
**EVALUATION OF THE HOUSING INTERNSHIP INITIATIVE
FOR FIRST NATIONS AND INUIT YOUTH (HIIFNIY)**

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Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français sous le titre : Évaluation de l'Initiative de stages en habitation pour les jeunes des Premières nations et les jeunes Inuit (ISHJPNJI)

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Executive Summary

Introduction/Background: This report is an evaluation of The Housing Internship Initiative for First Nations and Inuit Youth (HIIFNIY). HIIFNIY is a program funded under the federal government's Youth Employment and Strategy (YES), which is intended to assist young people in making school-to-work transitions.

Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) is the lead agency of the YES program, coordinating its efforts across all Federal department and agencies. Individual departments and agencies in turn implement a variety of related internship and employment programs. The HIIFNIY program, administered through CMHC, is one such program.

The objective of the HIIFNIY program is to aid the transition of Aboriginal and Inuit youth from school to employment and to improve participants' employability through the provision of housing-related work experience and on-the-job training. The program is targeted to Aboriginal youth living on First Nations and Inuit communities. As well as having these labour force objectives, the HIIFNIY also aims to increase the capacity of Aboriginal communities to manage and maintain good housing. The importance of the program was underlined by the conditions of high youth unemployment, and poor housing prominent in Canada's First Nations and Inuit Communities.

Initially, funding of \$1 million per year was made available for the two fiscal years, 1997-98 and 1998-99, for HIIFNIY. Program commitments were distributed across all provinces and territories. A total of 44 sponsors (First Nations or Inuit employers) participated in the program in 1997-1998, providing positions for 87 interns.

Method of the Evaluation: The evaluation was based on review of background documents, interviews with CMHC regional staff, and surveys with participating employers (these were all First Nations or Inuit communities) and interns. Additional information was obtained from interviews with employers and youth from comparison communities which did not participate in HIIFNIY. Generally, comparison communities were communities which had applied for, but not received, HIIFNIY funding. Data was collected and analyzed for 34 participating employers, 52 interns, 45 comparison employers, and 19 comparison youth. Surveys were mostly completed by telephone by

Maang Associates interviewers (a few were completed and returned by FAX) in the period December, 1998 to March, 1999. **Terminology:** The term employers as used throughout this report refers to the housing agencies of First Nation or Inuit communities.

Generally, interviews went very well, and all those approached were eager to participate in the surveys. However, significant difficulties were encountered in locating interns in the First Nations and Inuit communities (many had moved or did not have telephones and therefore could not be contacted in spite of extensive contacts with employers and other community agencies). Similar difficulties were encountered in identifying samples of comparison youth, particularly where, because they had not participated in the program, First Nations employers were reluctant to release personal information such as names and telephone numbers.

Results: The results of the evaluation show that HIIFNIY was successful in several ways. Those interviewed generally expressed positive views of the program, and identified numerous ways in which the program produced benefits. Some key findings were:

Rationale/implementation: Employers saw the program as having good value because of its linkage to a “hands-on” activity and its relevance to a high priority and highly visible area such as housing. Additionally HIIFNIY employers identified a number of positive features of HIIFNIY as compared to HRDC and DIAND programs (advantages included, for example, the focus on housing, the absence of an educational requirement, and longer-term employment). Participating employers implemented training generally as planned, and most employers and interns rated training positively. Interns also rated supervision positively. Overall assessments by CMHC regional staff were also positive.

Employment/Skill Impacts: Employers reported interns to have significantly improved work habits, job readiness, etc. over the course of the internships. As well, a substantial portion of interns obtained continuing employment after the internship was completed (just over half of interns had obtained or continued employment at the time of the survey, while just under a third of the comparison youth interviewed were employed at the time of the survey). Interns reported increased earnings, improved job skills, etc. Interns also reported that the internship resulted in substantial thinking about careers and the future. Importantly, many interns attributed participation in the program to their decision to seek more training, more education, etc.

Community Impacts: HIIFNIY employers reported many positive changes in housing capacity and quality of their communities’ housing during the period they participated in the internship program. Capacity improvements were generated by the

acquisition of new skills by interns and the stated intentions of substantial numbers of interns to try to remain in their home communities. Employers reported recent improvements in housing conditions. While HIIFNIY projects would have contributed to improved conditions, the program was not sufficiently large to have influenced overall trends.

Alternatives: HIIFNIY employers were generally very positive about the cost-effectiveness of HIIFNIY -- that the funds were better spent on internships than they would have been spent, for example, on materials for housing construction or repairs.

Interestingly, when asked about the value of the internship program, many HIIFNIY interns indicated that more training or education could have been to their advantage. This was seen by the evaluators as a possible effect of the HIIFNIY experience. This orientation of interns to training and education suggests that a program such as HIIFNIY may have greater impacts if better linked to both preparatory and follow-up training opportunities for continuous skill development. Data for a formal cost-effectiveness analysis of such a development were not available

Overall Assessments: Most participants indicated satisfaction with the program. All interns and participating employers indicated that they would recommend the program to others, and that they would re-apply to the program. As well, employers from comparison First Nations and Inuit communities, who were previously unsuccessful applicants for HIIFNIY, indicated a high level of interest in the program, and that they would re-apply in the future if possible. This suggests that many more internships could be provided, were additional resources available.

Conclusions: These results appear to indicate that HIIFNIY had exceptionally practical and demonstrable impacts in the funded communities. In the evaluators assessment, these impacts result from reasonable program design and also from the nature of housing in First Nations and Inuit communities -- that because the needs for housing are extensive, and the housing process is very public, First Nations and Inuit communities are creating jobs which provide very substantial training and housing value.

Additionally, many respondents suggested that broader economic dynamics make this a program that works: that housing and related construction are one of the major sources of employment in First Nations communities and surrounding regions, and also represent important employment opportunities for First Nations youth off-reserve.

These considerations make a program such as HIIFNIY a good investment for YES as participant suggestions (Section 4) emphasize and as the evaluators also note in Section 5, a number of extensions are possible in the broader context of training and housing resources programs, but these would have to be subjected to a detailed cost-benefits analysis to determine their value.

1. Introduction

1.1 BACKGROUND¹

The Federal government's Youth Employment and Strategy (YES), is intended to assist Canadian young people in making school-to-work transitions. Its rationale emerges from the widespread problem of youth unemployment in Canada generally. Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) is the lead agency of the YES program across all Federal departments and agencies. Under YES, individual departments and agencies implement a variety of related programs. For example, internship programs are operated in the Federal public service (through Treasury Board) and through private organizations (mostly non-governmental organizations), in many sectors such as tourism, technology and others.

The Housing Internship Initiative for First Nations and Inuit Youth (HIIFNIY) administered through CMHC is one of the YES programs. The particular objective of the HIIFNIY program is to aid the transition of Aboriginal and Inuit youth from school to employment and to improve participants' employability through the provision of housing-related work experience and on-the-job training. The program is targeted to Aboriginal youth living on First Nations reserves and in Inuit communities. At the same time, the HIIFNIY program also aims to increase the capacity of Aboriginal communities to manage and maintain adequate housing.

Eligibility: In order to be eligible for the program, youth have to: have their primary residence on a First Nations reserve or in an Inuit community; be between the ages of 17 and 29; and have been out of school and unemployed for at least six months. Eligible projects must be sponsored by a First Nations or Inuit community and provide on-the-job training (including a training plan) or work experience in the housing area, with a minimum of 3 months employment, up to a maximum of 12 months. A wage subsidy of up to \$10 per hour or \$400 per week was provided by CMHC to approved sponsors.

Initially, funding of \$1 million per year was made available for HIIFNIY for the two fiscal years, 1997-98 and 1998-99. It was estimated that about 50 person-years of housing work could be funded per year. Program commitments were distributed across all provinces and territories. A total of 44 sponsors (First Nations or Inuit employers) participated in the

¹ Portions of this introduction, evaluation questions/issues and some other materials in this report have been adapted from CMHC's *Framework for the Evaluation of the HIIFNIY, 1998*.

program in 1997-1998, providing positions for 87 interns. HIIFNIY was extended for two additional budget years in March 1999.

