

Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig
Anishnabek Child and Family Services

Description of Services and Organization

SUMMARY

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INTRODUCTION

Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig Anishnabek Child and Family Services is a Native service organization working for the well-being and quality of life of children and families in eight First Nations. The organization came into being to respond to the needs of children and families. These were documented in an extensive planning process beginning in early 1992, a process featuring broad consultation, research and deliberation by Project staff and a Steering Committee.

Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig means "We love, we care". The following ideas grew out of this loving and caring spirit. Beginning with a statement of our purpose or mission, we go on to describe our path to wellness, and the service tools for reaching our goals.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig Child and Family Services is a First Nation controlled service organization serving the children, youth and families of the following participating First Nations: Dokis,

Henvey Inlet, Magnetewan, Nipissing, Shawanaga, Temagami, Wahnapiatae, and Wasauksing.

Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig is family-focussed and will provide individual, family and community healing, through prevention, intervention, cultural education, and community development. These services strive to create and enhance unity and strength within the communities. Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig services and organization reflect values, beliefs, and principles that are consistent with Native culture. The organization and its programs, along with the communities it serves, are rooted in the historical principle of self-determination. Community development begins with us.

This culturally-based organization responds to the needs of its member First Nations, working in balance, co-operation and mutual respect.

The care of children is the responsibility of the whole community. The family environment is an important source of teaching. Holistic services enhance physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual health and well-being. The extended family is an important unit in the lives of adults, children and youth throughout the life cycle. All work is guided by the values of love, honesty, mutual care, unity, forgiveness and respect for the whole environment. As a culture built on strong relationships, much of the focus is on strengthening communications within families, throughout communities, and across our member First Nations. While working in the present, service providers will acknowledge the past history and its impacts on our people in relation to outside influences, and strive to build a strong future for all families, children and communities."

QUALITY OF FAMILY LIFE: TOWARDS A POSITIVE FUTURE FOR OUR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The community consultations surfaced a number of ideals or values for family life. For community members, these ideas convey a positive vision for strong family environments, supportive of their members' growth and well-being. For Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig, these ideas provide clear direction for services, staff and all the work that lies ahead.

Briefly, Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig Child and Family Services supports the communities' beliefs that strong and healthy families should include...

- **Quality parenting** based on a recognition that children and

youth are dependent on adults for their basic needs and learning, and that parenting is best provided through skills, good communications, sound role modelling, and quality time with children.

- **Strong family relationships** based on respect rather than physical or emotional abuse; nurtured by quality time together, healthy communications, and expression of love and affection; and supported by elders and other extended family members.
- **Personal well-being** or mental health, reflected in positive self-esteem and Native pride, good feelings in everyday life and relationships, acknowledgement and respect from others, and avoidance of alcohol and drug abuse.
- **Support for education and community responsibility**, including the schooling and training of children, youth and adults; role modelling in the community; and taking responsibility for community growth.
- **Supportive environments for spirituality**, including the acceptance of individual choice of contemporary or traditional Native spiritual beliefs.
- **Cultural awareness and respect**, including the right of individuals to learn and practice Native values and traditions, and the expression of respect towards oneself, others and the environment.

TARGETING THE PROBLEMS

Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig Child and Family Service aspires to help communities and families realize the above ideals in many ways. Through healing and prevention initiatives, the following problems will be targetted:

Parenting problems brought on by, for example, inadequate discipline, poor communication, absence of appropriate role models, lack of quality time together, insufficient support for schooling, or child neglect and abuse.

Family and marital problems which include conflict, marital breakdown, problems associated with single parenting, and communication difficulties within the family.

Family violence including physical or emotional child, spouse and elder abuse.

Sexual abuse within the family (incest) or in the community

The problems of children and youth, which (depending on the community) will include behaviour problems, gas sniffing, use of alcohol and drugs, problems associated with sexuality, vandalism, school-related problems, and psychological problems (e.g. low self-esteem)

Community problems directly or indirectly affecting family life, such as lack of community information about social problems; negative attitudes and behaviours (e.g. gossip); lack of support for community initiatives; and negative outside influences (eg. racism, cultural ignorance).

* * *

Although the details or priorities of family problems may differ from community to community, the above general description is sufficiently focussed to give direction to Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig's service planning. We first turn to our long-range service goals.

