

Summary Report

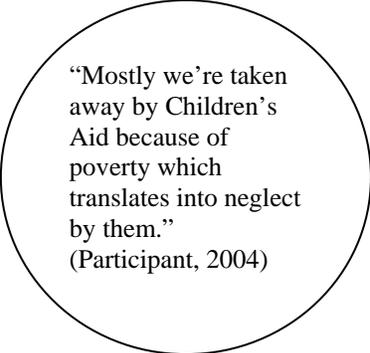
Title: *Struggles, Strengths and Solutions:
Exploring Food Security with Young Aboriginal Moms*

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Date: April 2008

Background:

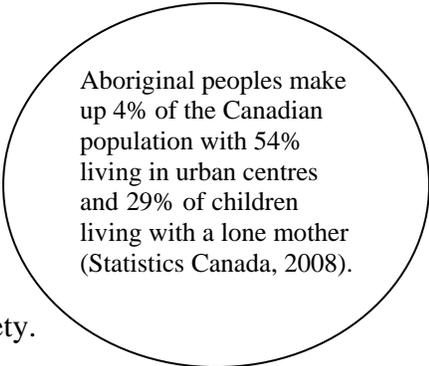
In an earlier research project with homeless Aboriginal youth in Toronto, participants were able to explain their life experiences within the realities of the present day impacts of colonization. They also had many encouraging messages such as wanting to make contributions to the future of *all* Aboriginal children and how they saw positive change as centring on reforms to social policies. Particularly remarkable were the young Aboriginal mothers who were struggling financially, but who found the strength to do the best they could for their children. The findings of this project, along with a research interest in the area of food security for Indigenous peoples, led to this project.



“Mostly we’re taken away by Children’s Aid because of poverty which translates into neglect by them.”
(Participant, 2004)

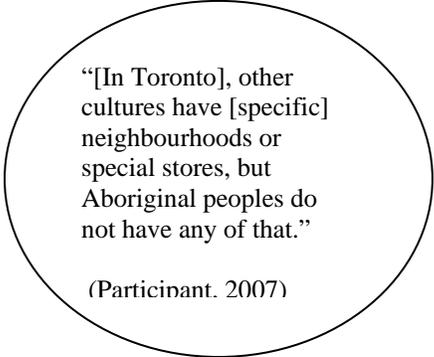
Overview of Main Findings:

This report includes a literature review on factors affecting food security for marginalized women with a focus on young Aboriginal mothers. Food security is defined as having access to enough culturally acceptable food that is nutritious and safe at all times, plus the governmental policies that support this. Few research projects have focused specifically on Aboriginal women and their children in the area of food security. There is even less information on how Aboriginal women and their children find ways to survive, and sometimes thrive, in a harsh society.



Aboriginal peoples make up 4% of the Canadian population with 54% living in urban centres and 29% of children living with a lone mother (Statistics Canada, 2008).

The findings from the research project highlight gaps in social services and policies, identify agencies and programs that are helpful and offer several beneficial recommendations to policy analysts to improve issues related to



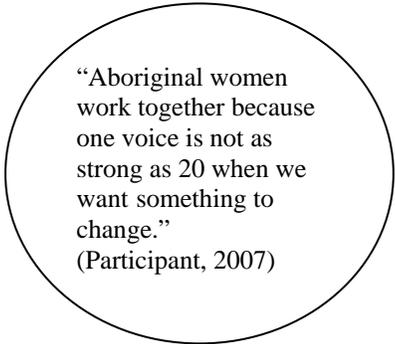
“[In Toronto], other cultures have [specific] neighbourhoods or special stores, but Aboriginal peoples do not have any of that.”

(Participant, 2007)

urban food security. The project also shows that Aboriginal research methodologies work with young Aboriginal women and can be successfully combined with creative methods such as the use of computer technology and the arts. In addition, findings describe the challenges and rewards of working with two young Aboriginal mothers who were research assistants on the project.

Summary of Key Recommendations:

The recommendations that came out of the research project included some at the local level such as suggestions for agencies, others at the



“Aboriginal women work together because one voice is not as strong as 20 when we want something to change.”

(Participant, 2007)

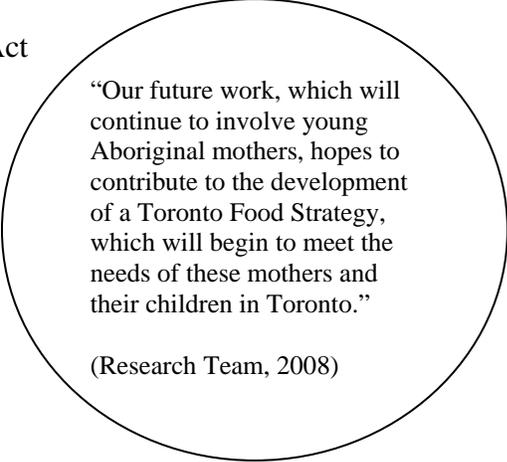
provincial level and those at the national level. Highlights of the recommendations include:

- Food banks and other services need to be spread throughout the city
- Work with Toronto’s Food Strategy to implement its commitment that everyone should have access to affordable culturally-appropriate foods
- Involve young Aboriginal mothers in agency boards of directors, committees, etc.
- Raise the level of Ontario Works while including pre-natal vitamins, baby formula and Aboriginal traditional foods
- More subsidized housing
- Greater funding for education for young Aboriginal mothers

- Creation of a universal family social policy
- Creation of universal child care
- Develop an Aboriginal Family Services Act

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“Our future work, which will continue to involve young Aboriginal mothers, hopes to contribute to the development of a Toronto Food Strategy, which will begin to meet the needs of these mothers and their children in Toronto.”

(Research Team, 2008)