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Social Services And the Innu of Labrador Interim Delivery Strategy

Background:

The two Innu communities of Labrador have both been pursuing healing and recovery strategies for several years. A key part of those plans is adequate and appropriate social services. This need is one of three key reasons cited by the Innu for pursuing Indian Act Registration and reserve creation. Action on Child and Family Services (C&FS) is seen to be a high priority for the federal and provincial governments and a sub-committee of the Maintable overseeing the Indian Act Registration process was recently created with C&FS as a first item.

The Committee struck by the Maintable on Registration –known as the Program Sub-Committee–met in St John's on April 18, 2002 to devise a plan for action on C&FS. Discussion revealed two main issues–immediate improvement of delivery of social services and, movement toward Innu control. As a result an overall workplan with both short and longer term objectives, was to be prepared. The Innu undertook to prepare an outline of a proposal to secure immediate professional social work support based in the two communities, in order to expedite that portion of the workplan.

The Need for Interim Services:

The Innu of Labrador receive social services from the province. Provincial staff have described in several forums over the past few years their ongoing issues with recruitment and retention of qualified social workers for the two communities. As well they have described a caseload of 320 and allocation of 4 Certified Social Worker positions between the two communities, resulting in an average case load of 80 versus the target of 25 mixed risk cases. The Innu cases are considered to be more complex and risky than the average but there is no case load target for such types of cases. With such a case load, the province also notes that even if recruitment and retention issues were overcome, there is insufficient access to supporting resources to provide complete case management services to the communities for the needs there.

In the April 18 meeting it was explained that there are several factors contributing to ongoing recruitment and retention issues. While salary levels and lack of good accommodation in Davis Inlet are factors, they are not the main ones. The major factors are: the difficulty of non-natives to work effectively in an unfamiliar cultural, social and linguistic milieu and; a feeling that provincial objectives may sometimes conflict with local ones. These two factors create a strenuous working environment for those whose very profession is to help people, families and communities in difficult situations.

In summary, the existing system:

- 1) does not provide adequate quality or quantity of services to the Innu of Labrador;
 - 2) there are some salary and accommodations issues affecting recruitment;
 - 3) the provincial professional service model does not allow effective front line delivery;
- and,

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- 4) there is an inherent role conflict for professional social workers.

Each of these contribute in varying ways to recruitment, retention and performance issues. An interim solution that addresses these matters may be welcomed by all parties.

The Parameters.

Child and family services are provided through provincial legislation. This establishes the legislative, policy, standard levels, professional accreditation requirements, roles and responsibilities, and organizational structures for C&FS activities and functions. In recognition of the importance and the liabilities associated with questions of children at risk, there are very specific rules about child apprehension from consideration, through court orders, and post apprehension. That said, there is a practical focus on prevention activities by social workers rather than apprehension. It is in the preventative area that there may be the most room for immediate and innovative arrangements to improve social services delivery in the two Innu communities.

At the April 18th meeting federal and provincial officials raised matters of capacity that must be demonstrated before the Innu could take control of federal funding for Child and Family Services and develop delivery options similar to other First Nations. Meanwhile the Innu noted problems in the capacity of the existing system to meet actual needs. It was apparent that there were many links between interim action and longer term capacity matters. Accordingly, the Innu have sought to incorporate such links in their proposal for Interim delivery in order to hasten action toward longer term Innu control.

The Interim Professional Social Work Support Outline:

Objective: Development of an interim delivery model under Innu direction that will provide more professional social work capacity, more effective operations within the existing legal framework, and can facilitate resolution of issues delaying Innu control over C&FS.

Legislative Framework: Provincial legislation continues to apply.

Standards and policies: Provincial standards will generally apply. Where standards are policy based, these will be reviewed to see if different policy interpretations would facilitate improved social work performance in the communities.

Qualifications: Where laws or regulations require a function be performed by a person registered to do social work in the province, that qualification will be met.

Management: A community-based approach complemented by an Interim Director that provides common direction to social workers in both communities and coordinates professional linkages to provincial staff.

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Delivery model: Delivery is through local case teams which shall include Social worker, front line Innu workers, health, addictions, country treatment providers, education, and other staff as appropriate. All shall operate as equal team members and promote the most effective use of front line workers and of professional staff.

Responsibilities: The Innu employees will perform all social work functions that can be empowered under existing laws. (At this time it is uncertain whether authority can be delegated in all areas or not) For greater certainty we suggest an MOU between the Innu and Health Labrador Corporation on respective roles and responsibilities .

