

"FLYING ON YOUR OWN"

A Proposal for Personal Development Training

INTRODUCTION

This proposal seeks funding for the expansion of a preventative mental health program now administered to fourteen communities in North Western Ontario. The program is provided under the auspices of the Sacred Circle Program, of Ojibway Tribal Family Services (OTFS). (For a description of these, see Appendix "A").

The mental health or personal development program, entitled "Flying on Your Own", has experienced enormous success in Manitoba, parts of British Columbia, and now in North Western Ontario. "Flying on your Own" was developed and is currently implemented by Natives to meet the needs of their own in local communities.

This program is an example of how Native people across Canada are taking steps to improve their community and personal well-being. Their actions are based on different assumptions about needs, and therefore have different targets of change or concentration. We see political efforts, new economic initiatives, community development, and innovative social service agencies and programs. All of these aim to raise Native quality of live to the levels enjoyed by other Canadians, while reducing the many symptoms of disadvantage, including alcohol abuse, violence, early mortality, child neglect early school leaving and many others.

Accompanying these efforts is a serious recognition that the opportunities being created by and for Native people will not be fully realized without equal attention to personal healing and development. Native people cannot expect to become productive workers, loving parents and sexual partners, or vigorous community members, while plagued with self-doubt, the emotional pain of previous family or institutional abuse, or indeed (as one recent book by Native authors notes) are treating each other in ways that are neither healthy nor helpful.

What is clearly needed, ideally administered at the community level by Native people, are ...

.opportunities to surface and heal personal pain

.the development of emotional building-blocks for a new self-image and sense of competence

.tools or interpersonal skills for building and maintaining emotional health and well-being, while solving immediate problems

.the development of support groups and naturally helpful community relationships to help build upon personal development experiences and sustain individuals through periods of healing and growth.

"Flying on your Own" is designed to accomplish these important changes.

"Flying on Your Own": A History of Community Self-Healing

"Flying on your Own" first began in Alkali Lake, a reserve in British Columbia. For years, the residents of Alkali Lake were ravaged by alcohol abuse. Finally, the community took charge of its fate, and developed local controls and services which all but wiped out alcohol abuse and its accompanying problems. These experiences have been documented in a film entitled "Honour of All".

Out of this community growth experience, a group of local residents established a program called "New Directions" which later evolved into "Flying on your Own". Originally adapted from a non-Native program by Margaret Gilbert and others in Alkali Lake, the program gradually began to reflect the concerns of aboriginal people. In particular, issues of self-esteem, identity, spirituality, and the importance of community emerged as core themes.

In 1986, Audrey Bone and Stella Blackbird, two Ojibway women from the Keeseekowanin Reserve participated in the program and became trainers. They offered the program on their home reserve, changing the name to "Flying on your Own" after the inspirational song by Rita McNeil. By April, 1991, over 3,000 Native people in Manitoba had taken part in the program which had been offered on reserves throughout the Province.

In March of 1990, Audrey Bone and another trainer provided the program to the Board members and staff of Ojibway Tribal Family Services. Received with such enthusiasm, the program was incorporated into OTFS' Sacred Circle Program, a suicide prevention program for Native youth in the 14 OTFS communities.

Since that time, "Flying on Your Own" has been offered in 18 workshops and continues to be received enthusiastically. To date, local youth, OTFS management, the Clinical Psychologist, and front-line workers have participated in the program as part of general in-service training and personal development. Because of the need and demand for the program, planners are under extreme pressure to expand beyond the original target group.

Four distinct programs are now available to OTFS communities. An Introductory Self-Awareness component introduces the program, provides basic learning experiences in self-awareness and personal growth, and offers assistance in planning community follow-up sessions. Basic Training is more advanced, bringing together community members for longer and more intensive mutual understanding. Flying on Your Own's Intensive Personal Development is a five day advanced program which is held on average every six weeks. Because this program contains many of the elements of the other two, it will be described in more detail under "Program Description".

Finally, A Leadership Training Program is also available. This program is a specialized personal development program for existing or potential leaders in the fourteen communities. More details will be given later, under "Program Description".

Since its beginning, "Flying on Your Own", has continuously adapted to meet local community needs while not losing sight of its original focus on healing and personal development. For example, in Ontario, planners realized that the issues associated with spirituality and cultural revitalization were important. At the same time, the program needed to respect and encourage the participation of persons following contemporary religious beliefs.

At this point in the program's evolution, planners are faced with the needs both of continued core funding, and expansion to accommodate a broader target group.

