

SUFA RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY NATIONAL ABORIGINAL ORGANIZATIONS (NAOS)

ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS (AFN)

1. Thorough assessments and evaluations of programs and services to First Nations communities and individuals are required in order to determine program effectiveness and to assist in the policy development process. These assessments and evaluations should track the status of actual funding compared to funding commitments, and should also identify and examine cost drivers such as fiscal pressures from population growth and rising service costs.
2. While other priorities such as national security may take precedence from time to time, the federal government must not shelve or fail to follow through on commitments given to First Nations and Aboriginal peoples regarding the need for resources to enhance services in light of continued poverty, lack of employment, poor health, need for post-secondary education etc.
3. The federal government should take the lead on establishing authentic intergovernmental relations with First Nations governments by extending an invitation and supporting the ongoing involvement of First Nations at intergovernmental tables including SUFA and others.
4. SUFA should acknowledge the role of First Nations governments which are directly and closely connected to First Nations community members and therefore the most vulnerable in terms of accountability. These governments need to be accommodated in the intergovernmental structure of Canada.
5. SUFA should also acknowledge that First Nations peoples and governments are not adequately represented by the federal, provincial and territorial governments in their intergovernmental negotiations and deal-making. First Nations interests should be safeguarded and First Nations governments should be afforded the opportunity to speak on behalf of their own interests in an equitable manner with other levels of government.
6. First Nations should be included in processes to formulate or alter policies which will have a direct impact on First Nations.
7. Direct First Nations participation is required in processes designed to improve social, economic and political conditions faced by First Nations peoples.

8. The federal government should honour its commitment in “Gathering Strength” to put in place new fiscal relationships to allow First Nations governments to exercise increased autonomy and self-reliance through expanded new transfer arrangements. First Nations expect to work in partnership with the Government of Canada on new fiscal relationships.
9. Previous recommendations from the Assembly of First Nations on the need to resolve jurisdictional and other issues related to health, and to increase support for post-secondary education, should be immediately acted on by the federal government.
10. The federal government has a duty to advocate for the inclusion of First Nations in processes and agreements that affect them. The federal government must advocate the interests of First Nation peoples and governments.
11. The federal government should accept nothing less than concurrence from provincial and territorial governments regarding the inclusion of First Nations in SUFA.
12. Aboriginal –specific programs should be an aspect of the overall policy focus of SUFA, to make it possible for First Nations governments and other orders of government in Canada to come together to overcome social and economic challenges that define the lives of many First Nations people.
13. First Nations leaders should be directly involved in SUFA and its implementation in order to help themselves and to work with other governments to achieve mutually beneficial results.

INUIT TAPIIRIT KANATAMI (ITK)

1. The national leadership of ITK should be full participants in the Ministerial Council on Social Policy Renewal, because of the unique nature of Inuit social policy needs and the special relationship between Inuit and the Crown.
2. A greater effort must be made to include Inuit in the implementation and assessment of SUFA in a more planned and thoughtful way, and in a manner consistent with our unique constitutional status and rights.

3. ITK recommends that an additional provision be added to the Principles section to reflect the unique place of Aboriginal peoples in the Social Union:

Within their respective constitutional jurisdictions and powers, governments commit to the following principles:

.....

Aboriginal peoples of Canada

Recognition of the unique role of the Inuit, First Nations and Metis peoples of Canada in Canada's social union and the contributions each can bring to reflect and give expression to the fundamental values of Canadians.

4. ITK recommends that some reference to “substantive equality” be added to the section headed “All Canadians are equal” to signal the need to take into account the particular circumstances of Inuit in Canadian society.
5. The non-derogation should be reworded to read nothing in this agreement *shall be construed* (interpreted) as abrogating or derogating from aboriginal and treaty rights including the *inherent* right of self-government *and rights under land claims agreements*.
6. ITK recommends that the focal point of federal/provincial/territorial efforts should be on maintaining the basic elements of Canada's social safety net, while improving its efficiencies and removing existing inequities and barriers to access and recognizing the importance of the federal spending power to address the socio-economic challenges facing Inuit.
7. Implementation of SUFA in a truly inclusive way will require the full participation of ITK and resourcing to engage in joint policy development with federal, provincial and territorial governments.
8. ITK recommends that funding be provided for an ongoing Inuit social policy and program assessment process with the participation of the federal government and interested provincial and territorial governments. There is a need to assess the impact and effectiveness of transfer payments to provinces and territories in specifically serving Inuit social policy and program needs.
9. ITK recommends that funding be provided to ITK and Pauktuutit to conduct a study of the specific impact of the NCB and the NCA in each of the four Inuit regions.

CONGRESS OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLES (CAP)

1. A companion Accord should be negotiated and concluded between national Aboriginal organizations and federal/provincial/territorial governments and attached to a renewed Social Union Framework Agreement.
2. Adequate and stable funding is required to sustain CAP's ability to be engaged in intergovernmental activities surrounding SUFA.

