FAILING OUR ABORIGINAL PEOPLES:
A NORMATIVE THEORY OF CONSTRUCTIVE SOCIAL CHANGE

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The enduring social dysfunction that confronts Canada's Aboriginal people is a challenge that has reached crisis proportions. Aboriginal communities are preoccupied with social issues ranging from academic underachievement to substance abuse, domestic violence, welfare dependence and suicide, to health and nutrition. The avalanche of human and financial resources aimed at redressing the quality of life for First Nations people on, and off, reserves, and Inuit living in remote arctic communities seems to either be entirely misguided, or perhaps, itself exacerbates the problem. In this essay we offer a theory of social change that focuses on the role of social norms. This theory focuses on the impact of social change on the normative structure on an effectively functioning group and on normative features that may lead to constructive social change. We will suggest that such a normative analysis may explain why mainstream solutions to address social issues confronting Aboriginal communities are doomed to failure, as are, equally, the application of traditional Aboriginal interventions. As a guiding framework, we will use a folk theory in the form of "80-20" rule that is evoked every time someone in any social organization feels frustrated at the disproportionate allocation of resources within their organization.

The 80-20 Rule

The 80-20 rule proposes that any group, organization or institution seems to experience the same imbalance; Instead of every member of a group receiving the same resources, 20 % of the members require 80% of the group's resources be they attentional, financial, human, or emotional. The rule is usually evoked out of frustration when someone in an organization feels the wrong people are draining too many scarce resources. This popular use of Pareto's 80-20 rule is one of those flippant observations that, nevertheless, must contain a kernel of truth. After all, any time it is evoked people nod their head in agreement as they contemplate their own experience, in their own social organizations.

Who are typically the 20% in a social organization that require inordinate attention? They are individuals who stand out as non-normative. They are the high maintenance extended family member, the committee member that never completes work in time for the meeting, the disruptive or underachieving student in a classroom, the criminal in a community, or the nation that constantly requires support from others in an international context.

If we explore the conditions that give rise to the expression 80-20, we can understand intuitively why such a rule would arise in popular discourse, and why it would apply to so many social organizations ranging from families to nations. Every organization is comprised of socially defined formal and informal norms to the point that we accept as a given that organizations have a "corporate culture." To further facilitate social interaction, organizations comprise a set of roles that are rationally related so as to efficiently achieve a social organization's goals. Each role has associated with it socially

defined rules or prescriptions (norms) that are expected to be followed. The entire social organization ideally requires strict adherence to the overarching norms, as well as the specific norms associated with each role, in order to maximize the smooth and effective goal-directed functioning of the group.

If the majority of members in any social organization adhere to the norms, the organization has a decent chance of surviving and indeed achieving some, if not all, of its goals. Failure to achieve its goals, ineffective social interaction, and, in extreme cases, chaos would be the inevitable result if many group members did not adhere to the socially defined norms. Imagine an organization, for example a school board, that was designed to deliver formal education to young people in a community. What if no one in the organization, from board members to teachers to students, adhered to the norms of what time school began and let out, class schedules, number of days schooling was offered or dutifully covering the curriculum?   What if there were absolutely no normatively defined qualifications or experience required for any positions in the system? In terms of more informal norms, what if there were no norms for professional interaction, or appropriate speech, or dress, or, in terms of confidentiality, what teachers would or would not share with students about other students and teachers? And what if teachers only paid normative lip service to genuinely caring about students, while informally performing at a minimalist level.

In any reasonably functioning social organization, then, the majority of members adhere to the norms. All they require is sufficient feedback to reinforce that their efforts are contributing to a positive outcome, and to maintain their motivation to continue making a constructive contribution. The minority, the folkloric 20% that do not adhere to the norms, are the ones that require attention. They require attention, first because by not following the norms they are disrupting any collective effort that a social organization undertakes to achieve its goals. Second, the individuals themselves will suffer by being "out of step" and thus may be in need of assistance. The end result is that disproportional resources will be allocated to these non-normative individuals. The aim will be to bring these individuals "back in line" so that they might integrate into the normative structure of the social organization, and thereby contribute to the organization's collective goals.

So it is that in any classroom, it is the disruptive students, and those behind in their studies that receive the lion's share of attention. Usually the attention is directed at helping the targeted students to behave more normatively in terms of classroom behaviour and academic performance. Similarly, it is the minority of young people in a community who run afoul of the law that are the focus of inordinate attention. Their non-normative behaviour attracts the attention of the police, the justice system, parole officers and social workers to name a few. Again, the aim is to redirect this minority of young people to more normative behaviour. The same process operates in any organization. A family member with a drinking problem will be the focus for both the immediate and extended family, with a view to normalizing the behaviour. A large corporation will spend considerable resources on employees who are not performing adequately, while those functioning smoothly require far less monitoring and intervention. In any social organization, then, while 80% of group members normatively function smoothly

requiring little maintenance, there are the non-normative 20% who require special, inordinate attention. 80-20 is of course a mythical ratio and the exact percentages will vary from organization to organization. Whatever the percentage, the inordinate resources directed at the mythical 20% have an explicit purpose; to transform the 20% into the 80%, or turn non-normative into normative behaviour.

