Willow Bunch Métis Local #17

Project Number: 1176-SK

Case Study Report

Willow Bunch Healing Project

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1. Introduction

The following report is one of 13 case studies being conducted for the impact evaluation of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF). The case studies were selected to include representation from a variety of project types and targets (Appendix 1). This case study covers the project types and targets for Métis, rural, west, and materials development.

The project addressed here is the Willow Bunch Healing Project delivered by the Willow Bunch Métis Local #17 of Willow Bunch, Saskatchewan (AHF-funded project #1176-SK). The primary purpose of the project is to, "Give a positive awareness of history of the Willow Bunch Métis to the community ... [and] increase pride in being Métis."[1] The report will describe Willow Bunch, the Métis and non-Aboriginal communities within, the project's service delivery, team characteristics, and what it hopes to achieve in the short and long term. The report will also focus on changes in individual participants, the most prominent changes in the community, and how those changes were measured. AHF board-requested indicators of change (physical abuse, sexual abuse, incarceration rates, suicide, and children in care) were not collected in this case because they were insufficiently sensitive to the recognized needs and desired outcomes of the Métis community of Willow Bunch.

2. Methods

This case study evaluates changes of Métis participation in cultural activities, interviews, and meetings and of community awareness of true Métis history by gathering and analyzing qualitative information on areas of desired change that were selected cooperatively with the project. Through the use of program logic, the report also examines whether change can be attributed to project effort or to other contributing environmental factors.

Project files (funding proposal, contribution agreement, quarterly reports, and a tourism and economic development plan), the project's response to the AHF Supplementary Survey of July 2001 and the National Process and Evaluation Survey, Internet, and key informant interviews with the project team and selected community service providers were the primary data sources. Although participant feedback forms were mentioned in the proposal as being one of the evaluative and accountability measures the project had planned, this was not the case. This is unfortunate as feedback could have provided very useful information for the case study. It seemed the project relied only on verbal feedback at the time of each activity.

During the first week of March 2002, one-on-one interviews were conducted with 11 individuals associated with the project or with local community services. The people interviewed included three team members, an advisory council member who is also president and board member of Métis Local #17, an Elder, a youth who was also the coordinator for the committee developing the historic village in the community, and the remainder were from community service agencies—two Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the school principal, a retired local parish priest, and the postmaster.[2]

Statistics were collected from websites for Statistics Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and Government of Saskatchewan as well as from project files. Attempts to collect data from the Coronach RCMP detachment and the Willow Bunch town office were unsuccessful as there were no reported incidences of crimes and the town office did not keep statistics up to date.

The development of interview questions (Appendix 2) was based on the selected project's desired short- and long-term goals (see performance map) and AHF board-mandated questions. The logic model was sent to the project prior to the development of questions in order to confirm any changes to project goals from the proposal stage to implementation. The questions attempted to determine if any desired social change in participants and in the community was achieved. Pilot testing was done in this case to ensure whether the questions were easily understood. Separate questionnaires were developed, one for team members that were based on the assumption respondents would have some knowledge of the participants. The other questionnaire was for outside agencies (i.e., school, museum, and town office) in the hopes to determine whether project output (i.e., information on Métis culture and history) was achieved and knowledge of the Métis was expanding.

The project was able to secure interviews with some of the leading community members who were not necessarily involved with the project. Contact with some of the potential interviewees was difficult as some worked outside the community and one had become very ill. Actual interviews were conducted by an AHF employee, and two of the three project team members were interviewed at the Local where privacy was limited to the project coordinator's office.

2.1 Limitations

Because direct assessment was problematic, indirect assessment or the perceptions of key informants were weighted heavily. Furthermore, the only participant feedback was unsolicited and informal, which did not allow for the discovery of trends or anomalies.

Two days of training were offered to community support coordinators and others of the AHF in survey development and interviewing techniques in March 2001, with a follow-up in July 2001. Work began in earnest on this case study in January 2002, and interviews were prepared based on the short-term outcomes identified in the performance map. The interviewer was independent in the field and, in this case, no debriefing after each day of interviews took place. Field notes were reviewed and transcribed only after all interviews were conducted. There is really only one line of evidence in this case study, which was directly obtained from, or referred by, the project team. However, dissent was encouraged in at least two introductory remarks preceding interview questions:

- that there are no right or wrong answers, only answers that are true from your perspective; and
- the report will *not be able to identify who said what*, so please feel free to say things that may cause controversy.

Attempts to secure disconfirming evidence, rival explorations, or negative cases were limited to only one respondent. Other possibilities to secure this type of information was negligible due to lack of time and scheduling of interviews. The only quantitative information obtained was limited to rates of participation in some project activities. The luxury of multiple evaluators was not available within the resource limitations; however, the context and data were reviewed and most responses were recorded verbatim. This allowed verification and reanalysis by an external evaluation facilitator, which may have reduced bias associated with only one investigator.

The interviewer was mostly reliant on information that was readily available as only three days were allocated to gathering data. The most important information missing are social indicator data, disconfirming

points of view, as well as more long-term follow-up of community progress based on the desired outcomes identified.

3. Project Description

Historical information on the Métis of Willow Bunch is almost non-existent, and what does exist gives the Métis a negative image as well as being written by non-Métis people. This project hopes to change the historical image of the Métis who contributed to the settlement of Willow Bunch. In this light, the project also hopes to change the views of non-Métis to allow pride of being Métis to flourish.

A proposal was sent to and approved by the AHF to identify, collect, and disseminate true historical contributions of the Métis of Willow Bunch in order to heal the negativity toward the Métis, thus meeting the needs of the Métis community. It is not the project's wish to rewrite history but to show the community of Willow Bunch, the Métis community of Saskatchewan, and the rest of Saskatchewan that the Métis established Willow Bunch and later contributed to the present-day community. The project commencement date was 1 October 2000 and was funded as a one-year project that ended 30 September 2001, with a contribution in the amount of $109,200. The project is currently in its second year of operation.

