

“Better Outcomes for Aboriginal People and The Justice System”

A Strategy Framework to Strengthen and Unify Efforts to Reduce the Overrepresentation of Aboriginal Children, Youth and Adults in the Child Protection and Criminal Justice System in BC



"The figures are stark...and reveal what may fairly be termed a crisis. It arises...from bias against aboriginal people and from an unfortunate institutional approach that is more inclined to refuse bail and to impose more and longer prison terms for aboriginal offenders. The drastic overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system... reveals a sad and pressing social problem."

Supreme Court of Canada, R. v. Pelee, 2012

"More than twenty years after Parliament enacted the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA) allowing the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) to enhance Aboriginal community involvement in corrections and respond to the unique needs and circumstances that contribute to high incarceration rates for Aboriginal people, disparities in opportunities and outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders continue to widen.

**Spirit Matters: Aboriginal People and the Conditional Release Act,
Howard Sapers, Correctional Investigator, Canada, 2013**

"There are community based, grass roots and traditional models of justice that work well in our communities. Investing in community programs and services-rather than on imposed penalties and correctional facilities-will promote healing, and go much further in reducing crime"

**Grand Chief Doug Kelly,
Chair, First Nations Health Authority, 2013**

"Aboriginal people continue to face...adverse socio-economic factors and other health determinants when compared to other British Columbians. Many of these same factors can influence the likelihood of an individual's involvement in crime. (We need to) focus on prevention and rehabilitation rather than increased incarceration...focus on relationships, crime prevention and diversion, and monitoring and evaluation...and re-focus on health promotion and crime prevention".

**Dr. Perry Kendall, Provincial Health Officer's Special Report:
Health, Crime, and Doing Time March 2013**

At the center of our strategic objectives is social justice and justice reform. While this Association is celebrating 40 years of service, impact, success and effectiveness were at the heart of the discussions in addressing complex, multi layered issues and challenges. A core central question was 'How do we become more effective as an Association to turn the tide of social justice?'

NCCABC Social Justice Forum, April 2013

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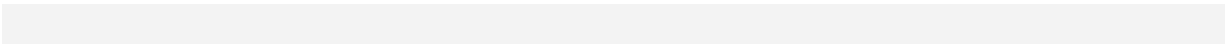
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A. Purpose of The Better Outcomes Strategy Framework

This framework document was developed by Darlene Shackelly, Executive Director, and Ray Lazanik, Management Consultant, for the Native Courtworker and Counselling Association of BC (NCCABC) to inform their new five-year Strategic Planning process. It is not intended to provide a fully developed Better Outcomes Strategy. That work lies ahead. It is intended to describe the urgency, importance and opportunities that exist for developing a long term unified action plan and system level strategy to change what must be changed.

The intended audience for this document is all those who will have to play an active role in making such a strategy a reality-the Board and staff of the NCCABC, the First Nations Leadership Council, other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations and government ministries.

The purpose of this Strategy Framework is five-fold:

1. To recognize that a convergence of opportunities and a new understanding of the need for truth and reconciliation exist to support action on a concerted effort to address the continuing, growing rate of disproportionate incarceration of Aboriginal people, youth in custody and children in the care of the province and;
2. To support the development of a new facilitation role, supported by the 2013 Protocol Agreement with the First Nations Leadership Council, that the NCCABC can play in facilitating such an effort in BC, consistent with its recent strategic direction to address poor justice system outcomes;
3. To initiate a new level of collaboration among communities, agencies and governments and a new level of investment of all available resources in early intervention, prevention, education, employment, cultural connections and health promotion, focused on Aboriginal children and youth, living both on and off reserve, and on those at high risk of apprehension by the child welfare system, those already in that child welfare system, and other youth and adults facing high risks of incarceration;
4. To initiate a new level of system level accountability for monitoring and assessment of these efforts and analysis of available data at a detailed level required to determine progress and to systematically identify where gaps in access to support, early intervention and in service integration need to be filled;
5. Finally this paper suggests that *First Nations and Aboriginal organizations facilitated by the NCCABC, must take the lead* in developing a well structured and supported 'Better Outcomes Strategy' and invite the participation and partnership of government and non-Aboriginal organizations in its implementation, rather than continue to await government prioritization of this problem.

First Nations and Aboriginal leaders and leading organizations, such as the NCCABC, have made the moral argument for social justice for Aboriginal people for many years. The financial costs of incarceration versus the use of community programs –which also provide increased public safety and crime prevention-provide the compelling business case for such a strategy particularly during a period of constraint. It costs up to \$20,000 per year for each youth under community

supervision and related programs, and approximately \$215,000 per year for each youth in custody¹.