We need to underscore that every individual participates in a wide variety of social organizations. Someone may be part of a family structure, work hierarchy, leisure group, community and nation state, to name a few. It would not be uncommon for someone who is targeted as a non-normative minority in one domain, to be part of the normative majority in several other domains. That said, however, there are certain key domains that might generalize to several other domains. For example, a person who develops a serious gambling problem may well find that, with time, their non-normative gaming impacts their family, work and leisure group functioning such that they become non-normative across a number of domains. This is not to imply cause and effect in terms of domain generalization. The non-normative gambling may indeed be the cause of non-normative behaviours in other domains. It is equally possible, however, that non-normative behaviour arising in the work or family domain gives rise to the non-normative gambling.

The potential for cross domain generalization is particularly important in the present application of our normative theory. Aboriginal communities, both First Nations and Inuit, seem to confront the same cluster of challenges in terms of domains. These include academic underachievement, underemployment, substance misuse, family violence and poor physical and psychological health. The root cause or causes, and the precise relationships among the domains are unclear, but undoubtedly arise from the widespread effects of colonization. Regardless, addressing non-normative behaviour in a single domain would be, by definition, a more manageable challenge than addressing non-normative behaviour in a wide variety of domains. Aboriginal communities, however, face the daunting challenge of non-normative behviour across the full range of life domains.

The Neglected 80%

To the extent that the 80-20 principle is the pervasive pattern for social organizations, there are three critical categories of members to consider. First, there are the demanding 20%, second, the resources within the organization, professional or otherwise, whose role is to intervene with respect to the 20%, and finally, the 80%.

The 20% are a major preoccupation precisely because of the disruptive impact of their non-normative behaviour. Those who intervene to normalize the 20% receive attention because their mission is important to the effective functioning of the organization, but also because successful normalization is the exception rather than the rule. Consider the frustrations organizations express at how difficult it is to rehabilitate the 20% when issues such as violence, drugs, alcohol, delinquency and underachievement are involved.

Forgotten in most analyses are the quietly functioning 80%. It is this 80%, perhaps precisely because they adhere to the norms, who, for the most part, are relegated to an unappreciated, background role. But from our normative analysis, their contribution is both pivotal and critical. First, and foremost, it is the 80% who define the normative standards that guide the entire process. It is the 80% of students in a classroom who, of course in the context of an entire school culture, define and model what is the range of acceptable behaviour. The 20% get singled out when their behaviour lies outside these normative boundaries. When resources are allocated to the 20%, the aim is to rehabilitate the 20% to a point where they resemble the 80%.

In this sense the 80% define the norms both for identifying those in need of attention as well as serving as the goal for any intervention strategy. And the 80%, or any subset of the normative majority, can put inordinate pressure on a non-normative individual. The classic social psychology experiments initiated by Asch clearly demonstrate how apparently normative members of a group can influence an individual member to comply with the group, even when compliance belies the individual's physical senses. Milgram further illustrated how an individual member of a group will conform to an authority from the group, even when the individual may be violating universally defined moral behaviour. Finally, Zimbardo's experiments underline the extent to which individuals will conform to the normative expectations of a role defined by the group. These experiments together demonstrate the power of social influence when a number of group members, or a consensually defined authority, wish to pressure an individual group member to conform to the group's norms. The 80% can indeed induce inordinate influence on the minority (20%).

A second important function served by the 80% is support and encouragement. That is, what happens when the 20% non-normative members of a group have been defined and resources are directed at rehabilitating this 20%? The 80% of normatively functioning group members will usually signal their tacit approval by not voicing any complaints. They may go further and offer verbal and behavioural support. Only rarely will they disapprove of attention being directed at the 20%. After all, the explicit purpose is to normalize, non-normative behaviour. Thus, for example, the 20% of teenagers who are delinquent require inordinate attention by schools, parents, police, the courts and social workers. The focus on these young people is tacitly approved most of the time, and occasionally applauded when normative measures seem particularly effective. And, of course, the 80% will voice their opinion loudly if it is felt that the police, judicial system, or others are engaging in misguided interventions.

The 80-20 rule as reality

When the "80-20" rule is brought up in everyday conversation, it is employed as an expression of frustration and exasperation. Interestingly, using the 80-20 expression as an analogy to understand social functioning and change, it is clear that the rule is not an aberration but rather a relatively accurate portrait of how normal groups function. The actual percentages are mythical, but their relative magnitudes capture the actual functioning of groups. That is, in a well functioning group the behaviour of most group

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members conforms to the group's norms, and thus these group members invite little inordinate attention. However, there will usually be a minority of group members who behave non-normatively. Their non-normative behaviour will attract attention as their behaviour will stand out relative to the normative majority. Moreover, the non-normative behaviour will be a distraction to group goals at the very least, and more likely disruptive or threatening to effective group functioning. Thus, in the majority of cases the non-normative minority will attract a great deal of attention, and most of the attention will be directed at rehabilitating the non-normative behaviour so as to render it normal.