3.1 The Project Team

The project is delivered out of a recently purchased house. Métis Local #17 was established in the 1940s but has never received core funding nor has it delivered any services from an established location. It existed solely through membership fees, and the elected board participated on a voluntary basis. At present, its only other funding source comes from the AHF.

Although the AHF National Process Evaluation Survey stated that the project had four full-time employees, two part-time employees, and a number of volunteers who contributed approximately 40 hours per month, it became clear that the project coordinator was the only full-time team member. The consultant and researcher visit the project three to four days per month. There was another researcher–interviewer for the first six months but is no longer with the project.

The project coordinator is Métis, born in Willow Bunch but left when he was 10 years old. He returned years later to settle in the community. He was president of the Willow Bunch Métis Local #17 from 1996 to 2000 but stepped down as president in order to become the project coordinator. Since 1996, he has been involved in various Métis and community issues (i.e., member of the Willow Bunch museum board, past Métis Nation of Saskatchewan board member of the Métis Employment and Training Services Inc., the southern Saskatchewan representative on the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan Hunting and Land Rights Task Force, and member of the Southern Saskatchewan Tourism Association). Prior to 1996, his experiences included rodeo announcing, auctioneering, stand-up comic, rodeo competitor, park guide, and horse packer. As project coordinator, he sets up all activities and conducts interviews for the project, which include cultural events and workshops.

The project consultant (co-coordinator for the current year) is also Métis with familial ties to Willow Bunch. He offers consulting services on many projects for a number of Aboriginal organizations and governments. His services include evaluations, research, needs assessments, and proposal submissions

on issues relating to economic development and tourism, homelessness, family violence, hunting, and education. For the project he developed the proposal, completed the quarterly reports, and supported the research. As well, he prepared a tourism and economic development study for the Local in 1998.

The project researcher and writer holds a doctorate in educational policy and administrative studies, a master in Indian and northern education, a bachelor of arts in history, and a professional teaching certificate. She has completed an extensive list of reports for a number of Aboriginal organizations, both national and provincial, such as the Métis National Council, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, Gabriel Dumont Institute, and other Métis organizations and Aboriginal communities. Her more recent research has concentrated in the area of economic development for Métis people.

According to the project coordinator, 30 to 35 volunteers contributed to the office setup for the Local. Elder involvement appears to be one Elder, but there was some confusion as to whether he was on the advisory committee or not. In either case, he openly contributes advice whenever called upon.

Involvement of youth seems limited as there is only one at present who is involved. He recently identified as a Métis and is now a member of the Local as well as the coordinator of the historical village. Members of the advisory committee for the AHF-funded project also make up the board of the Local.

3.2 Activities and Outcomes

Three major social issues affecting the Métis community identified in the project's funding proposal were high incidences of depression, drug and alcohol abuse, and racism. The main program activities expected to produce change in these conditions were:

- collect and analyze stories, interviews, research material;
- examine the loss of Métis identity;
- identify what it means to be Métis;
- identify Métis families and their contributions;
- involve Métis Elders and youth;
- develop a communication plan;
- revive and appreciate traditional Métis activities, e.g., Aboriginal Day, Riel Day, fly the Métis Nation flag;
- maintain regular public meetings and newsletters and use all media to inform and promote a positive image;
- re-educate the Métis and the non-Métis community of true history;
- work with the museum, schools, provincial Métis agencies, and organizations to promote positive Métis history;
- co-sponsor workshops and cross-cultural awareness in Willow Bunch and elsewhere with other Métis organizations, agencies, and services; and
- work with community leaders on promoting Willow Bunch for a new positive image.

These activities would lead to the production of booklets, brochures, and posters on Métis contributions to the area, a book or publication on the healing process, and a book or publication on the Willow Bunch Métis. In the short term, there would be an increased number participating in cultural activities, interviews, and meetings; an increased number of Métis sharing their stories; and an increased number aware of the true Métis history. These would ultimately create conditions where there would be an increase in pride

in being Métis, a positive awareness of the history of the Willow Bunch Métis, a better relationship with the non-Métis community, and an improved Métis image.

The relationship between project activities and selected short- and long-term benefits is set out in the logic model (Table 1). The performance map that follows details the project's mission, target, objectives, and goals. This map or reference guide was used to determine what information should be gathered to measure any change that has occurred.

Table 1) Logic Model—Willow Bunch Healing Project

Activities	Address the legacy of a nation of Aboriginal people, the Métis of Willow Bunch, which has lost its Métis identity.
What we did	# of cultural activities; and developed communication plan.
What we wanted	Increase # of Métis participation in cultural activities, interviews, meetings; and increase awareness of true Métis history.
How we know things changed (short term)	# participating in cultural activities; who shared stories; and # aware of true Métis history.
Why we are doing this	Ensure a positive portrayal of the history of the Willow Bunch Métis; and increase pride in being Métis.
How we know things changed (long term)	# who are proud to be Métis; and # of people who are aware of the true history of Métis in the community.

