

THE GZAA-GAAH-NAAH-NIG CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES PROJECT

PLANNING FOR IMPLEMENTATION

**Potential Blocks and Growing Pains in a New Native Child and
Family Services Agency**

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INTRODUCTION

This is a planning paper for the Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig Child and Family Services Project. The purpose of this paper is to anticipate potential helpful and hindering factors which may affect eventual implementation of a new agency. These factors will be taken into account by the Project Steering Committee in developing an implementation strategy and plan. The plan will be put into place during Phase II of the project, the "Development Phase".

The themes in this paper came from several sources of information in the Gzaa-Gaah-Naah-Nig Project. We now turn to a summary of these sources.

SOURCES OF IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING INFORMATION

From the outset, implementation planning was taken as a very important component of this project. The difficulties, or what we have called "growing pains" in other Native services, were attributed to a neglect of planning for implementation and a careful development phase. All of us were committed to avoiding this mistake.

The core ideas emerged from the following sources:

- 1. A community consultation in which community members were asked to contribute to the implementation planning process by speculating on potential "helps and hindrances" to development.**
- 2. A Native Child Welfare Conference in which five Executive Directors from other Native child and family service agencies were asked to share their organizational growing pains, and recommendations.**
- 3. A Resource Assessment Study in which current service providers in the participating First Nations were asked to share the challenges of delivering their services.**

- 5. A review of four organizational reviews and program evaluations of Native family and children's services.**

- 6. An implementation planning workshop in which members of the project Steering Committee (including Chiefs, service managers, and service providers) participated in a group idea building process.**

We indicated above that the perceptions of community members would be used as a partial source of information for planning the implementation of a new agency. Our assumption was that in their common-sense local wisdom and experience in small communities, they could alert planners to the community factors which may help or hinder new initiatives.

Despite the known complexities of planned change, we needed a simple way of probing people's common-sense ideas. We asked a single question towards the conclusion of the Family Needs Assessment interview:

"What would help or stand in the way of the development of a successful child and family services agency?"

Interviewers were trained to probe for as many helpful factors or blocks as possible.

RESULTS

The People Speak

Tables 1 and 2 summarize the answers to the above question. From the community household interviews, the answers cluster around eight significant factors. Thus, people thought that the development of a new agency would be affected by the following:

- . community support**
- . funding**
- . the support of Chief and Council**
- . community awareness of the agency**
- . appropriateness of staffing**
- . working relationships with other agencies**
- . community attitudes and behavior**
- . appropriateness of location**
- . other factors**

Each of these will now be discussed, in order of priority. Priority is measured according to the number of respondents mentioning each one.

Community Support

A large number of people believe that the level and type of community support will be an important factor in affecting the ultimate success of the agency. In this case, "support" refers to the belief in the agency's appropriateness, particular as regards meeting important needs.

Community support also refers to the level of participation in programs by clients (i.e. seeking help, attending community initiatives) and by volunteers. To quote one respondent, success will follow if...

"People...take an interest and volunteer. Getting involved with programs. Interest in the community. If you don't have the people its not going to work. If people come together, it would all work. Support."

And, as one member said, the agency might falter if ...

" .. no one supports the agency, spreading rumours about the agency that are false. This could harm them.."

Funding

Many respondents expressed concern about appropriate funding levels, and how inadequate funding could inhibit development. Appropriate fund-raising arrangements should be in place, including (according to some) efforts to raise funds from the community. Quoting one respondent:

"Funding is essential; purse-strings have to be identified, secured and managed effectively"

Support of Chief and Council

The solid endorsement by the community leadership is yet another important perceived factor in the ultimate success or struggles of the developing agency. To quote:

" Chief and Council need to be totally behind the program."

Community Awareness

Community awareness emerged as the most frequently mentioned important factor for successful development of the agency. Two hundred and ninety-four people (61% of the total) commented on the importance of keeping the community aware of the agency, its development, and the various programs. Answers reflecting this theme were perhaps the most detailed and helpful concerning the reasons and specific ways to keep people informed. Two examples follow:

"More public awareness...Continual update through fliers, newsletters and meetings."

"More advertisement, public awareness of facilities available. More visiting to communities, to household, band visiting... build the trust within the community"

Appropriate Staffing

Another high priority issue (175 people or 36%) potentially affecting the success or struggle of the agency is the question of staffing. It is clear from the various responses that people are looking to well qualified staff, hopefully Native, as the key to quality service.

Although some respondents do not emphasize hiring Natives, most of those concerned about staffing, lean in this direction. Staff must be familiar with the communities and must be able to deliver according to circumstances and need. To quote:

"Person hired has to understand the community. Volunteers from within the community..."

" Training of our people to run agency, no outsiders"

" Hire more local people who have lived here for a long time. If hired from off the island, they should be Native."

Several respondents commented on how local hiring, depending on how it was done, might unleash jealousies and conflicts within the community. Since these negative responses might undermine trust in the agency, a fair hiring process would be important.

