

INDIAN AUTONOMY IN CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES:  
BARRIERS TO SUCCESS

A Practicum Report

presented to the  
Faculty of Graduate Studies  
in partial fulfillment of the requirement  
for the degree of

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

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Fall, 1986 ©

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## PREFACE

My interest in Canada's native people as they relate to the delivery of social services spans two decades, beginning as a junior social services worker with a general family assistance caseload in a medium-sized Saskatchewan city, proceeding to a rural caseload and then to senior positions in the northern part of the province where the caseload was predominantly people of native ancestry.

I have seen native people from the perspective of the case worker, a co-worker, an employee, an employer, a teacher, a student and a friend.

During that time I have progressed from being the "fresh-faced idealist" with all the answers "if only those people would cooperate", to a more pragmatic professional who has seen the social services institution fail to meet the needs of Indian people. I have listened to the recriminations of both the professional social worker and the native person as they sought to vent their frustration. I have endured the lack of improvement in the quality of life of native people and, in fact, have watched as it deteriorated.

I became aware that neither the institution nor myself could offer any solutions, except perhaps on a one-to-one basis which, while perhaps sustaining an individual or a family through a particular crisis, did nothing to effect long-term change.

In the spring of 1983, I was attracted to the University of Manitoba to be a part of what appeared to me to be the most exciting and innovative initiative undertaken to ease the oppressive social conditions on Indian reserves. I was to be part of a field instruction team training native people to actually assume the responsibility for provision of child and family services on the reserve.

I was not unfamiliar with the process which led to this assumption of responsibility by native people. Several years earlier I had been employed by a provincial government department which was philosophically committed to relinquishing control of mandated services to local people. The catchwords for that process are "devolution" or "decanting". Although there was some progress made before the department itself was "decanted" back to southern line departments, it was generally doomed to failure because adequate groundwork for the transfer of such responsibility had not been properly laid. In the end,

the process served to reinforce the "failure syndrome" to which native people have become accustomed: duties and responsibilities are thrust on woefully prepared Indians who can, at least implicitly, be blamed for the consequent failure.

Governments cannot shoulder all of the blame for such debacles. Native people, after generations of neglect, want to share in the fruits of this country and they want it now. Their patience exhausted, they demand immediate action, ignoring, or not fully realizing, the implications that unpreparedness brings.

The Manitoba program to which I was attracted seemed to take the middle ground. Native people were to receive two years of specially designed training with possible credit towards a baccalaureate degree, while at the same time would work as social workers on their reserves under the direction of professional social workers.

From the beginning, the program suffered problems, many of them attributable to the uniqueness of the initiative and the fact that there were no "blueprints" to point the way to success. These problems were to be expected. What was not expected was the extent of turnover among the trainees, a rate which seriously jeopardizes the future of the program.



As I talked with and counselled my students, it became clear that there were many forces directed towards them which made continuation of their studies extremely difficult. Although my students were just one of three such groups undergoing training via the University program, it was apparent that the condition was widespread and that the continuous inflow and outflow of trainees negated the intent of the program.

The problem is a serious one inasmuch as the native social worker and the child-care committee involved on the reserve must make daily decisions which may literally involve life and death and which will certainly affect the future of native children. And the failure of the program or its individual parts might well precipitate the withdrawal of government support and set back the future of Indian autonomy in this area for many, many years.

The devolution of responsibility for the delivery of child and family services to native people is an important milestone in Indian history and its success or failure will be carefully monitored in many other jurisdictions, and may well affect the outcome of future efforts by Indian people to secure their right to self-determination.

Because of my concern both for my students and the program itself, I was delighted to be offered the opportunity to participate in an evaluation of the child and family services program of the Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council. Their program is Canada's first Indian-controlled child welfare agency, having begun in July, 1981. I hoped through this evaluation, and through my studies as a graduate student, to increase my own knowledge in the sphere of native-delivered social services as well as to probe more deeply into the pressures and problems faced by the native social worker trainee. In so doing, I might be able to offer alternative models for native social work practice and training to the various shareholders in this process as well as to other interested spectators in Canada and elsewhere who are looking to this program as a potential answer to their own dilemmas.