The attention that the non-normative minority (20%) receives is purposive. Usually, it is designed to protect the group and its goals, and if possible redirect the behaviour so as to be more normative. Young delinquents receive attention from professional police officers and a court system designed to protect the community and rehabilitate the young person with perhaps the additional help of social workers, parole officers and counselors. The non-normative 20% who disrupt classrooms, endanger their children, or drive under the influence, all have a different array of professionals who set about to protect the group and/or rehabilitate the non-normative individual.

Some group members are non-normative for a very short period and with special attention quickly rejoin the normative 80%. Such would be the case for people who develop a curable physical or mental illness, or for those who experience a short period of financial difficulty. Since every group functions, more or less, according to the folkloric 80-20 rule, there are as many examples as there are groups. Finally, notice how in every case the non-normative minority receives inordinate attention from specialists, and as we have noted with the critical support of the normative 80%.

It is difficult to appreciate the importance of these critical roles that are played by the seemingly passive 80%. A few mainstream societal examples may be instructive both to underline the importance of the 80%, and allow for some appreciation of the challenges faced by Aboriginal communities. Our examples focus on the role played by the 80-20 rule in terms of how mainstream society copes with social change. Television was an innovative technology that changed mainstream society in a variety of superficial, and not so superficial, ways. One of us remembers the introduction of a single channel and the excitement that surrounded the addition of each new channel every few years. Then came cable TV and access to three key American channels. Recently, of course, the introduction of satellites has led to an explosion of specialty channels accompanied by information overload. Through that entire thirty year process there were no clear norms about how much TV, and what type of programming, adults and their children should watch. It was only in the 1990s that people began to raise the issue of appropriate use of TV, both in terms of what, and how much, children should be watching, and what they were missing while glued to it. Slowly mainstream norms evolved such that presently, in addition to formal rules about content and advertising, norms have developed such that a young person spending too much time in front of the TV, watching the wrong programming, or indeed never watching TV, will evoke a disapproving or inquisitive response from others. This is the 80% finally at work after thirty years. The fate of fast-foods has followed precisely the same normative curve. Slow to be accepted, fast food

chains came to play a dominate role in mainstream diets. Only recently have norms evolved about their appropriate use, and indeed misuse.

The personal computer and access to the internet have followed the same path. Mainstream society is beginning to develop norms for its use but they have not as yet been solidified. Finally, there is the recent explosion of cell phones. As yet there is no normative structure. Proof of the need for norms to evolve is that for formal meetings and movies at the cinema someone has to announce to all assembled that cell phones should be turned off.

These simple examples point to the extent to which an 80-20 normative structure allows groups and organizations to function very effectively. Imagine the challenge for Aboriginal communities that do not benefit from a slow introduction to these, and more profound changes, but rather have them thrust into their communities all at once in their full blown state. With no time and experience to evolve a normative structure, little wonder that observers are surprised at the apparent overindulgence in TV and junk food in Aboriginal communities. Even these apparently trivial changes have a profound impact on the identity of Aboriginal youth and their general state of health. If mainstream communities take years and years to evolve an effective normative structure with the requisite 80%, why should Aboriginal communities be any different, especially since they have not had the benefit of a slow introduction to changes?

We are proposing that the 80-20 rule characterizes effective group functioning in any social context. Clearly, unless the majority of group members are acting normatively, the group will be unsuccessful in achieving its goals. Thus far, we have focused on norms common to each and every member of a group or organization. Most groups, however, are comprised of a complex set of inter-related roles, usually arranged in hierarchical fashion. The hierarchy is usually arranged in some form of pyramid such that most group members occupy lower status roles with the number of group members diminishing as one climbs the group hierarchy. Logically, the proportion of normative and non-normative group members should be found equally throughout the entire structure of a group. Thus, we would expect the 80-20 rule to apply as much to those in the role of vice-president as those in lesser roles throughout the group. However, also logically, as we proceed higher through the hierarchy, the proportion of non-normative people should decrease. This diminution of non-normative people at the higher levels of organizational structure is due to the mechanism of promotion: in order to move up in the hierarchy, one must conform to the norms of the group. Logically, group members who are promoted within the group hierarchy are those who most diligently conform to group norms. It is unlikely that a non-normative person would be promoted, unless the norm in question was of little importance. Thus, we would expect to find non-normative group members throughout all roles in a group hierarchy, but the proportions would be less, the higher one rises in the group.

