

# The Northern Development Strategy

*The Northern Development Strategy (NDS)* is the Manitoba Government's long-term plan to develop the human and natural resources of northern Manitoba. The strategy creates opportunities for social and economic changes to benefit all northern Manitoba. At the heart of the strategy is the belief that the priorities, strengths and experiences of northern Manitobans must guide northern development.

Manitoba's *Northern Development Strategy* recognizes that northern people must be full partners in creating a strong and sustainable economy. It focuses on the priorities of northerners and northern Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) have identified and addresses them by working with all northern communities.

*The Northern Development Strategy* was initiated by the province's five northern MLAs. Working with other northerners, they identified five priorities:

Transportation   Health   Employment & Training   Housing   Economic Development

In addition to these five priorities, the strategy includes ongoing work in other important areas such as child welfare and community justice. The goal is to create self-reliant communities in which strong families can raise healthy children.

*The Northern Development Strategy* is a guide for all government departments. A working group of senior government officials co-ordinates the delivery of northern services, assisted by the province's Community and Economic Development Committee of Cabinet.

The strategy is designed to:

- improve quality of life
- expand education and employment opportunities
- increase economic opportunities
- co-ordinate services and investment in northern Manitoba

The strategy involves residents in each stage of development, from identifying problems to implementing solutions. It gives Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (ANA) communities a greater role in governing

their affairs by providing (ANA) communities with many of the planning powers other Manitoba communities already have. To do this, the province amended its *Northern Affairs Act*.

Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs leads the government on Aboriginal issues. (ANA) now has an office in The Pas. Re-establishing a presence in the community is part of a larger reorganization that puts more staff in the field and gives community councils additional technical resources.

## The Northern Development Strategy In Action

The NDS includes a commitment to work in partnership with northern people to improve their quality of life. It continues to build on the significant steps the province has taken to reduce the cost of living and increase access to important services, including employment and training opportunities. Wherever possible and appropriate, the province is also working with the federal government and private sectors partners on important northern initiatives. As well, the governments of Manitoba and Nunavut have agreed to work together on mutually beneficial transportation, health, tourism, regional and community economic development, energy and resource management projects.

A look at what is being done in each of the NDS priority areas shows how effective this approach has been.

### Transportation

Northern Manitoba's rugged terrain is often a serious transportation barrier. About 33,000 people in northern Manitoba have no all-weather access roads and the winter road system becomes more fragile with global warming.

Reliance on winter ice roads and air transportation drives up the cost of living in many communities and compromises health care, employment and training. Many airports in Manitoba's North were aging—their runways were too short for modern transport planes and the provincial jet ambulance.

## Road Improvement

The construction and upgrading of northern roads reflects the importance of transportation in the development of every community throughout the province. Since 2000, the province has dramatically increased its northern highways budget.

From 1999 to 2002 provincial transportation infrastructure spending was \$32 million higher than its previous level. In carrying out transportation improvements the province has worked closely with local governments and communities.

A \$4-million gravel dust control program has improved the safety and quality of life in the communities relying on gravel roads. Communities benefiting from these improvements include Pine Dock, Princess Harbour, Matheson Island, Bloodvein, Split Lake, Easterville, Chemawawin, Moose Lake, Crane River, Pelican Rapids, Swan Lake First Nation, Little Saskatchewan, Fairford, Gillam, Cormorant, Leaf Rapids, Lynn Lake, Manigotagan, Seymourville, Hollow Water, South Indian Lake and Valley River.

Dust control, grading, gravelling, paving and major reconstruction projects were funded in Cormorant, Cross Lake, Flin Flon, Grand Rapids, Nelson House, Norway House, Moose Lake, Pikwitonei, The Pas, Thompson and Wabowden.

To improve public safety, the province surfaced the 60-kilometre section of Provincial Road # 391 from Thompson to Nelson House and provided \$2 million in improvements to Provincial Trunk Highway #10A in Flin Flon.

To improve access to South Indian Lake, construction has started on a project to upgrade 46.5 kilometres of the existing South Bay road, build 27.5 kilometres of new road and put a cable ferry crossing at a point closer to the community. Provincial Roads #373 and #374, at Norway House and Cross Lake, have undergone major upgrading, as has Ethel McLeod Drive in Cross Lake. The government has also started preliminary work on the building a bridge over the Nelson River at Cross Lake.

