

CANADA'S RESPONSE TO THE ON-RESERVE HOUSING CRISIS: A STUDY OF THE KELOWNA ACCORD

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Housing shortages and poor quality housing are challenges for many of Canada's First Nations living on-reserve. Adverse housing conditions are associated with negative health consequences.

Objective: The main aim of the study is to examine a seminal example of failed on-reserve housing policy, the Kelowna Accord, which occurred in November 2005.

Methods: John Kingdon's Multiple Streams Model (MSM) is used to highlight key events and circumstances that led both to the initial prominence of the Accord on the government agenda and the ultimate failure to act on this Accord. Three streams of processes (problems, politics, and policies) described in MSM are analyzed to determine how participants influenced the Kelowna Accord's place on the governmental agenda.

Results: The Kelowna Accord was most influenced by MSM's problems and politics streams. The change in social climate, increasing scorn for the Liberal party, and the introduction of a new party removed Aboriginal issues from the agenda.

Discussion: Altering the presentation of the on-reserve housing problem may focus more attention on First Nations housing and facilitate policy change, leading to better health. Lessons from this analysis may be used to inform future advocacy for better policy in this area.

Key words: Aboriginal, housing policy, First Nations, Kelowna Accord, Multiple Streams Model

INTRODUCTION

HOUSING

Housing is instrumental in the health and well-being of individuals and communities (Carter and Polevychok, 2004). Over the past two centuries, significant improvements in health in industrialized countries have largely been related to positive developments in living and working conditions including adequate and safe water supply, sanitation, nutritious food, waste disposal, drainage, crowding, and housing (Lindheim and Syme, 1983; World Bank, 1993).

The need for adequate housing is recognized by several international and Canadian laws. The United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which Canada ratified, identifies housing as a fundamental human right. In article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, the right to housing is codified as a "constituent element of the right to an adequate standard of living" (The Ontario Off- Reserve Aboriginal Housing Trust Report, 2008). In 1986, the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion (World Health Organization [WHO], 1986) recognized shelter as a basic prerequisite for health (Public Health Agency of Canada [PHAC], 2004). Stable housing improves the likelihood that individuals will be able to obtain and maintain jobs, access required services, and develop lasting community relationships (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation [CMHC], 2004). Home ownership also provides a means for economic prosperity and financial security over longer periods (PHAC, 2004).

A housing crisis has developed in Canada in recent years (PHAC, 2004) with approximately 1.7 million households experiencing housing problems (Carter and Polevychok, 2004). Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC, 2006) noted lack of adequate, suitable, and affordable housing as the key challenges to housing in Canada. "Adequate" implies that a home does not require major repairs. "Suitable" refers to a home with a sufficient number of bedrooms for the number of residents. "Affordable" suggests that a dwelling cost less than 30% of a household's income before taxes (CMHC, 2006). While many groups are affected by substandard housing conditions in Canada, Aboriginals are among those most at risk.

ABORIGINALS IN CANADA

Aboriginal is an umbrella term which encompasses First Nations, Inuit, and Métis persons according to Canada's Constitution Act (1982). First Nations

implies being a status or registered Indian. Métis have mixed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal history and identify as Métis. Inuit are the original people of Arctic Canada and live mainly in the north of Canada (Patterson, 2006). According to the national census, in 2006 there were 1,172,790 Aboriginal people in Canada. Between 1996 and 2006, the Aboriginal population grew by 45%, compared with 8% for the non-Aboriginal population (Statistics Canada, 2008). On average, the Aboriginal population is much younger than the non-Aboriginal population (Statistics Canada, n.d.).

Among Canadian Aboriginals, inferior housing is most prevalent for First Nations living on reserves. Reserves are land set aside by the federal government for occupancy by an Indian group or band. These lands are owned by the federal government, in accordance with provisions from the *Indian Act* which limits private home ownership opportunities for First Nations (International Housing Coalition [IHC], 2003). Bands are groups of persons who share ancestry, traditions, values, and have signed agreements with the Crown (IHC, 2003). In 2006, Statistics Canada estimated that 40% of Canadian Aboriginals lived on reserve; the remaining 60% lived off reserve. Of the First Nations persons living on reserve, 98% were Status Indians (Statistics Canada, 2008). Métis and Inuit persons do not traditionally live on reserves and are governed by different rules than First Nations (Canada Aboriginal Portal, n.d.).