CMHC regional staff delivered the program to First Nations and Inuit communities, within terms of the *HIIFNIY Proposal Development Guide*, which outlined application and approval processes. CMHC field staff were responsible for announcing/advertising the program, and selecting successful projects. In turn, sponsors signed an agreement with CMHC, and hired and trained the interns. CMHC staff then monitored projects, processed financial claims, etc.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION AND DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Purpose: This evaluation report provides an assessment of the HIIFNIY program as it operated in 1997-98 in all the Provinces and Territories. The purpose of the evaluation was to collect basic data on the operation of HIIFNIY, and to provide an assessment of the program within Treasury Board guidelines of the Government of Canada. The program has not been previously evaluated for Treasury Board.

Issues and Questions: The report addresses a wide range of evaluation issues related to the impact of the program on employability, and impacts on housing and on communities generally, in four broad issue areas. The issues addressed are generally drawn from the *Housing Internship Initiative for First Nations and Inuit/Youth : Evaluation Framework* (CMHC, 1998).

1. **Rationale and Relevance:** The relevance of the program in providing an opportunity for improving employability of Aboriginal youth and/or improving housing management capacity in Aboriginal communities.
2. **Employment Impacts:** The concept of transition to work programs, and the appropriateness of the program for meeting the needs of First Nation and Inuit youth.
3. **Community impacts:** In particular, the need for housing capacity-building in Aboriginal communities through improved skill levels related to housing management, construction and renovation.
4. **Administration and Cost-Effectiveness Issues:** Was the program well administered and clear? Was the program cost-effective in meeting the needs of First Nations and Inuit Youth? What alternative evaluation procedures (if any) could have been more appropriate for HIIFNIY and for supporting accountability?

The evaluation concludes by examining two broader areas:

5. **Overall Results:** An assessment of the overall success of the program in achieving primary goals of improved employability of youth and improved housing management capacity for communities.
6. **Participant's Views of Alternatives and Future Directions:** A consideration of some ways in which the program could be strengthened as seen by participants: (i) to achieve maximally meaningful human resources impacts for Aboriginal youth; and (ii) to be made more effective in the future.

Specific issues and questions examined in the evaluation regarding these topics are as noted in *Display A: CMHC's Evaluation Issues and Questions*, and *Display B: The related Youth Employment Strategy (YES) Evaluation Issues and Questions*.

Method of Design Development: Work for development of the evaluation design included a variety of steps. One key step was a series of detailed exploratory interviews with CMHC regional staff across Canada to discuss issues of concern, regional factors that needed to be taken into consideration and potential obstacles to completing the evaluation. A second key step was examination of related background research and evaluation studies to identify previous research approaches and hypotheses.²

² Some materials examined at this stage included: broader literature on youth employment. For example: Gordon Betcherman and Norman Leckie, *Profile of the youth Labour Market*, September, 1996; J.A. Burns and Vanessa Thomas, *Evidence on the Effectiveness of Youth Labour Market Programs in Australia and the United Kingdom*, October, 1996; and more specific reports such as the *Evaluation of the Métis Housing Administration Program*, CMHC, 1994; and *Evaluation Framework for the DIAND Youth Strategy*, 1996; and *Interim Evaluation of the DIAND Youth Strategy*, 1997.

Display A**The CMHC Evaluation Issues/Questions**

(these are placed under broad headings and ordered somewhat differently from the RFP outline of issues. The RFP question number is noted in [brackets] after each question)

Broad Issue #1: Rationale/Relevance/Implementation:

Does HIIFNIY offer benefits to Aboriginal young people that are not available under HRDC or INAC programs? [C.1] Is the program logical? Was implementation a logical extension of the program concept?

Broad Issue #2: Employment Impacts:

How did internship training contribute to skill acquisition? [C.3]

How did supervision by employers contribute to skill acquisition? [C.5]

How much job experience was gained by interns? [C.6]

Did interns become more employable because of participating in HIIFNIY? [C.7]

Has HIIFNIY increased the employment, earnings, or labour force participation of interns? [C.8]

Broad Issue #3: Community Impacts:

Have internships been committed in Aboriginal communities that need skill enhancement in housing or housing-related occupations? [C.2]

How did employers/communities benefit? [C.4]

Are increased levels of housing skills retained in Aboriginal communities? [C.9]

How has the capacity to manage, repair, or build housing changed in the community? [C.10]

Has HIIFNIY improved the housing stock/capacity in communities? [C.11]

Broad Issue #4: Cost-effectiveness and Administration:

Was the wage subsidy offered by HIIFNIY a cost-effective means of delivering labour force and housing capacity benefits to Aboriginal people? [C.12]

Display B
HRDC (YES) Evaluation Questions

(numbers in [brackets] indicate the numbering
used by the Interdepartmental Evaluation Committee)

- [Y.1] To what extent does HIIFNIY as part of Youth Employment Strategy (YES) address employment needs? (related to CMHC broad issue #1)
 - [Y.2] How satisfied are participating youth with various aspects of HIIFNIY as part of YES program? If they continue why? (relates to CMHC issues C.3 and C.6)
 - [Y.3] To what extent does HIIFNIY respond to employer needs? (relates to CMHC issue C.4)
 - [Y.4] To what extent did HIIFNIY assist youth in obtaining employment, upgrading employment, becoming self-employed and improve earnings? (relates to CMHC issues C.6 C.7 and C.8)
 - [Y.5] To what extent and for what reasons do some participants remain unemployed or on income support after the program? (relates to CMHC issue C.8)
 - [Y.6] To what extent has HIIFNIY established links between employers and youth?
 - [Y.7] To what extent has HIIFNIY assisted participants in making the school to work transition? (relates to CMHC issues C.7 and C.8)
 - [Y.8] Are the activities under the HIIFNIY incremental, that is, over and above activities that employers would have undertaken in the absence of program funding? (relates to CMHC issues C.8 and C.12)
 - [Y.9] To what extent has HIIFNIY delivered measures to the target client group and what were the impacts? (Relates to issues in CMHC broad issue #1)
 - [Y.10] What are the cost and benefits to society, to governments and to participants as a result of HIIFNIY? (relates to CMHC issue C.12)
 - [Y.11] To what extent are specific HIIFNIY program activities and characteristics related to success? (relates to CMHC issues C.3 and C.5)
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Study Team: The Maang study team was led by Mr. Vern Douglas (President), with assistance from a number of researchers, including: Dr. Ted Adam Harvey; Ms. Sue Langton; Ms. Marian Ficysz; a team of four Aboriginal researchers (Ms. Tricia Longboat, Ms. Janelle Dwyer, Ms. Moneca Sinclair and Ms. Meggan Schnarr-Rice); Ms. Micheline Ross (who provided French language services for the study team); and Mr. Don Storm who assisted with survey administration.

1.3 THE EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Overview: The primary methodology of the evaluation was a series of two participant and two comparison group surveys. These were: (1) a telephone survey of sponsors of internships (the First Nations and Inuit Communities who were the employer participants in the HIIFNIY program); (2) a telephone survey of HIIFNIY Interns; (3) a telephone comparison survey of First Nations and Inuit employers who were not participants in the program; and (4) a telephone survey of comparison youth (youth who were not participants in HIIFNIY). A fifth data collection activity was a set of interviews with CMHC regional field staff which examined selected issues in the administration and implementation of the program, including time utilization required for delivery of the program.

Interview Guides: The participant interview guides for both employers and interns were designed to address the key evaluation issues identified above and asked mostly closed-response “check-off-the-box” type questions. The telephone interviews covered nearly all of the issues in the evaluation. For example, participant employers were asked about the availability of skilled labour, changes over the past two years in quality of housing and housing capacity of the First Nation or community, and whether changes could be attributed to HIIFNIY. Employers were also asked about their satisfaction with interns and how much they learned, and about the training and supervision they provided to interns. Interns were asked about employment history, training and supervision they received in the internship, satisfaction with the program, prospects for the future and so on. Both surveys asked questions about alternatives (how the HIIFNIY funds might have been better used), and what participants would suggest in the way of improvements to the program.

Comparison group interview guides were designed to allow close comparisons with the responses of participants. For example, as in the evaluation survey, comparison employers were asked questions almost identical to those asked of participant employers regarding their experiences in hiring youth, training and supervision they provided, etc. Comparison employers were also asked the same questions as participant employers about the types of changes they had experienced over the past two years in housing and management capacity. In the same way, comparison youth were asked questions virtually identical to those asked of interns regarding the training and supervision they received on their last job, prospects for the future and so on. The rationale for the comparison samples was that -- at least in a qualitative way -- impacts of HIIFNIY might be ascertained by comparing outcomes for those participating in HIIFNIY to those not participating in HIIFNIY.