In a normative 80-20 structure, the role of leaders is of great importance: Their position in upper-level roles affords them the opportunity to use their power to influence group members who are lower in the status hierarchy. As symbols of both organizational

goals and normative behaviours, a leaders' influence is top-down, and while normative leaders serve to reinforce the goals and norms of an organization, non-normative leaders may have a significant impact on more than just the "20" from which they come. A position of leadership, and the power which accompanies it, provides an opportunity for non-normative leaders to change the normative structure at their level, which can in turn impact lower levels. Once the normative structure begins to change, the process accelerates as the number of non-normative people increases. Those at the lower levels of a social organization may then be influenced by their superiors to act in a non-normative way; thus, an imbalance at the top of the hierarchy causes a transfer of non-normative behaviour at lower levels. If the normative structure is inverted, so that non-normative group members no longer represent the minority, we suggest that the process in order to reestablish an 80-20 structure, will be instigated from the bottom-up. Those at the bottom may have less power, but they have the advantage of absolute numbers. This size advantage makes it possible for them to regroup and engage in collective action such that in the end they may influence and initiate changes at the upper level of the hierarchy.

There is a final structural complexity in terms of the 80-20 rule that needs to be addressed. We have been applying our normative analysis as if there were only one set of norms operating throughout any social organization. In reality, as soon as an organization becomes larger than a handful of members, informal or formally designated subgroups will form. For example, in terms of our present focus, ethnic minority groups in general, and Aboriginal groups in particular, are among the important subgroups that comprise Canada as a nation. The larger group, Canada, will operate according to an 80-20 normative structure, but so will each subgroup. The issue is the relationship between the normative structure of the larger group and the structure of its subgroups. Clearly, the larger group's capacity to achieve its goals will be compromised to the extent that the norms of the larger group and any particular subgroup are in conflict. If we focus attention on any subgroup of a larger group, four distinct categories of norms can be discerned. First, there will be a small array of universal norms. As universals they are shared by all groups and subgroups, differing only in the detailed manner in which the universal norm is articulated. The norms of reciprocity, greetings or incest, for example, apply to all groups and subgroups everywhere.

The second category of norms are more critical to the present analysis. These are norms that the subgroup shares with other subgroups within the larger group, and, indeed, with the larger group as a whole. These are the shared norms that every ethnic community in a nation, including Aboriginal peoples as a subgroup, would have in common. These are the overarching norms, usually articulated as values, that would characterize the culture of a nation. These organization-wide norms are the glue that provides the entire organization with a collective means and direction for achieving the goals of the entire organization. The question is, who defines these overarching norms? Clearly, not all subgroups contribute equally. Indeed it is more powerful subgroups who articulate these norms, precisely because they have the power to enforce them. It is the upper echelon in a university or company, and the majority group in a nation who has the power to specify and enforce the collective norms. In terms of the present analysis, Aboriginal peoples are an important subgroup, but some of their norms will be ones they

share with mainstream majority Canadian groups, and it is mainstream Canadians who will, for the most part define these shared norms.

The direct implications of these shared norms are that the problems confronting Aboriginal communities involve those that fall into this shared category. Academic success, the use of alcohol and drugs in moderation, and health prevention are all norms that are shared by Aboriginal people and mainstream Canadians equally. Whenever there is a breakdown in these norms in an Aboriginal community, that is when academic underachievement, alcohol and drug misuse or unhealthy behaviour predominate, there is at least agreement at some level that such norms are dysfunctional.

The third category of norms are those that are unique to the subgroup. While unique, they are nevertheless not in conflict with the norms of the larger group, and indeed may well be respected by the larger group. Ethnic minority groups each have their cultural identity, but these unique norms in no way compromise the norms of mainstream society. Indeed, one of the more powerful societal norms is that minority groups should be encouraged to maintain their cultural distinctiveness. In the case of Aboriginal people, their relationship to the environment involves norms that are unique, but these are largely respected by mainstream Canadians.

Finally, the fourth category of subgroup norms are those that are also unique, but are incompatible with the broader norms of mainstream society. These are certain to be a source of conflict with the norms of the larger group. Usually these are norms confined to the subgroup and even then represent only a small portion of the subgroups norms. Thus, while they may be contentious, they will not usually compromise the overall goals of larger group. Examples might include ethnic subgroups with eating habits or drug habits that are at odds with the broader societal norms. In the case of Aboriginal peoples, some of the more contentious norms are those surrounding protection of the environment and the right to unlimited hunting and fishing that are at odds with mainstream norms related to economic development and employment.

When 80-20 becomes 20-80!

What can we expect when a group does not have the mythical 80% who are normative and a minority 20% who are non-normative? What happens when the normative/non-normative ratio is more like 50-50, 40-60, or, more dramatically, 20-80? These normative reversals will only occur when social change is sudden, dramatic and touches every major goal of a group. Examples abound when we consider entire nations coping with the almost instant introduction of capitalism and democracy. The catastrophic impact of slavery as Africans were suddenly kidnapped and forced from their culturally rich life to cope with a new role on a new continent. In terms of our present focus, this is precisely what Aboriginal peoples face in their remote communities and reserves, and in urban centers. No group has been forcibly cornered into widespread normative disruption more than Aboriginal People. The challenge they confront in terms of normative regulation needs to be addressed for our analysis will reveal that the usual regulatory mechanisms that are applied to the usual 80-20 context will be ineffective.