STUDY OBJECTIVES

The main aim of the study is to examine a seminal example of failed on-reserve housing policy – the Kelowna Accord. The paper describes current Canadian policy regarding on-reserve housing for First Nations; presents research findings relating to on-reserve housing and health status; and then critiques the Kelowna Accord using the Multiple Stream Model (MSM) (Kingdon, 2003). This analysis elucidates successes and failures related to keeping the Kelowna Accord on the Canadian national agenda. Findings may be applied to future Aboriginal policy issues.

CURRENT ON-RESERVE HOUSING POLICY

On-reserve housing is the responsibility of the Canadian federal government (IHC, 2003). The mandate of the Government of Canada is to work with First Nations to increase availability of safe, affordable housing in First Nations communities (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada [INAC], 2008a). The federal government invests approximately \$261 million annually in on-

reserve housing through two federal organizations responsible for the provision and management of on-reserve housing: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) and Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC).

INDIAN AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS CANADA (INAC)

INAC, formerly the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND), provides \$138 million annual funding for on-reserve housing construction, maintenance, planning, and renovation (Mayes, n.d.). Over 2300 new housing units and nearly 3300 renovations are completed on average each year (INAC, 2008a).

INAC funds are intended to increase the availability of safe, affordable housing by providing capital for home construction and renovation (INAC, 2008a). INAC's on-reserve housing policy was designed to emphasize community control and accountability and encourage socioeconomic development through shared responsibility, increases in private sector investment, and linkages with training, job creation, and business development. INAC, however, does not provide all the necessary funding for housing; First Nations persons are required to secure a minimum portion of the necessary financing (INAC, 2004).

In 1996, INAC introduced the On-Reserve Housing Policy allowing First Nations to play a substantial role in determining how to invest funds. This policy emphasized First Nations control, expertise, shared responsibility, and increased use of private sector financing. First Nations who adopted this new policy could use their funds to maintain and insure their homes rather than being restricted to construction or renovation activity (Koeck, 2000). First Nations who did not adopt the 1996 policy continued to operate under a subsidy program developed in the 1960s (INAC, 2008a).

CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION (CMHC)

CMHC provides assistance for housing repairs and the construction of rental housing under the provisions of the National Housing Act with funding provided by the Government of Canada (INAC, 2004). CMHC is a department of the federal government that attends to on-reserve housing. In addition to the INAC funding, CMHC provides \$123 million for new home construction, improvement of old units, and subsidies for on-reserve housing (CMHC, n.d.; Mayes, n.d.).

Two program examples illustrate how CMHC operates. First, the On-reserve Non-profit Housing Program provides loan insurance to homeowners. Subsidies to Indian Band Councils are also available to build rental

housing. Second, the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program provides assistance to Aboriginal reserve communities to repair, rehabilitate, or improve dwelling units to a minimum level of health and safety, or to make a housing unit accessible to a person with a disability (INAC, 2004).

First Nations organizations are responsible for dispensing these funds to community members. Chiefs and band councils develop community housing plans and administer INAC and CMHC housing programs for home construction and maintenance.

ABORIGINAL HOUSING AND HEALTH IN CANADA

QUALITY OF LIFE INDICATORS

Despite funding from federal agencies, the low standard of living for many of Canada's First Nations is documented in quality of life indices. The United Nation's Human Development Index quantifies a country's development across certain domains, including housing quality. Canada consistently scores near the top of the rankings while the country's Indigenous population ranks much lower. For example, in 2001, the Canadian Indigenous population had scores comparable to Belarus or Trinidad and Tobago (Cooke et al., 2004).

The Community Well-Being Index (based on the Human Development Index) provides scores for four components of socioeconomic well-being, including two housing indicators. Quantity is measured by the proportion of the population in dwellings that do not have more than one person per room. Quality is measured by the proportion of the population whose dwellings are not in need of major repairs, based on self report in the census (Cooke, 2005). Based on census data, communities in each province receive a score for each indicator. Scores may be compared between First Nations and other Canadian communities (INAC, 2009). According to 2001 census data, one First Nation community is amongst the top 100 Canadian communities; 92 First Nations communities are in the bottom 100 (INAC, 2008b).

EVIDENCE ON HOUSING AND HEALTH

Substandard housing is linked to adverse health (Carter and Polevychok, 2004). Aboriginal persons often have worse health than the general Canadian population with increased rates of mental illness, alcoholism, family violence, injuries, diabetes, tuberculosis (TB), obesity, lower life expectancies, and higher rates of suicide (Bobet, 1989; National Aboriginal

Health Organization [NAHO], 2004). Respiratory illness has been linked to overcrowded dwellings and household mould.