Organizational and Leadership Issues

One in five people interviewed felt that organizational or leadership factors would be important in determining the success of a new agency. The most often expressed concern related to organizational functioning and leadership was that the agency would be controlled by, and accountable to, Native people. The importance of strong planning was also raised.

Other comments like "good administration", strong agency governance", and a "suitable support system for staff" round out the various organizational and leadership themes.

Negative Community Attitudes and Behavior

Concerning possible impediments to development, approximately one in five people sense that a major challenge will come from negative community behavior and attitudes. Although respondents describe these in many ways, a close analysis of their words and phrases reveal three core themes:

- . the theme of negativity**
- . a theme suggesting fear of change**

- . **the theme of "denial", implying that many people will resist seeking help**

Negative attitudes and a general fear of change are well-documented themes in the process of introducing new initiatives. Rather than to dismiss these feelings as annoying blocks from uncooperative people, these attitudes should be addressed by the planning group as important characteristics of the community environment.

If the negativism and fear are true, they may be the legitimate frustrations of people remembering countless unsuccessful initiatives, which have not produced significant change. The challenge for planners is to acknowledge these feelings in a positive way, and think strategically about how to respond to them.

The denial theme is somewhat different than negativism or fear of change. However, it is no less real in its consequences for programming. The same theme surfaced in our resource assessment study, when service providers were asked to speculate on why some clients were hard to reach.

Obviously, programs will not reach their objectives if those in need are reluctant to seek services. "Denial" is one interpretation of this phenomena; our research data, as well as evaluation studies of other Native agencies, suggest four possible reasons:

- . **that potential clients do not trust the staff**
- . **that people feel that confidentiality is not respected**
- . **that people are unaware of the agency's purpose and the details of programs**
- . **that local offices do not allow privacy, and potential clients are reluctant to be seen seeking help**

Future planning must address these and other issues affecting client access to the agencies services.

Co-operation and Support from Other Agencies and Programs

Many people recognized that new service agencies do not operate in isolation. To assure success, the agency must build appropriate working relationships with a broad network of service agencies and programs, both on- and off-reserve.

In the minds of 70 people, (14% of the total) how a new agency will fit into a broader network of service agencies and programs, and the on-going support and cooperation, will be essential to its viability. In describing the ideal relationship with other services, words like "co-operation", "communication", "consultation" and "helpfulness", and "support" were used again and again.

Those reflecting on what might go wrong () anticipated possible resistance from other agencies who fear job loss, or who sense that services are already available from main-stream agencies.

Similar apprehensions concerning agency\government relations were also expressed, though not nearly as frequently. Words like "manipulation", "interference", and "fear of Native control" and "red tape" expressed the underlying pessimism in some respondents.

Confidentiality

Many people expressed the importance of confidentiality in the policies and practices of a new agency. This acknowledges the difficulty of providing services in small communities, particularly when locally-hired staff are the core service providers. As well, the issue of confidentiality, has surfaced in one way or another, in most evaluations of community-based Native organizations.

Other Helps and Hindrances

The above sections summarize the major themes as community members reflected on the things that may help or hinder the successful development of a new agency. Other concerns were also raised although not as many times as the others. These were:

- . **Location** : the selection of a place for the agency which has sufficient space, affords privacy, does not favour any one community, and is accessible.

- . **Appropriateness of Programs and Services**

- . **Client issues**: denying problems, not utilizing services, fearing services, harassment for seeking help.

2. **Review of Organizational Reviews and Evaluations**

Because a number of Native service agencies have been in operation for several years, and have been evaluated by external reviewers, the Gzaa-Gaah-Naah-Nig Project benefitted from these early experiences. The following projects were reviewed:

**The Experience of Growth: An Evaluation
of Ojibway Tribal Family Services
(Frank Maidman Associates, 1988)**

**Expanding the Circle of Support: Organizational
Review, Ojibway Tribal Family Services, Phase II.
(Frank Maidman Associates, 1991)**

**A Comprehensive Review of Payukotayno
James and Hudson's Bay Family Services
(James N. Docherty and Associates, 1992)**

**Native Family Services: Visions, Realities,
and Opportunities. An Evaluation of Tikinagan's
Band Family Services Program (Frank Maidman Associates, 1992)**

Table 3 summarizes the main growth issues raised in these reviews. As well, Table 3 includes those issues raised by the service providers in the participating Gzaa-Gaah-Nig Communities.