How Aboriginal languages, cultures and ways of life have been destroyed through the ravages of internal colonialism have been well documented. The concrete, visible upheaval to Aboriginal Peoples' ways of life is scathing, but no less destructive is our growing understanding of its detrimental impact on psychological identity. The norms that define a clear cultural and personal identity are the necessary psychological frameworks that allow individuals to successfully navigate life and achieve a semblance of well-being.

The result is a modern travesty where Aboriginal communities struggle with pervasive social dysfunction, underemployment and academic underachievement, along with physical and mental health issues that are unacceptable when compared to national standards. Repeated efforts both from within Aboriginal communities themselves, and mainstream interventions have struggled to address these issues with frustratingly little success.

What our 80-20 analogy does first is offer some insight into the precise magnitude of the challenge confronting Aboriginal communities. Second, it points to precisely why many intervention strategies are doomed to failure, and finally, suggests at least broad directions for constructive social change.

The Failure of Current Interventions

In the normal 80-20 scenario, there are a myriad of interventions directed at the 20% of group members depending upon the specific non-normative behaviour in question. What they all share, however, is resources, be they human or financial, directed at the targeted minority with a view to normalizing their non-normative behaviour. The underachiever, delinquent, violent, substance misuser, mentally ill, physically ill minority, to name a few, is targeted by trained professionals. Sometimes non-normative minority group members are fully aware of their status and seek professional help themselves. Sometimes they are slow to acknowledging their status and thus do not immediately pursue help. And, sometimes there is no awareness of their own non-normative behaviour, or there is complete denial, in which case professionals must do the targeting and implementing. In all cases it is the normative majority that tacitly defines the non-normative minority and supports the intervention.

Without the crucial role of a normative majority, however, the rational basis of intervention by professionals collapses. First, few will identify themselves as non-normative and seek help since there is no normative majority to serve as a reference group. Indeed, if anything, non-normative behaviour would be the norm and hence there would be little incentive to change. Applied to Aboriginal communities, especially isolated First Nations reserves and remote Arctic Inuit communities, even services that are taken for granted take on a different perspective in the context of an inverted 80-20 rule. For example, what could be simpler than a nursing station in a community? When residents have an accident or become ill, they go to the station where a professional non-Aboriginal nurse will diagnose, treat, and if necessary, medevac (medical evacuation) the patient to a hospital. The problem is that community residents have no normative context

for knowing how, when, and if to avail themselves of medical attention. Even in the Canadian mainstream, the changing structure of health care has left most people confused and uncertain about when to go to the hospital, clinic, or family doctor, if they have one. In Aboriginal communities there is no normative structure about the use of health facilities. Not surprisingly some residents demand help when none is needed and many in dire need do not seek help, or seek it too late. Moreover, preventative health measures are not taken routinely. All of this because there is no long-term normative structure in the communities to guide residents in the most effective use of a nursing station. If norms are lacking with respect to behaviour as concrete as physical health, other, less visible domains, such as psychological well-being and long-term goal setting, are likely to produce even more ambiguity.

The behaviour of students in school is instructive by way of example. In most mainstream schools, attendance and class behaviour is more or less regulated. Those few who break the norms are dealt with through a variety of means including after-school detentions, occasional short terms expulsions, with parental involvement for reinstatement for serious violations. These remedial actions are directed at the minority who transgress, and are not always successful. Applying the same procedures to Aboriginal schools is doomed because the normative structure is different. Arriving late to school, skipping classes and taking off entire days is so frequent that 80% of the students would be in detention every day. There is little incentive for school success since there is no clear relationship between academic achievement and employment status. Moreover, parents of students have little experience with formal mainstream education, and have no personal experience with formal education determining their quality of life. There is a general sense in Aboriginal communities that education is important, but it's importance is recognized because it is a societal norm, one that we have noted would be defined and imposed by the powerful mainstream majority. In Aboriginal communities, there is no clear, concrete normative sense that formal education is directly relevant to their life. In short, there is no majority in the community (80%) with a shared norm about the fundamental importance of schooling. The result is that detentions and expulsions pose no threat to students, and there is no normative structure to reinforce mainstream notions of student conduct. No wonder mainstream disciplinary measures are destined to fail.

Equally problematic are the use of traditional Aboriginal procedures for dealing with non-normative behaviour. Aboriginal procedures are, in most cases, culturally more familiar and appropriate, leading mainstream policy makers and Aboriginal leaders to have high expectations for their success. However, Aboriginal procedures for justice, healing and child discipline, for example, all arose prior to European incursions when Aboriginal groups truly controlled their own collective identity and had evolved very effective 80-20 normative structures. Regulatory interventions were directed at the non-normative minority with the full backing of the normative majority. Adopting such intervention strategies without the benefit of an 80-20 normative structure, face the same overwhelming challenges as mainstream interventions. The paucity of results is more devastating, however, because it would appear on the surface to reflect a failure in

Aboriginal culture. Clearly, the cultural benefit is sabotaged by the lack of a functional normative structure.

