isolation, inadequate housing, minimal access to external resources and the ongoing intergenerational abuse are oppressions faced by on-reserve shelters on a daily basis. The fact that these shelters are able to provide service despite these oppressions and the gross funding disparity is a testament to their amazing commitment to ending family violence.

In light of the above, parity is only a simple first step. What is needed in Alberta and across Canada, for on-reserve shelters, is an adequately funded shelter program. This would provide for a continuum of services to prevent, intervene and follow-up with programs designed to meet the very complex needs on-reserve. It is further our contention that issues of gang violence, poverty, substance abuse, and HIV/AIDS are rooted in the gender issues that result in violence against women. Any initiative that ignores this reality is doomed to fail.

Recommendations:

- *Immediate action* must be taken to not only ensure parity but move beyond this with a funding framework based on best practice that provides the continuum of services required to resolve family violence.
- *Appropriate assistance* for the women working in shelter, including access to travel and funding for professional development; programs for vicarious trauma; security provisions; and, support for networking with band councils, government officials, police and other community services to build community collaborative response to family violence.
- *Address the policy vacuums* that exist between off and on-reserve supports through the development of shelter protocols.

There is a death here almost every week. It is really hard on the staff because they support these women. When that happens, we come into the circle, we pray, and then we make one more black mark on our list of women who have been in shelter. There are so many black marks on that list.

Alberta on-reserve shelter director

Sources:

Alberta Council of Women's Shelters. "A Comparative Review and Evaluation: Seeking Parity Between On-Reserve Shelters and Shelters Funded by the Province of Alberta." Tasha Novick, lead researcher. (February 2005).

Amnesty International Report. "Stolen Sisters: A Human Rights Response to Discrimination and Violence Against Indigenous Women in Canada." (October 2004).

Campbell, Jacqueline. "Intimate Partner Violence Risk Assessment: Implications for Women's Safety." Multi City Intimate Partner Femicide Study. (2004).
www.dangerassessment.com.

Dreaddy, Kimberly. "Moving Toward Safety: Responding to Family Violence in Aboriginal and Northern Communities in Labrador." Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Association Against Family Violence Report. (2002).

Fontaine, Phil. National Chief. "Letter to ACWS." Unpublished letter. (February 2006).

Goyette, Linda, ed. *Standing Together: women speak out about violence and abuse*. Brindle and Glass (Edmonton: 2005).

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. Departmental Audit Evaluation and Review. "Evaluation of the Family Violence Prevention Program for First Nations." Assisted by: Rosemary Trehearne and Associates. (June, 2004).

Kleiss, Karen. "Horrorified kids saw mother knifed in heart." *On-Reserve Shelter Four Part Series. Edmonton Journal*. (21 October 2005).

Kleiss, Karen. "Fleeing to shelter on reserve was first step for woman trying to escape violence." *On-Reserve Shelter Four Part Series. Edmonton Journal*. (22 October 2005).

Kleiss, Karen. "Immersion in violence transforms the abused to abusers: Uncovering the domestic violence epidemic in aboriginal communities." *On-Reserve Shelter Four Part Series. Edmonton Journal*. (23 October 2005).

Kleiss, Karen. "Children bear invisible scars of violence: Abusive households are at risk of raising angry, anti-social kids who grow up to have abusive adult relationships." *On-Reserve Shelter Four Part Series. Edmonton Journal*. (24 October 2005).

Languedoc, Sue and Jason Brown. "Reducing Family Violence in Canadian Aboriginal communities: Development of a Comprehensive Prevention Program." Aboriginal Consulting Services Association of Alberta Report. (April 2003).
LaRocque, Emma D. "Violence in Aboriginal Communities." *Violence Against Women: New Canadian Perspectives*. Katherine McKenna and June Larkin, eds. Inanna Publications and Education (Toronto: 2002). 147 – 162.

Martz, Diane J and Deborah Saraurer. "Domestic Violence and the Experiences of Rural Women in East Central Saskatchewan." *Violence Against Women: New Canadian Perspectives*. Katherine McKenna and June Larkin, eds. Inanna Publications and Education (Toronto: 2002). 163 – 196.

McKenna, Katherine and June Larkin, eds. *Violence Against Women: New Canadian Perspectives*. Inanna Publications and Education (Toronto: 2002).

Neilson, Carrie and Karen Walroth. "Domestic and Sexual Violence in the Aboriginal Community." Strengthening the Spirit Report. Unpublished. (no date).

Sheehy, Elizabeth. "Legal Responses to Violence Against Women in Canada." *Violence Against Women: New Canadian Perspectives*. Katherine McKenna and June Larkin, eds. Inanna Publications and Education (Toronto: 2002). 473 – 492.

Simons, Paula. "Aboriginal victims need power to break free: Shelters on reserve woefully under funded." *Edmonton Journal*. (25 October 2005).

Swasson, Sheila. "Statement of the Condition of Aboriginal Women's Shelters." Unpublished fact sheet prepared with the Quebec Native Women's Association and the Native Women's Shelter Network Committee. (2005).

Statistics Canada. *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile*. Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. (2005).

Tutty, Leslie M. "Effective Practices in Sheltering Women Leaving Violence in Intimate Relationship: Phase II." YWCA Canada draft final report. (January 2006).

United Nations. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Human Rights Committee. "Concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee: Canada." CCPR/C/CAN/CO/5. (November 2005).

UNICEF. "Domestic Violence Against Women and Girls." *Innocenti Digest*. (June 2000).

World Health Organization. *WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women*. November 2005.