Table 2) Performance Map—Willow Bunch Healing Project

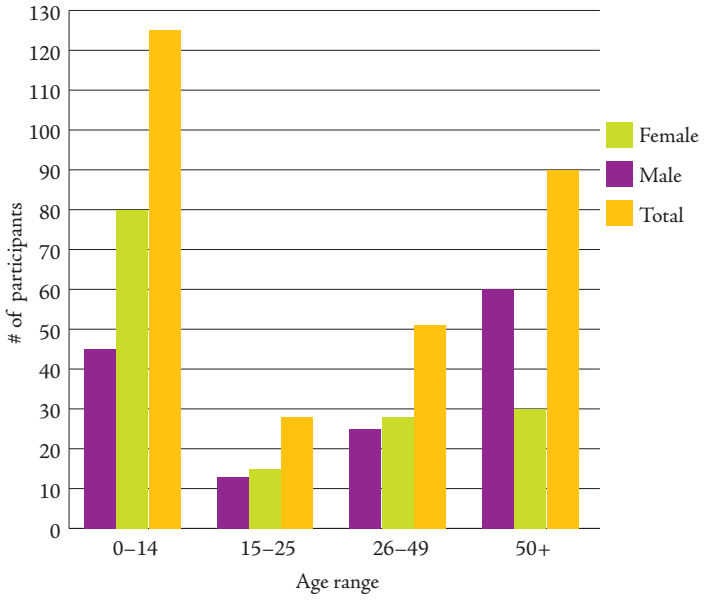
MISSION: Give a positive awareness of history of the Willow Bunch Métis to the community; increase pride in being Métis; and community will begin the healing process.			
HOW?	**WHO?**	**WHAT do we want?**	**WHY?**
Resources	**Reach**	**Results**	
activities/outputs		**short-term outcomes**	**long-term outcomes**
Communicate/educate: develop communication plan; re-educate community; hold regular public meetings; use all media to inform and promote; revive and appreciate traditional Métis activities (e.g., Aboriginal Day, Riel Day, fly Métis Nation flag); work with schools, museum, provincial Métis agencies, and organizations to promote positive Métis history; and work with community leaders to promote a new image.	The whole community of Willow Bunch.	Increase # of Métis participation in cultural activities, interviews, and meetings; and increase awareness of true Métis history.	Ensure a positive portrayal of the history of the Willow Bunch Métis; and increase pride in being Métis.

How will we know we made a difference? What changes will we see? How much change occurred?			
Budget	**Reach**	**Short-term Measures**	**Long-term Measures**
$109,200	# of Métis who participated in cultural activities and # of participants who attended meetings.	# participating in cultural activities; # who shared stories; and # who are aware of true Métis history.	# who are proud to be Métis; and # of people in the community who are aware of the true history of Métis.

3.3 Participant Characteristics

Attendance at public events where activities were organized by the project included: the old-time fiddle dine and dance (150 to 300 Métis and non-Métis people attended); a workshop on Métis identity (50 Métis people attended from the towns of Assiniboia, Wood Mountain, Rock Glen, and Willow Bunch); and the cultural day event that took place at the school (approximately 120 participants attended of whom 110 were students). All other activities that occurred did not indicate participant estimates. The following figure indicates the total number of participants for the full year submitted by the project in the fourth quarterly report.[3]

Figure 1) Participants by Age



3.4 Community Context

The town of Willow Bunch, Saskatchewan, is located at the southern end of the province approximately 50 kilometres from the United States border. It is a picturesque, small community typical of southern Saskatchewan. On a hill at the back of town are remnants of small shacks where the Métis who worked as seasonal labourers lived. This part of town was considered the lower class section and approximately 40 Métis families lived in these dwellings. "In fact, early in the twentieth century, the Métis were actually removed from the village by the French-Canadian elite and were forced to live in a nearby road allowance community known as the 'Métis hamlet.'"[4] Today, only a few remaining structures still stand, a legacy of how the Métis lived and were treated. Commercial buildings along the main street include a garage, motel/restaurant, tavern, and gas station. Recently acquired, Métis Local #17 now has its own building. Within the town, there are the town/fire hall, rural municipality building, co-op store, post office, library, school, retirement home, and convent that has been converted into a museum and community/day care centre. A few heritage buildings lie vacant and many homes have long-standing "for sale" signs giving the town an abandoned look.

The population of the town is 400 with 50 per cent being Métis.[5] It is now felt by the project that there are approximately 90 per cent who are Métis, but most do not identify or know they are Métis.

> I feel ninety per cent are Métis really, but that there's still a vast majority that wouldn't even admit. A lot of them, not so much that they wouldn't admit it, they don't know it. It has been hid from them and because of the past experiences over the years, you could fit into the community and your family got along a lot better in the community if you could deny being Métis or if you could hide it in a way then you would [and] you could fit in with the church a lot better. You could fit in with the structures that the non-Métis community had brought into the area such as credit unions, school boards, different kinsmen clubs, and different organizations. You would be accepted by them a lot more if they thought you were other than Métis.[6]

As of July 2001 there were 395 people living in Willow Bunch[7] compared to 430 in 1996.[8] This decrease is indicative of the economic turmoil this small rural town faces. Many high school graduates leave for education or opportunity and few return.

Major industries in the area include agriculture and the mining of natural non-mineral resources used in agricultural, industrial, and craftsmen products. The farming and ranching community is struggling with a three-year drought that is still ongoing. Tourism is an industry the town of Willow Bunch wishes and needs to improve and expand upon. In terms of dollars for economic growth, very little trickles into the community. Mostly, small grants from the Quebec government are awarded to improve francophone initiatives in Willow Bunch. Since the Saskatchewan government has made it policy to include and improve the well-being of Métis people as a separate and distinct society in the province, more dollars have become available for education and other programs that include a Métis component.

Regarding issues facing the community, moderate challenges were stated as lack of acceptance of Aboriginal language and culture by local institutions, local community opposition (fear, denial), substance abuse, and lack of transportation (i.e., local bus, vehicles). Slight challenges include adult illiteracy, apathy or lack of active Aboriginal community support, poor local economic conditions, family violence, sexual abuse, and lack of community resources, facilities, and services. It should be noted that there were no problems with suicide or fetal alcohol syndrome/fetal alcohol effects (FAS/FAE) and no severe challenges facing the community.[9] Analysis of social indicators revealed that there were no cases of physical or sexual abuse, children in care, or attempted or completed suicides in Willow Bunch for the year 2001. Although the data suggest that Willow Bunch is a healthy community, some respondents feel this may not be the case. They feel that small community dynamics, such as lack of trust in police services, may influence reporting.