CMHC Interview Guides: CMHC staff were asked questions which examined topics such as the kind and level of support and advice that was provided to sponsors and interns, time required to administer the program, the approval process, if skilled labour formed part of

the criteria for allocating HIIFNIY funds, and so on. CMHC staff were also asked to provide their assessment of HIIFNIY and its cost-effectiveness for delivering labour force and housing capacity benefits to Aboriginal peoples. These interviews also examined the basis of knowledge (did the CMHC staff visit the First Nations or Inuit communities, see the interns at each community, see projects in operation?), and CMHC staff assessments of administrative issues, etc.

Pilot Testing: Following initial design of the interview guides, pilot interviews for each survey were conducted in English. These pilot interviews were conducted in December, 1998. Results of these test interviews were used to clarify the instruments, to identify gaps in information, etc. After the revision of the interview guides and approval by CMHC, the participant employer and intern interview guides were translated into French.

Sampling: CMHC program coordinators in all regions were interviewed. Different procedures were followed for the participant and comparison samples of employers and youth, as noted below. Participants: The survey included all 1997-98 HIIFNIY participants (44 employers and 90 interns). Names, addresses and telephone numbers were originally drawn from CMHC administrative files. Comparison employers and youth: To construct this sample, CMHC regional staff were contacted and requested to provide the names of First Nations which had applied for, but which had not been approved for HIIFNIY funding. This list then became the basis for the comparison employer sample. The youth comparison sample was developed using a number of methods: collecting names of youth who applied to HIIFNIY sponsors but who were not hired, and (mainly) by asking comparison First Nation employers to identify young people who could have been hired, if they had received the HIIFNIY funding.

Initial Communications: All survey contacts were preceded by advance communications. Initially, these included telephone calls and E-mails from CMHC in Ottawa to Regional CMHC staff, and a variety of contacts with First Nations as noted below. First contacts with First Nations/Inuit communities were made by telephone and FAX. To begin the field work, telephone contacts were made to identify the correct contact persons in First Nations and Inuit housing organizations and to verify addresses, FAX numbers and telephone numbers. These resulted in updates and corrections to the data base on participants and comparisons communities. Introductory letters were then FAXED to each First Nation or Inuit community introducing the evaluation and its objectives and procedures. Subsequent contacts by the researchers were made by telephone to provide additional information about the study, the purpose and procedure, and to answer questions.

Survey Implementation: Follow-up telephone contacts by Maang's Aboriginal interviewers marked the start of the survey in earnest. Contacts were attempted with all participants (the 44 HIIFNIY sponsors and 90 HIIFNIY interns). Additionally, contacts

were attempted with an initial sample of 60 comparison employers (later, an additional sample of comparison employers was identified). In all cases where contacts could be made, the persons to be interviewed were given an opportunity to set a convenient appointment, and given advance list of topics. For most First Nations this included faxing a copy of the questionnaire to the interviewee ahead of time.

Interviews usually lasted less than half an hour and participants were generally co-operative. In the course of interviews, information was also obtained on the best ways to locate and interview interns (alternate phone numbers, contacts, etc.), and names of comparison youth were obtained from the comparison employers. Interviews also dealt with survey obstacles, such as the fact that many of the young people did not have telephones -- and how these obstacles might be overcome.

Results: The survey procedure worked well for First Nations and Inuit community employers. With up to 15 call-backs at different times of the day and week to non-respondents, a final response rate of approximately 77% was achieved (34 employers were interviewed). For the survey of interns and comparison youth, however, substantial difficulties were encountered. Most of these young people were difficult to contact: many did not have telephones and many had moved since the internship or the time of comparison employment. Many of these respondents could not be located in spite of countless attempts. As a result, a more modest response rate of 60% was obtained for interns (52 interns were interviewed). Comparison employers, however, were generally eager to be interviewed so that they could register their views on HIIFNIY. Forty-five comparison employers were interviewed. Unfortunately, many comparison employers were unable to identify comparison youth who could be located and interviewed, so that obtaining the comparison youth sample was extremely difficult. In some cases, comparison employers were reluctant to release names and telephone numbers, providing additional obstacles to the survey. As a result the final sample of comparison youth interviewed was nineteen.

Overall, the study data base provides a reasonably good sample of participants and their perspectives, good data on comparison employers, but only limited data on comparison youth. Survey responses are presented usually in terms of percentages, but these should be interpreted with caution because of the small sample sizes.³ While numeric data provide a point of reference, most study conclusions within are drawn more at a qualitative level, based on the evaluator's judgement.

³ It should be noted, however, that the participant samples represent a substantial portion of the population of participants, and therefore are more reliable.

Limitations: It must be noted that the study has several limitations: (i) many of the questions asked are subjective in nature, and can only be validated by comparing different respondent groups (for example, comparing employer and intern reports); (ii) participants and non-participants alike may be motivated to see the program in positive or negative ways, by nature of their participation; (iii) those who could not be included in the survey (for example, interns who had moved from the community) may have different or unique experiences or views of the program; (iv) comparison samples are not always equivalent -- for example, comparison youth were more likely to have been employed prior to their last job and were more likely to have attended university; and (v) the evaluation was conducted shortly after the operation of the program so that only short-term impacts can be observed.

1.4 ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

The issues outlined in Section 1.2 covered four broad issue areas which are addressed below: *Section 2.1: Rationale and Relevance; Section 2.2: Employment Impacts; Section 2.3: Community and Housing Impacts; Section 2.4: Administration; and Section 2.5: Cost-Effectiveness Issues.* Three summative points of discussion are also presented: *Section 3: Summary of Results vis-à-vis the Evaluation Questions; Section 4: Employer and Intern Suggestions for the Future; and Section 5: Conclusions.*

2. Evaluation Analysis and Findings

Context: Many of the concerns of the HIIFNIY program are similar to those other YES programs are addressing -- the broad societal goal of aiding school-to-work transition, and dealing with youth unemployment. Yet the context of Aboriginal communities and society in Canada give these issues an additional edge. The most important contextual factors are:

- **Poverty and Unemployment Rates:** Poverty is widespread in nearly all First Nations. For example, Statistics Canada estimated that as of the last Census, 41.5% of all residents of First Nations were in receipt of social assistance (Statistics Canada, Cat No. 89-534). In the same vein, Aboriginal youth living on First Nations and in Inuit Communities face very high unemployment rates compared to Canadian youth particularly because of the lack of jobs in First Nations communities. For example, the unemployment rate for registered Indians on-reserve between the ages of 15 to 24 was 43.7%, in the last detailed Census data (1991 Census Data, *Aboriginal Peoples Survey*, Table 1.3.) Thus a large pool of Aboriginal young people are potential candidates for such a program as HIIFNIY.
 - **Age Distributions:** The importance of such a program is further amplified by the growing population of Aboriginal youth in Canadian society. The average age of the Aboriginal population in 1996 was 25.5 years, 10 years younger than the average of 35.4 years in the general population. The proportion of young people aged 15 to 24 was also greater among the Aboriginal population. These young people represented almost one-fifth (18%) of all age groups within the Aboriginal population, compared with 13% in the general population (*The Daily*, Statistics Canada, January 13, 1998).
 - **Access to Training:** Many Aboriginal people reach adulthood without the skills, knowledge or credentials they need to find jobs or take up positions of responsibility in their communities. Their needs range from basic literacy and numeracy to advanced professional training. Federal, provincial and territorial governments have sponsored a range of adult training programs, but Aboriginal candidates face special barriers: Too few programs are accessible in or near their often remote communities; and courses lack relevance to their lives and circumstances (*Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report*, website address: www.inac.gc.ca/icap/).
 - **Housing Conditions:** Despite significant public spending over the past decade, housing, water supplies and sanitation services for First Nations fall far below Canadian standards. Overcrowded and dilapidated houses, unclean and limited supplies of water etc., pose unacceptable threats to health and reinforce feelings of marginalization and hopelessness. For example, Aboriginal homes are 90 times more likely than those of other Canadians to be without piped water, and on reserves more than 10,000 homes have no indoor plumbing. Moreover, houses occupied by Aboriginal people are twice as likely to be in need of major repairs as those of other Canadians (*Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report*, website address: www.inac.gc.ca/icap/).
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Additionally, widespread poverty in First Nations add to the potential importance of a program such as HIIFNIY. *A program such as HIIFNIY, dealing with two of these problems -- youth unemployment and housing simultaneously -- has exceptional attraction as a policy intervention.*

2.1 PROGRAM RATIONALE/RELEVANCE/IMPLEMENTATION

Overview of Basic Rationale: Some key questions examined regarding rationale, relevance and implementation, and related overview findings were as follows:

Broadly speaking, the overall question regarding rationale was: *What is the relevance of HIIFNIY in providing opportunity for improved employability of Aboriginal youth and/or developing improved housing management capacity in Aboriginal communities?*

Employer Assessments: HIIFNIY was seen by First Nation and Inuit employers as providing a unique opportunity to aid employment needs of youth in their communities and to aid housing capacity building at the same time. This was reflected in the assessments of First Nations employers regarding a wide range of broad employment impacts on youth, and the specific development of housing related skills. *These assessments are echoed in our later, more detailed discussions of employment and housing impacts.*

CMHC Staff Assessments: CMHC regional staff indicated that HIIFNIY not only offered youth exposure to housing and construction, the program also gave them an opportunity to understand what employment meant. For many of these young people (40%), the HIIFNIY program was their first chance at employment. Broader impacts were substantial. As one CMHC interviewee noted: "... the regions report that youth are showing more self-confidence as they continue on in the program".