Present Program Funding

"Flying on Your Own" is currently funded by the Ministry of Health's Youth Addiction Program. Under the auspices of that program, FOYO has applied its principles and techniques to the serious problem of alcohol, drug, and solvent abuse by young Native people. A major objective is to build the self-esteem and confidence of those young people who have shown self-destructive behaviors.

The funding arrangements between OTFS' Sacred Circle Program and the 14 bands support local community development by allocating \$6,000 to each community for local youth initiatives. The aim is to provide youth with the self-esteem and personal resources to resist addictive behavior.

The major limitation of current funding arrangements is that the program is ear-marked for youth, and officially cannot incorporate adults into the sessions. As will be discussed below, this neglects groups of needy adults.

Flying on Your Own and Public Policy

"Flying on Your Own" is very compatible with government's current policy concepts and goals for Native people. In fact "Flying on Your Own" is a good example of the kinds of initiatives currently being encouraged, and in some cases funded by, the Federal and Provincial Governments.

The program is Native-initiated and administered, and has as its ultimate goal the prevention of problems through the development of esteem, strong relationships of mutual support, and life skills. The program is community-based and fosters a community healing and empowerment process through local workshops and the development of on-going leadership and support groups.

The Provincial Government generally acknowledges that problems in Native communities were previously unsolvable because the values, attitudes and assumptions behind Government programs were non-Native. Their remedy is to support the development of Native services in their own communities, and thereby help Natives determine their own destiny.

The Ministry of Community and Social Services is committed to culturally-appropriate services which are developed and delivered by Native people in their own communities. This commitment is reflected in the following policy statement:

"In response to the living conditions of Ontario's Native population, the Provincial Government in 1985 adopted a policy framework supporting the concept of Native self-government on- and off-reserve and the provision of government services that enhance the self-reliance of Native peoples and protect their cultures. Where feasible, such services should be provided through Native service delivery mechanisms. Ontario's population is disadvantaged when compared with other groups in terms of employment, educational attainment, living conditions, income, and life expectancy. A heightened awareness and acceptance of their unique needs has resulted in a larger role for Native people in designing and delivering necessary social services on-and off-reserve."

These policy commitments are shared with other provincial Ministries. In the Ministry of Health, for example, Native people are definitely viewed as a high priority group. For target groups generally, Ministry of Health health promotion aims to enable people to increase control over and improve their health, through health enhancement (eg. nutrition education), health risk avoidance, and risk reduction (i.e. helping high risk individuals).

The Ministry seeks to support initiatives showing **strong community mobilization** in their projects, in which communities **define the problems and take local actions**. The key **goal is one of "community empowerment"**.

The goal of prevention, through community-based health promotion initiatives, is also endorsed by the Federal Government. The concept of health prevention includes the idea of mental health and is broadly enough defined to include the aims and activities of "Flying on Your Own". The Department of Health and Welfare Canada has identified three potential mechanisms to health promotion. These are note-worthy because they are directly compatible with the aims, objectives and methods of "Flying on Your Own"

self-care: decisions and actions taken by individuals in the interest of their own (mental) health

mutual aid: actions taken by people to help each other cope (eg. self-help groups which share ideas, information, and emotional support)

healthy environments: creation and conditions conducive to health (eg. access and circulation of important information; the promotion of healthy social, economic, and physical environments)

To illustrate how "Flying on Your Own" realizes these policy ideals and concepts, we now turn to a detailed description of the program. For more details, the reader is referred to the Appendices.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

"Flying on Your Own" is a personal development program designed to meet the emotional and developmental needs of Native people, as well as to provide important tools for healthy living. As well, the program has a community development component, creating informal support groups for those continuing to experience emotional difficulties.

An important assumption of the program is that many problems facing Native people are at least partly affected by their own personal functioning. Negative self-concepts, limited awareness, self-defeating behaviors and relationships, all need to be confronted and replaced. By achieving higher and more critical levels of self awareness, substituting appropriate modes of thinking and relating, and by learning self-healing techniques, individuals take important steps towards well-being.

The program is offered in three to five day "training sessions". Participants are assembled for lectures, small group, and dyadic sessions all designed to promote self-awareness, healthy emotional functioning, and appropriate interpersonal skills.

The Native people who have designed this program were guided by several implicit mental health principles:

1. Well-being is a holistic ideal involving balance or harmony in a person's physical, psychological (thinking), spiritual, and mental (emotional) selves. This harmony grows and is sustained as one interacts with others, within a context of culture, personal relationships and daily practices.
2. Well-being is strong in persons with a clear sense of their own individuality, capable of making choices and seeking resources, able to acknowledge responsibility for actions, and possessing a strong belief in their unique personal power and healing resources.