Zero Tolerance: a response to normative imbalance

Zero Tolerance has become a phrase of everyday usage to indicate "such and such a behaviour is not appropriate here." Since it has become a "buzz" word, the initial meaning of zero tolerance, and indeed its social significance has been lost. Our first personal encounter with the phrase was in the context of disadvantaged, inner-city high schools where problems of violence and drug use had become so prevalent that teachers were preoccupied with discipline instead of teaching. Every high school confronts problems related to drugs and violence, but usually they are not the norm in any literal sense. That is, the majority of students go about their academic business to a greater or lesser extent, while a few, usually the same few, are highly disruptive. In some schools, however, drugs and violence extend beyond the few and become almost normative. When drugs and violence become normative, an atmosphere of crisis and resignation permeates. Faced with such a normative crisis, a school principal, instead of attempting yet another procedure to regulate the problem, might introduce a zero tolerance rule. The rule would be simple, extreme, unyielding, and the consequence for any violation would be immediate expulsion.

What makes a Zero Tolerance policy especially noteworthy is that, on the surface, it violates societal norms of equity and justice. Both in our formal justice system or the every day regulation of behaviour, the punishment is meant to fit the crime; the more serious the offense, the harsher the punishment. Zero Tolerance violates such a norm of equity by pronouncing that the same severe consequence will follow the smallest to the most extreme offense in a particular domain. Thus, the implementation of a genuine Zero Tolerance rule is a serious undertaking, and the hope is that it's imposition can be removed once a more normative state is restored.

The implementation of such a Zero Tolerance policy received national attention in the media when a 13-year-old boy was suspended for bringing to school a tiny knife in his lunch bucket in order to cut his apple. The suspension was interpreted as a ridiculous overreaction and it provoked widespread public ridicule. However, understood as a breakdown in the school of the normal 80-20 normative structure, the need for a strict Zero Tolerance policy makes eminent sense. Initially, schools that evoked a Zero Tolerance policy were ones where school violence had become the norm. Thus, taking yet one more minor step to curb the violence was simply not going to work. When 80-20 becomes 20-80, the aim is not simply to reinforce an existing norm gone a wry, but rather to overturn a new socially destructive norm. Thus, the need for a genuine and literal Zero Tolerance policy; no violation however minor can be tolerated or the entire intervention will fail.

It would be tempting to introduce genuine Zero Tolerance policies for Aboriginal communities since they have been effective in reversing norms in some inner-city schools. However, there is a major difference in the two settings that makes such a

generalization unrealistic. In an inner-city school context violence may, under certain circumstances, become normative among students. But violence is not normative for the school board, the principal, the teachers, students at other schools, or in terms of the community, authorities and parents outside the school. Thus, the pronouncement of a Zero Tolerance policy by a school principal will have the full support of all these stakeholders, and indeed will inevitably fail unless there is full support from all stakeholders.

Aboriginal communities do not have the benefit of such widespread social support for normative change, especially among community leaders and institutions. For example, most of the social problems, that is behaviours that violate overarching mainstream norms as well as norms in Aboriginal communities, cut across all strata. They are not limited to a definable subset but rather affect young and old, rich and poor, and men and women. Education, employment status and family connection offer no immunity. Indeed, the role of leaders is a particular challenge in terms of normative change. Community leaders, who are as likely to be non-normative as anyone, are the last ones who would be motivated to initiate normative change. After all, they have been extremely successful in the context of the existing dysfunctional normative structure.

Thus, when confronted with widespread socially destructive behaviour, many institutions have evoked some form of Zero Tolerance policy. Unfortunately, they are rarely implemented rigorously and so have become synonymous with nothing more than a superficial reminder that a particular behaviour is not valued. Indeed, many Aboriginal communities have declared themselves to be "dry" by legislating that no alcohol or drugs are permitted entry into the community. And yet, many of these communities confront substance abuse problems that are as widespread as communities that are not "dry".

Moreover, even when implemented rigorously, no Zero Tolerance policy will be effective without the consensual support of key stakeholders. Aboriginal communities for the most part cannot count on a consensus among key stakeholders, since Aboriginal leaders and others intervening to "renormalize" the community are themselves invested in the less than fully functional 80%. Thus, evoking a Zero Tolerance policy for behaviour the community targets as socially destructive is not likely to be successful.

Towards a solution to a 20-80 normative structure

The normative challenge we have described is a daunting one, which perhaps explains why so many mainstream, and indeed traditional Aboriginal, interventions have been less than completely successful. Our normative analysis suggests where the beginnings of a solution might lie, but we need to underscore that what we propose is a framework for social change, not the cultural content of social change. That is, our focus is on the "how," not the "what." We are not making recommendations about what values, priorities, goals, or lifestyles communities should adopt. These are rightly the exclusive responsibility of Aboriginal communities themselves. Rather we are offering inferences about how communities might stimulate change. Our inferences arise from a normative

analysis, the genesis of which was stimulated by concerns that have been voiced by Aboriginal peoples across the country.