Other Considerations: Broadly speaking, housing can be considered as a high priority for First Nations because of the gaps in housing (poor housing generally in First Nations), and the significance of this as a social issue. Additionally, the need for new housing for a growing population, and the substantial need for housing repairs and rehabilitation on First Nations adds to the view that this is a potential growth industry, and thus one which would be usefully aided by skill development programs such as HIIFNIY.

Uniqueness of HIIFNIY: A key and first issue to be addressed is related to the unique value which HIIFNIY added to the broader range of Federal programs that are available to Aboriginal youth: **Does HIIFNIY offer benefits to Aboriginal young people that are**

not available under HRDC or INAC programs? [Evaluation Issue/Question C.1] For example, programs considered for comparison included the HRDC Housing Renewal Development Co-operation Program and the INAC Youth Strategy Program.

Employer Assessments: According to survey results, 75% of the First Nations participating in HIIFNIY had also participated in the HRDC and/or INAC programs in the past.⁴ These employers who had participated in both HIIFNIY and the other programs were asked to draw comparisons. Responding to these questions, HIIFNIY employers were three times as likely to report advantages for HIIFNIY as disadvantages.

Some typical comments of First Nations and Inuit community employers as to advantages of HIIFNIY (many linked to the specifics of housing trades) were:

- “The CMHC program provided specific youth training in housing, therefore ensuring development in this needed area.”
- “It was good that there was no educational limit required, so that the program could be open to all youth including those who had not completed school. “
- “Gives a longer employment term; individual learns more.”
- “Helped apprentices because specifically trade-oriented. Meets a need for professional development, specifically in trade areas.”
- “Allowed hands-on training, which is more useful than other programs which do not emphasize training.”
- “More structured; trained with outside contractor, more supervision, allowed involvement and work experience with mainstream community; greater hands on experience; allowed the First Nations employer to train youth instead of hiring experienced workers.”

Other comments by First Nations employers were generally positive about the process of HIIFNIY administration, for example, as some commented regarding HIIFNIY:

- “(there was) A more organized and clear proposal writing & application process.”
- “The approval process was shorter.”
- “Were able to provide a higher wage allowance; HIIFNIY did not do spot checks.”
- “More trust involved.”

⁴ Additionally, it should be noted that just under 50% of HIIFNIY interns had previously participated in another youth employment or training program.

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- “By running the full year, a longer period of training could be provided.”
 - “The full year gave more experience, versus summer job like other programs.”

HIIFNIY employers noted relatively few disadvantages for HIIFNIY. One problem noted was replacing interns where turnover occurred, which some employers reported was a cumbersome process. For some, an educational requirement (at a high grade level) was seen as potentially desirable to allow a higher level of technical training and to allow interns to undertake higher level jobs. (This view was contrary to the view of other employers noted above, that flexibility in this area -- ability to hire those with little formal education -- was beneficial.)

CMHC staff were divided as to whether HIIFNIY offered advantages not offered by similar programs run by other government of Canada departments. One interviewee pointed out that this CMHC initiative is “a drop in the bucket” in comparison to the HRDC funding for its internships. Others noted that HIIFNIY was less restrictive, more specific to housing, does not expect the intern to already have a skill set (as some HRDC programs do), and is geared towards the community as a whole rather than just the individuals involved.

Introduction to Implementation: Was the program implemented as intended?

Several aspects of implementation were examined including type of work and characteristics of participants (age, gender, education, etc.).

Type of work: Generally, the program appears to have been implemented as intended, youth were hired for necessary jobs, mainly doing housing construction and renovation, but also higher level jobs, such as assisting in administration, conducting surveys of housing conditions and so on.

That real jobs were undertaken and real skills were learned was evidenced by the comments of many interns that they desired further training in the particular trades, access to apprenticeships, etc. That the internship jobs had personal meaning for interns was underlined by the reports of many that the things they were learning in the internship were helping them to do improvements and repairs to their own homes. These types of qualitative indicators suggest that the program generally provided benefits which were more than just work experience.

Who were the participants in this program? This question was examined to find out if the program was reaching youth that have recently left high school or other youth, and to determine other characteristics of participants. Some specific findings were: The

average age of the interns was 26 years and the interns were predominately male (81%). Interns were generally at the high end of the YES age range, but within the age range set for the program. Education levels were generally low: grade 11 was the average grade most of the interns had achieved, and only a minority (37% having some advanced education: 27% had attended some community college, and 8% had completed a community college program; 10% had attended university and one had completed a university program).

Special Needs: When asked to describe themselves, 10% identified themselves as single parents and 4% identified themselves as persons with a disability. Living arrangements: interns lived with parents (27%), with spouse and children (37%), with their children (8%), and with spouse and no children (2%). Only 17% of interns reported living alone. Significantly, nearly half of interns had formed their own families already, again a reflection of the fact that these interns were older than those typically involved in YES youth internship programs.

One key unexpected finding appeared in the targeting of the program. Men received a disproportionately large share of internships (81% in 1998/99). This may reflect the traditional male domination of the construction industry both on First Nations and in Canada as a whole, but is not consistent with the concept of such employment/training programs providing equal opportunities for both males and females.

However, it must also be noted that males and females shared internships based on administrative, planning, and policy occupations equally.

As well, targeting of the program to youth was a goal that was met, but with interns generally falling into the high end of the age limit of the program (average age of 26). This, the evaluators speculated, is the result of the large pool of unemployed young people in First Nations and Inuit communities, and the fact that many able Aboriginal people in their late 20's or early 30's may still be in the process of transition to their first job with lasting career potential, simply because there are few such jobs in First Nations communities. Many of these young people have never had career oriented employment. With such a large pool of unemployed young people, the most experienced candidates for internships are likely to be older individuals, with fewer opportunities left for younger unemployed youth.

Another question considered in the evaluation was how HIIFNIY was made available to First Nations by size of community. The average reported population of the First Nations and Inuit communities participating in HIIFNIY was 2,200 persons versus 720 for non-participating communities. HIIFNIY communities are large compared to First Nations communities in general. This likely indicates that the application process for the program made it easier for funds to be accessed by larger First Nations, who would

have more resources to prepare applications, and also would have larger housing programs. Since interest and need for such a program was strongly expressed by some small First Nations in our comparison sample, this may be an issue for future consideration.

What was the apparent demand for HIIFNIY?

A key issue not addressed by the evaluation directly, but important to the program (and perhaps YES) overall, is: *“What is the need for this type of program?”*

Comparison group interviews were often conducted with First Nations and Inuit communities which had applied for HIIFNIY, but had not received funding. Virtually all of these persons indicated that one of the reasons they wished to be interviewed was to express the importance of this type of program to CMHC and its continuation and expansion.

Some of the First Nations interviewed had specific special projects which they had intended to use to provide interns with experience. For example, one First Nation was in the process of privatizing the housing on reserve, and they were thus founding an organization that would supply mortgages to those wishing to buy the houses they were living in from the Band. This interviewee saw HIIFNIY as a potential method of financing first jobs in housing finance and policy for recent university and college graduates from the Band who normally don't return to the reserve because of lack of employment. Providing educated Band members with meaningful employment on-reserve, and thereby bringing the educated members of the community back to the reserve, he believed, is really important to the successful economic development of his community. Another Band explained that a program such as HIIFNIY would fill an important need for labour this summer, when electricity lines will be brought to the community. The resulting electrical and plumbing renovations to houses would provide youth with valuable learning opportunities. All indicated they would apply if the program were extended, even though some had been refused twice. CMHC delivery staff who were interviewed all emphasized that demand for the program far exceeded available funds.