Overcrowding

The association between overcrowding and TB transmission in Canada's Aboriginal groups has been documented (Clark and Ribben, 2000; Smeja and Brassard, 2000; Clark et al., 2002). TB, a major public health problem for Canadian First Nations communities, is nine times more prevalent in these communities than in Canada as a whole (IHC, 2003). In Canada, 17.2% of First Nations' houses are considered "overcrowded" with more than one person per room. As well, there are 4.5 people in the average First Nations home, compared to 2.6 people in the average non-Aboriginal home (NAHO, 2004).

Mould

Mould is also prominent on many reserve structures including homes. Indoor mould has been associated with adverse effects on respiratory illness, and specifically asthma (Gent et al., 2002; Zock, 2002). The high prevalence of mould on reserves is likely because between the 1960s and 1980s most reserve housing was centrally designed and delivered by the federal government. Many of the houses, schools, and workplaces were built on wood frames which are prone to mould (IHC, 2003).

In 2006, the Auditor General and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts recommended that a strategic plan be developed to address mould in First Nations communities. In response, the First Nation Indoor Air Quality Committee, consisting of officials from INAC and CMHC, working in partnership with the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), developed a national strategy in 2006 (INAC, 2008c). This strategy is intended to develop awareness and capacity among First Nations' home occupants, communities, and institutions to enable them to prevent or remediate mould problems. Awareness is raised through education and information distribution. Capacity is raised through provision of guidance, training, support for mould prevention, and improvement in new and existing housing. Feedback from Aboriginal stakeholders has resulted in some revisions of the national strategy (INAC, 2008c).

KELOWNA ACCORD: A SUMMARY

THE RISE OF THE KELOWNA ACCORD

In November 2005, First Ministers gathered in Kelowna, British Columbia for a two-day summit, where they developed the Kelowna Accord. The Accord was an agreement between Liberal Prime Minister Paul Martin and the Government of Canada, Canadian provinces/territories, and the 600 Aboriginal bands in Canada. The goals were to eradicate poverty and raise the standard of living of Aboriginal Canadians to that of other Canadians over the next ten years by eliminating gaps in education, skills development, health care, access to clean water, employment, and housing. The Accord included a pledge from the federal government to contribute \$5.1 billion over a five-year span including \$1.6 billion for housing and \$90 million to Aboriginal organizations to enhance their ability to propose public policy (Webster, 2006).

Housing was a focus of the Accord because of its substantial ability to influence well being of Canada's Aboriginal persons. The introduction of sustainable housing and related infrastructure would have played a critical role in reducing Aboriginal health disparities (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, n.d.). In addition, housing is associated with economic opportunity and employment (Hill et al., 2007).

THE FALL OF THE KELOWNA ACCORD

Despite the commitments to the Accord, the Canadian government failed to act. In January 2006, a Conservative government headed by Stephen Harper was elected to replace the Liberals. Aboriginal issues were not among the five priorities in the Conservatives' election campaign and the Conservatives denied that formal commitments were made at Kelowna. Further, they contended that money was not budgeted for those purposes (Webster, 2006).

Jim Prentice, the Conservative Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, asserted that the Kelowna Accord was simply a Liberal preelection tactic and that there was no paper with signatures. In response, Liberals Paul Martin and Ralph Goodale — former Prime Minister and Minister of Finance respectively — avowed that the government had set aside the sum outlined in the Accord (Webster, 2006).

In October of the same year, Paul Martin introduced a private member's bill, Bill C-292 (the Kelowna Accord Implementation Act), which was passed in the House of Commons. The bill stated that the government

should immediately comply with measures set out in the Kelowna Accord (*Kelowna Accord Implementation Act* (c. 23, K-0.65) (Department of Justice, 2008). Private member's bills, however, cannot compel the government to spend money (Canadian Press, 2008b) and no change was initiated.

ANALYSIS OF THE RISE AND FALL OF THE KELOWNA ACCORD

John Kingdon's *MSM* (1995) will be used to analyze key events and circumstances that led both to the initial prominence of the Kelowna Accord on the government agenda and the government's ultimate failure to act on it. John Kingdon (1995) proposes three processes through which government agendas are influenced: problems, politics, and policies. Policy analysis is critical because policies that support better housing will lead to better health.