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3. One's personal power and independence may be hampered by unresolved emotional pain, buried feelings, long standing fears, inappropriate beliefs and behaviors, and the presentation of false images to oneself and others.

4. For emotional well-being, people must have an opportunity to surface and confront serious emotional pains. These pains may have their origins in past events (eg. sexual abuse) or current behaviors and situations (eg. family violence, alcohol abuse).

5. A lack of emotional well-being or disharmony are not fixed. Nor do they necessarily require extensive professional treatment for change. Because they are affected by personal thinking and actions, people can acquire skills or tools for stimulating well-being privately and with others.

6. One must learn to confront everyday beliefs and actions that are self-defeating.

7. People grow and find strength and support from other people, in relationships of trust, honesty, openness of communication, cooperation and commitment.

The Intensive Training Program is a five day training session consisting of lecturettes, small/large group and dyadic exercises for experiential learning, and homework assignments.

The program works towards five specific objectives:

1. To assist participants to form a positive attitude towards all aspects of their lives
2. To learn to acknowledge, accept and resolve past ugly experiences from alcoholism, drug abuse, and emotional neglect
3. To exchange negative feelings, beliefs and attitudes to ones which are positive and life-serving
4. To learn to heal oneself
5. To learn "who am I", and experience one's personal power, and unique and special gifts

These objectives are pursued through a series of training events, designed to promote self awareness. As well, some are designed to encourage practice of new behaviors, such as open communications or the direct expression of anger. The training events are varied, often with lecturettes followed by experiential learning.

The training climate in the five day program is an important part of the learning. The climate is sustained by a set of clear rules, expectations, and relationships between partners, all of which are designed to facilitate and reinforce the learnings throughout the session.

The climate is structured partially by a series of "ground rules" which clearly specify the do's and don'ts for the session, as well as the general expectations concerning participation, and post-workshop behavior. To communicate a sense of seriousness and

commitment, the sessions are perhaps more structured than most. For example, the rules for completing homework assignments are firmly administered. (For a listing of ground rules for trainers and participants, refer to Appendix "C").

The principles of mutual support and sharing are also encouraged and learned through the establishment of "a buddy system". In this, participants are teamed with other persons for the duration of the workshop. Buddies are encouraged to share their learning experiences and help each other throughout.

Lecturettes are short talks given by the trainer. Each one covers a particular concept, value or issue in personal development. Examples of lecturette topics are: holistic thinking and sharing, behaving as an individual, beliefs and values, the body's natural healing activities, and fears throughout life. As in most adult learning settings, lecturettes are frequently used to introduce group or dyad exercises.

The experiential learning exercises are the core learning approaches in the "Flying on Your Own" program. Experiential learning takes place in two person dyads, small or large groups. Within the group context participants are asked to reflect about themselves, their past and present behaviors or attitudes, and how these benefit or block life goals. As well, several exercises bring people together in a process of open communications about each others behavior, attitudes, and public images ("masks"). Emphasis is also given to the communication of positive sentiments, such as trust and caring. Interpersonal skills are learned and practiced in these situations.

Groups and two person relationships are also used to surface and confront the fears, hatreds, broken commitments, and avoidance behaviors which might dominate and weaken the quality of one's life. In one exercise, for example, participants are asked to share and dismiss the negative feelings towards one's parents and oneself. In another, participants are asked to yell loudly, in order to overcome their fears of disrupting others.

Homework assignments are made regularly, as a serious preparation for the following day's exercises. Homework completion is expected, and is a subject of public review. Participants are encouraged to provide mutual support in carrying out assignments. Examples of homework topics are "the biggest block in my life", and "10 reasons for living". All assignments are made to promote serious reflection about life, as background for personal development.

Throughout the five days, participants learn to replace the "negatives" in their lives with "positives". Negative attitudes and memories are confronted and replaced with positive feelings. Negative self-images and public masks are dismissed in favour of positive images and honesty. Optimism and hope take the place of

doom and gloom. This "substitution process" is encouraged in both thinking and concrete action.

For details on various training processes, see Appendix ...

Follow-up Support

The "Flying on Your Own" planners and staff recognize that the intensive program may surface emotions and behaviors which could have a disturbing effect on participants's lives after the workshop. As well, some issues (eg. sexual abuse victimization) require follow-up professional consultation on a longer term basis. For these reason, special efforts have been taken to establish a strong system of support and referrals. A local and central support system has been established to meet any on-going needs.