2.2 EMPLOYMENT IMPACTS

Key evaluation questions examined covered a variety of employment skill development and human resources issues, specifically:

How did internship training contribute to skill acquisition? [Evaluation Issue/C.3]

Interns and employers alike saw training as a high priority in HIIFNIY. Indeed, training was a prominent feature of HIIFNIY's basic proposal requirement and most employers

appear to have followed the training plans. In the HIIFNIY employer's survey, over 70% reported that they followed their training plans, and over 90% felt that the training plan was useful. Only 24% of the employers changed the training plan; and 12% had abandoned the training plan. Overall, 65% of HIIFNIY employers assessed the training as very successful.

Interns provided corresponding assessments. Seventy-five percent of interns reported receiving a lot or a fair amount of training (35% of the interns felt they received a lot of training, 40% responded they received a fair amount, and 25% felt they only received only a little training). In contrast, less than 40% of comparison youth reported receiving a fair amount or a lot of training in their most recent jobs. *Interns also were able to place a lot of specifics on the learning from the job* (presumably from both formal and on-the-job training). Interns reported a wide range of hard and soft skill learning -- as some commented:

"I learned basic job skills. Punctuality, interpersonal skills improved."

"I got specific training in trades; administration, budgeting and costing."

"I learned about housing standards & inspection."

"It was my first experience in management-type responsibility."

"The visual inspection work was tied to my university engineering education."

"I learned about heating systems, carpentry, and inventory."

"I got to deal with CMHC."

"I learned about fire fighting, electrical, carpentry, etc."

"I learned about computers and software."

"I learned how to plan and write reports on what I did."

"I learned a lot about painting, shingling, & everything else about maintaining a house."

"I learned about maintenance, construction & tendering bids."

"I got to take course on R2000 homes."

"I learned about rent and lease systems on-reserve."

Overall, 87% of interns reported learning a lot or a fair amount about new housing construction, and 71% reported learning a lot or a fair amount about repairs, maintenance and renovation. Some 30% of interns reported learning a lot or a fair amount about such housing areas as administration, office work, policy research and

planning. Training in occupational health and safety was also prominent in the HIIFNIY program. Interns were asked how important workplace health and safety was in the program. Sixty-seven percent responded that it was very important; 23% responded it was somewhat important; 6% felt it was not very important; and 7% said it was not important at all.

When interns were asked how much their internship job helped them learn new job skills, a total of 86% indicated “a lot” or “a fair amount” (44% indicated “a lot”; 42% “a fair amount”; 8% “only a little”; and 6% “not at all”). In contrast, 74% of the comparison youth interviewed indicated that they learned “a lot” or “a fair amount” from their current or last job. Analysis of length of internships relative to interns’ reports of skill acquisition indicated that longer internships were significantly correlated with increased job skills ($r = 0.31$, significant at 5%).

How did supervision by employers contribute to skill acquisition? [Evaluation Issue/C.5]

Overall, employers felt that their supervisory role contributed to skills such as having interns becoming more confident and more business-like, and improving work readiness. Interns also reported that supervisors were very helpful.

Interns were asked how much of their work was supervised during a normal working day: 49% responded almost all day; 25% part of the day; 18% a little each day; and 8% almost none of the day. When interns were asked how helpful supervision was, 68% said it was very helpful, 22% somewhat helpful, 4% not very helpful and 6% not usually supervised. When employers were asked whether the intern(s) were supervised on a normal working day, 44% responded almost all day, 24% most of the day, 29% some of the day, and 3% almost never. These answers corresponded well and suggested that good supervision was generally present in the HIIFNIY internships.

How much job experience was gained by interns? [Evaluation Issue/C.6]

Interns worked on average for 25 weeks, and had a wide range of job experiences as was suggested in Section 2.1, including trades (carpentry, electrical), and involvement in technical issues such as housing standards and inspections. Interns were asked what type of work they did at their job and 56% said new housing construction, 54% housing repairs/maintenance/ renovation, 21% housing administration/office work, and 20% housing policy/planning work.

Although some turnover was noted among interns, there is no indication that the total time interns were employed was reduced. Rather, job experience was apparently allocated over a slightly larger number of interns.

**Did interns become more employable because of participating in HIIFNIY?
[Evaluation Issue/C.7]**

Employer Assessments: Employers felt that interns productivity and work habits changed substantially during the internships.

When asked about productivity, 64% of HIIFNIY employers reported that interns became more productive as the internship progressed. HIIFNIY employers were also asked to rate how interns' work habits changed, if at all, during the internship. They replied 44% improved reliability about showing up for work, 44% had improved punctuality for work, 84% became more confident, 56% improved work readiness, and 56% became more business-like (appropriate office behaviour).

Employers specifically identified such changes improvements (in their own words). As some commented:

“Both of my interns became more punctual.”

“He became more responsible and conscientious.”

“He became more independent.”

“He learned proper business conduct & conduct in meetings.”

“He learned how to communicate better.”

Interns reported that they had gained more skills that would eventually help them in improving their chances of finding other full-time work in the future. As well, interns were more optimistic about the future: when asked if they thought they would be able to get a better job in the future than they had in the past, 63% replied “yes”, and only 8% replied “no” (29% answered that they did not know). One particular success story was interesting: One First Nation put its intern to work with an independent contractor, and later the intern obtained continuing employment with the contractor. This story provides an interesting illustration of how a program like HIIFNIY can be used to leverage additional employment for youth.

CMHC staff who were interviewed indicated that the assessment they had from the field was that interns had significantly improved work habits and job readiness. Overall

CMHC staff interviewed echoed the views of participants, indicating that the interns not only learned about housing construction but they gained valuable skills in job readiness and more self-confidence that would aid them in the future.

Perhaps the most dramatic single change noted in Interns assessments of HIIFNIY was the way in which the program affected their outlook on training, occupations and career plans. When asked if the HIIFNIY experience changed their plans, 69% indicated that the experience had encouraged them to apply for a training program; 85% indicated that the experience encouraged them to look for other work in housing; 74% reported that they were starting to make new plans about their careers. Indeed, looking back at HIIFNIY, many interns concluded that their need for education and training was substantial. ***These changes appeared to the evaluators to be striking changes for an older group such as these HIIFNIY interns. The evaluators concluded that it would be a benefit of HIIFNIY, that it could spark such self assessments and renewed thinking about education and training.*** As is shown in *Section 4: Alternatives and Future Directions*, interns had many ideas about how these types of goals could be better linked to HIIFNIY.

Did HIIFNIY increase the employment, earnings, or labour force participation of interns? [Evaluation Issue/C.8]

Before the internship most of the youth had had few jobs or employment experiences and had limited job skills. According to the surveys, after the internship, over half of the interns (52%) had obtained employment and 57% of those who had obtained employment continued to work in housing, reflecting an impact of the program in strengthening the housing-connection of the program. Of those employed, 52% indicated that the internship was helpful in getting continuing employment. The majority of employers (79%) reported that they would not have been able to hire the interns without funding from the HIIFNIY program.

The post-program employment rate for interns who had short internships (24 weeks or less) was 48% while the rate for those whose internships were more than 24 weeks was 57%. The difference is not significant suggesting that, on the basis of year-one evidence, short-term internships were as effective as long term internships with respect to post-program employment.

Youth who participated in HIIFNIY not only increased skills and obtained continued employment, but also obtained slightly higher wages and better hours after the internships as compared to before. At previous jobs, interns earned, on average, \$8.70 per hour for an average 38.6-hour work week, whereas after the internship, those who were employed averaged \$9.61 per hour for a 37.4-hour work week.

Nonetheless, a substantial portion of interns were still in receipt of non-wage income, generally employment insurance (22.8% of interns) or social assistance (19% of interns), and 6% of interns reported they had no source of income after the internship. While a portion of this under-employment must be attributed simply to the lack of jobs in First Nations communities, it does raise a key question of concern to interns as to where an internship like HIIFNIY should lead? To other employment or other training?