The continuing social and economic costs to government, Aboriginal people and all British Columbians of not making this effort are unacceptable, unsustainable and unnecessary. The essential driver behind this Strategy Framework is the increasing recognition that success in achieving better outcomes is both possible and required.

B. A Key Role for the NCCABC

The decades long role of Aboriginal Courtworker (ACW) programs across Canada was evaluated in March 2013 by the federal Justice Department². It was found that:

“Within the limits of its resources, scope and reach, the ACW Program has been effective in helping Aboriginal persons charged with a criminal offence to obtain fair, just, equitable and culturally sensitive treatment in the courts. The challenges faced by Aboriginal people in the justice system are significant, unique and multidimensional”.

This evaluation did not evaluate the impact of the ACW on reducing incarceration rates nor did it ascribe this goal to the ACW program or to any other program.

The problem, in other words, is that while there is a great deal of concern expressed by government officials at the federal and provincial levels and indeed the Supreme Court of Canada (see quotations above) and within Aboriginal organizations on the high rate of incarceration, ***there is no focus or accountability attached anywhere to directly address this problem or improve these outcomes attached to any government or other agency in Canada.***

There is vacuum of leadership that will need to be filled if change is to occur.

The NCCABC, is the lead Aboriginal Justice service provider in BC and for 40 years, has been cost-shared by the federal Department of Justice and Provincial Ministry of Justice. It can play an important role in facilitating this process of attaching accountabilities to a shared agenda and required actions to achieve better outcomes. The BC First Nations Justice Plan, June 2007 ³, developed by the BC Union of Indian Chiefs spoke of the need for a “host agency to administer start up funds related to coordination activities and to support immediate developments”. That need still exists.

The First Nations Justice Plan provided an initial statement of Vision and Goals that help guide our work today in developing this *Better Outcomes Strategy Framework*.

“Vision

Justice is the process of maintaining peaceful relations and harmonious co-existence between all elements of creation. The full acknowledgment and respect of natural and First Nations laws ensures the overall health and well-being of First Nations on physical,

¹ MCFD figures reported in Provincial Health Officer and Representative for Children and Youth Report, Kids, Crime and Care, February, 2009

² Aboriginal Justice Strategy, Final Report, Evaluation Division Office of Strategic Planning and Performance Management, Department of Justice, Canada, November 2011

³ First Nations Justice Plan, Union of BC Indian Chiefs, June 20, 2007

emotional, social, and spiritual levels”.

“Goals

- 1) To decrease the over-representation of First Nations peoples in Canada’s jails and prisons, both federal and provincial.
- 2) To ensure that First Nation justice is viewed with a holistic approach which would place an emphasis on healing and the recognition of First Nations jurisdiction and authority to enact their own laws and justice systems within their territories.
- 3) To see the enactment of legislation that recognizes the right of First Nations people to establish our own justice systems.
- 4) To increase the involvement of people of First Nations ancestry in criminal justice professions (i.e. First Nations Police Officers, translators, Native Courtworkers, and Aboriginal judges).
- 5) To ensure those who work in the criminal justice system take the proper steps to enhance their understanding of the First Nations cultures with which they interact.
- 6) To empower First Nations to identify, direct and implement comprehensive community healing and prevention strategies as a long term initiative to reduce crime and criminal activity at a local level”.

More recently, building on this effort, a strategic stakeholder visioning session was held in April 2013, made up of First Nations leadership, aboriginal youth representatives, government representatives, and aboriginal organizations. Its purpose was to gain input into the NCCABC’s five-year strategic objectives. Many suggestions were made about how current programs and services should be expanded, and service networks coordinated and improved. But it also went further. *It identified a consensus among key stakeholders that the NCCABC needed to utilize their standing in the community to take a lead role in turning the tide of social justice and address the skyrocketing incarceration statistics.*

The consensus arising from that session was that the NCCABC should take the lead role in engaging the organizations, facilitating, and convening the processes, developing the concepts and documents and proposing the structural arrangements necessary for a “*Better Outcomes Strategy*” for our people. This approach could include both provincial and federal partners as well as key Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations in a well thought out, open, efficient process resulting into a first iteration of this Strategy within a year from this fall-2014.