Within each community, volunteer Local Support Groups are trained and supported by the "Flying on Your Own Staff", OTFS staff, and the OTFS Clinical Psychologist, Dr. Ed Connors. The support groups are community members who have taken the program, and wish to carry on the healing process in a healing community. The support groups meet on a regular weekly basis, holding traditional healing circles in which everyone is free to share their pain. The groups typically take place in the evening so that all people are free to attend. The groups are organized and facilitated by the local OTFS Family Support Worker.

The groups also have a very informal quality. All persons are free to reach out and seek help from others, if the need occurs between meetings. As well, the group activities have led to a number of socials in which healthy behaviors and events are substituted for alcohol and other self-destructive activities.

"Flying on Your Own" also benefits clinically from being part of the OTFS mental health program, The Sacred Circle. Dr. Connors, in his role as Clinical Psychologist, is available for personal counselling for those in need. Program participants needing professional help will be referred for follow-up counselling. As well, some of Dr. Connor's clients are referred to the training program for supplementary personal growth experiences. In this way, individual counselling and personal growth training go hand in hand.

The program trainer consults closely and regularly with Dr. Connors. These consultations address problems arising during programs, and determine how to make the program more sensitive and responsive in a clinical sense. As well, Dr. Connors is available to "Flying on Your Own" staff to help them manage the stress which inevitably results from a very intensive and emotionally draining program.

The Sacred Circle Community Mental Workers are also available to the training team. They are available in crisis situations, and are important liason persons if referrals are needed to Dr. Connors or other human service agencies. Each Community Mental Health Worker has work responsibilities in certain OTFS communities. They are well acquainted with the local membership, and assist in the planning stage and post-workshop support activities.

Finally, the "Flying on Your Own" staff have a vast web of service agencies to call upon, if serious emotional or behavioral problems surface as a result of participation in training. Although many agencies are not geographically close, they nevertheless have close working relationships with Ojibway Tribal Family Services. "Flying on Your Own" greatly benefits for its location in a larger system of service delivery to Native communities.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

"Flying on your Own" is a program of Ojibway Tribal Family Services' Sacred Circle Program. Sacred Circle is

semi-autonomous in administration and service delivery, although the Community Mental Health Workers work closely with the general family support staff. Accountability is primarily through the Program Director who is a regular reporting member of the OTFS management team.

As the Program Director of the Sacred Circle Program, Dr. Ed Connors has responsibility for overseeing and assuring the quality of the administration and delivery of "Flying on Your Own". He does this through regular supervisory and consultation meetings with the "Flying on your Own" Co-ordinator. As a Clinical Psychologist, he monitors the clinical appropriateness and effectiveness of the program.

The Program Co-ordinator is responsible for a number of training, organizing and administrative activities. She schedules and co-ordinates all training events and workshops. She organizes activities at the community level, and develops resource materials. As well, the Co-ordinator explains the "Flying on Your Own" program to the various communities and responds to special requests for local projects. She trains and supports local people to carry on the personal development and healing activities in post-program support. She also carries out financial and other administrative duties associated with the "Flying on Your Own Program".

The Program Co-ordinator is the principle trainer for the program, although other trainers may be used from other Native communities. As trainer, she is responsible for planning and delivering each "Flying on Your Own" session. In this, she works closely with local band members, including OTFS Family Support staff. In this way, the unique needs and local conditions are thoroughly attended to. The Program Co-ordinator also takes responsibility for evaluating each session, and training the Training Assistants.

The "Flying On Your Own" Training Assistants are local community residents who have participated in previous sessions, and have been trained to assist in their home communities. They assist with

preparation, conducting training sessions (eg. small group leaders, securing resources), and post-workshop reflection. Having trained and participated, they act as knowledgeable local support persons after the workshop. As well, they maintain their ties with other Training Assistants in other OTFS communities, and thus make up a vast network of human resources across the region. They are volunteers.

The "Flying on Your Own" financial administration and accountability takes place through the regular OTFS agency finance department. The Coordinator of Finances assumes responsibility for financially administering the general operational budget as well as all special programs within the agency.

Evaluation

Before and after each five day session, considerable information is gathered from each participant. The purpose of this is to monitor closely the kinds of participants and their life issues, as well as their experiences within the program. Information is used to assess program impact, and to improve delivery. (For copies of program questionnaires, see Appendix "...").