There were no residential schools in this area; however, Sisters of the Cross Convent did operate as a school between 1914 and 1971 and has since been converted to a museum. The Willow Bunch public school, opened since 1888, accepts both Métis and non-Métis students from the area. When the convent opened as a school it accepted and boarded both girls and boys from the outlying areas until 1923. No evidence could be found to determine the number of Métis children who attended either school. All students, both Métis and non-Métis, were taught that Métis were

> people of mixed background, they have some qualities and some faults of both races. Many of them are irascible, inconsistent, wasteful and love alcoholic beverages. They cannot work consistently nor can they adapt as farming or business. They become easy prey to the european settlers that unscrupulously buy their land for a piece of bread or a bottle of whiskey and are thus reduced to a miserable existence ... Today with few exceptions, the Métis are rather miserable.[10]

This excerpt is from a history book that is still held in the Willow Bunch library and, thus, reinforces the non-Métis community's negative views toward the Métis. As stated in the project files, this constant degradation has led Métis to abuse, violence, and addictions and feelings of low self-esteem, depression, fear, and shame. It has created fear, distrust, anger, suspicion, gossip, and open hostility towards Métis by non-Métis people: "There were stories of beatings, name calling, racism"[11] that some Métis came forward and told.

Historical documentation reveals how the Métis were mistreated and shunned from institutions such as the credit union, community councils, and organizations: "They could be part of the parish. They were part of the fold. However, there was not any of them that sat on parish council or school boards."[12] Even the young did not escape the racism:

> I definitely seen a lot of segregation and that type of thing. The first day of school, I remember playing with a French boy and we were getting along fine and the nun come over and I couldn't understand French. I couldn't speak French that good but I could understand some of it to get by and I remember her saying, "you don't play with Mitchif, you play with your own kind." She took him away from me, you know, the dirty half-breed.[13]

The Métis were considered intellectually inferior and mainly restricted to agricultural labour. If a Métis wanted to increase employment opportunities he had to forego his identity: "I think that a lot of the people in this community were anti-Métis for a long time. A lot of people."[14]

In 1998, Métis Local #17 received a grant from the Clarence Campeau Development Fund, a Métis-controlled funding agency established to provide a means for Métis communities to plan economic development opportunities. This grant allowed the Local to hire consultants to prepare a tourism and economic development plan for the Métis. It was then discovered that the community did contain a rich Métis history that has been neither identified nor clearly documented. It was this discovery that led the Local to work on rectifying this omission.

4. Results

The desired outcomes that were examined focus upon social and environmental changes but also include a look at individual change. More specifically, the following discussion highlights: impact on the individual, including project awareness, Métis involvement, and identification; and impact on the community, including response to the project, access to information on the Métis, community relations, and community knowledge of Métis. It should be noted that some of the activities set out in the contribution agreement between the project and AHF did not take place. There was no book produced or distributed as the project had difficulties in obtaining the number of stories and interviews that were hoped for, no formal communication plan was developed, and there was no evidence of any brochures, pamphlets, or posters produced by the project.

4.1 Impact on the Individual

The majority of respondents were aware of the project, although most saw it as the Local's activities rather than the Willow Bunch Healing Project. The following lists what respondents believe is the central message of the project:

- "an understanding of the healing project";
- "learning one's own culture";
- "Métis oppression is revealed";
- "the way Métis were treated historically";
- "heal loss of Métis identity";
- "bring community of Willow Bunch together";
- "jobs for Métis";
- "start another museum";

- "portray accurate historical account of the Métis"; and
- "clear the Métis name by showing Métis people as being positive."

While only a small portion of the non-Métis community may have been exposed to project material, those who were appeared positive toward Métis culture and history.

Métis membership and identification are clearly on the rise. The Local reports a membership of 250 from the towns of Willow Bunch, Coronach, Rockglen, and Bengough; the membership was at 100 four years ago. This increase may have been influenced by AHF-funded activity, as some only discovered that they were Métis once the project started: "A lot of it is people didn't even know that there were Métis. They didn't even know that there was an organization or a nation that there could be a membership." The increased identification could also be attributed to recent legislative changes to policies that benefit Métis people.

Many Métis appear more interested in their family and group history, which is manifested through their attendance at Local meetings and the increase in discussion about Métis identity. When asked about changes in project participants, respondents agreed that there was a dramatic increase (over 80%) in participant knowledge of accurate Métis history as well as involvement and pride in Métis culture. One respondent said, "I see kids in my classes that talk about being Métis now and I don't know if that would have happened ten years ago or five years ago, for that matter." Another stated, "I feel more proud to be Métis now." The Métis flag is now flown on all occasions, and more community members wear the Métis sash with pride. Respondents also felt there was a moderate to dramatic increase (over 40%) in participant knowledge of Métis culture and identification. Although there was some disagreement about the extent of change, respondents did believe that there was an overall increase in non-Métis' knowledge of accurate Métis history. Respondents credited a variety of actions and conditions for the noted change, including: an individual desire to learn; the influence of the school librarian and principal; the commitment of the project team and project activities; no accurate information on Métis history existed before; open and inviting cultural events during holidays and school time that are focused on reconciliation and not blame (i.e., a Métis dine and dance where about 150 to 300 people attended); and the existence of the Métis Local facility as well as their increased participation with Métis Nation of Saskatchewan affiliates.

4.2 Impact on the Community

There were mixed feelings regarding what percentage of the community was positive about the project—anywhere from less than 10 per cent to 50 per cent. Those that were positive were the Métis involved with the Local, students, people who have an appreciation for history, many of the Elders, those with a broad world view, and those who have left Willow Bunch and gained an opportunity to experience other environments and different cultures.