Throughout this paper, I extensively employ the terms "Indian", "native people" and "native". The term "Indian" is used to distinguish those indigenous persons who have the status of an Indian person in accordance with the provisions of the Indian Act, and it this group toward which most of my study and this paper is directed. The other terms are used in a general sense to describe all persons of native

ancestry, which would include status (or registered) Indians, as well as non-status Indians and Metis. I have also employed a variety of terms -- including dominant culture and out-culture -- to describe the majority population in the country having roots in Europe.

## PART I

## THE NEED FOR CHANGE

## Chapter 1

## Historical Perspective

In 1984, amid much pomp and ceremony, Canada celebrated the 450th anniversary of the arrival of the French explorer Jacques Cartier to these shores. However, the event was not a joyful one for Canada's original inhabitants, for Cartier began an inexorable process which led to a migrant superordination which was to erode some 30,000 years of Indian heritage and culture on this continent.

Although the first contact between the Indian and the European was cooperative in nature, it soon became cooptive and exploitive. Military defeats and European diseases took a physical toll, while the missionaries worked to destroy the aboriginal ideologies and the institutions of the state played a key role in bringing Indian culture and values into line with that of the dominant culture.

In Canada, there was little of the direct blood-letting which characterized the settling of the American West. The Government of Canada, in a 1978

publication about the development of the Indian Act, described the interaction between the white and Indian communities as evolving in three stages. The first was the evolution of attitudes in which Indians were seen as a separate and special group which had to be dealt with in a certain way. These attitudes ranged from that of the "friendly Indian" who helped the early European arrivals, to the "heathen savage", to a belief that Indians were more like simple children who needed to be guided and shepherded. As attitudes shifted, methods of dealing with the Indians also changed.

The second stage was the development of policies to define and conduct the relationship. These policies, which naturally changed as attitudes toward the Indian people changed, eventually led to the third stage which was the development of legislation to reflect both the policies and the social attitude towards Indians.

That third stage began with the Royal Proclamation of 1776, following the defeat of the French in Canada, and essentially established the framework for the relationship with the Indians, enunciating the "recognition of aboriginal rights and the necessity of extinguishing those rights by treaties" (Cumming, Mickenberg, 1972). It continued through the Lands Act

of 1850, the Civilization Act of 1857, the Enfranchisement Act of 1859 and then finally the Indian Act of 1876 and its subsequent revisions. This legislation helped to shape the relationship between the Indian and the non-Indian and concomitantly also shaped the attitudes of the dominant culture toward Indian people.

Implicit in the legislation was a strategy to assimilate the Indians into the Canadian mainstream. Although it was not legislated, Canada's Prime Minister Sir John A. MacDonald made it clear in 1880 as to how the government was disposed to handle the Indians: "...to wean them by slow degrees, from their nomadic habits, which have almost become an instinct, and by slow degrees absorb them or settle them on the land. Meantime they must be fairly protected." (Canada, 1978)

It must be admitted that the Canadian government did achieve a fair measure of success in pursuit of MacDonald's solution. The establishment of the reserve system did curtail the movement of the Indian and, while the Indians were not absorbed, they were settled on the land. And, perhaps by the Prime Minister's interpretation and the prevailing thought of the day which was heavily steeped in the colonial tradition of

the British Empire, the Indians were "fairly protected", but it could not be said to have been in the best interests of the Indians.

The relationship was truly one of colonizer and colonized, dominated as it was by the explicit control of power and decision making by the Europeans for the purpose of extracting benefits and by their persistent efforts at normative control over the Indians. A 1971 study, "Poverty in Canada", (Harp, Hoffley, 1971) supports that assertion: "A strong argument exists for viewing Canadian people of Indian ancestry as a colonial people, who have been treated and in effect controlled by outside authorities over which they had no direct control."

Although mechanisms such as Indian residential schools and health systems were established, they had no relevance to the Indian experience and little or no effort was made to understand the different culture, history and tradition. And once the primary role of procurement of furs and hides had diminished, there were no acceptable alternatives to assist Indian people to enter the economic and political mainstreams.