The on-going evaluation results have been very useful. The majority of participants report favourably on how the program helped their own personal development. The largest majority talk about how they were helped to "let go" of past hurts, burdens and issues. As well, participants talk about new changes in attitudes and feelings towards themselves and towards others. Still others are encouraged by better ways to solve life problems, and by getting along with others, communicating, trusting and caring.

Young people in the program consistently seek opportunities to help themselves and their parents achieve a better family life. They are troubled by alcohol abuse and other problems in the family, as well as various complicated and unsatisfying communications. They generally seek a better grasp of what is going on within the family, and want to learn to help both themselves and their parents. They strongly urge that "Flying on Your Own" be made available to their parents. These responses from young people have created strong pressures for program expansion.

The clinical judgement of "Flying on your Own" is that the program succeeds because Native leaders offer culturally appropriate methods of healing. It is deemed by OTFS senior staff as perhaps the most powerful healing program in the agency.

RATIONALE FOR EXPANDED PROGRAM AND FUNDING

The "Flying on Your Own" program is currently funded by the Ministry of Health's Youth Addictions program, and is therefore targeted for young Native people. Program experience, though, indicates that the target group must be expanded to adults within the community, including the adult family members of the youth taking the program. There are four main reasons for this:

1. Under present funding arrangements, the main target group is young Native people who are self-destructive through the use of drugs, alcohol, and solvents. This is undoubtedly an important group. However, the program's experience and the experience of OTFS generally, is that many Native adults are in need of the program. These needs have emerged directly from being a Native person in Canadian society.

As a result of previous boarding school experiences, child abuse or neglect, alcoholism or personal tragedy, many adults are living their lives with unresolved pain. Also, many do not reach their full potential in family, community or work life because of poor self-esteem and destructive ways of relating to others and looking after themselves. Finally, these unhealthy self-images, relationships, and self-destructive behaviors drastically affect their roles as parents, placing their children at risk. Involvement in "Flying on Your Own's" personal development program would be enormously beneficial.

2. Young people who have taken the program begin to think and act differently within their own families. This is understandable, given their experience of profound change in self-image, values and interpersonal skills within the program. For example, they may be more demonstrative, loving, open and expressive among family members who are not so inclined. As well, they may communicate new expectations from other family members.

The behaviors and new expectations resulting from personal growth may be quite novel and surprising, and may disturb the usual routines of family living. In some cases novelty creates tension. What is needed are opportunities for other family members to experience the same growth opportunities as their youthful members. Future workshops will welcome members of families whose personal development will go hand in hand with strengthening family relationships.

3. The ultimate goal of the "Flying on Your Own" program is community healing. This can only be accomplished if sufficient and appropriate numbers of community members are exposed to the experiences of the program. In a real sense, new standards of relationships are introduced, guided by values of trust, honesty, commitment, forgiveness and mutual support. Such standards need to be shared and commonly felt within the membership, such that expectations for new behavior are reminded, reinforced, and made routine on an everyday basis.

Common understandings, mutual commitment and behavior according to new standards provide support to individual self-awareness and development. As well, there is natural role modelling for initiates, and a "boost" if people slip into old patterns. Common standards which reinforce reaching out to others, set the stage for a natural community supportive environment.

4. Sustaining personal development within communities requires the support of natural leaders and follow-up support groups. The development of these human resources requires a special application of the principles and techniques of "Flying on Your Own". This application targets special people who are in a strong position to provide help to their communities in an on-going way. Such training must be delivered separately and apart from other community training workshops. Finally, such training must teach a unique body of skills and knowledge to help and lead others.

For these four reasons, it is proposed that "Flying on Your Own" be made available to other target groups which include adults as well as youth. Two target groups are proposed: members of the general adult community population, and those aspiring to community leadership and support roles. Adults in the general population will take the program as outlined above (See "Program Description"). The "Flying on your Own" program will be tailored for leadership training as described in the following section.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING

This is an outline for a proposed leadership training course based on the principles and techniques of the "Flying on your Own" personal development program. The course as outlined benefits from one application during 1990.

In general, the purpose of the course is to develop innate leadership skills. Emphasis is placed on becoming aware of a broad purpose in life, based on the needs of Native people and personal development. Training emphasizes setting and achieving of goals, learning from the experiences of serving others, and developing the confidence and ability to take risks. Specific leadership skills will be developed.

Participants in leadership training will be graduates of the five day intensive "Flying on Your Own" training, as described in the above sections. Leadership training is a requisite to becoming a trainer.