> The ones that did live in a Métis way or recognized as Métis people here, they really are reluctant … because they were always put down all their life about being proud of who they were … the people that are enthusiastic are the ones that were never treated any differently … they never really went out to say they were [Métis]. They were a little more light-skinned … and given opportunities to better themselves economically or agricultural businesses or what have you. The people that went to the convent that were identified as Métis people—most of their memories are quite hurtful. So they don't [want to engage]. It's hard getting through to them.[15]

Others who showed enthusiasm included the mayor, the librarian, the nuns at the rectory, the kinsmen club, and the local principal who was particularly supportive. One respondent stated, "He's been involved in many of our feasts and he participates in the cultural events at the school and he encourages the Métis to come in the community and present the Métis point of view at the school. That is something that didn't exist before and is now become stronger and stronger." The Local is also gaining ground with the museum board that has resisted changes to its displays. Now, however, they are starting to listen.

Still, some were resistant and respondents estimated that anywhere from 10 per cent to 50 per cent felt apprehensive, as one respondent stated, "Older Métis but they're enthusiastic about the project. They are glad something is being done, but as participants they are reluctant." The less enthusiastic were older and more closed-minded who felt threatened by an accurate history and changing of school language laws—English rather than French would be the primary language—and resented economic development funding for the Métis. One respondent stated, "The people who never left Willow Bunch who have taken one interpretation of history for granted for so long and because a project like this is going to challenge some of those assumptions, they're perhaps a little defensive about it."

All respondents were generally pleased with what the project had been doing. One non-Métis respondent felt it was great that the Métis were writing their own history. A member of the school authority also expressed his appreciation of the Local's eagerness to help in school cultural activities related to Métis issues. The profile of the Métis still has opportunity for growth, as two respondents were admittedly unaware of the project and the Métis Local but understood that education could only improve community relations.

Some respondents observed that there had been an increase in the amount of information on the Métis. Information dissemination is taking place for the first time, which is also influenced by new benefits for the Métis (e.g., education funding). The following lists what the project has done in the past year to get the information out to the public that has never been done before:

- 10 to 12 workshops held that were open to the general public;
- 8 to 10 cultural activities were held and hosted by the project;
- the Local is working within the school;
- other Métis organizations are visiting the community;
- several newspaper articles and reports on Métis have been written; and
- interviews regarding the project have taken place.

Community respondents noted that there was increased discussion about Métis issues and Local activity. Information sharing included monthly handouts, historical documentation available to Local members, and what is being taught in the school (although curriculum changes occurred prior to the project). The project intended to produce brochures, pamphlets, and posters but has instead made use of already developed pamphlets and posters of other Métis organizations. Still, communication has occurred mainly through open discussion with animated displays of Métis culture rather than through written handouts. This seems to work well, albeit limited to a smaller audience. Métis history and culture, rich with life and colour, is better related through demonstration.

Since the project started, some felt that views toward Métis had improved, shown by the increased community involvement in Métis activities, especially by the youth, and an informal agreement made

between the historic village committee and the project.[16] Also, some community members are encouraged by opportunities for prosperity. The impact from project activity is being felt outside the community, with some wondering how Willow Bunch got so far ahead while other communities have not. One respondent said, "I've gotten phone calls from some people that used to live here that I don't even know and thanking me for what we have been doing and wish me all the success." Progress will happen when presence, resources, committed people, and experts combine. The steadfast enthusiasm, congenial approach, and firm vision of the project team have influenced many to become more open-minded about Métis issues.

The majority of respondents also felt there was an improvement, albeit minor, in the broader community's view of the Métis as evidenced by more people hiring Métis and those starting to ask questions, especially the students at school. Although minor, respondents credited the improved image to Métis displays, the physical presence of the Local, other Métis organizations in the province, Métis in the media, provincial education policy, and more open discussion about Métis issues. To determine how much knowledge the community has on the Métis, respondents were asked what it means to be one. Responses included:

- "Aboriginal blood mixed with non-Aboriginal blood."
- "Trace roots back to a particular people and culture."
- "Descendants from seven Métis families from the Red River settlement near Winnipeg who were the first settlers of the prairies and have a separate culture."
- "Musical history and sash."
- "I don't really know. As far as I'm concerned I'm a Canadian, Canadian-Métis. But first of all I'm Canadian I would say. But I'm Métis I don't deny that. I grew up to be. In the early years you see you didn't go around bragging that you were a Métis. But now it seems everybody wants to be a Métis. So I don't know ... the project ... As far as I can see it hasn't changed me at all but I'm glad to see the way things are going."

All informants concur that the broader community has greater knowledge of Métis history and traditions as evidenced by the increase in youth identification as well as invitations to participate in non-Métis events and committees. They believe that a number of factors have created conditions where change was possible, such as:

- workshops and activities associated with Métis history and culture, especially those enabled by AHF support where experts came (e.g., Gabriel Dumont Institute and the Métis Employment and Training Services Inc.);
- the importance of having someone validate your identity;
- recognition of Métis contributions to the community in a positive, non-threatening way;
- having a physical presence in the community (i.e., the building);
- available information about the Métis for distribution; and
- the Saskatchewan government's education policy that encourages Aboriginal history to be incorporated into school curriculum.

Overall, respondents believe that increased awareness of and respect for Métis culture and history has evolved as a result of project activities:

> The more I can see, it's even broadening my own perspective to know that some of the most highly decorated veterans from this community were Métis. That the giant was Métis. You know, it makes you look at some of that history a little bit differently because the giant with a name Beaupre has been very much promoted as a francophone and his Métis heritage has never really been promoted. And I think most of the history of this area has come from a euro-centric perspective up until the healing project.[17]

Pride in Métis culture has resulted in increased identification:

> The Métis people were shunned traditionally and it's kind of grown through time to where we are now. Now I think the Métis association has such a positive impact on the community and I think it's opening up eyes and people are seeing that, you know, it's not that beneath you. It's good to be Métis and to be proud of who you are.[18]

4.3 Partnerships and Sustainability

No formal partnerships have been established and sustainability is really a non-issue. Once the book is published the objective will have been achieved. Still, informal partners are plenty. As one respondent said, "You've got the kinsmen involved, you've got the community involved, you've got the school involved, you've got the museum involved, you got the historical society involved, and the Métis themselves. So this something that's never happened before."