MacDonald's intention that the Indian should be absorbed never really materialized. While the reservation system was intended to bring about

assimilation, it also served to keep the Indians separated from the rest of society, thus defeating that intention. Although the Indians could, to a large extent, be confined to specific tracts of land, they remained a separate and distinct cultural entity in a country in which they were rapidly becoming outnumbered. Instead, the experience of being a colonized people appears to have kept them unified, both politically and spiritually. Furthermore, these conscious attempts at assimilation led to a people caught between two cultures, belonging fully to neither.

There have been many explanations offered as to why acculturation or assimilation did not occur, ranging from the persistence of the Indian culture to their isolation on reserves, to natural resistance to change and to theories of change itself.

Vogt (1971), writing in "Perspectives on North American Indians," says that while material aspects of a culture can change readily, family and kinship institutions are more persistent and that aspects of life such as implicit values, cultural orientations and personality type are still more persistent. He sees the communal structure of Indian Society as enabling it to withstand the pressure for change.



Another, more recent theory, holds that the Indian culture is the oldest extant, and that the strength of the Indian value system has allowed it to endure this long and that it will ensure its endurance after other cultures have disappeared (Bryde, 1971).

What is certain is that the Indian people have managed to retain, to a considerable degree, their distinct identity. Although there has been cultural borrowing, attempts at acculturation, integration or assimilation have not solved the needs or objectives of either side. Indian people have been forced to adapt to many changes...by and large their old ways are gone...their freedom and traditional pursuits have been curtailed...their autonomy has been replaced by the institutions of the out-culture...and their culture has been demeaned and degraded.

It has been shown time and time again that the fact of being a colonized people tends to unify people. Indians from coast to coast have resisted assimilation and have retained their unique identity.

On their part, Indian people maintain that aboriginal rights are perpetual and that they cannot be extinguished by treaty. As Watkins points out in "Dene Nation - the colony within" (1977), although the erosions of colonialism are real, the Indians are

attempting to "reclaim" their lands, not simply claiming them. Indians maintain that land claims aren't just about real estate or property rights which are marketable and subject to appropriation, but are about the basis for some kind of sovereignty. They are about political rights and political control - in other words, self-determination. Indian people don't want assimilation or integration.

The logical implication is that there must be another way of assuring harmonious and equitable relations between the two sides, and that is some form of partnership arrangement within the context of Confederation which provides for some manner of self-government, which would include separate services, allowing Indian people a greater role - and greater responsibility - in governing their own affairs.

There are unmistakable signs that this is beginning to happen. Although Indian people have only been recognized as citizens in this country since 1958, they are beginning, in small measure, to regain some of their lost autonomy. Decades-old land claims are being settled in a number of jurisdictions and, in 1983, the House of Commons Committee on Indian Self-Government headed by Keith Penner made recommendations which could

lead to a far-greater assumption of self-determination by Indian people.

One of the areas in which this is happening is in the devolution of responsibility for the delivery of child and family services to Indian control, an area in which Indian people have suffered for many, many years.

But while change has been a long time coming, it is not something which Indian people have not seen before, although perhaps in different areas and different manifestations. History has proven that they have a right to be skeptical. As Willie Denechoan, an Indian medicine man from Hay Lake, Alta., was quoted in "Reservations Are for Indians" (Robertson, 1970): "The government has us in a little box. Every now and then they open the lid and do something to us and close it again."

## Chapter 2

## The Impetus for Change

"We are your true and best friends who will never advise you badly, who will never whisper bad words in your ears, who only care for your good and that of your children."

Lt. Gov. Alexander Morris  
negotiating Treaty 5, 1874

The first treaties with the Indians in what is now Manitoba were signed in 1871, more than half a century after the coming of the settlers to the area. The era of the fur trade was in eclipse and the traditional lifestyles of the Indian had been irrevocably altered, their economy changed from one of sustenance to one based on barter and then to an ever-growing dependency on the out-culture government as part of treaty entitlements.