Innu Governance of Interim Services: The preferred option for funding and accountability is through the approved Innu Advisory Services (tribal council). This is complemented by a C&FS Advisory Committee in each community created pursuant to existing community committee practices.

Proposed Organization and Procedures Outline.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

An MOU will describe the roles and responsibilities of the agencies and positions involved. The MOU will include any oversight committee, liaison procedures, and reporting needed to ensure all operational obligations of all parties are met.

Tripartite C&FS workplan.

This will establish the tasks required to identify and resolve capacity and other issues to be resolved prior to Innu control of C&FS. It will also secure the resources needed for implementation.

Tribal Council.

The Labrador Innu Advisory Services (LIAS) is governed by a Board of Directors described by DIAND directives that have been modified in recognition of the limited membership and administrative budgets. It is composed of the Mushuau and Sheshatshiu Innu chiefs, plus one Band Councillor from each community that is selected by each Band Council. The non-voting Chairperson role is to be filled by the Innu Nation President. This governance structure ensures major decisions are reached through consensus and makes the LIAS directly accountable to the member Band Councils.

The LIAS was approved by DIAND in August 2000 and then subjected to a moratorium 10 months later. While funds have been allocated, senior federal approval of its implementation is still needed. The Maintable should seek clarification in writing of its status and advise whether an alternative organization is required.

Community Committees.

Each community will establish a local Committee which is expected to have membership similar

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to the following:

- * One Chairperson (may be a band councilor)
- * Four Community representatives (including service users and senior staff)
- * Interim Director of Innu Child and Family Services
- * Federal representative (ex-officio)
- * Provincial representative (ex-officio) .

The Committees will have the responsibility for identifying community specific issues or concerns with respect to any and all aspects of the delivery of child and family services in the communities. (This does not include individual case specific issues.) The Committee members will liaise with the Band Councils and community members to monitor, evaluate, plan and provide advice on all matters in regard to services provision. Members will be expected to participate in capacity development opportunities related to board membership.

Operations:

1. The Director of Innu Child and Family Services will provide professional supervision and guidance to oversee the development and delivery of front line services in both communities, as well as ensure the implementation of capacity development for community and staff. Lyla Andrew, an experienced MSW has been approached to take on this position. An administrative assistant fluent in Innu eimun, would be hired to work with the interim director in order to facilitate the work within both communities, and maintain an administrative office.

The Interim Director will have overall responsibility for the day to day provision of services and staff supervision. She will oversee all aspects of the child and family services programs. Managers in each community will report directly to her, and through her, to the local committees and the LIAS Board. The Interim Director and administrative assistant will be employed through contractual agreements with the LIAS.

2. Staff. The resources for incremental staff will flow through the LIAS and be managed by the Director. The front line workers will be hired jointly by the Director and the respective Health Commission director. The funds for front line workers will be transferred to each Commission by the Director of IC&FS. Social workers staff will be Jointly hired by all three Directors and retained on contract with the LIAS.
3. Case management
Key to the Innu model of social services delivery is the use of local case management with all players operating toward common goals. Front Line Workers will be empowered through multi-disciplinary case teams to undertake a fuller range of front line social service functions. This will better equip the social workers with the information needed to do their jobs. The case teams will then ensure that all factors are brought to bear on each case at every step of the way including complementary progress in treatment and healing plans.

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GRAPHIC DIAGRAM TO BE DEVELOPED

Measurements of Success:

This project is focused on improving the effectiveness of social work in the Innu communities, and secondarily, of demonstrating capacity for Innu control over C&FS. While there are no direct measures of this success there are certain items that can indicate whether or not things are improving. The indicators should be jointly designed by all three governments to ensure the needs of each are met, that mechanisms for collection of data and timely reporting are developed, and that resources are secured for it.

Resources.

Additional resources will be required. Even though these may be for an incremental scenario (ie assume that existing provincial resource allocations remain committed to the communities but not necessarily under Innu direction), these incremental resources will be significant. This outline is not designed to cost the resource needs, however an example of the scope of resources can be seen in simply increase the number of social workers.

In order to meet the case load standards suggested by the Child Welfare League of Canada of 25 mixed risk case per worker, a total of 13 qualified workers, or 9 more than the present provincial allocation of four, is needed. Under provincial terms of employment social workers are paid up to \$45,000. That leaves an incremental salary allowance of \$405,000 (9 x \$45,000) plus benefits, plus any other premiums such as isolated allowance, home return flights, or housing assistance.