Although there seems to be support from local organizations, the extent of that support is not evident, and trust issues are still an undercurrent in the relationship between the Métis and others in the community. Some suspect that overly enthusiastic "partners" may be clamouring for Métis-specific funding without any intent of sharing the "power" with the Métis. Overall, it was felt that support of the local leadership, school principal, kinsmen club, parks and recreation, postmaster, town council, and rural municipality were helpful and earnest. Even Métis organizations outside the community have shown their support through visiting the community and by participating in cultural activities on the project's behalf.

As for financial sustainability of the Local, it will be difficult to continue because AHF is its only funding source. They will be looking at Heritage Canada, Gabriel Dumont Institute, and the Clarence Campeau Development Fund for future funding.

There are no co-sponsors involved with the project, but support linkages have been established with Métis Addictions Council of Saskatchewan Inc., Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research, and Métis Nation of Saskatchewan. The project is currently working with the Willow Bunch Historical Village Committee to ensure that the Métis component of the village is accurately portrayed.

4.4 Accountability

One team member believed that the Métis leadership is constantly monitoring and evaluating activities at monthly Local meetings that are also open to the community. Even though the project stated they were using feedback forms to evaluate and monitor, none were submitted with project monitoring reports. The project may have felt that completing the project monitoring reports was the only evaluation exercise required. Communication with the community included sharing the project's work plan for the second year and having constant informal communication with the school, museum, historical committee, and other Métis institutions. Press releases, public announcements, and live interviews were included as well.

4.5 Addressing the Need

The project is not addressing the legacy of physical and sexual abuse in residential schools, but it does state that the intent was only to focus on Métis identity and history. Residential schools were only one

of many tools used to assimilate Aboriginal people, and there were many other colonial institutions that also attempted to quash Métis identity and culture.

The project has set a foundation for an improved relationship, not only with others, but within the Métis community as well, by examining the loss, reclaiming Métis identity, documenting an accurate history, and using this information to re-educate the community. Overall, the team feels that the activities undertaken have contributed to changes in attitude and acceptance of the Métis from most people who have been exposed. The project credits the Métis members of the community for their progress to date.

4.6 Successes and Best Practices

One best practice was to have one-on-one and group discussion and communication with the community and to work with the local school system. Métis cultural events that provide opportunity to see, hear, and taste the culture through food, song, and dance have been very well received. Involvement of local agencies in project activities has improved trust and relationships, and the linking with other Métis organizations has increased information flow to the community. A constant presence (flying the Métis flag and showcasing the Red River cart) and voice in the community have encouraged communication on history and culture. The most notable success seems to be the cultural activities at the school, as youth tend to be more open to different ideas and are eager to increase their knowledge.

4.7 Challenges

Some community relations are strained, especially with the older set. The project identified the difficulty in dealing with some Métis elders who were reluctant to relate their experiences; however, the elders are becoming more involved in Local activities.

During Canada Day celebrations, the project put on a display with the Métis flag and Red River cart, demonstrated how to make bannock, and played traditional Métis music that most attendees seemed to enjoy by spending more time at this display than at others (including the Francophone community display). Leaders and demonstrators of the Francophone display went to the Métis display, interrupted the festivities, and announced that they were going to sing some French songs, including what they believed that *"les sauvages et les Métis, voyageurs"* had played. This show of dominance and hostility dampened festivities and was done with a sense of complete normality. In order to change this attitude, the project feels that it will take more than two years.

The project also had difficulty convincing people that it is trying to improve community relations. Support from some church members does exist (e.g., nuns allowing access to birth and death records), but most suspicion and doubt appears to emanate from other church members.

4.8 Lessons Learned

Only a small number of interviews have taken place thus far, and the team felt they needed more time to interview older Métis. They did not take into consideration the guilt and denial older Métis feel about their heritage and the time needed to develop trust. They also realized that recent funding is being allocated to Métis initiatives, causing some resentment from those feeling left out of the resource loop. One way

to improve relations would be to work jointly on St. Joseph's Day celebrations. The project stated that teaching the youth about Métis history and about being Métis would be more beneficial because they felt the youth are more open-minded, and those of the older generation tend to be more set in their ways. Thus, the project is planning to coordinate a cultural youth camp at one of the provincial parks in the area.

The tenacity of those who are threatened by a new social order where Métis value is recognized was unanticipated and underestimated. They are the ones who control how local heroes are portrayed and resist any message that threatens their place in the historical social hierarchy. While the team is not entirely clear on how to influence them, it is clear that the endeavour will be long-standing. The team felt that lateral violence[19] is seen on a daily basis and will not go away once history has been accurately documented. They presented a wish list of what they would like to see done, which was to restore the Métis cemetery and to prepare a documentary on the life of Métis-born Edward Beaupre (the Willow Bunch Giant who was the tallest man in Canada and the fourth tallest in the world).

5. Conclusion

Historical segregation of the Métis in schools, employment opportunities, and housing has led to racism, distrust, and lost identity that still exist today in Willow Bunch. Educating the community about true Métis history, encouraging pride in Métis identity, and attempting to improve the relationship between Métis and non-Métis appear to have contributed to positive changes in the community. As a program focused on re-educating the community with a positive message about the value of Métis identity and contribution to the region, the Willow Bunch Healing Project appears to be having a positive influence on those who participate and is generally well received by most. Those exposed to project material and activities, who appeared to have gained knowledge and were positive toward Métis culture and history, are Métis involved with the Local, students (many now identify as Métis), historians, many Métis Elders, people re-entering the community who hold a broader world view, the mayor, the librarian, nuns at the rectory, members of the kinsmen club, the local principal, and members of the museum board who previously resisted changes to the Métis displays but are now starting to listen.