MULTIPLE STREAMS MODEL (MSM)

The first stream in the model suggests that the extent to which policymakers attend to certain issues is based on whether the issues are perceived as problems, which is largely based on personal values and beliefs. (Kingdon, 1995; Travis and Zahariais, 2002). The second stream that influences agenda setting is politics. For example, legislative turnover or elections that result in new administrations and associated changes in national mood may be powerful agenda setters (Kingdon, 2003). Kingdon also distinguishes between visible participants (i.e., politicians) and hidden participants (i.e., advisors). "Visible participants are those who receive considerable press and public attention" (Kingdon, 1995, p. 199). Kingdon's third stream focuses on policies. This stream includes a variety of ideas that are generated and shared by specialists in policy communities. Ideas are presented and assessed in various contexts; some survive unchanged, some are redeveloped, and some are discarded. A confluence of the streams is termed "coupling." During these times separate streams are joined together, which increases the likelihood that subjects will gain a fixed position on a political agenda (Kingdon, 2003).

THE RISE OF THE KELOWNA ACCORD

Problems Stream

Problems that earn attention from government officials are clearly defined (i.e., with quantitative indicators) and have possible solutions (Kingdon,

2003). However, commonly reported indicators of quality of life in Canada are often not available for First Nations populations. This is because First Nations are excluded from Canada's National Population Health Survey and the Canadian Community Health Survey, the primary sources for calculating indicators (NAHO, 2004; Patten and Beck, 2004).

The indicators presented in the 2003 Auditor General's Report may have catapulted the First Nations housing crisis to the national agenda. Following years without credible indicators, Sheila Fraser reported that there was a shortfall of 8,500 housing units and that over one-half of the existing housing required renovation (Barnsley, 2004).

In addition, MSM notes that an issue is more likely to reach prominence on an agenda when problems are presented with a solution that is appealing to policymakers. The proposal of a solution to the housing problem acceptable to both Aboriginal organizations and government officials may have increased its prominence on the agenda.

Politics Stream

In addition to problems, MSM notes that politics and national mood play a role in an issue's placement on the agenda. A generous national mood — in contrast to a conservative one — increases the likelihood of consideration for costly initiatives (Kingdon, 2003). After the economic struggles of previous years related to the September 11, 2001 crisis and SARS, Canada's economic success in 2005 may have led to a national willingness to devote large sums to First Nations reserves.

In sum, the coupling of problem stream (Auditor's General Report — an indicator) and the politics stream (economic prosperity) facilitated the ascent of the Kelowna Accord to the government agenda.

Policy Stream

A second impetus for the inclusion of the Kelowna Accord on the agenda in late 2005 was the transformation in policy image and, specifically, changes in the contextualization of the problem. In previous reports, improving the living circumstances of Canadian Aboriginals was viewed as charity — aiding a struggling population (e.g., Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [RCAP], 1996). The Kelowna Accord, however, was presented as an attempt to eliminate gaps between non-Aboriginal Canadians and their Aboriginal counterparts, portraying the Kelowna Accord not as charity but as an equalizing force.

THE FALL OF THE KELOWNA ACCORD

Problems Stream

Apathy

Unmet promises in the Kelowna Accord were met with acceptance or apathy from the Canadian public. There have been similar instances in Canadian history in which short-term shocks with the potential to influence First Nations housing were followed by government inaction and public apathy that reinforced the status quo. For instance, in 1993, the Liberals' policy Red Book included promises made by leader Jean Chretien as part of his election campaign. Among these were commitments to work with Aboriginals to develop an approach to housing that emphasized community control and local resources (Patterson, 2006). Despite failing to act on these promises, the Liberals won a strong majority and formed the next government of Canada. In 1996, *Gathering Strength — A Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP) addressed a variety of aspects related to housing for Aboriginal on and off-reserve. Amid its 400 recommendations were those calling for increases in spending for on-reserve housing (RCAP, 1996). However, the Chretien government dismissed the report and recommendations, stating that they were too costly and that current policies already addressed much of the report's contents (Diabo, 2004; Patterson, 2006).

Indicators

Although indicators played a role in the ascent of the Kelowna Accord, they also contributed to its downfall. The extent of the housing problem was disputed due to disagreements over two key values — (1) the number of Aboriginals or First Nations (population estimates); and (2) the number of existing Aboriginal or First Nations homes (housing estimates). Estimates of both values vary depending on the definition and source.