2.3 EMPLOYER/COMMUNITY IMPACTS

Key questions were: Did housing change in the community and did community members benefit from the HIIFNIY program? It was anticipated that a variety of benefits would occur from the program: housing capacity could be improved and having additional staff resources could positively influence quality of housing stock. Additionally, it was suggested by some employers that broader benefits of HIIFNIY were derived from community members observing more of their young people participating in the development of the community. Some of the key questions addressed were:

Were internships committed to Aboriginal communities that needed skill enhancement in housing or housing-related occupations? [Evaluation Issue/C.2]

The evaluation surveys indicated that the program was applied to communities which need skill enhancement: indeed, a large percentage of HIIFNIY employers indicated that the internships helped meet their need for skilled workers in housing. When HIIFNIY employers were asked whether internships had helped to meet a need for skilled workers in housing in their community, 86% replied “yes”.

HIIFNIY employers were also able to put specifics to these labour shortages, reporting needs for: “all trades”, “journeymen”, electricians, plumbers, carpenters, and administrative staff. Often, they noted, work could not be done because of the lack of these skilled persons. This assessment of the program as being relevant to needs was reinforced by other survey results. When HIIFNIY employers were asked, “have there been situations in the past two years where trained housing workers were needed to improve housing, but were unavailable”? HIIFNIY employers responded 65% affirmatively, suggesting that the targeting of the program was good.⁵

These results, however, should not be taken as suggesting that other needs were substantially less. Rather, our comparison interviews suggested that skill shortages were experienced in virtually all First Nations and Inuit communities, including smaller

⁵ As well, problems in obtaining skilled workers were reported by fewer comparison communities (58%). This also suggests that HIIFNIY was targeted to communities with somewhat greater needs for trained personnel.

communities. Thus while targeting of the program was good, substantial needs for such a program were apparently left unfilled.

How did employers/communities benefit? [Evaluation Issue/C.4]

In interviews, a large percentage of HIIFNIY employers (First Nations or Inuit communities) felt that the organizations or broader community's capacity/ability for housing construction improved during the time of the internship program. Employers generally indicated that having interns added to their personpower and allowed them to undertake more construction renovation and repairs and more support tasks than would have been the case otherwise. A portion of these improvements was attributed to the program, as noted in the following discussion of related evaluation issues/questions.

CMHC staff also felt that the program helped increase the self-esteem of interns, helped them raise their standard of living. One CMHC manager felt that this was a contribution to broader efforts to reduce negative community factors such as a high level of youth suicide.

While CMHC staff were quick to point out that the youth interns were the real winners in the HIIFNIY program, they also listed a variety of benefits to the First Nations and Inuit communities. Many First Nations and Inuit communities were able to complete work on the reserve which they would not have otherwise been done.

Employers reported costs of about \$3400 per intern for supervision, training, etcetera. There were also associated cost-savings to these employers, as they had an extra employee subsidized by the government. First Nations and Inuit communities were seen as benefiting from the program indirectly through having a more skilled and confident member of the community. The program also was seen by CMHC staff as helping the morale of the First Nations and Inuit communities, who observed youth who want to work and who are now able to help their communities.

Are increased levels of housing skills retained in Aboriginal communities? [Evaluation Issue/C.9]

When asked if their ability to find skilled labour had improved, stayed the same or declined in the past two years, 50% of HIIFNIY employers reported improvement, 43% indicated "stayed the same", and 7% reported their ability to find skilled labour had declined (note, as well, that similar results were reported by comparison employers: 55% improved; 41% the same; and 5% declined).

That housing skills are retained in the community in the short run is indicated clearly by the fact that about one in three HIIFNIY interns retained their employment with the First Nation housing organization after the end of the internships. In addition, about

88% of interns who were interviewed continued to live in their home communities. If the inability to contact interns is assumed to indicate that they had already moved somewhere else, up to 40% of interns may have migrated by the time of the evaluation survey. However, patterns of Aboriginal migration show that there is a tendency for young people to return home after living elsewhere for a period. It is therefore not certain that the skills of already-migrated interns have been permanently withdrawn from the local labour force.

This gain appeared to be underlined by future intentions as well. When interns were asked whether they would still be living in their home community/First Nation in the next 2-3 years, 61% replied “very likely”, 29% indicated “somewhat likely”, and 10% replied “not very likely”. When asked if they would live in a neighbouring Aboriginal community/First Nation, live in a neighboring non-Aboriginal community or move to an urban centre, the responses for all these choices were that only 10% were very likely to move. This indicates that most interns would try and find employment in or near their home communities, thus skills developed should be retained by the community.

These results notwithstanding, the reviewer is reminded that one limitation of the evaluation is that some interns could not be surveyed because they had moved to other communities, and could not be traced within the study time frame.

This may or may not represent a skill loss relative to the program’s goals, depending upon, for example, whether they have moved to another Aboriginal community, and whether they have continued to work in housing. Providing this type of information could be a valuable step in a different -- more forward looking evaluation of this or similar programs in the future.

How has the capacity to manage, repair, or build housing changed in the community? [Evaluation Issue/C.10]

Overall, HIIFNIY employers reported that the capacity to manage, repair or build housing in their communities had improved during the period of the program. Indicators were as follows:

When employers were asked if their organizations’ capacity/ability for housing construction had improved over the past two years: 79% of HIIFNIY employers replied that it had improved; 18% said it had stayed the same; and 3% indicated a decline. Asked about capacity for housing repairs, maintenance and renovation, 79% reported an improvement, 12% said it stayed the same, and 9% said it declined. These figures are consistent with the data on training, skill acquisition, and continued residence in the home communities reported earlier.

Asked about whether such changes could be attributed to HIIFNIY, the vast majority of HIIFNIY employers suggested that HIIFNIY was at least a modest and sometimes an

important contributing factor. 15% attributed “a lot” of improvements to HIIFNIY, 32% attributed “a fair amount” to HIIFNIY, and 47% attributed “a little” to HIIFNIY.

While 79% of HIIFNIY employers reported improvements in capacity for new housing construction over a two-year period, only 57% of comparison employers reported such improvements. Similarly, in the areas of repairs and renovations, 79% of HIIFNIY employers reported improved capacity over the two-year period, as compared to 57% of comparison employers. While capacity to manage has improved more in HIIFNIY communities than in comparison communities, the larger size and possibly stronger economies of HIIFNIY communities may be the cause of the improved trend rather than the operation of HIIFNIY, which provided on average two interns per community. No data is available to test this hypothesis.

While findings were positive, future evaluations of HIIFNIY or similar programs could examine other factors as possible explanations, such as robustness of the local or regional economy or creativeness or leadership of the housing organization.

How has HIIFNIY reduced the cost or extended the useful life of the housing stock in participating communities? [Evaluation Issue/C.11]

To examine this issue, HIIFNIY employers were asked whether the condition of housing stock (e.g. quality, life expectation) had improved, stayed the same, or declined over the past two years. Sixty-two percent reported an improvement; 29% said it stayed the same; and 9% reported a decline. Comparison employers reported less improvement in housing stock and more decline over a two-year period (62% of HIIFNIY employers reported improvement in the quality of housing stock, as compared to 52% of comparison employers) and comparison employers were almost twice as likely to report a decline in quality (16%) as were HIIFNIY employers (9%).

Again, HIIFNIY communities display stronger trends towards improvement in housing condition, but the contribution of other factors, such as the strength of the local economy, to these trends cannot be dismissed.

2.4 ADMINISTRATION

Some other questions of interest posed by the evaluators, but not explicitly in the original CMHC evaluation criteria included the following:

How Was HIIFNIY Administered?

Costs: CMHC staff reported that on average they spent ten days per year on the project. CMHC staff suggested that on average, time utilization for the program may have been about 9 hours per First Nation, or 4.5 hours per intern -- a modest administrative cost overall. One administrator noted that the administration likely took more time than anticipated because follow-up activity was time consuming.

Monitoring: Not all CMHC administrators were able to visit the Bands who participated in the program, although when they were unable to visit, they often asked their colleagues who were visiting the Bands for other reasons to check in with the person at the Band responsible for the HIIFNIY interns.

Support: The CMHC administrators did not find that the employers (Bands) and interns needed a lot of support. In general they provided background information to write proposals, and provided advice when asked. As one administrator concluded: "This program has not been designed to be proactive".

Selection of Interns: The selection process for interns was left to the Bands. CMHC staff had no input on which persons were hired.

Were the administration and criteria of the program well-understood? What kind of other support or information might have been required?