In addition, more Métis attend meetings at the Local and appear to be interested in their family and group history. For some, they have discovered that they are Métis. Influence in the broader community has been credited to a community desire to learn, the influence of school authority, a committed project team, open and friendly cultural events, the existence of the Métis Local, and participation of other Métis organizations. Basically, project activities are allowing for accurate information and cultural celebrations to be shared for the very first time. These activities have been conducive to positive learning experiences, improved community relations, and views toward the Métis. Evidence includes increased employment for Métis and more interest in Métis culture and history. Informal communication has worked well in some cases; however, written material from the project could supplement informal efforts.

Increased Métis membership and identification indicates pride. This change in attitude may be influenced by the project team, including the coordinator's dedication and humorous, down-to-earth approach. Other influences include the physical presence of the Métis (i.e., Métis flag is flown, Red River cart is displayed, cultural events with animated displays are taking place, and Métis Local facility is evident for the first time), economic opportunities, and provincial legislative changes that benefit the Métis in Saskatchewan.

Those who seemed not to respond well to project materials and activities were older community members, some church members, those who have never left the community, and those who resent historical changes to school language laws. The feeling is that it will take much longer than the life of this project to change attitudes and ease suspicion. Also, some older Métis are still reluctant to share their stories, and feelings of guilt and denial will need more time to change.

Although the project's first year plan was to complete an accurate historical account of the Métis of Willow Bunch, they found that it was going to take a lot longer as only one quarter of the book was done. Historical information on the Métis in general was difficult to obtain; however, work with the museum committee to improve the Métis displays is well underway. Finally, while the extent and magnitude is not entirely clear, something beyond physical changes is definitely different in Willow Bunch. A community-wide survey would be needed to quantify the impact.

6. Recommendations

The following recommendations are suggestions to enhance administration and evaluation of the program.

Program recommendations:

- increase exposure of information on Métis (open discussion and written materials) and include demonstrations of Métis song, dance, and food;
- include project-produced documentation to hand out during cultural demonstrations and information sessions; and
- project-produced documentation and advertising of events to be included in local paper and distributed to the whole community to ensure information dissemination to everyone in Willow Bunch.

Evaluation recommendations:

- develop a participant feedback form to guide improvements; and
- develop and conduct a community survey to determine the extent of Métis knowledge and rate of racial discrimination.

Notes

[1] Information from Willow Bunch Healing Project proposal for funding, February 2000 submitted to AHF.
[2] It should be noted that the town office was occupied solely by the secretary and that the mayor and other councillors were employed full-time elsewhere.
[3] The project submitted statistics in all four quarterly reports, but the final report (fourth) contained numbers for the full year. Quarterly reports request statistics for each activity that occurred during the quarter, but this was not done.
[4] Excerpt from draft of historical book being developed.
[5] AHF Supplementary Survey (July 2001).
[6] Interview response, 6 March 2002, Willow Bunch, SK.
[7] Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics (November 2001). Saskatchewan Population July 1. Retrieved: http://www.stats.gov.sk.ca/
[8] Statistics Canada 1996 Census: Population Statistics for Willow Bunch (Town), Saskatchewan (retrieved data on 14 January 2002). The Aboriginal population was not listed due to the community receiving only the short form of the Census questionnaire that did not include questions regarding Aboriginal ancestry. The town office still uses the 1996 Census.
[9] National Process Evaluation Survey, 2001.
[10] *Willow Bunch Healing Project Report*, October 2001, page 1.

[11] Information from Willow Bunch Métis Local #17 project files.
[12] Interview response, 6 March 2002, Willow Bunch, SK.
[13] Interview response, 6 March 2002, Willow Bunch, SK.
[14] Interview response, 6 March 2002, Willow Bunch, SK.
[15] Interview response, 6 March 2002, Willow Bunch, SK.
[16] This agreement was done as a draft letter but was never formalized.
[17] Interview response, 7 March 2002, Willow Bunch, SK.
[18] Interview response, 7 March 2002, Willow Bunch, SK.
[19] "One of the biggest impacts of unresolved trauma and abuse is lateral violence. This kind of violence is how oppressed people show their rage and frustration from being constantly put down. It usually happens without people knowing that it is part of the cycle of oppression. The violent acts are directed at our own people (laterally) rather than at those who have oppressed us. The ways that lateral violence shows itself include: blaming others, putting others down, gossip, family feuds, jealousy and in-fighting within a group or community, to name a few. Lateral violence has become a way of life in many Aboriginal communities. It is tearing many communities apart." Aboriginal Healing Foundation (1999:A5). *Aboriginal Healing Foundation Handbook, 2nd edition*. Ottawa, ON: Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

Appendix 1) Case Studies Selection Criteria

1. Métis, Inuit, First Nation, Non-Status
2. Youth, Men, Women, Gay or Lesbian, Incarcerated, Elders
3. Urban, Rural or Remote
4. North, East, West
5. Community services
6. Conferences/gatherings
7. Performing arts
8. Health centre (centralized residential care)
9. Camp/retreat (away from the community in a rural setting)
10. Day program in the community
11. Healing circles
12. Materials development
13. Research/knowledge-building/planning
14. Traditional activities
15. Parenting skills
16. Professional training courses

Appendix 2) Interview Questionnaires

Willow Bunch Healing Project
Interview Questions—Project Team

It is important that they know that:

- that there are no right or wrong answers, only answers that are true from their perspective
- their participation is strictly voluntary and they can choose to answer or not answer questions as they see fit
- they have been selected based upon the criteria that were important to the board (i.e. geographic, group representation, etc and not on their past performance or any fears about their performance so far)
- that we are only trying to learn from their experience so that we can help them get what they want and help others get what they want from their AHF projects
- that the report will not be able to identify who said what,
- that they should feel free to say things that may cause controversy and
- that for the most part, it is important to focus their comments on participants.
- It is also important to stress that there are a wide range of acceptable and truthful answers including "I don't know" and "I'm not sure".

1. To start, I would like you to now think about the project participants. Have you noted changes in any of the following?