C. Achieving Collective Impact and Better Outcomes

Governments and other organizations have attempted for decades to solve large-scale elusive social problems through various models of collaboration often without producing many results. The vast majority of these efforts lack the elements of success that enable collective impact initiatives to achieve a sustained alignment of effort.

The proposed approach to be used in this initiative is based on the collective experiences of the leaders of the First Nations and Aboriginal organizations such as the NCCABC over many decades. It also leverages the widely referenced work on “Collective Impact.”⁴

We know that large-scale social change requires broad cross-sector coordination, yet the social sector remains highly focused on the isolated interventions of individual organizations. The approach called *Collective Impact* requires the commitment of a group of important stakeholders from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem. The ‘*Better Outcomes Strategy Project*’ will be an example of ‘Collective Impact’, the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem.

The assumption in this approach is that large-scale social change comes from an advanced form of cross-sector collaboration, well beyond inter-agency coordination and completely different from the isolated interventions of individual organizations.

Collective Impact Initiatives are long-term commitments by a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for the purpose of solving a specific, complex social problem that have eluded solution to date.

Research shows that successful collective impact initiatives addressing health outcomes, school success rates and other challenging issues, typically have five conditions that together produce true alignment that lead to powerful results:

1. Committed leadership organized around a common sense of purpose and shared agenda,
2. Shared measurement systems,
3. Mutually reinforcing activities,
4. Continuous communication,
5. A backbone support organization.

This requires a fundamental change in how government funders see their role, from contracting with individual organizations for narrowly defined services, to leading a long-term process of social change based on one shared plan with many players and integrated parts acting as a team. It is no longer enough to fund an innovative solution created by a single nonprofit, or to build that organization’s capacity (which is itself highly problematic in the experience of Aboriginal service providers). Instead, funders must help create and sustain the collective processes, measurement reporting systems, and community leadership that enable cross-sector coalitions to arise and thrive. This requires a broader notion of capacity building than has been used to date.

⁴ “Collective Impact” and “Channeling Change: Making Collective Impact Work”, by Mark Kramer of Harvard’s John F. Kennedy School of Government et. al. published in the Stanford Social Innovation Review, 2011 and 2012).

D. Children in Care-Youth and Adults in Jail: A Continuing Pattern of Poor Outcomes

Aboriginal people in Canada and BC are at greater risk both for being victimized by violent and personal crimes, and for being negatively impacted by the criminal justice system. Aboriginal people are three times more likely than non-Aboriginals to be victims of violent crime, and they are at even higher risk for being victims of assault, sexual assault, robbery and partner abuse.

While there are some small, poorly funded services in place there is no comprehensive system, plan or strategy to address a continuing pattern of poor outcomes for Aboriginal people who continue to be significantly over-represented as offenders in the Canadian criminal justice system. There are some positive efforts within the Justice system that are encouraging. First Nations Courts in New Westminster, Kamloops, Cowichan, and North Vancouver are beginning to show the effectiveness of alternative approaches with new and repeat offenders. At the same time the justice system response to this pattern does little to improve the situation for victims or offenders:

- Incarceration rates of Aboriginal people are five to six times higher than the national average. Statistics from Correctional Service Canada show that while Aboriginal people represent only 5% of the Canadian population, they account for 30% of those who are incarcerated in federal institutions.
- Aboriginal youth are 6% of the general population in Canada but they account for 33% of youth in custody; 35.5% of Aboriginal youth are involved with youth justice system-more than graduate from high school (24.5)%.
- *While the crime rate has been dropping nationally, there was a near 40 per cent increase in the national Aboriginal incarcerated population between 2001-02 and 2010-11.*⁵

Unrepresented Children in Care

The route that half of those incarcerated take to get to this unfortunate state is provided by the Provincial Child Protection System. There are now more children in this system, (56% of the total number in care) removed from family and community, than there were at the height of the Residential Schools era.

- In northern BC the number of Aboriginal children is more than 80% of the total number of children in care.
- About 50% of all Aboriginal offenders were graduates of provincial child protection systems. A study of BC's Aboriginal children in care⁶ indicates that 41 per cent have contact with the criminal justice system by the age of 21, compared to 6.6% of the general population. This number grows to 51% for males.

The NCCABC has identified that these numbers are partly related to the continuing lack of representation and support to BC Aboriginal families at critical times in Family Court. The addition of Native Courtworkers and Counsellors in the Family Court system can go some distance in helping families who are in distress, to understand the family court system, as well to

⁵ Spirit Matters: Aboriginal People and the Conditional Release Act, Howard Sapers, Correctional Investigator, Canada, 2013

⁶ Provincial Health Officer and Representative for Children and Youth Report, Kids, Crime and Care, February, 2009

develop strategies to keep their children and family together. This help is necessary to provide options to Judges that can begin to reshape program and service approaches and outcomes for children youth and families. The complete lack of such support in court for families at this critical decision point in the system needs to change as an early product of the effort described here.