Many participating and non-participating employers felt that the HIIFNIY program could have been better explained to applicants. As remedies, some First Nations recommended "a clear/ simple public relations program to communicate the program in better terms". Others indicated that they did not receive notification of the program for a given year. Others noted that small First Nations did not have the resources to apply. Some First Nations employers also said they needed more time for applications -- "not at last minute", "send notices sooner and advise people about their applications status sooner", and "plan to meet seasonal construction needs better". Additionally, many non-participating employers indicated that the explanations for their funding requests being not approved were not complete or useful.

How Did the Selection Process Work?

CMHC regional staff reported that they were generally satisfied with the site selection process. CMHC staff noted that precise rules were the key to a successful selection strategy. Where these precise rules did not exist, CMHC staff suggested that they be tightened for the future. For example, precise parameters regarding the financial contribution of the sponsors, proposal deadlines, the eligibility of bands who have participated in the program in the past, would help make the selection process more straightforward.

CMHC staff also reported that criteria for site selection varied across the country. Issues which were taken into account in the selection process, to varying degrees in different regions, included the percentage of unemployed youth in the community, the band's ability and willingness to support the youth on the program, geographical location (e.g. in one province half the money was allocated to the North, and the other half to the South), and the availability of trained personnel to train the interns. CMHC staff reported that the housing needs of the community were rarely taken into account in the selection process.

2.5 COST-EFFECTIVENESS

Some aspects of cost-effectiveness and administration examined were seen in the following questions and findings:

Was the wage subsidy offered by HIIFNIY a cost-effective means of delivering labour force and housing capacity benefits to Aboriginal people? [Evaluation Issue/C.12]

CMHC staff we interviewed generally assessed the program as a cost effective program, and this assessment appeared to be validated by many of the employment and housing impacts noted above.

This was further tested by asking some additional questions of HIIFNIY employers and interns. Both were asked whether alternative uses of funds would have been better than using the funds only for internships. The results were extremely interesting:

- HIIFNIY employers were generally firm on the value of HIIFNIY. When asked if HIIFNIY money could have been better spent aiding youth in other ways, for example, using it for training programs generally, or if it would have been better used to keep youth in school, the vast majority responded "no" (70% replied "no" to training programs; and 76% responded "no" to additional schooling).
- When asked the same question, HIIFNIY employers were even stronger in rejecting the value of applying the same money to materials for new housing/repairs, or training for regular staff (83% rejected the alternative of spending HIIFNIY moneys on housing materials, 79% rejected the alternative of spending the same money on regular staff training).

Overall, these results suggested that the human resources development impacts of HIIFNIY were uniquely valuable – and thus, potentially cost-effective – for the participating First Nations employers.

However, the same type of question (would another way of spending the money have been better) posed to interns themselves, produced quite different results:

- When asked whether attending a formal training program or going to school for one year would have been more helpful than the internship alone, more than half answered “yes”, and 100% said they would recommend the internship to other Aboriginal youth.

An explanation for this can be seen in the changes in career expectations and goals which was discussed in Section 2.2, where very dramatic changes in educational and career ideal were seen in Interns. Our assessment is that the Internship program itself had such a strong effect on interns’ career ideas, that “after the fact”, the assessment that education and training could have been a better investment, was likely brought about by the internship experience itself.

This broader concern with education and training linkages is seen clearly when interns’ suggestions for improvement of the program are examined below (see Section 4).

3. Summary of Results

3.1 OVERVIEW OF RESULTS VIS-À-VIS CMHC ISSUES

Generally, the results of the evaluation indicate that the program was successful. These indications are particularly clear in the surveys of HIIFNIY participants (interns and First Nations employers, generally housing divisions of Band governments. Those interviewed generally expressed positive views of the program, and identified numerous ways in which the program apparently produced significant benefits. Some of these indicative findings include:

Rationale/implementation: Employers viewed the program as having real value because of its linkage to a hands-on program such as housing. This value was seen as greater than some similar programs to create employment, so that HIIFNIY was seen as more than just work experience.

Participating employers implemented training generally as planned, and most employers and interns alike rated training positively. Interns also rated supervision positively.

Additionally, HIIFNIY employers identified many practical positive features of HIIFNIY which they described as advantageous compared to HRDC and DIAND programs (applications in housing, longer term of employment, training, etc.).

Employment/Skill Impacts: Employers reported interns to have significantly improved work habits and job readiness, etc. over the course of the internships.

A substantial portion of interns obtained continuing employment after the internship was completed (approximately half of interns had obtained or continued employment at the time of the survey, while only about a third of the comparison sample was employed at the time of the survey).

Interns reported increased employment earnings and improved job skills. Interns also reported that the internship resulted in substantial thinking about careers and the future. Most importantly, many interns attributed participation in the program to their decision to seek more training or more education.

Community Impacts: Employers reported many positive changes in housing capacity during the period of the internship, and a portion of these changes were attributed to HIIFNIY. That these changes might logically be attributed to HIIFNIY was supported

by the fact that positive housing changes were reported far more frequently in HIIFNIY communities than in comparison communities.

Cost-Effectiveness/Alternatives: HIIFNIY employers were generally very positive about the cost-effectiveness of HIIFNIY -- that the funds were better spent on internships than they would have been spent, for example, on materials for housing construction or repairs.

Interestingly, however, HIIFNIY interns generally indicated that more training or education could have been to their advantage. This may be an effect of the HIIFNIY experience itself -- the program helping young people to consider career and education issues more thoughtfully. In any case, this result points to the broad need for training and education in Aboriginal communities, and also suggests that a program such as HIIFNIY will have greater impacts if better linked to both preparatory and follow-up training opportunities for continuous skill development. Further research on this topic is suggested.

Overall Assessments: Most participating employers indicated satisfaction with the program. All interns and employers participating or not indicated that they would recommend the program to others, and they would re-apply to the program.

Discussion: One issue of interest is the fact that many interns were hired for jobs after the internship which employers would not have hired them for before. Why is that? The evaluators attributed this change to several factors. First, some interns appear to have been able to develop new skills which qualified them for jobs they would not have been considered for before. Secondly, it appears that some changes in budgeting practices appeared, where some First Nations reported moving some functions in-house, which previously had been contracted or purchased from outside.

CMHC regional interviewees were aware of such practices. According to one CMHC regional interview many of the employers wanted to try and retain the young people in the housing area especially if the young people were doing exceptional work. To this end, some of the Bands would continue employing interns after the program funding ended by using other Band funds. In some cases this meant keeping "in-house" funds which were previously used to purchase services from outside contractors. These types of changes may mean that more jobs are being created for Aboriginal youth, as a result of this program. Thus, such a program may have positive incremental effects in developing First Nations' housing human resources, capacity and infrastructure.

Conclusion: Of course, certain cautions must apply to these assessments: data collected were after the fact and partly subjective; and community conditions (local economy), community size, and organizational features were not controlled for. *Even so, the study findings pointed to a positive assessment of HIIFNIY overall.*

3.2 OVERVIEW OF RESULTS VIS-À-VIS THE YES EVALUATION ISSUES

Several key YES evaluation questions are considered below, in summary form, which echo, to a great extent, the specific answers given to the CMHC evaluation questions (original YES Evaluation question numbers are at the end of each question in [brackets]).

YES Evaluation Issue #1: To what extent does HIIFNIY as part of Youth Employment Strategy (YES) address employment needs?

According to the survey findings reported above, the HIIFNIY program addressed important employment needs for Aboriginal and Inuit youth 17-29 years. The Internship was the first opportunity for employment for many of the participants, and resulted in training, skill acquisition, and improved outlook on career, training and education.

YES Evaluation Issue #2: How satisfied are participating youth with various aspects of HIIFNIY as part of YES program? If they continue, why?

The evidence indicated that overall, HIIFNIY interns were very satisfied with the program, supervision, training (although more was desired), skill acquisition, connections made, etc. Continuing with the program appeared to have been related to the program delivering generally what was expected: employment income and learning. The survey results suggest that the smaller percentage of those leaving the program left for a wide range of reasons generally not related to the program itself (e.g. other opportunities, family responsibilities, etc.).

YES Evaluation Issue #3: To what extent does HIIFNIY respond to employer needs? (note employers are always First Nations or Inuit Communities)

According to the employer surveys, overall the employers were satisfied with the way HIIFNIY served needs of their communities' youth for labour force training. Employers obtained additional labour and increased their pool of skilled workers for the future and thus strengthened their housing programs.

YES Evaluation Issue #4: To what extent did HIIFNIY assist youth in obtaining employment, upgrading employment, becoming self-employed and improve earnings?

