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APPROACHING ABORIGINAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN WINNIPEG:

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ABORIGINAL SERVICE DELIVERY NETWORKS

Kevin K. Lee

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in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of City Planning

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APPROACHING ABORIGINAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN WINNIPEG: THE DEVELOPMENT OF ABORIGINAL SERVICE DELIVERY NETWORKS

BY

KEVIN K. LEE

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MASTER OF CITY PLANNING

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the issue of Aboriginal self-government in an urban setting with a focus on the interests of urban Aboriginal service organizations. The operating environment of these organizations with respect to self-government is discussed, including pertinent historical events, socio-economic characteristics of the community, and legal precedents. Models of urban Aboriginal self-government and related issues described in the literature are explored. Existing research on the characteristics of urban Aboriginal organizations is reviewed. Results from new research, conducted for this project, on these organizations' relationships with entities in their operating environments are described. Findings from this thesis suggest that existing urban Aboriginal service organizations can have a political and service provider role in the development and functioning of some forms of urban Aboriginal self-government. Of the models explored, the Political Autonomy and Neighbourhood-based forms of urban self-government appear to be the most amenable to existing organizations. However, these organizations are not currently operating as either a political or service system, and would likely have to increase their levels of coordination as a network to fulfill a governance function. Revenue raising capacities of, citizenship/membership in, and the integration of Aboriginal culture in a governance body remain outstanding issues.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The development of Aboriginal[1] self-government has been primarily driven by existing Canadian institutions. In this context, there appears to be evidence of an overemphasis on the legislative preconditions under which Aboriginal self-government can happen and an under emphasis on the operational conditions necessary to implement it[2] If Aboriginal self-government in this country is to constitute another level and/or system of government[3], it is time Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people begin to ask the very difficult questions regarding its form, functions and effects on all of us.

One of the basic justifications for any system of governance is to provide services to its citizens. Although specific services to the Aboriginal population have been primarily provided by the federal government, and to a lesser degree provincial and municipal governments, it is well documented that these services have not adequately addressed the cultural and geographic needs of Aboriginal peoples, on and off reserves.[4] According to Weinstein (1986), many people have felt that Aboriginal control in the design and implementation of service delivery is an effective way to address the needs of urban Aboriginal communities. He states that Aboriginal organizations are pushing for more autonomy in urban areas for the following reasons:

> First, aboriginal people seek to overcome their dependency exacerbated by socio-economic conditions. Second, they seek to establish and expand culturally supportive services and institutions in order to foster greater social cohesion. Third, they seek a devolution of authority over service delivery from federal and provincial governments to aboriginal people.[5]

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1 The term Aboriginal is used in this text to refer to those people of Indian, Métis, or Inuit ancestry.

2 Hawkes, David C., "Conclusion" in Hawkes, David C., ed., Aboriginal Peoples and Government Responsibility: Exploring Federal Provincial Roles (Ottawa: Carleton University Press 1989), pp. 363-64.

3 "Ottawa mends historic wrong," *Winnipeg Free Press* (December 8, 1994), p. A4.

4 Bostrom, Harvey, "Government Policies and Programs Relating to People of Indian Ancestry in Manitoba" in Breton, Raymond & Gail Grant, eds., *The Dynamics of Government Programs for Urban Indians in the Prairie Provinces* (Montreal: The Institute for Research on Public Policy 1984); Frideres, James S., *Native Peoples in Canada: Contemporary Conflicts* (Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc. 1993), p. 275.

5 Weinstein, John, *Aboriginal Self-Determination Off a Land Base, Background Paper*

Aboriginal organizations are seeking the autonomy to pursue alternative service delivery priorities than those of non-Aboriginal governments.

Boisevert's (1985) definition of Aboriginal self-government suffices for a discussion starting point, which describes it as "the various institutional arrangements which can be put into place to enable the Aboriginal peoples to make their collective decisions."[6] Self-government, then, is largely about establishing institutions to exercise the will of Aboriginal people. Executive and administrative institutions, functioning collectively, are the channels through which self-government is to operate. The challenge, then, is to establish an operational system of service delivery under Aboriginal control which is responsive to the cultural needs of specific local Aboriginal populations.