The rapid changes associated with urban living and loss of traditional supports have compounded feelings of isolation and dislocation among Aboriginal people, placing them at increased risk for involvement in the criminal justice system. The pattern of events leading to incarceration, combined with urbanization, dislocation and a very large cohort of potentially at risk youth, compared to other British Columbians and Canadians, means that these results are more likely to get worse before they get better without a major effort on the part of First Nations, Aboriginal organizations and communities both on and off reserve and government to learn from what works and invest in success.

The Office of the Correctional Investigator Canada 2005/2006 Annual Report stated that “despite years of task force reports, internal reviews, national strategies, partnership agreements and action plans, there has been no significant progress in improving the overall situation of Aboriginal offenders during the last 20 years. Since then he reports that the situation is growing worse and “disparities continue to widen” between Aboriginal and other offenders.

Incarceration and Mental Health

Overrepresentation is also found in other closely related numbers. According to the Provincial Health Officer’s 2007 Annual Report, Status Indians in BC were much also more likely to be hospitalized for mental and behavioral disorders due to substance use than other British Columbians. Hospitalization due to schizophrenia, as well as delusional, mood and stress related disorders were also higher.

In 2009 in the report by Provincial Health Officer and Representative for Children and Youth entitled “Kids, Crime and Care” they indicate that of the youth in care involved with the youth justice system:

- Almost 72 per cent have been reported with intensive behavioral problems or serious mental illness within the school system, compared with just over two per cent for the general youth population.
- Nearly two-thirds (65 per cent) of children in continuing custody were diagnosed with a mental disorder at least once during childhood.

A review of BC’s Child and Youth Mental Health services in 2008 concluded,

“All the child and youth mental health stakeholders, internal and external, know that more resources will be needed; no less important is the call for leadership. People in the field believe that a firm grip steering the system will be required...establish a formal structure to coordinate planning and service delivery, across ministries and sectors, provincially, regionally, and locally⁷.”

⁷ “Promises Kept, Miles to Go: A Review of Child and Youth Mental Health Services in BC”, 2008

The linkages between all these system fragmentation issues, the numbers of children in care, numbers with school problems, mental health issues, alcohol and drug use issues and youth and adult incarceration rates must better inform a strategic collective system-level effort to achieve better outcomes for our people. This 'Better Outcomes Strategy Framework' is intended to help make that happen.

E. Opportunities for Change Are Converging

Continuing poor outcomes in the child protection and criminal justice system for First Nations and Aboriginal Peoples of BC and the lack of effective collaborative efforts to address these outcomes are the reality. However, today, in BC, a series of events, inquiries, and efforts including some useful legislation, have created a new window of opportunity to examine what is happening, why it is happening and what needs to change and to consider how change, which is both possible and necessary, can happen.

We can begin to change the continuing pattern of high victimization, high incarceration rates and massive overrepresentation among our people in the child protection and criminal justice systems if we determine together that continued inaction is unacceptable.

The necessary conditions for improvement are aligning. The 'Better Outcomes Strategy Framework' described in this document will build upon leverages these converging opportunities. They include the following:

Government's Core Review and The Justice Reform and Transparency Act (March 14, 2013)

The B.C. government invests over \$1 billion annually in public safety and the justice system. In the past six years, the crime rate in B.C. has dropped 33 per cent, and is 45 per cent lower than its all time high in 1991. Expenditures on adult criminal justice personnel and processes have increased by 35 per cent since 2005⁸.

There is a newly mandated BC government committed to Justice Reform and more value for the current level of investment in government programs and services that are inefficient or ineffective (core review). There is a call from many quarters inside government for investing in and leveraging prevention and early intervention strategies in what has been cost effective and proven to work in improving outcomes for Aboriginal people and all British Columbians. Justice Minister Shirley Bond has said, "Despite a declining crime rate and \$1 billion in annual funding, our justice system is not seeing the outcomes that British Columbians deserve." ⁹

Clearly, the government recognizes the need for changes but has not yet focused on Aboriginal issues. The new 'Justice Reform and Transparency Act' resulting from the Cowper Report recommendations¹⁰, requires the establishment of a Justice and Public Safety Council and encourages the establishment of related Advisory Boards. These bodies are to advise and make