Despite the declaration of perpetual care for Indian children by Manitoba's lieutenant-governor, it was not until after the Second World War that much was done to lend credibility to that promise, and it would take many years of jurisdictional wrangling between the two senior levels of government before services which were provided to other Canadians were finally extended to Indian children and their families.

For instance, in 1947 the Canadian Welfare Council and the Canadian Association of Social Workers made a joint submission to a House and Senate committee studying changes to the Indian Act in which they charged that "Indian children who are neglected lack the protection afforded under social legislation available to white children in the community." In other words, there was no equity of accessibility to child and family services and Indian children were suffering as a result.

The Parliamentary hearings produced changes to the Indian Act and there was a general public reawakening to the plight of Canada's Indian people, but a study published almost two decades later (Hawthorn et al., 1966) confirmed that nothing had changed:

Public concern about the Indians and public knowledge of their problems that would demand a change are scanty and uneven. Public knowledge does not even match public misconception. Not enough is known of the problems to create a call for their solutions...(provision of child welfare services) varies from unsatisfactory to appalling.

The situation was aggravated by the fact that both provincial and federal governments continued to disclaim responsibility for the provision of such services. Despite this apparent intransigence, there were some small moves to provide service. In British Columbia in the mid-1950s, provincial district social services offices began extending services to Indian people, and about the same time a bilateral agreement between the federal and Ontario governments saw services extended to Indian reserves in that province.

In Manitoba, a bilateral agreement was signed in 1966 which extended provincial services to 14 Indian bands in the southwest part of the province. Over the next 15 years, special agreements were signed with a number of bands to permit them a greater role in the delivery of child and family services.

The jurisdictional conflict between the two levels of government has never been fully resolved. However, in 1979, the Hon. G. Garson, a magistrate from the Manitoba Provincial Judge's Court ruled that it was the legal responsibility and duty of the Province to provide child welfare services to Indian people, and that ruling has not been overturned by higher courts. To that point, it had been commonly understood that Treaty Indians were the sole responsibility of the

federal government -- and one which Indian people are anxious to maintain. They argue that their special relationship with the federal government via the treaties is jeopardized by any attempt by the provinces to intervene.

But extending provincial services was not the solution it had been hoped for. Although services were extended in the name of equity, the move turned out to be a double-edged sword. It invited "open season" on Indian families as their reserves were invaded by well-meaning but culturally ignorant social workers from the out-culture who were appalled at the conditions they encountered.

In hindsight, it was inevitable that the numbers of Indian children removed from their families would increase as child welfare services became extended to the reserves. What could not have been foreseen was the extent to which this occurred.

A 1980 report on foster care and adoption in Canada (Hepworth) revealed that while native people accounted for approximately six per cent of the country's population, more than 20 per cent of the children in substitute care were Indian.

The disproportionate number of Indian children in care was especially apparent in Western Canada. In

Alberta and Saskatchewan, the ratio of native children in care to the provincial total was 44 per cent and 64 per cent respectively. In Manitoba, statistics for the same period show Indian children comprising more than 32 per cent of all children in care (Johnston, 1983). But that figure applies to Treaty Indians only. An estimate of all children of native ancestry in substitute care put that figure closer to 60 per cent (Hepworth). For a Status Indian child, that means that the chances of being in care is four and a half times greater than that of other children.

As disturbing as those figures may be, the disposition of those children gives rise to an even-greater cause for concern. Another study conducted in 1983 (Johnston) showed that among status Indian children in care in Canada, a consistent average over the last decade of about 75 per cent have been adopted into non-native families. In addition to adoptions, there were massive foster home placements in non-Indian homes.

In Manitoba, which until 1982 was the only Canadian jurisdiction that still placed significant numbers of native children in the United States, a Review Committee on Indian and Metis Adoptions and Placements headed by Judge E.C. Kimelman found that 38



per cent of all Indian and 17 per cent of all Metis children adopted in 1981 were to families in the U.S.A.

In addition to the statistics on over-representation and disproportionate use of non-native resources, there is some evidence - largely anecdotal - which suggests that outcomes for the native child in care are less satisfactory than those for a non-native child in care.