Feasibility studies on all-weather roads at Shamattawa, York Landing, Thicket Portage, Pikwitonei, Pukatawagan, and Ilford have been done, with community involvement.

## Winter Roads

Granville Lake, Brochet, Lac Brochet and Tadoule Lake have all been added to the winter-road network. A number of winter roads are being rerouted to extend the season and become the route for future all-weather roads. Ten new bridges have been built along the winter road system.

To improve access to York Landing, the province extended the ferry service's days of operation from three to five per week.

## Airports

Northern airports are the lifelines for many northern and remote communities. The Thompson and Island Lake airports, for example, are the two busiest airports in Manitoba, after Winnipeg. To ensure northern airports can meet the demand the province (often with Federal assistance) is investing in airport renewal. To date this includes:

- construction of a \$1 million air terminal in Island Lake
- construction of new air terminal buildings at God's River, Oxford House and Lac Brochet
  - runway extensions at Red Sucker Lake, Brochet, Lac Brochet and York Landing
- installation of a new \$150,000 navigational beacon at the Gods River Airport
- maintenance shop upgrades at Island Lake and Berens River airports
- new runway lights at Grace Lake Airport (The Pas)
- new maintenance equipment for five northern airports
- navigational approach aids for Island Lake and God's Lake Narrows airports
- functional design on new St. Theresa Point/Wasagamack Airport and roadway

A new airport for Little Grand Rapids is in the planning stages. A feasibility study on a new airport at Poplar River is also in progress.

Wherever possible, local people have been hired to work on these construction projects. With Federal assistance, Churchill now has a new air terminal building and a refurbished runway that will be capable of handling any size of aircraft. Under the Manitoba Airports Assistance Program (MAAP) Swan River and Leaf Rapids received municipal operations and maintenance grants.

## Health

In many northern communities, food costs are high, houses are cramped, physicians, medical services and equipment are limited. Poor nutrition and poor health for children along with tremendous difficulty and cost in getting treatment when serious health problems develop are serious concerns. To address these serious inequities, *The Northern Development Strategy* is designed to improve delivery of health programs and services to northern residents with an emphasis on Aboriginal and other remote communities.

## Addressing Critical Issues

### Diabetes Strategy

Manitoba Health, local regional health authorities (RHAs), non-governmental agencies, Health Canada and the Manitoba First Nations Diabetes Committee are implementing a Regional Diabetes Program.

### Dialysis Treatment

In summer 2000, Norway House Indian Hospital opened its new dialysis unit, the first on a reserve in Canada. The province is currently working with the Island Lake communities, the federal government, and other agencies to provide a dialysis unit in Garden Hill in 2003.

### Suicide Prevention Planning

Suicide rates in northern Manitoba are significantly higher than the rest of the province. Federal and provincial representatives, Aboriginal organizations and service providers have formed an Aboriginal Committee for Suicide Prevention (ACSP). Provincial efforts are concentrated in working with local communities to promote new opportunities in education, training and employment.

## Healthy Children

Children who grow up in safe, stable and nurturing environments enjoy greater success throughout their lives. To help as many children as much as possible as soon as possible, the provincial government has created the Healthy Child Manitoba Program (HCM). Healthy Child Manitoba includes representatives from seven provincial departments working with community partners to develop children and family programs and services. Services in the north include:

- **Healthy Baby:** The Manitoba Prenatal Benefit Program assists income-eligible pregnant women, including First Nations women on reserves, to meet their extra nutritional needs during pregnancy.
- **BabyFirst and Home Visiting:** Home visitors establish trusting, nurturing relationships with families, promote problem-solving skills and assist in strengthening the family support system.
- **Parent-Child Centred Approach:** Coalitions to support parenting, improve children's nutrition and literacy have been established in the Burntwood, Nor-Man and Churchill Health Authorities. Support is also provided to the Manitoba Association of Friendship Centres for parent-child activities at Friendship Centres in The Pas, Flin Flon, Thompson and Lynn Lake.

- Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention: This strategy on healthy adolescent development is designed to reduce the number of adolescence pregnancies.
- Recreation: Local communities are assisted in recreational opportunities with financial assistance for development projects and hiring local and district recreation directors.