[THIS SECTION WILL BE COMPLETED IN THE NEXT DRAFT]

BUDGET REQUEST

This is a budget request to fund 14 workshops over a twelve month period. Two types of workshops would take place. First, there are 12 Intensive Flying on Your Own Training sessions, one per month. Each one of these would occur in a

separate OTFS community. The second category of workshops involves Leadership Training. Two workshops would be held over the 12 month period. Separate budgets for these two categories are provided.

Budget for Intensive "Flying On Your Own" Training
(12 workshops, 5 days each)

Staff

Trainer \$18,000

Assistant Trainer 6,000

Expenses

Travel 9,000

Supplies/materials 4,800

Child care 6,300

Cooks 6,000

Miscellaneous 600

Sub-total: \$57,900

Budget for Leadership Training
(6 sessions, 3 days per session over a five week period)

Staff

Trainer \$12,000

Expenses

Travel (trainer and assistants) 5,400

Participant travel 4,000

Meals and accommodations 14,400

Materials/supplies 1,000

Sub-total: \$36,800

Total: \$131,500

Appendix "A"

OTFS SERVICES: PHILOSOPHY AND PROGRAMS

Introduction

Ojibway Tribal Family Services is a Native family and children's service organization, serving fourteen Treaty 3 First Nations in the Kenora - Dryden area: Eagle Lake, Rat Portage, Washagamis Bay, Waubaskang, Wabagoon, Grassy Narrows, Whitefish Bay, Northwest Angle 33, Northwest Angle 37, Islington (Whitedog), Shoal Lake 39, Shoal Lake 40, Lac Seul, and Dalles.

O.T.F.S. began as a community-based response to the needs of people in the areas of family life and child-care. For years, the First Nations were concerned about the separation of families, and the deterioration of the extended family network. Also, the organization began as a reaction to what were perceived as unwarranted intrusions by provincial child welfare authorities. Countless children were removed and lost to their families and communities. Provincial intervention as a solution became part of the problem, creating untold pain and denial of cultural learning to many Native children.

The creation of OTFS is an alternative to Provincial intervention into the lives of Native families. The main assumption is that Native communities are best equipped to respond to the needs of children, families and communities. OTFS has succeeded in preventing problems and offering help by empowering communities and supporting the response of natural community resources. Where professional or specialized responses are required, OTFS blends Native and non-Native healing methods, or supports families in their use of outside Native or non-Native treatment facilities.

Over the first five year developmental period, OTFS' programs and services grew in response to the major problems of alcohol abuse and adolescent suicide. First, OTFS assumed the administration of the NNADAP Program into the agency's administrative structure. Next, The Sacred Circle Program was created to respond to the high suicide rate of Native youths.

O.T.F.S.' general mission is to strengthen the quality of family and community life so that children have an opportunity for physical and mental growth in a supportive, healthy environment. As well, through early preventative help, O.T.F.S. aims to reduce the risk of family break-up, adolescent suicide, and alcohol abuse.

OTFS Goals: Visions for Family and Community Well-being

Ojibway Tribal Family Services has come into being to help promote the development of a series of ideal family and community states. Some of these ideals were contained in the original description of the family support model. Others have emerged with the on-going service work of OTFS, as well as through the discussions in training and community research.

Briefly, OTFS services work towards the following positive ideals:

- .Strong family life, including both the immediate and extended family, which supports the growth and quality of life of children and adults.
- .The re-unification of families which were previously torn apart by problems, and by the intervention of outside agencies.
- .The creation of cohesive OTFS First Nation communities, which support a strong and functioning family life and child-rearing, based on Native culture, ideals and principles.
- .A strong helping community which responds with love and care to the stresses and crises of parents, children, youth and other members of the fourteen First Nations.
- .A First Nation membership which is emotionally and physically healthy

Values and Principles

A number of important values and principles provide direction to OTFS services and organization. Perhaps the strongest value is the ideal of self-government or self-determination. Ojibway Tribal Family Services, as a service system, is an example of self-government in the service sector.

Another important value concerns the importance of children and natural families. OTFS firmly believes that the best interest of children is with their natural families, and service must reflect this principle. This means that families are recognized as the primary resource for nurturing children into healthy and stable adults. Services will be structured in a supportive way, based on the unconditional belief that families can raise their children given appropriate support and/or intervention.

Other important service principles are as follows:

- .All services should mobilize or energize the community in the support of individuals, families and the care of children. The communities' informal "natural" sources of support should be used as much as possible.