⁸ White Paper on Justice Reform part one: A Modern, Transparent Justice System October 2012

⁹ Minister's Comments, White Paper on Justice Reform part one: A Modern, Transparent Justice System October 2012

¹⁰ Jeffrey Cowper, Final Report of the Chair of the BC Justice Reform Initiative, August 27, 2012

recommendations related to development of: “a strategic vision reflecting desired outcomes for the justice and public safety sector” and requires the establishment of a Justice Summit to meet at least annually to:

- “Review and consider initiatives and procedures undertaken in other jurisdictions in relation to the justice system in those jurisdictions”,
- “Provide input to the council to assist the council in creating the strategic vision”,
- “Make recommendations relating to priorities, strategies, performance measures, procedures and new initiatives related to the justice and public safety sector”,
- “Assess the progress being made in justice reform in British Columbia”, and
- “Engage in any other deliberations that the Justice Summit considers appropriate”.

This provides an opportunity to promote “Collective Impact” levels of collaboration, for attaching accountability for progress and designing First Nations and Aboriginal Councils focused on achieving Better Outcomes for our people.

It is important to note here that the Inaugural Justice Summit, held in March 2013 included only two Aboriginal representatives out of fifty judges and officials invited. Mr. Hugh Braker Q.C., president of the NCCABC, was one of those who was invited as well as Mr. Darryl Shackelly also of the NCABCC.

Mr. Braker has written to the Honorable Minister of Justice, Shirley Bond indicating

“We did not hear any of the speakers mention Aboriginal issues or perspectives...given the grossly disproportionate number of Aboriginal people before the courts, I would have thought that those reasons alone would have justified a greater Aboriginal presence at the Justice Summit. I urge you to increase Aboriginal representation at any future Justice Summit and include Aboriginal issues on the agenda.”

While this was a disappointing beginning of a new process intended to build opportunities for collaboration, it is expected that this feedback from Mr. Braker will result in a positive response from the Ministry.

A Convergence of Critical Reviews and Reports

There is a need for a full and significant Government response to the recommendations of many converging reports, reviews and forums including:

- **The Truth and Reconciliation Commission:** The contribution of the Commission’s work, following the Apologies of the Government of Canada and Canada’s Churches for the trauma caused by residential schools and the huge events held in Vancouver at this time have created a new context for addressing the intergenerational impact of those policies and abuses on our people today, including their direct connection to incarceration rates;
- **The Cowper Report:** The wide ranging Justice Reform Initiative based Cowper review of the BC Justice System recommend new governance models to address the need for change;
- **The Oppal Report:** “Forsaken”, the Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry

- is a huge milestone in uncovering the realities of poverty and the policing and justice system on the lives of Aboriginal women;
- **Child Protection Critiques:** The continuing series of highly critical reports by the Representative for Children and Youth on the negative impact of the child protection system on Aboriginal children, families and communities provides a clear rationale and roadmap for change;
 - **First Nations Health Authority Strategies:** “A Path Forward: a Ten Year Mental Wellness and Substance Use Plan for BC First Nations and Aboriginal Peoples” and other Indigenous based efforts from the new First Nations Health Authority. Their focus on preventative and supportive child and youth mental health services (including, for example, access to service issues and services for Fetal Alcohol Syndrome children and their families, which are needed long before the youth is standing for sentencing in criminal court and a much more costly period of incarceration.) is a new and Indigenous perspective on how communities can learn from each other to achieve mental wellness;
 - **Provincial Health Officer Reports:** The 2013 report by the Provincial Health Officer, “Health Crime and Doing Time” on the Potential Impacts of the Safe Streets and Communities Act (former Bill C-10) on The Health and Wellbeing of Aboriginal People in BC and his series of reports of Aboriginal health, the determinants of health and the need for innovative approaches rather than more incarceration is a unique perspective linking health outcomes and justice system approaches;
 - **The Transformative Change Accord and New Relationship:** There is a recognized need for renewal and updating of the seven-year old ‘Transformative Change Accord’ and ‘New Relationship’ which did not place priority on reducing incarceration rates or targeting change in regard to justice system outcomes;
 - **Government’s Innovation Focus:** Two ministries now include the word “Innovation” in their names. There is a growing recognition of the need for innovation and new thinking in the way Aboriginal and government organizations work together, integrate their efforts, design programs, engage communities and build on success, building on the tripartite governance work leading to the establishment of the First Nations Health Authority;
 - **Focus on Addressing Aboriginal Women and Violence:** The work of the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation’s Minister’s Advisory Council on Aboriginal Women. Formed in 2012 its role is to develop strategies that address the issue of violence in First Nations communities.
 - **New Role of the NCCABC:** The 2013 Protocol Agreement between the First Nations Leadership Council and the Native Courtworker and Counselling Association of BC (NCCABC) mandating greater focus on this issue and a leadership / facilitation role for the NCCABC; As well, the report of the Social Justice Forum hosted by the NCCABC, 2013, which make many recommendations on the need for new governance structures, on evidence-based proven programs and services, the urgent need for investment in cost-effective service enhancements of many kinds, improved collaboration and much better alignment of efforts and resources among government, First Nations and Aboriginal organizations.