### Dental Health

- Healthy Smiles, Happy Child: This dental health program initially targets children in Thompson and Norway House.
- Resources of \$150,000 have been transferred to the Burntwood Regional Health Authority to provide children's dental surgery at Thompson Hospital.

The province has also significantly increased its spending on childcare over the past two years.

## Public Health

Through the Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure Program, provincial support has been provided for water, wastewater and solid waste management improvements in Birch River, Swan River, Flin Flon, Cranberry Portage, Wabowden, Thompson, Benito, Lynn Lake, Cormorant, Camperville, Duck Bay, Minitonas and Leaf Rapids. It has also been provided in The Pas, Waterhen, Pikwitonei, Easterville (in partnership with the Chemawawin Cree Nation), Brochet (in partnership with the Barrens Land First Nation) and The Pas (in partnership with the Opaskwayak Cree Nation). The province is also funding training for water and wastewater operators in the Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs communities.

## Improving Access to Effective and Appropriate Services

### Telehealth

Doctors and patients from northern Manitoba now have faster access to clinical specialists in Winnipeg through the new telehealth video conference facilities at hospitals in Flin Flon and The Pas. Northern telehealth sites are located in Berens River First Nation, Churchill, Flin Flon, Gillam, Leaf Rapids, Lynn Lake, Swan River, The Pas and Thompson.

### Ambulances

Additional funding has been provided to support the air ambulance program. In 2001/02, eight new ambulances were funded by the province to provide service in the north in communities such as The Pas, Grand Rapids, Wabowden, Thompson, Cross Lake, Snow Lake and Lynn Lake. The Fleet Ambulance Program, being implemented province-wide, provides paramedics with state-of-the-art equipment.

## Transportation Fee

In 2000, the province eliminated the \$50 fee charged to northerners using the Northern Patient Transportation Program to travel out of the region for non-urgent medical procedures and tests.

## Investments in Health Care

Under the NDS:

- Churchill Regional Health Authority received over \$1 million for capital projects
- Norman Regional Health Authority received almost \$2 million for capital projects
- Thompson General Hospital received \$10.7 million in improvements
- a CT scanner has been approved for The Pas and will be operational in early 2003.

Other initiatives include:

- replacement of the Wabowden and Ilford Nursing Station
- an adult day program for Flin Flon
- an eight-bed psychiatric unit in The Pas Health Complex
- a 10-bed psychiatric unit in Thompson General Hospital

## Developing Human Resources

### Health Care Professionals

The province has increased the number of medical professionals working in northern Manitoba. The government added 15 training positions for medical students and residents and introduced a five-point plan to address the challenge of recruiting and retaining physicians in rural and northern Manitoba.

In 2001, of the 85 students enrolled in medical school at the University of Manitoba Faculty of Medicine, three were of Aboriginal descent. It is anticipated that the number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal northern students will continue to increase. As a part of this plan, the province has created the Office of Rural and Northern Health to promote more health care professionals.

The province has also:

- increased funding to the Burntwood Regional Health Authority to allow it to raise the number of general practitioners and to provide increased coverage for obstetrics, gynecology, pediatrics and surgery
- increased the number of doctors in Norman Regional Health Authority by eight
- increased funding of the Northern Medical Unit to support more doctors for Pukatawagan and Cross Lake, expanded services at Island Lake, Grand Rapids, Easterville and the fly-in program
- provided funding to train medical laboratory technologists in x-ray functions
- funded a nursing program at Norway House

**Under the Manitoba Nursing Education Strategy the Bachelor of Nursing program will be offered in Thompson, The Pas and Norway House.**

## Creating Partnerships in Planning/Improving Co-ordination of Service Delivery Systems

### Northern and Aboriginal Population Health Institute

The Burntwood Regional Health Authority and Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO) are working with other organizations to plan a Northern and Aboriginal Population Health Institute.

### Four Arrows/Island Lake Regional Health Services

Four Arrows Regional Health Authority, the province and the federal government are establishing the Four Arrows/Island Lake Regional Health Service. It will include a district health centre and a dialysis unit.

# Employment & Training

A skilled and educated workforce is the foundation of a strong, self-reliant community. Economic development strategies can create job opportunities, but without training, people cannot take advantage of them.