METIS NATIONAL COUNCIL (MNC)

1. Federal and provincial governments need to reaffirm their commitment to SUFA's principles, including making the express promise in the strongest terms possible of direct and active involvement of Aboriginal peoples in the future implementation of SUFA.
2. SUFA ministers should clarify the recognition of "Aboriginal peoples" within the Agreement as expressly including the "Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples" referred to in section 35(2) of the *Constitution Act, 1982*.
3. The dispute resolution mechanisms called for in SUFA must be developed in such a way to enable affected parties, and specifically aboriginal communities and associations, to have unfettered and easy access to resolve any disagreements that may arise over the implementation of the SUFA commitments by any of the signatory governments.
4. Federal and provincial governments must respect the diversity that exists among Aboriginal peoples and must consider in particular the perspectives and needs of the Métis and off-reserve Indians in maintaining their identities and cultures. This is an especially significant priority in urban centres.
5. Federal and provincial governments must recognize the significant need for greater equity of access to distinctive programs and services for the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples designed by them and delivered through institutions under their control.
6. At the same time, SUFA must not be interpreted as preventing bilateral initiatives and agreements between the government of Canada and Métis or other Aboriginal organizations without the involvement or concurrence of provincial or territorial governments.
7. The ongoing political and legal dispute concerning which level of government has primary constitutional jurisdiction concerning the Métis

must be definitively and clearly resolved once and for all. It is the position of the MNC, as well as most governments and commentators on this topic in Canada, that the Métis come within the concept of "Indians" in s. 91(24) of the *Constitution Act, 1867* such that the Parliament of Canada and the federal government has primary jurisdiction and responsibility. The Métis nation accord of 1992 needs to be a focal point for renewed discussion as part of charting the future relationship between Canada and the Métis people.

8. Although the principles of SUFA have not been properly respected by governments in pursuing the transfer of social housing, it is not too late for the mistakes to be undone. It is clearly possible, in those provinces in which Transfer Agreements have yet to be concluded, for the participating governments to guarantee full Aboriginal participation in the negotiations of the projected transfer, even where such transfers have already taken place, it is appropriate for the provincial governments to initiate negotiations to transfer existing Aboriginal social housing stock to the control of Aboriginal governance institutions.
9. The Government of Canada must provide adequate funding for the MNC to support their meaningful participation in Social Union matters in the future in order to ensure that the necessity for their cultural recognition, social equity and economic inclusion in the future of Canada is assured.
10. Federal, provincial and territorial governments should commit expressly to include the Aboriginal leadership in any future intergovernmental negotiations that might impact upon Aboriginal peoples and their unique political and legal position in Canada.

NATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF CANADA (NWAC)

1. That NWAC be involved in the development of performance indicators and setting priorities for national Aboriginal specific goals.
2. That NWAC be provided fiscal capacity to engage fully in any and all tripartite work related to the SUFA.
3. That NWAC be provided with resources to participate in any further work on the National Children's Agenda.
4. That NWAC be provided with financial resources to conduct research on the issues, concerns, and needs of Aboriginal women and children to ameliorate poverty in their lives.

5. That NWAC be provided capacity to fully and meaningfully participate on the Aboriginal Technical Committee on Social Policy as recommended in *In Unison 2000*.
6. That NWAC be provided with capacity to conduct a thorough analysis of the impact of SUFA and trends in social policy, in light of SUFA, that affect Aboriginal women and children.
7. That SUFA be amended to add Aboriginal peoples as signatories with the goal of, once and for all, addressing the Federal/Provincial/Territorial jurisdictional debate over responsibility for funding and services for Aboriginal peoples.
8. That one of the goals of SUFA should be funding predictability for Aboriginal peoples, Nations, Aboriginal governments, and National Aboriginal representative groups, including NWAC.
9. That National Standards be incorporated into SUFA which specifically address Aboriginal women's unique issues and concerns.
10. That the recommendation of the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights be observed:

Para 415: The Committee recommends that the State party consider re-establishing a national programme with specific cash transfers for social assistance and social services that... universal entitlements and national standards and lays down a legally enforceable right to adequate assistance.

11. That the following recommendations of the Provincial/Territorial governments be followed:
 - a. Premiers called on the federal government to recognize its treaty, fiduciary, and constitutional responsibilities for the health, education, and well-being of Aboriginal Canadians and to work with provinces, territories and Aboriginal peoples on more effective delivery and financing of health, education and social services for Aboriginal peoples;
 - b. Premiers stressed the importance of continued Aboriginal involvement to ensure that the needs of Aboriginal children are a priority as work on the National Children's Agenda proceeds.
 - c. Premiers encouraged continued cooperation between governments and Aboriginal organizations toward addressing the education, skills development and labour market needs of Aboriginal people.

12. NWAC underscores the importance of creating employment opportunities and initiatives for Aboriginal women. Aboriginal women live in poverty and every effort must be made by the signatories to SUFA in partnership with Aboriginal peoples to address this problem.
13. SUFA should clearly set out substantive rather than formal equality provisions. This is especially important for NWAC because of the fact that Aboriginal women are “doubly disadvantaged” in Canadian society and this consideration must be recognized in the SUFA.