It is clear that many of the themes from from these evaluations paralld the concerns from Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig's community research. The evaluations indicate that many of the growing pains in new Native services result from:

- . Mission confusion**
- . The challenges of introducing culture-based services and organization**
- . Undeveloped or inadequately followed policies and procedures**
- . Funding inadequacies and financial practices**
- . Difficulties in organizational structure**
- . Management and supervision**
- . Organizational communiucation problems**
- . Staffing issues**
- . Weak local community and organizational support**
- . Service gaps**
- . Difficulties in client accessibility and service utilization**
- . The challenges of implementing customary care arrangements**

**. Esatblishing appropriate working arrangements
with agencies outside the communities**

**. Matters concerning service centralization versus
local Band direction of services**

TABLE 3: DEVELOPMENTAL CHALLENGES IN NATIVE FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S AGENCIES: A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM ORGANIZATIONAL REVIEWS

<u>Challenges</u>	<u>Agencies</u>			
	<u>Pay.</u>	<u>Tik.</u>	<u>OTFS</u>	<u>Gzaa Resource Ass.</u>
1. <u>Mission</u>				
. clarification of meaning				*
2. <u>Culture-base</u>				
. practices absent	*			
. conflict with Christianity				*
. absence	*			
. no culture-based family work; struggles with;	*	*	*	
. Involvement of Elders:				
. appropriate roles	*			*
. support to particip.	*			

. staff involvement

*

3. Policies and Procedures

*

*

*

*

. not developed

. child abuse

. not used

. not culture-based

. process

. incomplete awareness

by staff and communities

. conf. of

interest *

Challenges

Agencies

Pay.

Tik.

OTFS

Gzaa Resource Ass.

4. Financial

- . adequacy * *
- . decision *
- . practices (eg. signing) *

5. Organizational Structure

- . job uncertainty *
- . confusion over authority: band, agency * *
- . overly spec. *
- . insufficient time *
- . insufficient staff *
- . administrative problems (red tape, bureaucracy) *
- . Clinical Director *
- . Inflexible use of human resources: community-bound; *

office-bound

Challenges

Agencies

	<u>Pay.</u>	<u>Tik.</u>	<u>OTFS</u>	<u>Gzaa Resource Ass.</u>
6. <u>Management</u> *				*
. philosophy				
. responsibilities *				*
. problem-solving *				*
. planning *			*	
. culture-base				*
. absence of written respons. *				
. decision-making at middle levels *				
. staff evaluation				*
7. <u>Supervision</u> *		*		*
. lack				
. skill				
. location				
8. <u>Board Functioning</u>				
. inactive			*	
. liaison				
. planning			*	
. programming				*
. financial monitoring			*	

- . translation *
- . grievances *
- . staff involvement *

9. Case Management

- * * *
- . incomplete
- . confidentiality *
- . file System * *

Challenges**Agencies**

	<u>Pay.</u>	<u>Tik.</u>	<u>OTFS</u>	<u>Gzaa Resource Ass.</u>
10. <u>Communications</u>			*	
. skills				
. info. systems			*	
. poor minutes *				
11. <u>Staff Issues</u>				
. hiring		*		
. orientation *	*		*	
. turnover *	*		*	
. training *	*		*	*
. pers. probs; agency response		*	*	
. local issues affecting work			*	*
. non-use of resource materials	*		*	

Challenges

Agencies

Pay.

Tik.

OTFS

Gzaa Resource Ass.

12. Local Community Issues

**Insufficient staff visits
to communities ***

*

**Community lacks
awareness of
programs/roles ***

*

*

*

**Community doesn't
support (int.,
participation,
volunteers) ***

*

*

*

**Local organizational
support lacking ***

*

*

*

. lack superv.

. conflict messages

. inad. knowledge

. Council over-involved

. reactive rath. than planning

. local committees not functioning

. local policies

. leadership support

*

*

**. physical space
(privacy) ***

*

*

**Poor local
team-work ***

*

*

*

. isolation

. coordination

. mutual knowledge

Challenges**Agencies****Pay.****Tik.****OTFS****Gzaa Resource Ass.****13. Service Issues****Lack prevention**

*

**Inadequate knowledge of
Prevention**

*

*

Crisis driven

*

*

**Lack sexual
abuse progs.**

*

*

**No consistent
service models**

*

**Client
accessibility;
use**

*

*

*

. treatment by office staff**Lack community
development**

*

**Lack child abuse
review**

*

*

*

Counselling

*

. relatives**. skills**

- . culture-base**
- . sensitive areas**
- . unemployment**

*

Challenges

Agencies

	<u>Pay.</u>	<u>Tik.</u>	<u>OTFS</u>	<u>Gzaa Resource Ass.</u>
14. <u>Customary Care</u>	*	*		
. absence	*			
. locating				
. working with				
. emergency				
. abuse of service				*
. lack of follow-up support		*		*
. expense				*
. \$ expectation			*	
. staff taking children	*			
. insufficient foster homes				*
15. <u>Repatriation</u>				
. costs				*
. insufficient				*
16. <u>Protection</u>				
. court work				*
. excessive use	*			
. adversarial				*

. "apprehension"

*

**17. Community
healing**

*

. follow-up

Challenges

Agencies

Pay.

Tik.

OTFS

Gzaa Resource Ass.

**18. Community Relations:
Other Agencies**

*

. knowledge of
programs

*

. mutual aware.

*

. accessing

*

. referral/
follow

*

*

. policy
differences

*

19. First Nations

. understandings *

. communications *

. resp. to needs *

. results *

. decentralization * * *

**. incorp. other
services ***

. self-direction *