For over a decade, some form of this process has been underway in many reserves. Band chiefs and councils have been slowly gaining more control over resources for the provision of services on reserve as the federal government has been actively devolving its responsibilities.[7] This devolution of powers is particularly the case in Manitoba with the recent agreement to dismantle the Manitoba arm of the Department Indian and Northern Affairs, signed by the federal Minister responsible and the Chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs.[8] One might say that there is, in fact, some degree of an established service infrastructure on many reserves, with administration of those services being conducted by reserve residents.

The urban environment, however, does not have the same degree of Aboriginal service infrastructure in place, partially because federal legislative mandates have historically been reserve based and non-Aboriginal service alternatives exist. This is not to suggest that only Aboriginal agencies can deliver services to Aboriginal people. However, certain needs of this community must be addressed in a culturally appropriate manner in order to be effective. Non-Aboriginal agencies are not meeting these needs, often because they do not recognize or concern themselves with the specific cultural implications of their methods. Aboriginal organizations have demonstrated that in culturally relevant service areas, they are more effective than non-Aboriginal agencies. In Winnipeg, effective service delivery for the Aboriginal community is currently being conducted, but in a limited fashion. There are Aboriginal run service organizations successfully providing services to the urban Aboriginal community in a number of

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Number 8, (Kingston: Institute of Intergovernmental Studies 1986), p. 22.

6 Boisevert, David A., *Forms of Aboriginal Self-Government; Background Paper Number 2* (Kingston: Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, Queen's University 1985), p. 2.

7 Long, J. Anthony & Katherine Chist, "Aboriginal Self-Government," in James P. Bickerton & Alain-G. Gagnon, eds., *Canadian Politics, 2nd Edition* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press Ltd. 1994), p. 230.

8 "Ottawa mends historic wrong" in *Winnipeg Free Press* (December 8, 1994), p. A4.

social service areas, but they are categorized as non-profit agencies rather than part of a legitimate government. As well, the scale of these projects is relatively small, funding is often inadequate and short-term, and service provision is piecemeal and reaches only a portion of the population. Nevertheless, these organizations have a place in the present network of social services in urban areas and represent a potential base on which to build a service delivery system for Aboriginal people in the city.

If Aboriginal peoples living in Canadian cities are going to receive government services that effectively address their unique needs, services for them are not only going to have to become more culturally appropriate, they would also need to become more coordinated and comprehensive. Service delivery systems can be established within a framework of Aboriginal self-government in urban areas. For chiefly pragmatic reasons, non-Aboriginal local governments would certainly continue to play a role in providing services to Aboriginal people, although this role is likely to change. By working with Aboriginal leaders, all parties can benefit by determining where they might be able to complement each other in fulfilling their respective mandates. Furthermore, as Aboriginal communities have consistently identified inadequately met needs in non-Aboriginal government service delivery, there is no doubt that established local governments have much to learn from effective Aboriginal organizations regarding their communities' interests.

The urban areas being referred to in this paper are those cities in Canada where Aboriginal peoples do not constitute a majority of the city population but do constitute a sizable population. These cities include Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Regina, Winnipeg, Toronto, Halifax and many other smaller cities. The content of this paper is not meant to apply to small towns and rural areas where Aboriginal people reside.

1.1 PROJECT OUTLINE

My intention is to demonstrate some roles that existing Aboriginal organizations operating in Winnipeg's current political, economic and cultural environment might have in the transition to self-government. Section 2. of this document, *General Environment of the Urban Self-Government Movement*, starts by exploring the historical and political environment of urban based Aboriginal organizations and the self-government movement, both in Canada and in Winnipeg, from the mid-1960's to the present. Next, the unique socio-economic characteristics and legislative environment of urban Aboriginal community is discussed.

Section 3., *Defining Urban Self-Government*, raises some of the theoretical issues regarding Aboriginal self-government in urban areas. By describing some issues that would be pertinent in the development of an urban form of self-government, some specific models being discussed,

service jurisdictions important in achieving the goals of self-government, and impacts on existing local government operations, a framework for discussion is outlined.

Section 4., *Theory of Service Delivery Organizations in Networks*, discusses interorganizational theory relevant to the operations of Aboriginal service delivery organizations. It defines organizations as being part of a service network, theory regarding their operating environments, and issues related to coordination in these networks and network configurations. It concludes with a discussion of potential service delivery and political roles of existing Aboriginal service organizations.