In mainstream society, the primary goal is one of maintaining an 80-20 normative structure. The non-normative 20% are routinely targeted to, at least, ensure the percentage does not rise, and at best, reduce the percentage. Such a maintenance process is challenging enough. For Aboriginal communities the objective is not one of maintenance, but rather of reversing a well entrenched set of dysfunctional norms.

Ironically, just as in the context of a well functioning group the focus is on the 20%, so too, in communities that are less functional, the focus for social change is on the 20%. The functioning 20% in a community of widespread dysfunction are pivotal in that they are the individuals who must instigate the monumental task of reversing a well entrenched set of community norms. The first step in any community will be to identify and regroup the minority of individuals who personify the desired set of new norms. The task of identification and regrouping is a difficult one since these individuals will not be found within one organization, or within one strata of the community, or indeed within one extended family among the few that comprise the community. The fully functional minority, precisely because of their non-normativeness, are not likely to maintain a high community profile. Indeed they will usually do all they can to appear as if they adhere to the norms of the community. After all, on First Nations reserves and in remote Inuit communities, leaving the community is not a realistic option for most since it requires abandoning family, friends, and an entire community that has served as the individual's point of reference for their entire life. Nevertheless, some do leave to pursue what they believe to be a more functional lifestyle, and often it will be to work for the betterment of their communities from afar. But these individuals are critical members of their community's functioning minority who are, for the most part, lost to the mission of reshaping the entire normative structure of the community.

Unequivocal support for the functional minority in the community could, of course, come from mainstream institutions and the mainstream public at large since both espouse precisely the same norms. Unfortunately, a history of broken promises and suspicions renders this possibility tenuous at best. Indeed, any demonstrable support could well backfire since it would be viewed as mainstream society imposing its will on Aboriginal communities. Such a theory of conspiracy is very salient for communities who have fought against a long history of Canadian colonial policies directed at assimilation.

Thus, the fact that fully functional individuals in a community are sprinkled throughout all strata, are motivated to maintain a low profile, and, indeed, may even have left the community, makes identifying these individuals a more difficult task than might be imagined. But even if key individuals can be successfully identified, having them agree to group together in order to redefine the norms of their community will be monumental. These are individuals who generally keep a low profile and any regrouping for the instigation of social change will expose them to alienation from their community,

including close friends, and undoubtedly extended family members. In remote small communities this is a devastating price to pay.

The task of identification and regrouping does have one facilitating circumstance: Communities have begun to talk more openly about the social problems they confront. Until recently communities have tended not to acknowledge the scope of their own problems. Mainstream institutions played a pivotal role in this denial process by placing themselves in a no-win situation. On the one hand, there was some recognition by mainstreamers that the social problems in Aboriginal communities have their roots in failed colonial policies of blatant discrimination and assimilation. On the other hand, for mainstream institutions to make public pronouncements on the scope of the social problems would appear as discriminatory in and of itself. This conspiracy of silence is slowly being broken as communities come to grips with the reality of their own past, and mainstream institutions are forced to confront their own role in the process.

Finally, the targeting of the "functioning" 20% is made more complex by the fact that individuals may be part of the 80% in one domain, but squarely in the 20% in another domain. Initially, this might seem encouraging since the task is limited to identifying members of the functioning 20% in the particular domain that the community has chosen as its focus. But as we noted earlier, there are some non-normative behaviours that tend to generalize to most, if not all, other domains. In terms of domain specificity, we all know the family member who needs inordinate support, but who has wonderful interpersonal qualities, or the unorganized, unpunctual coworker who has amazing problem-solving skills. Unfortunately, many of the problems confronting Aboriginal communities are ones that generalize to other domains. Problems with alcohol and drugs, or academic underachievement and underemployment, or indeed chronic malnourishment, cut across all life domains. This harsh reality, however, is offset by our own personal experience in communities. An individual may have even regular bouts with alcohol, indeed bouts that impact both their family life and work efficiency. The same individual may well be a fully functioning constructive force at other times. Despite confronting a social problem with destructive outcomes that generalize, this is nevertheless a quality person who can be, more often than not, a constructive force for social change. Not only might such individuals be genuine contributors to constructive social change, they can serve as a more realistic model for others in the community who are pessimistic about their own lives.

The end result is that while it remains a daunting task at the community level, it is at least possible to contemplate identifying and regrouping a small minority of community members who might be willing to spearhead social change. Once the 20% is identified and regrouped, their main challenge will be to alter the norms of the 80%. Their aim will be to, over time, increase the number of well-functioning individuals beyond 20%, thereby reducing the percentage of the community falling into the dysfunctional 80%. Ultimately, a reversal of the 20-80 structure would be the ideal.