Population Estimates

Population estimates vary widely depending on category definitions and data quality. Congress of Aboriginal People Chief Patrick Brazeau argued that the Kelowna Accord focused too much on Aboriginals living on-reserve, neglecting the 74% of the Canadian Aboriginal population living in non-reserve areas. Phil Fontaine, chief of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN)¹, stated that First Nations represent a greater proportion of the Canadian

1. First Nations citizens in Canada are represented by the AFN, a national organization (Assembly of First Nations [AFN], n.d.).

Aboriginal population than the estimates suggest (Congress of Aboriginal Persons [CAP], 2008a).

There are four census-based measures of the Aboriginal population offered by the Canadian government (Statistics Canada, 2003). These are: (1) persons who report identifying with Métis or Inuit or are members of First Nations bands; (2) persons who reported at least one Aboriginal origin (First Nations, Métis, or Inuit) for the ethnic origin question in the census; (3) persons holding registered Indian Status meaning they were registered under the Indian Act; and (4) First Nations or Band membership — living on a reserve as part of a band (CAP, 2004).

According to the census, approximately 976,000 persons identified as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit. Roughly 558,000 identified as registered Indians (IHC, 2003). A similar number claimed membership in a band. There was no estimate of persons reporting Aboriginal origin. A report by INAC proclaimed that there were 690,101 First Nations in Canada in 2001. The Auditor General Sheila Fraser's Report (2003), however, numbered this population at 423,000.

Housing Estimates

Conflicting housing estimates also confused the extent of need in Kelowna Accord negotiations. The Auditor General's report (2003), a precursor to Kelowna Accord negotiations, stated that in 2001 there were 89,000 housing units on-reserve and that 8,500 additional units were required (Office of the Auditor General, 2003). In contrast, a CMHC report (2004) estimated approximately 99,400 housing units on reserves with a shortage of between 20,000 and 35,000 (CMHC, 2004).

Aboriginal leaders involved in Kelowna Accord negotiations accepted different values. Fontaine accepted the Auditor General's figures and even reiterated them in his public appeals for improved housing (Fontaine, 2007). The Quebec region of the AFN suggested that Quebec's housing crisis alone was worse than the national numbers presented in Fraser's 2003 report (Office of the Auditor General, 2003; Barnsley, 2004).

Although indicators were critical to reflect the severity of a problem, advocacy is also necessary to influence policy.

Politics Stream

The disappearance of the Kelowna Accord in early 2006 corresponded with a change in government and distinct public mood shift at the end of the

Liberal reign. Canada had been under Liberal rule since Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau but in January 2006, a Conservative minority government was elected, led by Prime Minister Stephen Harper (Coyne, 2006).

The election followed the [Gomery Commission](#) investigation of Liberal corruption following a report by the Auditor General suggesting that the federal government inappropriately paid over \$100 million to communications agencies (CBC News, 2006). Martin and other party members were marked as unscrupulous (Stanford, 2003).

After the scandal, Martin became one of the most visible supporters of Aboriginal rights — which he proclaimed would become his personal mission. In October 2006, he introduced the *Kelowna Accord Implementation Act* in a speech to the House of Commons (Department of Justice, 2008). Although support from a visible participant often increases the likelihood that a subject will rise on a government agenda, Martin had been demonized in his government's defeat, and his support for the Kelowna Accord was ineffective. Another offshoot of the scandal characterized by wasted funds was public reluctance to engage in costly undertakings (Kingdon, 2003).

In summary, the Kelowna Accord was most influenced by the problems and politics stream. The change in social climate, increasing scorn for the Liberal party, and the introduction of a new party and new participants removed Aboriginal issues from the agenda.

Tenuousness of Aboriginals in the Policy System

The policy subsystem is dominated by the Canadian federal government. Aboriginal organizations have tremendous difficulties being significant actors in the Aboriginal policy subsystem largely because existing policies limit Aboriginal power by restricting their rights. Among the most influential policies regarding Aboriginals in Canadian history is the *Indian Act* — a Canadian [statute](#) enacted in 1876 by the [Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development](#) Canada under provisions of the [Constitution Act \(1867\)](#). The Act defines who is “Indian” and contains certain legal limitations and rights for registered Indians. It also regulates reserve and band operations (Flanagan and Alcantara, 2002). The Indian Act deprives reserve residents of individual ownership and property rights. Holle (2001) argued that these stipulations provide disincentives for businesses to move to reserves — which has negative implications for the economic success and standard of living for Aboriginals on reserves. Holle (2001) contended that by

maintaining this arrangement, the federal leadership of Canada continues to trap Native people in poverty.