Section 5 (*Characteristics of Existing Aboriginal Service Organizations*) and Section 6. (*Relationships of Existing Aboriginal Service Organizations and Service Delivery*) have a distinctly Winnipeg focus. In Section 5, characteristics of Aboriginal service organizations that currently exist in the city are described. Section 6 contains a review of the results from interviews conducted with selected respondents from Aboriginal service organizations. The interviews, conducted by this author, focused on relationships between these agencies and other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal service organizations, client populations, and funding agencies, as well as some self-government issues.

Section 7, *Review of Service Organizations' Operating Environment*, includes discussion of the implications of the literature review and the interview research described in Section 6. The operating environment of Aboriginal service organizations in Winnipeg is discussed in terms of the theory discussed in Section 4. This discussion is followed by some conclusions about the implications of pursuing each of the urban Aboriginal self-government models described in Section 3. Finally, implications of particular issues with respect to urban self-government are outlined.

2. GENERAL ENVIRONMENT OF URBAN SELF-GOVERNMENT MOVEMENT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Aboriginal self-government in urban areas is being pursued primarily due to the dissatisfaction many Aboriginal people have with the general environment. This section defines some of the environmental characteristics that have influenced the development of the self-government movement in Canada, and more specifically in Canadian cities. Long and Chist (1994) conceptualize five driving forces behind the self-government movement in the following:

> Aboriginal demands are rooted in a number of concerns. First, they involve a rejection of the federal government's historical policy of forced assimilation of Aboriginal peoples into the dominant society and a corresponding claim for the recognition of the cultural uniqueness of their own societies. Second, they stem from the long struggle by Aboriginal people for acknowledgment of their ownership claim to their traditional lands, which they argue have never been surrendered to the Canadian state. Third, they reflect a desire to reaffirm what Aboriginal peoples believe to be their inherent right to self-government. Fourth, in the case of treaty-based First Nations, they reflect what Indian peoples believe to be a trail of broken promises by the federal government regarding the fulfillment of treaty obligation as well as the failure to recognize the "nation-to-nation" nature of the treaties themselves. And fifth, these demands stem from a deeply held conviction on the part of Aboriginal leaders and their peoples that self-government is the only path to escaping the poverty and social pathologies that afflict many Aboriginal communities.[9]

The combination of these concerns have culminated into a significant force in Canadian politics. Addressing Aboriginal issues has become part of the national and most provincial agendas, and are of great concern to the general public.

Aboriginal people in cities are in an environment with circumstances unique from those in reserve and rural areas. As such, their pursuit of self-government will entail different strategies and arrangements. As discussed in the *Introduction*, existing urban Aboriginal organizations would likely have a significant role in shaping new relationships with existing governments in cities. The first section tracks recent historical events that have influenced the urban self-government movement. The current socio-economic conditions, and legal and political contexts, of Aboriginal people in cities is explored in the following section. These explorations lay the

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9 Long & Chist, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

of Aboriginal people in cities is explored in the following section. These explorations lay the foundation for further discussions on possible models of urban self-government.

2.2 THE ABORIGINAL SELF-GOVERNMENT MOVEMENT IN CANADA

2.2.1 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW: 1960-1990

Since Confederation and their loss of self-government, Aboriginal peoples have objected to their relationship with the Government of Canada.[10] However, Canada has always been looking to get out of the "Indian business" through the assimilation of Aboriginal peoples into the larger society.[11] The historical record of exchanges (or lack of exchanges) between government and Aboriginal people has demonstrated the need for autonomous Aboriginal organizations to monitor government activities and speak for the interests of the Aboriginal people. These organizations, whether political or service agencies, have a definite role in the development of urban Aboriginal self-government in Canada.

The Government of Canada has long seen its national interest as being incongruent with Aboriginal interests. This perception of conflicting interests is arguably the primary reason that Aboriginal peoples have been historically marginalized by government in the name of the interests of the majority. Indian and non-Aboriginal peoples have not seen their interests coincide since the early phases of the fur trade.[12] As Miller (1989) states:

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10 Milloy, John S., "The Early Indian Acts: Developmental Strategy and Constitutional Change," in J. R. Miller, ed., *Sweet Promises; A Reader on Indian-White Relations in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1992).

11 Tobias, John L., "Protection, Civilization, Assimilation: An Outline History of Canada's Indian Policy," in J. R. Miller, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 127.

12 Miller, J. R., "Introduction," in J. R. Miller, ed., *op. cit.*, p. vii-ix. The first two phases of the fur trade saw Aboriginal and European traders engaged in mutually, but not always equally, beneficial relationships. These phases extended from first contact to the late 18th and early 19th centuries.