Minority Influence

In mainstream society the focus is on how a majority influences the minority. For example, parents of teenagers worry constantly about "peer pressure," That is, they worry that their teenager will not be able, on their own, to withstand the pressure from an entire group of teenagers to engage in undesirable behaviours. The worry is a genuine one because when a majority attempts to influence a minority, the majority has tremendous power. The majority has the power of numbers, and this means they also have the power to include or exclude the minority, reward or punish the minority, in short, control the quality of life for the minority.

While majority influence is rooted in the power of numbers, minority influence is governed by a totally different process. Because the minority does not have the power of numbers they are in no position to force compliance from the majority. The challenges faced by the 20% are enormous: not only must the minority 20% resist the norms as defined by the majority, but they must also find a way to impose their will on the majority 80%. Research on minority influence suggests that it is possible for a minority to influence the majority under optimal conditions.

The minimum requirement is that the minority speak unanimously, consistently and with self-confidence. Because the 20% do not have the benefit of widespread support, they have to be acutely aware of their message compared to members of a majority trying to exert influence on a minority. Indeed, majority members who are at times inconsistent and less than confident, can still influence a minority. Because of its size, the majority is often perceived as doing things the "right" way, regardless of the flaws, inconsistencies and vagaries in their definition of "right way." In fact, it is natural to believe that if the vast majority supports something, they must be right. After all, "how could so many people be wrong?" In Aboriginal communities this issue is exacerbated by some leaders. As we noted, in a difficult 20-80 situation, dysfunction will be found at all levels, including among the formal leadership. This is especially problematic given the extra weight their behaviour carries.

Thus, in order to be persuasive the minority must be doggedly vocal, self-assured and consistent in their arguments. Faced with such a determined minority, the majority while not under pressure to comply, may begin to engage in what theorists label a validation process. The validation process involves members of the majority beginning to question and perhaps even doubt their own views. When a majority influences a minority, the power of the majority is such that the compliant minority may do little other than superficially comply. The validation process provoked by minority influence may be more difficult but, when it succeeds, it stimulates genuine attitude and social change. That is, the change is not superficial compliance in the face of overwhelming numbers, but the genuine internalization of change. Once the validation process is set in motion majority group members will be motivated to carefully review their position compared to that advocated by the minority. The result will be more creative and novel perspectives, and, according to some researchers, divergent thinking will be stimulated. Even if the minority's position is not immediately and automatically adopted, critical thinking will be

activated and a careful review of alternatives will be considered. For example, if the 20% is sufficiently consistent and self-confident in arguing that education is necessary for children, it is possible that parents will start insisting that their children attend school faithfully and take their learning seriously. Minority influence, lacking the power of numbers, has no guarantee of success. But when successful the changes that are promoted will more often than not be long-term, and internalized.

What the minority hopes for, of course, is a snowball effect. As more members of the majority defect, the less the minority is a minority and the majority a majority. Indeed, a majority member that has defected is more persuasive than a minority voice.

However, it is important to consider aspects of group composition in order to better understand minority influence. An outgroup minority will have little persuasive impact on majority ingroup members, first because the outgroup is a minority and second because they are an outgroup, that is they are not members of the group that is the focus of social change. There are important implications in the case of 20-80 for Aboriginal people. First, mainstream members of a society are likely to be ineffectual in promoting social change since mainstreamers represent an historically based and conflictual, for the most part not to be trusted, outgroup. The challenge for mainstream advocates for social change in Aboriginal communities, is how to minimize their outgroup status and take inordinate steps to genuinely gain the trust of Aboriginal communities.

By contrast, the 20% in an Aboriginal community are not an outgroup, and thus have a better chance of instigating social change in the community. That is, the 20% despite being different because they are non-normative by community standards, are nevertheless similar in that they share our ethnic heritage. This similarity provides the 20% minority with leverage when it comes to instigating social change. This similarity needs to be highlighted by using labels such as "we" and "us" to underscore the shared ingroup status.

Conclusions

For any organization, group or community to achieve its goals, the vast majority of group members must adhere to the socially defined norms of the group. These would include norms common to all group members as well as more particular norms associated with the myriad of interrelated roles that together coordinate group activity. Groups take seriously any members who exhibit non-normative behaviour since they compromise the effective functioning of the group.

We highlight how inordinate resources are directed at non-normative group members with a view to rehabilitating them to a normative state. We argue that the silent majority of normative group members play a pivotal role by both defining normalcy and supporting attempts at rehabilitation.

The process is qualitatively different for groups that suffer a normative imbalance such that non-normative group members outnumber those that are normative. Clearly, the

rehabilitation task will be inordinate. More importantly, the rehabilitation process must be accomplished without the benefit of a majority to serve a normative and supportive role.

This is precisely the challenge confronting Aboriginal communities where academic underachievement and social dysfunction are widespread. Our normative analysis underscores why the usual rehabilitation processes applied in the context of mainstream groups, or traditional Aboriginal interventions are doomed to fail.