		Dramatic Increase (>80%)	Moderate Increase (40-80%)	Slight Increase (1-40%)	No change	Don't Know	Slight Decrease (1-40%)	Moderate Decrease (40-80%)	Dramatic Decrease (>80%)
(a)	knowledge of Métis culture	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
(b)	knowledge of accurate Métis history	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
(c)	involvement in Métis cultural activities	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
(d)	identify as Métis	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
(e)	pride in being Métis	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
(f)	non Métis knowledge of accurate Métis history	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
(g)	non Métis institutions (e.g. schools, museums) intentions to use renewed Métis history publication	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

Why do you think things turned out the way they did? In other words, if there was no change or things got worse, how would you explain why this has happened?

_____

_____

OR, if there was change? Why did things change?

_____

_____

What do you believe caused things to change/remain the same/ or get worse?

2. In the last 12 months, have you noted if information regarding the Métis available to the general public has:

increased **decreased** **stayed the same** **not sure**

What have you observed that makes you feel this way?

3. What have you learned from your involvement with this project so far?

4. Is there anything you could suggest that might improve this project?

5. We are aware that you have supplied information through the submission of your quarterly reports, but we would like to offer you another opportunity to provide any further insight in the following areas:

   i. the extent of survivor involvement
   ii. the effectiveness and extent of partnerships and linkages
   iii. the project's ability to monitor and evaluate its activity
   iv. support of local leadership

6. In the last 12 months, please state whether you feel the non-Métis community knowledge of Métis history and traditions has:

increased **decreased** **stayed the same** **not sure**

How do you know?

Why do you believe this has happened to the participants?

Why do you believe this has happened to the community?

7. In the last 12 months, please state whether you feel the broader community's views towards Métis has:

increased **decreased** **stayed the same** **not sure**

How do you know?

Why do you believe this has happened?

8. Does a formal communication plan exist with any local institutions (e.g. schools, museums, other Métis organizations)? Can we have a copy?

9. Do you have any final comments to share?

MANDATORY QUESTIONS:

10. How well is the project addressing the legacy of physical and sexual abuse in Residential Schools, including inter-generational impacts? Please choose only one response.

6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Very well, hard to imagine any improvement	Very well, but needs minor improvement	Reasonably well, but needs minor improvement	Struggling to address physical and sexual abuse	Poorly, needs major improvement	Is not addressing the legacy at all	Not sure

Please offer an explanation why you feel this way:

11. What are the previously identified needs that the project is intended to address?

12. How would you rate the project's ability to address or meet those needs?

6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Very well, hard to imagine any improvement	Very well, but needs minor improvement	Reasonably well, but needs minor improvement	Struggling to address physical and sexual abuse	Poorly, needs major improvement	Is not addressing the legacy at all	Not sure

13. How well has the project been accountable (i.e. engaged in clear and realistic communication with the community as well as allow community input) to the community? Please choose only one response.

6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Very well, hard to imagine any improvement	Very well, but needs minor improvement	Reasonably well, but needs minor improvement	Struggling to address physical and sexual abuse	Poorly, needs major improvement	Is not addressing the legacy at all	Not sure

Please offer an explanation why you feel this way:

14. How well have the methods, activities, and processes outlined in the funding agreement led to desired results? Please choose only one response.

6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Very well, hard to imagine any improvement	Very well, but needs minor improvement	Reasonably well, but needs minor improvement	Struggling to address physical and sexual abuse	Poorly, needs major improvement	Is not addressing the legacy at all	Not sure

Please offer an explanation why you feel this way:

15. Will the project be able to operate when funding from the Foundation ends?

16. How well is the project able to monitor and evaluate its activity? Please choose only one response.

6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Very well, hard to imagine any improvement	Very well, but needs minor improvement	Reasonably well, but needs minor improvement	Struggling to address physical and sexual abuse	Poorly, needs major improvement	Is not addressing the legacy at all	Not sure

Please offer an explanation why you feel this way:

Willow Bunch Healing Project
Interview Questions—Outside Agencies

It is important that they know that:

- that there are no right or wrong answers, only answers that are true from their perspective
- their participation is strictly voluntary and they can choose to answer or not answer questions as they see fit
- they have been selected based upon the criteria that were important to the board (i.e. geographic, group representation, etc and ***not*** on their past performance or any fears about their performance so far)
- that we are ***only trying to learn from their experience*** so that we can help them get what they want and help others get what they want from their AHF projects
- that the report will ***not be able to identify who said what***,
- that they should feel free to say things that may cause controversy and
- that for the most part, it is important to focus their comments on participants.
- It is also important to stress that there are a wide range of acceptable and truthful answers including "I don't know" and "I'm not sure".

1. Are you aware of the Willow Bunch Healing Project?

   _____

   _____

2. If so, can you tell me what is the central message they are trying to promote?

   _____

   _____

3. Can you describe for me in your own words, what it means to be Métis?

   _____

   _____

4. Do you believe that your (school, museum, etc, etc) will incorporate the renewed Métis history currently being prepared into the curriculum (reference material), etc.

   _____

   _____

5. Do you currently teach Métis history (display Métis contributions to the region)?

   _____

   _____

6. If not, is there a plan to incorporate Métis history into the curriculum (museum displays), etc

   _____

   _____

7. What do you believe will change as a result of the project activities?

   _____

   _____

8. In the last 12 months, have you noted if information regarding the Métis available to the general public has:

   increased **decreased** **stayed the same** **not sure**

   What have you observed that makes you feel this way?

   _____

   _____

9. In the last 12 months, please state whether you feel the non-Métis community knowledge of Métis history and traditions has:

   increased **decreased** **stayed the same** **not sure**

   How do you know?

   _____

   _____

   Why do you believe this has happened in the community?

   _____

   _____

10. In the last 12 months, please state whether you feel the broader community's views towards Métis has:

    increased **decreased** **stayed the same** **not sure**

    How do you know?

    _____

    _____

    Why do you believe this has happened?

    _____

    _____

11. Do you have any final comments to share?

    _____

    _____