Education achievement rates are lower in the north than the rest of Manitoba. Those northerners who want to take post-secondary training often have to leave the region. For others, the cost of post-secondary education is simply out of reach. For these reasons, *The Northern Development Strategy* has linked the issues of employment and training and the ANA staff will work with northerners to provide training that leads to jobs.

Funding for the ACCESS program, which supports several post-secondary programs in northern Manitoba and also provides assistance to northern Manitobans who wish to pursue post-secondary education, has been significantly increased under NDS.

### Supporting Students

In 2000, the province rolled back tuition fees and kept them in place for three years. In 2000, the province introduced a \$6 million bursary program for students in financial need. This is the first bursary program created in Manitoba since 1992.

### Strengthening Northern Public Schools

The province's commitment to strengthen public schools in the north can be found in:

- increased funding for public schools
- a doubling of funding for literacy programs
- a new Cree language school in the Mystery Lake School Division
- improved resources to better meet student needs

### College Expansion

To increase college enrollment, the Manitoba government established the College Expansion Initiative (CEI) in 2000. In partnership with Keewatin Community College, CEI has invested \$1.17 million in new and expanded training opportunities for northern Manitobans. Notable investments include significant funding for the college's community-based network of regional centres, a new diploma in Aboriginal Restorative Justice and development of a common first-year for the Civil Technician Diploma program. Future plans include at least three more regional centres along with economic development and human services programs.

### Training Health Care Workers

To meet the demand for health care aides in northern Manitoba, the Manitoba Education and Youth created a health care aide training program. It assists students in getting their Grade 12 equivalency and a Health Care Aide certificate from Keewatin Community College. The province increased college funding to allow it to offer the program on an ongoing basis and to keep tuition costs down.

### Training Child and Family Service Workers

A two year part-time Aboriginal child and family services diploma program is now offered in and around Thompson. Graduates can transfer credits towards degrees in Social Work, Human Ecology, Family Studies, Arts and Native Studies.

### Post-Secondary Expansion in the North

The province has been holding meetings, to listen and discuss improved service and a new institution of higher learning in the north. These consultations will ensure that northerners have a voice in shaping the future of education in the North. Professor Verna Kirkness, a well-known authority on Aboriginal education facilitated the sessions which are being held in a number of Manitoba communities.

### Aboriginal Employment

By 2011 as many as one-in-four people in the Manitoba workforce will be of Aboriginal descent. This presents a tremendous opportunity for both the Aboriginal and the business communities. The opportunity can only be realized if current high rates of Aboriginal unemployment are addressed and reduced.

### Finding Jobs

The province funds a program to assist young people in making the transition from school to work. In northern Manitoba the program operates through the Friendship Centres in Flin Flon, Lynn Lake, Swan River, The Pas and Thompson. The provincial government created the Northern Mobile Manitoba Youth Job Centre project to help students in remote northern communities find work. The project helped young people develop individual portfolios and provided them with leadership and life skills development training.

### Government as employer

In 2001, the provincial government held the first-ever Aboriginal Civil Service Employees Conference to hear directly from Aboriginal civil servants. Feedback and recommendations from the conference are being acted on within government.

The province is currently:

- developing a northern hiring process and an Aboriginal employment strategy
- implementing recommendations on better Aboriginal recruitment, retention and advancement
- recognizing employment equity groups
- reviewing recommendations from the first 2001 Aboriginal Civil Service Employees Conference
- continuing the two programs to prepare Aboriginal employees for increased responsibilities within government.

In partnership with Manitoba Hydro and the Burntwood Regional Health Authority, the province is increasing the employment of Aboriginal people in both organizations. Manitoba Conservation has worked with Aboriginal communities to develop an employment strategy and has hired an employment co-ordinator to recruit Aboriginals for positions at all levels.

# Housing

In many northern communities there is a drastic housing shortage. The northern climate is tough on existing houses and mould is a common problem in many houses. Crowded, inadequate living conditions are unhealthy and contribute to illness and social stress. Revitalizing the housing stock will create jobs, increase local training prospects, improve health conditions and serve as the basis for further local economic development.

As part of the NDS, the provincial government is finalizing an initiative with the federal government to provide a minimum of \$6 million to increase the affordable housing in northern Manitoba.

