

Honoring the Voices of Our People: A Qualitative Research Study of Income Security Reform in Indigenous Communities in Alberta

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This community driven study of Income Security Reform (ISR) was initiated by Indigenous Social Workers and a Health Director from the Confederacy of Treaty Six. Concerned about the implications of the Income Security Reform (ISR), these Treaty Six employees lobbied their Chiefs to conduct a study of how the proposed ISR would affect the lives of residents in their communities.

The study, entitled *Honoring the Voices of Our People*, is a participatory action research project as the participants identified the methodology, developed the questions, hired a Cree speaker as an interviewer, and recommended the action plan for the government and communities as identified in chapter 5.

The role of Blue Quills First Nations College included providing training workshops for the steering committee, facilitating the whole process, interpreting the data derived from the interviews, exploring alternative economic models and publishing the completed study.

The recommendations of this study take into account the federal government's plan to transform First Nations reserves into self-governing First Nations municipalities that would have the power to tax their residents as a source of revenue.

The participants of this project also acknowledge that the government could use the findings of this study to impose policy changes while claiming they, the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada bureaucrats, did engage in consultations with the reserves before implementing these policy changes. The findings of this project could be cited as

proof of the consultation process. However, as indicated in chapter 4 (Findings), the participants justifiably weary of any consultation process, are proposing instead a partnership of equals which would therefore require the government to collaborate and negotiate in good faith. The recommendations of this study therefore, address what needs to be done at the government level and the community level.