SERVICE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. **To Support Communities in their Support and Enrichment of Parenting**
 - . parent education and skill development

- . community resource development for parents
 - . crisis support
 - . stress management and the development of coping skills
 - . parent support groups
- 2. To Support Communities in their Efforts to Improve the Quality of Life and Resources for Children and Youth**
- . resource development for children and youth's development
 - . resource development for troubled children and youth
- 3. To Support Communities in their Initiatives to Strengthen Family Relationships, Problem-Solving, and Community Participation**
- . development of skills, knowledge and opportunities for family unity
 - . development of skills/knowledge for family problem-solving
 - . development of community resources for family unity, problem-solving, and response to crises
 - . facilitate access to natural community supports (e.g. relatives, Elders, friends)
 - . facilitate access to counselling\therapy\healing
- 4. To Support Communities in their Initiatives to Prevent Family Abuse and Violence**
- . community education concerning family violence
 - . promote changes in community conditions and stress affecting violence
 - . development of family skills (eg. anger management) in families at risk

5. **To Support Community Initiatives to Protect Children Against Neglect and Abuse**
 - . facilitate community policies/procedures/resources against child abuse/ neglect
 - . safety skills and knowledge in children
 - . interim working relationships with C.A.S.

6. **To Support Communities in their Initiatives to Provide Support, Guidance and Healing to the Participants and Victims of Family Violence**
 - . restoration of balance and harmony to victims
 - . restoration of balance and harmony to offenders
 - . restoration of balance and harmony to families affected by violence

7. **To Support Communities in their Initiatives Towards an Environment of Positive Sexuality and Positive Gender Relationships**
 - . community education concerning sexual abuse, gender relations, positive sexuality
 - . promote attitudes of openness and support towards victims
 - . community sex education initiative for children and youth

8. **To Help Strengthen Whole Communities in Relation to the Quality of Family Life and Child-Rearing**
 - . examination of community attitudes and behavior in relation to family life
 - . facilitate development and co-ordination of existing services for families and children
 - . assess need and feasibility of a family treatment centre

GZAA-GAAH-NAA-NIG SERVICE AND ORGANIZATIONAL PRINCIPLES

The following service principles are some of the core ideas which guide the planning, development and delivery of services.

1. Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig's function is primarily one of supporting and enhancing the existing local programs and services available to, or affecting families and children.
2. Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig recognizes the importance of establishing team-work and partnerships with existing services. Partnerships will exist throughout the 8 First Nations.
3. Family, children and community services will be mainly community-based. In some cases, depending on the community's and client choice, a service will be provided off-reserve.
4. Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig recognizes the important roles of Elders in planning, development, and service delivery.
5. Gzaa-Gaag-Naa-Nig recognizes the importance of respecting both contemporary and traditional Native values and life-style.
6. Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig acknowledges the importance of building healthy relationships.
7. Services will be provided to enhance pride and self-esteem
8. Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig acknowledges the importance of respecting the uniqueness of individuals and families.
9. Services will be provided to all Native people and their families, both on- and off-reserve.

GZAA-GAAH-NAA-NIG SERVICES

To respond to the targetted problems and issues, and to realize its service goals and objectives, Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig will offer the following comprehensive services.

Community Awareness Services

Awareness concerning (i) the agency and its programs (ii) general social issues (eg. grieving, sexual abuse, gas sniffing), and (iii) parenting skills and knowledge

Cultural Awareness Services

Community awareness concerning traditional and contemporary Native beliefs, traditions, values and practices. Inside and outside the community (eg. outside high schools, social services, etc.). As needed, these will contribute to direct client service (e.g. counselling) when cultural awareness seems an important step to healing and growth.

Direct Counselling Services

On- or off-reserve counselling for individuals, couples, whole families, and groups. These will include specialized services directed to the problems of sexual abuse, physical abuse, and other forms of family violence.

Community Development: Family Resource Development Services

Contribute to the development of human and material resources for strengthening and developing families, and responding to family crises. (eg. customary care, emergency placements, resource centres, mobilization and utilization of elders, volunteers and other natural helpers)

Also, support to the delivery of other local services (eg. NNADAP, CHR), groups, and organizations (schools, recreation) in which families and children are affected.

Family Support Services

Enhancement, support and possibly the supervision of existing

family support services as these are currently provided through the Native Prevention Program. Family support includes material aid, physical assistance, emotional interaction, guidance, information and feedback.

Family support will also include all efforts to initiate and support social and recreational activities, and encourage the participation of family involvement in community life.

Crisis Intervention

Involves direct or supportive assistance to communities as they respond to the crises of families, children and youth. This may involve creating emergency response teams for specific crises, such as suicides, illness, and other crises in which a strong team is required.

Child Protection and Customary Care

These services are directed to the protection of children against neglect, physical and child abuse, as these are currently defined in the Child and Family Services Act. Although Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig will not assume an immediate mandate to provide child protection services, it will work towards this goal.