To address the housing needs of northerners, the Minister of Manitoba Family Services and Housing convened a housing forum in Thompson in March 2001. It led to the creation of an advisory committee to the Minister. The committee includes representatives from:

- the Northern Association of Community Councils
- the Manitoba Métis Federation
- the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak
- the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
- the Northern Urban Industrial Communities

**Based on the discussion at the forum, the advisory committee has developed a northern housing strategy. The province will test new construction technologies in a demonstration house in Thompson. The technologies are expected to create houses that have fewer mould and moisture problems. A partnership with Manitoba Hydro will ensure this demonstration house will also be energy efficient.**

## Seniors Housing

Many communities have stressed the importance of having high-quality community-based housing for senior citizens. To support their efforts, the province contributed:

- renovation and modernization to the Northern Lights Manor in Flin Flon
- a new personal care home to The Pas. (It was also supported by the Town of The Pas, the Rural Municipality of Kelsey, the Opaskwayak Cree Nation, The Pas Health Complex Foundation and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Keewatin.)

The province is funding new personal care homes in Thompson and the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation.

## Neighborhoods Alive!

The Manitoba government, through its Neighbourhoods Alive! Program, has supported the Thompson Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation in addressing problems of urban decay.

# Economic Development

Strong, self-reliant communities need to control their own economic development. Partnerships and sustainability are central elements in *The Northern Development Strategy* approach to economic development. While the province works with northerners to create sustainable new economic opportunities, it is essential that steps are also taken to support the sectors that have historically been northern economic mainstays.

## Manitoba Hydro

### Lower rates, new construction, local ownership and training

Reliable and low-priced electric power generated in northern Manitoba has long been a provincial economic strength. The province recently equalized northern, rural and urban electricity rates throughout the province to give all Manitobans fair and equal access to a vital service.

Manitoba Hydro is considering building new generating stations in the North. Communities that would be affected have the opportunity to invest in the projects. Hydro is also conducting joint environmental assessments with First Nations communities. As part of this process, agreements in principle have been reached with several First Nations giving them the right to acquire ownership shares in the generating station.

The agreements also provide improved training, job and business opportunities in these communities. Manitoba Hydro and the province have committed \$30 million for training programs.

## Federal-provincial cooperation

Under the Canada-Manitoba Economic Development Partnership Agreement (EDPA) natural gas service was extended to Swan River, Minitonas and Benito. Under the Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure Program, Flin Flon has received funding to extend infrastructure services to a new shopping mall that will create 177 full-time and 219 part-time jobs.

## Communities Economic Development Fund

The Communities Economic Development Fund is an essential capital resource for developing and regional industries. It now also provides northern communities and entrepreneurs with access to Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) programs and support for micro-enterprises.

REDI will be funding the City of Thompson's new economic strategy and marketing plan. An example of innovations that are being considered is the promotion of Thompson as a cold-weather testing centre for North America. To assist in the business development in remote northern communities, the province through the Development Fund has established TEAM, a unique economic development program. Already active in over 25 communities on and off reserve, TEAM has more than 95 small enterprise clients and is expanding to another 20 communities.

## Churchill

Churchill is of great economic and strategic importance to Manitoba and Canada. The provincial and federal governments, and OmniTRAX contributed to the port's improvement. The improvements included:

- state-of-the-art dust control system
- an upgraded car unloading system
- harbour dredging and improved environmental protections at the marine fuel tank farm
- wharf repairs and a revamped elevator cleaning system

**As a result of the dredging, the port is now able to handle ships with more than twice the capacity of regular grain ships. Efforts to extend the shipping season and diversify shipments through the port are ongoing. The province has also established a committee to investigate alternative uses of the Churchill Rocket Range and has provided funding to Churchill to assist the community explore opportunities related to tourism and economic development.**

## Working with Aboriginal Communities

### Casinos

A partnership agreement between the Asen eskak Casino Limited Partnership and the Manitoba government has led to the opening of the Asen eskak Casino on the Opaskwayak Cree Nation. The Asen eskak Casino Limited Partnership includes Chemawawin Cree Nation, Grand Rapids First Nation, Marcel Colomb Cree Nation, Mosakahiken Cree Nation, Opaskwayak Cree Nation, Wuskwi Sipiik First Nation and Sapoteweyak First Nation. Over 100 full and part-time jobs were created through this project.