- .Service decisions and practices should utilize the customary care traditions of family support, child-rearing, and self-help. The extended family is particularly important in this regard.

- .Services should be compatible with, and supported by, Ojibway cultural traditions and local community practices. Services should not be artificially imposed upon existing communities; in other words, healing and support should be an integral part of community life.

- .Related to this, elders are important human resources for support, healing and education.

- .Services should be integrated with other band services in a community-based resource network.

- .Training and development is an important on-going requirement for support, healing and education. First, training keeps all human resources knowledgeable, skilled and self-aware. Secondly, community development work is necessary to keep each community aware of, cooperative and organizationally supportive of OTFS.

Services and Service Philosophy

OTFS works towards the above family and community ideals, and implements its service principles primarily through a series of preventative and healing activities. These are supportive of local community customs and compatible with Ojibway culture.

OTFS prevention work can be divided into three categories: primary, secondary and tertiary prevention.

primary prevention aims to help communities, families and individuals avoid high risk, child placement or self-destructive behavior (eg. suicide, alcohol abuse) by increasing community and family resources, awareness, coping capacity and by reducing stress.

secondary prevention aims to uncover cases of child maltreatment, family dysfunctioning, suicidal risk and other high risk cases, in order to provide the social supports, direct assistance and treatment required to end the dysfunction and prevent a long-term break-down of the individual and the family.

tertiary treatment aims at temporarily separating the child from the troubled parents for the child's safety, and providing support and resources to strengthen the family for eventual return of the child.

The involvement of **Elders** in cultural activities is an important element of OTFS services. Their contribution to cultural awareness has been consistent, and generally appreciated. To encourage cultural awareness Elders provide individualized spiritual guidance, local and central workshops, and participate in staff or Board meetings. Always, their message expresses the details and values of traditional practices and the implication for modern living.

OTFS services are provided through three separate programs, each with its own distinct set of service objectives: Family Support Program, Sacred Circle Suicide Prevention Program, and the Alcohol Prevention Program. Each of these are described below:

The Family Support Program

The OTFS family support program supports First Nation communities in their efforts to carry out their responsibilities for the well-being of their families and the care of their children. It accomplishes this through counselling, community and family education, and other local prevention initiatives. As well, the family support staff facilitate temporary or long-term customary care arrangements for children at times of family stress.

The service objectives of the family support program are as follows:

1. To strengthen families rather than removing children from their families during times of crisis.
2. To initiate community education and support programs to prevent the removal of children from their families and home communities.
3. To identify children in care of other agencies, institutions, and authorities, and facilitating the return of these children to their families in their respective communities.
4. To provide outreach services to band members of the 14 OTFS First Nations.

To fulfil its service goals, an OTFS family support model specifies eight service activities:

Community education is a primary prevention activity designed to strengthen communities and families so that children have opportunities for safe and healthy development. Community education has so far consisted of

three identifiable activities: cultural awareness, special needs learning, and community awareness of OTFS.

- **Family counselling** represents an important direct service to families, marital pairs and individuals. Counselling is done either by trained experienced counsellors (eg. some Senior Family Workers), professionals in non-community settings, or by "lay" members of the community (eg. most Family Support Workers, elders or other Board members).
- **In-home care services** recognize that families often benefit from assistance to parents within the home. Such "in-home care" is offered at times of illness or crisis, but also is provided to single mothers needing assistance or parental skill training.
- **Repatriation services** aim to re-establish ties between children, their families and the community. Of particular concern are the children who were placed off-reserve as a result of previous Provincial child protection decisions.
- **Short-term care** provides children with temporary living arrangements during crises or parental absence. Short-term care is deemed useful in family situations of prolonged illness, parental absence for treatment, employment-seeking, training, etc. Such placements draw upon relatives, friends or other natural community help.
- **Long term customary care** arrangements typically last for longer periods than those described above. Parents may be sick on a longer term basis or involved in an extensive treatment or rehabilitation process. Or, by necessity, they may have secured work which takes them from the reserve indefinitely. In such services, OTFS staff facilitate the arrangement and provide follow-up support as needed.
- **Special needs support.** To supplement the natural sources of community care, OTFS recognizes that some families need specialized professional services which may be unavailable on reserve or at central OTFS offices. Such services might involve clinical therapy, speech therapy, medical attention, financial consultation and the like.
- **Advocacy.** Family support staff advocate on behalf of families and individuals in their contacts with courts, social agencies and other service institutions. Advocacy involves making sure that clients receive the best and most appropriate service or attention, and that they are treated fairly. It involves making sure that clients interests are well represented to other agencies.