Before the internship, most of the youth interviewed had held few jobs or had little employment experience and limited job skills. All were unemployed prior to the internship, but after the internship, over half of the interns (52%) indicated that they had obtained employment and many had continued to work in housing, reflecting an impact of the program in strengthening the unique housing-connection of this program. Of those employed, 52% indicated that the internship was helpful in obtaining further employment.

Youth who participated in HIIFNIY not only increased skills and obtained continued employment, but also obtained slightly higher wages and better work hours after the internship. At previous jobs, interns earned on average \$8.70 per hour for an average 38.6 hour week, whereas after the internship, those who were employed averaged \$9.61 per hour for a 37.4 hour week.

YES Evaluation Issue #5: To what extent and for what reasons do some participants remain unemployed or on income support after the program?

All interns were unemployed before the internship and nearly half of the interns (48%) returned to unemployment after the internship. From the immediately available data, we cannot identify the exact reason for this. Generally, however, the overall lack of jobs in First Nations and Inuit communities appears to be a key factor -- there are simply very few jobs to go to.

YES Evaluation Issue #6: To what extent has HIIFNIY established links between employers and youth?

HIIFNIY established links between employers and youth as indicated by the number of youth hired to continuing positions after the internships. Many interns also indicated that they had "obtained contacts" through the internship, others indicated that they were moving to jobs with contractors and others whom they had met during their internship. This appears to be a key program outcome of value, and one which could be strengthened in the future.

YES Evaluation Issue #7: To what extent has HIIFNIY assisted participants in making the school-to-work transition?

Since the average age of interns was 26, with the majority having been out of school for some time, the impact of HIIFNIY in meeting this YES program objective is somewhat

unclear. However, for many, the HIIFNIY internship was their first job, which is a particularly strong indication of impact on school-to-work transitions. Additionally, the program appears to have activated many more complex linkages of work-to-school transitions, as reflected by the number of young people who decided, after the HIIFNIY internship, to explore the option of returning to school.

YES Evaluation Issue #8: Are there activities under the HIIFNIY incremental, that is, over and above activities that employers would have undertaken in the absence of program funding?

The majority of employers (79%) reported that they would not have been able to hire the interns without funding from the HIIFNIY program. Later, when interns had increased in skill-level and experience, however, First Nations employers were able to continue to employ them, presumably for more advanced positions. This suggests that the program contributed to the development of skill level in a substantial way. Ideally, the issue of incrementality (Is the employment work that would not have been created without HIIFNIY?), would be given additional attention in any future evaluation.

YES Evaluation Issue #9: To what extent has HIIFNIY delivered measures to the target client group and what were the impacts?

Clearly the program reached Aboriginal youth. Impacts appear to have been substantial in skill development, in development of networks, and in development of career and educational thinking, as was noted in Section 2.2 above.

YES Evaluation Issue #10: What are the cost and benefits to society, to governments and to participants as a result of HIIFNIY?

In addition to the overall program costs (the CMHC HIIFNIY budget), employers reported costs of about \$3,400 per intern for supervision, training etc. Training appears to have been a particularly significant part of this cost CMHC staff suggested that on average, time utilization for the program may have been about 9 hours per First Nation, or 4.5 hours per intern -- a modest administrative cost overall.

Questions on the degree to which housing conditions had changed over the past two years suggested that use of HIIFNIY was associated with improved condition of housing stock and improved capacity for construction, renovation and repair. Differences were evident in comparisons of trends in housing condition and management capacity in participating and non-participating communities. However, it is more likely that such trends have their origin in the size of communities, availability of trained labour, and strength of the local economy than in the operation of HIIFNIY itself.

YES Evaluation Issue #11: To what extent are specific HIIFNIY program activities and characteristics related to success?

The requirement for training in the HIIFNIY program appears to have been a key success factor, as greater success was reported by interns where more training was provided. This was reflected in both trainee and employer indications that more should have been done to improve the potential for internships leading to certification, apprenticeships, etc. Good supervision also appeared to be a success factor.

The objective to improve housing capacity specifically appears to have been met, in that conditions not only were reported to improve, but continuity was obtained, with many interns remaining with their housing employers or finding other jobs in the housing sector. This suggests the importance of an industry linkage in such internship programs.

Many of these findings point to the need for greater continuity in efforts such as HIIFNIY, to ensure that internships develop skills which relate to identifiable career lines and that the successive career lines or opportunities are potentially available to youth after internships are completed -- *to ensure that there is somewhere to go afterwards*. Some of these concerns emerge in employer and intern suggestions, as is noted in the next section.

4. Employer and Intern Suggestions for the Future

The results indicate that HIIFNIY had strong practical and demonstrable impacts in the communities that were funded for internships.⁶ Much needs to be done in First Nations housing, and needs appear to be such that every “hand on a hammer” or a computer can make a difference.

Additionally, some respondents suggested that broader economic dynamics make this a program that works particularly well: housing and related infrastructure construction are one of the major sources of employment in First Nations communities and surrounding regions; withdrawal from the workforce of older construction workers are creating openings, and the housing and construction industry also offers opportunities for First Nations youth off-reserve.

Thus, the data from this evaluation, and particularly participant responses, suggest that this is a good program, but one which -- even so -- still could be strengthened. Some types of changes were suggested by the HIIFNIY employers and interns themselves. They indicated needs as follows:

Employer Recommendations: First Nations and Inuit community employers we interviewed suggested improvements such as:

- additional funding for the training component;
- better access to regional education resources (e.g. apprenticeships in nearby centres);
- more CMHC support and follow-up;
- higher wage subsidies;
- training kits and resources; books, materials, videos;
- more portability between communities;
- linkages with other programs (e.g. HRDC’s Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreements);
- two year internship commitments;
- ways to lead from internship to later permanent employment; and
- publicity on best practices -- success stories.

⁶ Of course, not every community was a success. Our surveys identified a very small number of cases where the interns in fact were in undirected job situations with poor supervision etc. However, these appeared to be rare.

Intern Recommendations: Interns interviewed suggested improvements such as:

- better screening of First Nations applicants;
- better briefing from the First Nations employer at the start;
- regular meetings with CMHC to monitor internships;
- more information about the internship;
- wages to match responsibilities (some interns had higher level jobs with more responsibilities);
- better administration of the First Nations housing programs generally (e.g. to have materials arrive on time to avoid work interruptions);
- more formal and on the job training;
- more qualified trainers;
- linkages to urban communities and other job opportunities, linkages to apprenticeships, more training opportunities.
- a path to other related education (e.g. “in architecture”); and
- obtaining a certification of completion.

Overall, these suggestions were seen as providing a number of valuable potential directions for improvement of HIIFNIY or similar programs, but improvements which must be weighed in terms of their impact in drawing resources from the core output of the program -- the subsidies for intern employment.

5. Conclusions

While a number of limitations were faced by the evaluation (limited program experience, need to rely strongly on participant assessments, lack of hard measures of key factors such as housing conditions, etc.), a clear view of the program emerged from the evaluation, generally indicating success of the program in achieving its goals. Some of these key indications of goal achievement included:

- That employment was provided to Aboriginal youth who reported good job experiences and positive impacts on employability;
 - youth reported substantial training while in the program (75%);
 - youth reported good satisfaction with supervision (90%);
 - youth satisfaction with the program was very high (90%);
- That most of this work by interns went into hard outputs -- new housing construction and housing repairs and renovations;
- That significant changes in employment status were reported for youth:
 - while 100% of the youth were unemployed before the program, 52% were employed following the program;
 - while 58% of the youth were reliant on social assistance before the program, 19% relied on social assistance for income after the program;
- First Nations and Inuit communities made substantial financial contributions to the employment of interns, and often continued employment of these youth following the conclusion of the subsidy program;
- First Nation and Inuit employers identified a number of practical advantages to the HIIFNIY program as compared to other subsidy programs they had participated in;
- First Nations expressed a high demand for this program; 100% of past participants and previously unsuccessful applicants indicated that they would apply for the program again if possible;
- Both interns (100%) and employers (100%) indicated they would recommend the program to another young person or another First Nation.

Some areas for improvement were suggested, such as the need to reach smaller First Nations, to improve access to the program by female Aboriginal youth, and to improve career linkages and transitions for participating youth, but overall, the program was successful in many areas. Overall, therefore, we can conclude that **HIIFNIY is a good investment for Canada, but some changes could be desirable, as suggested by participant views and related considerations.**