

Community Healing and Aboriginal Social Security Reform

by Michael Bopp, Judie Bopp and Phil Lane (1998)

This 259 page study (including an extensive bibliography) explores the relationship between community healing and the reform of the social security system in Canadian Aboriginal Communities. This report was commissioned by the Assembly of First Nations, and its starting place is the following questions:

1. If we consider at all the money coming into Canadian First Nations communities that is supposed to secure social and economic well-being, what is actually being “secured”? Is improved human well-being the outcome? (Clearly for many Aboriginal communities in Canada the answer would have to be “no”.)
2. If well-being is not the outcome of 7 billion dollars per year spending, then what needs to change? More money? Differently structured programs? Change from within? All of the above?
3. What can communities do from within, to bring greater levels of well-being to themselves? (i.e. to “secure” well-being)
 - a) Community healing?
 - b) Community Development?
4. What sorts of assistance is needed from the outside to support healing and development processes leading to improved levels of human well-being in Aboriginal communities?

Some of the topics the report covers include;

1. Reconceptualizing social security in terms of determinants of well-being;
2. Principles for transformative work;
3. The global context for change in Aboriginal communities;
4. Healing issues in Aboriginal communities;
5. Frameworks and models for thinking about health promotion in Aboriginal Communities;
6. Competing views of “community development”;
7. Nuts and bolts of community development;
8. Participatory action research as a primary strategy for change;
9. Two community healing case studies (Alkali Lake and Hollow Water);
10. Essential elements of community healing; and
11. More than 20 specific recommendations related to strategies for improving well-being in Aboriginal communities, including recommendations for an Aboriginal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities, an Aboriginal Healing Accord, and support for the formation of civil society organizations (i.e. NGO’s) within Aboriginal communities dedicated to human and community development.

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