Diversity of Aboriginal Groups and Interests

Another reason for the exclusion of Aboriginal bodies from the policy sub-system is advocacy shortcomings. The five national Aboriginal organizations included in Kelowna Accord negotiations had disparate interests. The ill-effects of different group interests are described by Kaufer Christoffel's framework (2000): more individuals working for a unified goal exert a greater influence than small subgroups (Christoffel, 2000).

The five national Aboriginal organizations were Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (representing Inuit persons), Métis National Council (representing Métis), AFN (representing First Nations), Congress of Aboriginal People (representing urban and off-reserve Aboriginals), Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC, representing Aboriginal women). Each group advocated their own issue (Metro Coalition for a Non-Racist Society [MCNRS], n.d.).

Although their collective long-term goals were to reduce housing shortages — on-reserve, off-reserve, and in the North — each group negotiated independent short term goals in the Kelowna Accord to reflect the needs of their subset of the Aboriginal population. They included creating an Inuit Housing Institute; exploring a Métis Nation housing institute within 12 months; and reducing the on-reserve housing shortage by 40% in 5 years, the off-reserve shortage by 50% in 5 years, and in the North by 35% in 5 years (Patterson, 2006; MCNRS, n.d.).

In addition to disagreements during Kelowna Accord negotiations, there was discord among Aboriginal bodies following the failed implementation of the Accord. The AFN, in addition to leaders of the Inuit, Métis, and NWAC, endorsed Bill C-292, an *Act to Implement the Kelowna Accord*. The Congress of Aboriginal People, however, was displeased with the Accord because it did not sufficiently represent the interests of off-reserve Aboriginals. CAP leader, Phil Brazeau asserted that this group had been "marginalized and forgotten by governments" (CAP, 2008b, p. 2). The AFN argued that CAP and NWAC did not deserve representation in the Kelowna Accord negotiation process because they did not represent First Nations, Métis, or Inuit governments (MCNRS, n.d.).

Forms of Advocacy

In addition to the dispersion of interests and power, Kelowna Accord advocacy initiatives were crippled by reliance on a single form of advocacy, legislative advocacy, which is defined as “the reliance on the state or federal legislative process” to initiate change (Loue et al., 2003). Some examples of legislative advocacy used in this instance include AFN leaders meeting with Premiers at the Council for Federation meeting (Canadian Press, 2008b); and Paul Martin’s private member’s bill, the *Kelowna Accord Implementation Act* (Department of Justice, 2008). The reliance on this single form of advocacy is surprising considering other advocacy strategies employed by Canadian Aboriginals for other issues during a similar time period. Many groups of Canadian First Nation communities erected road blockades to advocate regaining control of land that was unjustly removed from band control in the 19th century by the federal government (Warwick, 2008). Although responses to road blockades were mixed, media coverage prompted widespread acknowledgement and discussion of these issues in Canadian society (Warwick, 2008). In contrast, Kelowna Accord advocacy strategies failed to gain public attention. Accordingly, Kelowna Accord discussions were mainly limited to individuals with expertise in political and legislative discourse.

CONCLUSION: LESSONS FROM THE MULTIPLE STREAMS MODEL

Lessons from this analysis may inform Aboriginal leadership, particularly in the area of advocacy. Policy implications to be pursued include developing accurate and consistent indicators to enumerate Aboriginal communities and define the extent of the on-reserve housing problem; using policy images to present First Nations housing challenges relative to other Canadians; using more than one type of advocacy (legislative advocacy); and unifying group interests as the basis for future policy development.

CHANGING THE POLICY IMAGE

The policy image or presentation of a problem may have the most potential to exert policy change. One strategy to amend this weakness and increase support for Aboriginals is to develop campaigns to educate Canadian media and the public about issues facing Aboriginals. Despite the tremendously poor quality of life for many of Canada’s First Nations, media reports often highlight negative aspects of Aboriginal communities (e.g., alcoholism and child neglect) rather than their challenging circumstances (e.g., Cook,

2008). Increased attention to Aboriginal issues may also prompt the development of accepted reliable indicators which will further aid discussion and advocacy for general society and policy communities.

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