### Friendship Centres

The province has restored core funding to 11 Manitoba Friendship Centres including those in Flin Flon, Lynn Lake, Swan River, The Pas and Thompson.

### Working with Aboriginal Organizations

The province restored funding to Aboriginal organizations such as the Manitoba Métis Federation, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak, the Southern Chiefs Organization, and the Mother of Red Nations Women's Council of Manitoba. This has enabled the organizations to participate in a number of projects to benefit Aboriginal residents on and off the reserve.

The participation of Aboriginal people in providing provincial government goods and services will increase with the new Aboriginal Procurement and Sustainable Development Initiatives.

### Natural Resources

The Aboriginal Resources Advisory Council was created to provide Aboriginal input and policy advice on development, environmental protection and conservation of natural resources.

- A new Environmental Stewardship Division in Manitoba Conservation works with Aboriginal communities to include Aboriginal entitlements in land use decisions.
- The province renounced its 50 per cent interest in mineral development activities on reserve land, as recommended by the 1991 Aboriginal Justice Inquiry Report.

An all-weather road, increased timber harvesting and a new hydroelectric transmission line have all been proposed for the east side of Lake Winnipeg. To ensure that these issues are dealt with in a comprehensive manner, the Manitoba government established the East Side of Lake Winnipeg Roundtable. The planning brought together local communities, industry and First Nations, to help develop a common vision for current and future land and resource use.

## Aboriginal Economic and Resource Development Fund

Created in 2001, the Aboriginal Economic and Resource Development Fund has helped generate \$14 million in economic activity, with significant benefits to the north in the first year alone. It has helped leverage funding for numerous projects benefitting northern communities.

## Northern Development Strategy Fund

Created in 2002, this fund will provide seed money towards a wide range of natural resource and sustainable development initiatives.

## Forest Diversification

There is a growing international market for non-timber forest products such as mushrooms, berries, floral greens, medicinal herbs, craft materials and landscaping products. The Northern Forest Diversification Centre assists northern communities' residents in harvesting, processing and marketing these products and creating new jobs from the north.

## Tourism

Adventure travel and eco-tourism are two of the fastest growing tourism markets. With its wilderness, rivers, large lakes, unique wildlife and birds, its Aboriginal communities, its protected areas and rich heritage, Manitoba is well placed to take advantage of this growing industry. Communities like Churchill, with its unique combination of whales, polar bears, birds, fauna, and northern lights are becoming known worldwide as a tourist attraction.

The province is funding travel and eco-tourism research, training, product development and marketing. It supports Keewatin Community College's training program for those interested in working in these industries. The province also supports the Northern Tourism Co-ordinating Committee and Aboriginal tourism development initiatives in the north.

## Mining

The province commissioned a mining task force to strengthen and promote the industry and the communities it supports. The province continues to support the exploration sector through:

- the Mineral Exploration Assistance Program (MEAP)
- the Manitoba Prospectors Assistance Program (MPAP)
- the Manitoba Mineral Exploration Tax Credit (MMETC)
- the Manitoba Geological Survey (MGS)

In recent years, historically low metal prices have led to the closure of several northern mines. The province has been working to help communities chart their futures. The Mining Community Reserve Fund has helped identify new opportunities for economic diversification. The province works with industry, environmental groups and other stakeholders to balance environmental stewardship with industry and community needs.

Initiatives include:

- participation in the Network of Protected Areas provincial initiative
  - working with Aboriginal groups to increase participation in the development of Manitoba's mineral resources
    - addressing the environmental and health risks as well as physical hazards associated with past orphaned or abandoned mines.

Mining firms in Manitoba enjoy the investment tax credit, equal to 7% of investments in mines and processing facilities, including mine expansions. Mining firms also benefit from a provincial fuel tax exemption for fuel used for off-road mineral exploration and ore transportation.