While child protection services are being developed, Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig will assume a strong liaison role with Provincial Child Welfare Authorities.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The following information is draft preliminary outline of the Agency's organizational structure.

Authority

Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig Child and Family Services takes its authority from the eight participating First Nation communities: Bear Island, Dokis, Henvey Inlet, Magnetawan, Nipissing, Shawanaga, Wasauksing, and Wahnipitae. The authority of the First Nations is exercised through Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig's Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors

Representing the eight First Nations, Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig's Board of Directors has the responsibility of representing the community, and assuring that the agency offers services which the communities need, understand and support. The Board will (i) establish, review and modify Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig's basic policies (ii) interpret the agency to the community and the community to the agency (iii) assure that Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig is properly financed, and (iv) monitor the management and progress towards the service goals.

Executive Director

The Executive Director is directly accountable to the Board of Directors, and is responsible for the implementation of Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig's policies throughout the organization and in the First Nation communities. The Executive Director is responsible for the quality of the work, the efficiency of organizational functioning and service delivery, and the over-all management of finances and human resources.

The Director of Services

Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig's Director of Services reports directly to the Executive Director. She is responsible for the initial development of services, coordination, and the quality of services in the community and the agency.

The Director of Services and the Executive Director will also be responsible for all purchased services, such as legal services, program development, case consultation, computer services and evaluation.

Administrative Coordinator and Administrative Staff

Also reporting to the Executive Director, the agency's Administrative Coordinator is responsible for the over-all financial operations, administration and daily office activities.

Administrative staff will include two Secretaries (one for the Director of Services), and a Systems Operation Officer. The "System's Officer" will be responsible for (i) organizing and disseminating all information about the agency and its research (ii) helping to establish a computerized management and case system within the agency, and (iii) eventually operating the computerized system.

Community and Cultural Services Coordinator

The Community and Cultural Services Coordinator is responsible for the development and implementation of all prevention initiatives for the enhancement of family well-being and the prevention of child neglect or abuse. Depending on the wishes of the First Nation community, such initiatives may be culture-based, focussing on such things as promoting awareness of traditional Native culture as this may strengthen family life, child-rearing, and community support.

Community Development Co-ordinator

Community Development Co-ordinator will help build or strengthen the community organizational systems needed to support the work of local service providers and the Agency.

The Agency's community development work will focus on five targets:

- . facilitating Band/Agency understandings or protocols concerning the mutual expectations and responsibilities concerning the services for families and children
- . helping communities build and enhance the working arrangements of those staff involved in working with families and children, giving particular attention to clarifying goals, roles and tasks of local personnel and links with the agency.
- . strengthening the process of working together by building healthy relations, mutual awareness, community healing, and team-building
- . helping the community address its family resource needs, including customary care homes, emergency places of safety, and other resources for child protection (eg. licensed homes)
- . helping to establish or strengthen working relationships with programs or agencies outside the community, including the development of protocols.
- . helping communities establish arrangements for recruiting, training and supporting volunteers

Family Support Coordinator

The Family Support Co-ordinator offers support and co-ordination to all Native Prevention Workers who provide family support services at the local community level. The Co-ordinator will support the development of local family support , help the workers access resources and training, build networks within and across communities, and provide case consultation and direct service.

Family Therapist

Working from a "family systems perspective", the Family Therapist will meet the needs of persons suffering from all types of violence, including sexual abuse, physical abuse, other abusive family relationships. As well, the Therapist will support local Native Prevention Workers and others providing counselling or other community-based healing. He or she will also carry a case load of families with serious problems, and will assist in planning of community awareness initiatives related to family violence and its effects.

Customary Care Worker

The Customary Care Worker will immediate work with the eight First Nation communities to establish a community/agency system for child protection. This will involve the development of local customary care arrangements for children requiring short- or long-term temporary placements in community homes. These efforts will be the main development work towards the agency assuming "society status".

He or she will also take responsibility for establishing an Agency capacity for responding to community crises affecting families. The Customary Care Worker will help communities, with the aid of other resources (eg. police, hospitals, etc.), to establish emergency response teams and policies. When the Agency opens its doors for direct services, the Customary Care Worker will be available to communities at times of severe family crises or community crises affecting families and children.

Finally, until Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig seeks the mandate for providing child protection services, the Customary Care Worker will assist the Director of Services as the liaison with the local Children's Aid Societies. Along with local Prevention Workers, the Worker will be involved in all protection cases from the eight First Nations.