These and other contributions, including reviews, reports and plans, provide a promising new

context of converging priorities and focus. This situation calls for leadership and collaboration in the development of a unifying, long-term, comprehensive Aboriginal led *Better Outcomes Strategy* for our people today, tomorrow and in the future. Efforts, innovative ideas, proven Indigenous program models, knowledge and commitment to work together in a disciplined careful long-term approach to change have been fragmented and ineffectual to date. There is no better time than now to change that pattern and make a difference for our people.

F. Potential Priority Focus Areas

The Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Kendall has proposed a number of areas of focus, in his *Special Report: Health, Crime, and Doing Time March 2013* that we need to consider in our Strategy:

- Increase collaboration, coordination, and integration between health and justice sectors, and with Aboriginal people, communities, and organizations. This collaboration should recognize the interrelationship between the determinants of health and risk factors for crime, and between health status (including mental health and well-being) and involvement in crime.
- Target interventions at young people to reduce risk factors and support protective factors can have far-reaching impacts. According to *Kids, Crime and Care*, components of these interventions should reinforce empathy, motivate learning, increase school connectedness, build resiliency, and encourage acceptance of diversity. More generally, programs and services should be made available to mitigate the cycle of poor health and involvement in crime described in this report.
- Focus resources on programs and initiatives that support preventive approaches, including those with the potential to enhance the determinants of health and protective factors against involvement in crime for all British Columbians. This includes, but is not limited to, employment, education, culture, and economic development.
- Support and expand existing programs designed to provide support for vulnerable populations, including Aboriginal children and youth in government care and children whose parents or guardians have been involved in the criminal justice system.
- For individuals involved in criminal activity, increase access to diversion programs and alternative justice strategies that focus on alternatives to imprisonment, especially those with a focus on Aboriginal offenders.
- Work with corrections officials and input and leadership from Aboriginal partners and communities to enhance availability of health services in prison, including support for mental health and substance use issues, to ensure incarceration includes culturally appropriate health promotion and rehabilitation opportunities that can break the cycle of poor health and crime. (The NCCABC's proposal for prison liaison workers can help to address this issue).
- Enhance monitoring of the incarceration rates of Aboriginal people in all provincial and federal institutions, as compared to the rates for other residents.

G. How To Initiate the Process: Action Steps

At the Social Justice Forum held on April 18, 2013 the NCCABC was challenged to take the lead, as the key agency in this field, in achieving a number of important policy, program, and resourcing and organizational objectives facilitating the development of a Social Justice Strategy:

The NCCABC is now in a position to begin this effort through the development of the “Project Initiation Phase” of the Strategy development process. This Initiation Phase can include the following actions. The Board of the NCCABC can:

1. Determine the level of priority, of the proposed “Better Outcomes Strategy”, approve the proposed direction, and assign implementation of the Initiation Phase to the NCCABC Executive Committee and Executive Director, who will report on progress as required by the Board; Executive Director, who will report on progress as required by the Board;
2. Continue discussion with the provincial government on their response to Mr. Hugh Braker’s letter to the Minister on Aboriginal representation and agenda in forthcoming work of the new Justice Summit;
3. Pursue resourcing for this Strategy development through new Justice Reform and Transparency Act and with other government sources such as the Ministry for Aboriginal Affairs and engage with key stakeholders on the approach and their potential roles in the development of the Better Outcomes Strategy;
4. Assign a Project Team and Team Lead to refine, oversee and implement the Strategy Framework.
5. Develop and refine a draft Project Terms of Reference to outline potential scope, concepts and key components of and Aboriginal Social Justice Strategy”;
6. Determine requirements for and facilitate meetings, workshops and work groups as required.