## Agriculture

The Pasquia Soil Management Association received funding under the Covering New Ground Program to establish a trial plot in The Pas, testing 20 varieties of forages. The results will identify those forage varieties best suited to northern growing conditions and enhance agricultural development. Manitoba Agriculture and Food works in an advisory capacity, while also maintaining an advisory role in:

- Pasquia Cattle Management Association
- Pasquia Farmers Co-op Association
- Carrot Island Dyke Committee
- NorMan Regional Development Corporation

The Manitoba 4-H program provides recreation, leadership, and personal development to youth in the north. Working alongside Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, the Manitoba 4-H specialist delivers these programs in The Pas, Flin Flon, Clearwater Lake, Wabowden and Norway House.

As well, an Aboriginal agriculture co-ordinator will work to increase contact with Aboriginal communities regarding agriculture potential.

## Other Initiatives

*The Northern Development Strategy's* approach goes beyond the five main priority areas. The province's commitment to community partnership and improving living conditions in the north are also apparent in its approach to community justice and child welfare. *The 1991 Aboriginal Justice Inquiry Report (AJI)* was a ground-breaking record of the condition of Aboriginal people in Manitoba society. However, few of its recommendations were acted upon. In 1999, the Manitoba government appointed the Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission to review the AJI recommendations and develop a plan to implement improvements to justice programs and services for First Nations and Métis people. The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry Commission's work has led to important developments in community justice, child welfare and Aboriginal rights.

### Community Justice

In keeping with the philosophy of the commission, the Manitoba government has increased its support for community-based justice programs. A community justice branch has been established to develop community justice programs throughout Manitoba. This branch's mandate is to help communities increase their capacity to prevent and to resolve crime and conflict at the local neighbourhood level.



A working group representing MKO and Manitoba Justice has been established to help guide community justice and community corrections programs in northern Manitoba. Examples of successful community justice programs include:

- Community justice committees: These play a key role in developing and maintaining safe secure communities. They have been established in many northern communities.
- First Nations justice strategy: A Cree-speaking magistrate now presides over court in nine northern communities. The court deals with summary conviction matters that do not require incarceration.
- St. Theresa Point Youth Court: This community has established its own Youth Court in partnership with Manitoba and Canada. This has allowed the community to take a positive and responsible approach to dealing with young offenders.

The Helen Betty Osborne Foundation, named in honour of the Norway House woman whose 1971 murder led to the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, supports Aboriginal women and men pursuing a college or university education.

### Other Developments

Discussions on the implementation of a community-based justice strategy in three Parkland Métis communities is ongoing. Also, ongoing plans are being finalized to deliver community-based training to northern Manitoba communities that have requested public education and training in domestic violence, sexual abuse and parenting.

### Probation Devolution

The province is consulting with Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak, Manitoba Métis Federation and Southern Chiefs' Organization on a plan to transfer the responsibility of providing probation services to Aboriginal people.

### Child Welfare

Community-based solutions work best in the delivering child and family services. The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry recommended the creation of Aboriginal, community-based child welfare agencies, which the Manitoba government established as The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry–Child Welfare Initiative (AJI-CWI). The AJI-CWI is a joint initiative of:

- the province of Manitoba
- the Manitoba Métis Federation
- the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
- the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak

It is creating a child and family services system that recognizes the distinct rights and authorities of First Nations and Métis peoples and the general population to control and deliver their own child and family services province-wide. In 2001, the province and the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. (MKO) signed an agreement that allowed First Nations to deliver child and family services to First Nations people in northern Manitoba.

## Northern Futures, Northern Directions

*The Northern Development Strategy* is an evolving process across provincial government, targeted to making changes in northern Manitoba. It is recognition that present policies must include the residents of the region. We have already seen improvements in transportation infrastructure, health care, education, and social services.

*The Northern Development Strategy* is allowing northern Manitobans to make significant life improvements. Northern and Aboriginal communities, non-governmental organizations and the private sector are all working with government to build on our strengths and address the northern priorities and recognize the enormous potential for economic and social development for now and into the future.

*The Northern Development Strategy* is fostering the conditions that can assist new initiatives such as ecotourism, non-timber forestry products and value-added processing of the products, while continuing to promote the traditional industries that are so vital to the north. Lessening the dependency on imported goods and services by maximizing the number of local jobs and services that can be provided in the north is a critical component of the economic strategy. Generations of northerners have worked hard, are self-sufficient and have promoted sustainable development in this region. The NDS recognizes this strong heritage and supports future growth that will build upon the past to make a stronger north.