The Sacred Circle Suicide Prevention Program

The OTFS Sacred Circle Program was created to respond to the alarming rate of suicides among young people in the 14 First Nations. It fulfils its mission through a combination of healing, crisis response, and community educational activities.

The Sacred Circle staff is a multi-disciplinary team, consisting of a Psychologist, Community Mental Health Workers, an Elder, a Trainer, and Administrative staff.

The service objectives of the program are...

1. To reduce suicides and suicide attempts among youth in the 14 First Nation communities, and in the Kenora/Dryden area.
2. To assist in the reduction of other self-destructive behaviors.

3. To assist young people to expand their awareness of themselves as addiction-free human beings and learn basic living skills (Flying On Your Own Objectives).

The Sacred Circle staff works towards their objectives through the following service activities.

Outreach services in which community-based consultation, assessment, and traditional healing are provided to the 14 communities.

Strengthening of Existing Resources in which the natural sources of community support and healing are guided and supported in their work with high risk youth. In particular, the relationships between youth and Elders are strengthened. This enables youth to learn about traditional beliefs and practices, thus strengthening their identities as Ojibway people. As well, they begin to view Elders as sources of teaching, advice and healing throughout their lives.

Community Consultation with Community Workers provides additional skills and knowledge to Family Support Workers, Alcohol Prevention Staff, and other Band staff. This takes place through local training workshops, meetings, and the participation of staff in assessment/consultation meetings with clients.

Crisis Intervention in which families and individual youth can gain twenty-four hour access to Sacred Circle staff. These contacts result in telephone consultation, referrals, or direct intervention from staff within the community.

Coordination of Services Inside and Outside the Community. Coordinating activities serve to (a) link existing resource people within the community (b) educate service providers about the needs of Native youth, and make them aware of appropriate healing approaches, and (c) make appropriate referrals of youth to long-term treatment facilities

Mutual Education Between Native and Non-Native Healing Systems, a service which aims to educate other mental health service providers about how a healing system for Native people can combine traditional and academic healing approaches.

Community Development, in which local community suicide prevention initiatives are developed and supported. In particular, suicide prevention skills are being taught to staff, teachers, parents and young people.

Personal Growth Training, in which young people are helped to heal themselves, deal with emotional blocks and defenses, develop positive attitudes, and acquire the tools for living a more productive life-style.

The NNADAP Program: Reduction of Alcohol and Substance Abuse

OTFS has assumed the administration and support of the National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program (NNADAP) for the 14 First Nations. The NNADAP program is a community-based, culturally-appropriate program offering healing and prevention programs.

The abuse of alcohol and substances has been continually identified as one of the most serious practices which undermine the well-being of families, children, and in some cases, whole communities.

The service objective of NNADAP is...

1.To reduce unacceptable levels of alcohol, drug and other substance abuse among the First Nation communities.

NNADAP staff endeavour to reach this objective through a comprehensive program of activities. These are summarized below.

Prevention

Co-ordination and Assisting Community Prevention programs and public relations activities

Support and Education to children and youth in the community regarding chemical dependency

Culturally-oriented Programs or events in and out of the community

Working with other Resources, attending meetings, workshops and training in job-related activities

Intervention and Treatment

Counselling and support to community members seeking help

Crisis Intervention to community members and their families who are dealing with crises

Assessments and referrals to meet individual needs

Treatment Facilities to meet individual needs and their chemical addictions

Aftercare and follow-up to support individuals returning to their communities

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

On-going training and development are important parts of the OTFS service process, for two reasons. First, OTFS healing and prevention activities do not draw upon a clear-cut body of professional knowledge. The services blend traditional helping, everyday community practices, and non-Native professional methods. This blending process is gradual, challenging, and highly dependent on close communication between all OTFS practitioners in a training setting. This is not an "in-service" training process in the usual sense. It is more accurately a process of building and experimenting with culturally-appropriate methods of problem-solving and human care.

The second reason for on-going training and learning among OTFS staff relates to their special position as members of the target communities. As community members, they too are personally touched by the conditions and crises affecting the community as a whole. They are leaders and helping "specialists" who interact with community members in all aspects of life (work, play, family life, politics, etc.). Their personal growth is a means of stimulating new ways of living and thinking within the community.

What this means is that staff training and development is one of the important on-going techniques which OTFS has at its disposal for achieving its goals. The skills, knowledge, and values acquired during OTFS training are carried over into other community roles.