Children placed in care, regardless of race, have a difficult time developing a strong and secure self-identity and separation from parents has profound and sometimes disastrous psychological consequences for a child (Bagley, 1981). And when this is coupled with either implicit or explicit cultural devaluation such as in cross-cultural placements, the identity struggle is further compounded (McKenzie, 1983). This has led Indian people to claim the practice is a form of cultural genocide, based on cultural racism and the devaluation of their culture.

#### REASONS FOR OVER-REPRESENTATION

The literature is replete with theories and explanations of the obvious imbalance of the number of Indian children in care. However, three general factors can be delineated which in combination provide the fullest explanation for this over-representation:

(1) poverty; (2) culture or cultural misunderstanding, and (3) colonization.

### 1. Indians and Poverty

The impoverished condition of native people in general, as represented by substandard housing, poor education and poor nutrition, is linked to feelings of powerlessness, alcoholism, despair, family violence and child neglect, and is seen as a contributor to Indian children taken into care (Asch, 1977; Zentner, 1973).

A 1972 study of American Ojibwa reserves (James) argues that there is no longer a distinctive tribal culture, that it has been supplanted by a poverty sub-culture, and that the modern Indian has more in common with others of the lower-class poverty culture than with the Indian ancestors. And the study asserts that this cultural change cannot be reversed so that the old culture is rehabilitated.

In "The Indian Identity Crisis" (1973), Zentner describes this culture of poverty as invoking the image of a situational and motivational syndrome which has as its central focus a greatly foreshortened temporal perspective which centres on the present. It also implies a lack of foresight and planning as well as a sense of alienation and powerlessness with respect to

occupational, social and political considerations. He goes on to say that it involves unskilled or semi-skilled occupations; comparatively low and insecure levels of income; an absence of standard levels of comfort and social amenities; low levels of educational attainment, and a lack of familiarity with science and technology.

These same symptoms, which are characterized by feelings of powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement, are widely reported in the literature. They are described by Durkheim as "anomie", by Marx as "alienation" and by Keniston as "estrangement".

Whatever its label, poverty contributes to the numbers of Indian children taken into care. Poverty produces stress and crises which are manifested by abnormal or aberrant behavior, one result of which is more Indian people before the courts and in the jails. This, in turn, produces greater surveillance by child welfare systems (among others). Social workers, being overwhelmingly from the out-culture, emphasize material factors when adjudging fitness of parents and the native parent, with few material goods, does not measure up.

Another theory which ties into the poverty theme is one which suggests that a lack of such services as child welfare, family counselling, alcoholism treatment and so on has resulted in neglect of Indian children and their subsequent placement in care (Zentner). However, the statistics provide ample evidence of what an increase in services has meant to Indian families. Rather than look at prevention, this theory again focuses on treatment and fails to address cultural issues. It suffers with most similar theories which seldom appear to recognize the structural causes of poverty and unemployment or the discrimination which Indian people face.

## 2. Cultural Differences

The provision of formal child welfare services in Canada is vested in the hands of the dominant culture, which determines its mandate, rules and regulations and act, in most cases, as the delivery agent. As such, it stands to reason that it is steeped in dominant culture values and judgements.

In order to more fully understand the necessity for change in the manner in which child and family services are provided to Indian people, it is necessary to gain an appreciation of the differences between Indian culture and tradition and that of the mainstream

of Canadian society, as well as to look at some of the differing approaches to child rearing which may give rise to the large number of apprehended Indian children. This awareness is important in understanding why methods used in the past (and in many areas are still being used) are not successful.

The dominant culture in Canada is one of European or Anglo Saxon derivation, which has its origins in the prehistoric agricultural cultures of the Middle East. Its moral principles are embodied in the Protestant Work Ethic, in which salvation is achieved in the afterlife as a result of diligent labor, stoic suffering and righteousness during the earthly period.

In "The Indian Identity Crisis", Zentner describes modern man as coming to regard the present as an opportunity to deploy his energies and resources in any manner which will enhance the probability of realizing future-linked goals, including the concept of a Christian afterlife. He undertakes to build ever-more-complex forms of corporate organization and to manipulate others even as they manipulate him. His units of action are collective and corporate in form and he lives in and for the future. This description is supplemented by Kirkness in "Indians Without Tipis" (1973), who says familial support of modern man is based

on the nuclear family, that he values youth over age, is interested in accumulation of material possessions and attempts to control nature.

By contrast, the Indian culture is described in terms of the Pre-Neolithic Ethic which centres on the concept of a man who, through a dream or a vision, has acquired supernatural powers from Nature, who shares freely with others the material benefits accruing to him through such powers; who is intensely concerned with his own spiritual welfare and who respects the spiritual individuality of others; who avoids manipulating others and resists being manipulated by them, and who is sensitive to the qualitative and emotional aspects of life and experience. This ethic includes a conception of the ideal character traits sanctioned in the traditional culture which manifests itself in the form of personalized rather than collectively defined standards of conduct. It is seen as a continuing cyclical process which takes place in the here and now.

Indian culture is seen as perceiving time as unimportant, that the concept of today and of the present is overriding; that it favors patience over action; has a broader concept of the extended family; has great respect for elders and tradition; is inclined

towards giving rather than saving, and lives in balance with nature.

These views are shared by an American professor, Dr. John Bryde in "Modern Indian Psychology", (1971) who cites the five great Indian values as: bravery; individual freedom; generosity and sharing; adjustment to nature, and good advice from Indian wisdom. By contrast, he sees dominant-culture values as: material achievement or money, success, activity and work; being moral; helping others who need help; efficiency and productivity; progress; material comfort; equality; freedom; external conformity; science; nationalism and patriotism, and democracy.

In "The New Indians" (1968), Steiner says: "Work for the Tribal Indian was, and is, secondary to living. His has been the 'reverence for life' that Albert Schweitzer spoke of in tribal men in Africa, not the reverence for work. His has not been the Calvinist belief that work is the source of goodness, or happiness, or success."

And almost two centuries ago, Long, in his diary entitled "Voyages and Travels of An Indian Interpreter and Trader" (1791), wrote of the Iroquois: "...they laugh when you talk to them of obedience to kings; for they cannot reconcile the idea of submission with the

dignity of men. Each individual is a sovereign in his own mind; and as he conceives he derives his freedom from the Great Spirit alone, he cannot be induced to acknowledge any other power."

All of this leads to a perception of Indian people by white society which includes:

- o an apparent inability to comprehend and to accept the values, the technologies and the organizational forms of their conquerors;
- o imbued with a mystical concept of destiny;
- o lack an appreciation of the importance of time;
- o seek to apprehend truth by means of affective rather than cognitive and empirical criteria;
- o they are profligate with money and fail to understand its less-immediately-obvious economic utility and social functions;
- o their lack of foresight and coordinated planning allegedly borders on laziness and improvidence;
- o devoid of logic and rationality in their approach to life and its problems;
- o prone to share freely with others, food clothing and shelter;
- o evidence of spiritual individuality and a moral indifference to the welfare of others. (Steiner, 1968.)



A marked difference to child rearing and the relationship of Indian children to their community and environment is also evident between the two societies. This, too, provides explanation as to why Indian children may be labelled as neglected and in need of substitute care.

While Britain was in the midst of the Industrial Revolution when children were all but slaves to the mining and manufacturing industries, Long (1791) was writing in his diary: "...from their infant state they (Indian parents) endeavour to promote an independent spirit; they are never known to beat or scold them...on all occasions they avoid anything compulsive, that the freedom with which they wish them to think and act may not be controuled (sic)." This is echoed by the Geographic Board of Canada in 1913 which wrote: "The prevalent idea that the Indian child grows up without instruction is entirely wrong, although it may be said he grows up practically without restraint, as instruction and obedience are enforced by moral suasion alone, physical punishment very rarely going beyond a mere slap in a moment of anger. As aggressiveness and the idea of individual ownership are less strong with the Indian than with his white brother, so quarrels are

less frequent among the children and fighting is almost unknown..."

Almost half a century later, Hawthorn (1966), in a wide-ranging survey of contemporary Indians in Canada, found that child-rearing conditions were much the same -- seldom is a child punished and discipline is primarily protective and loose. As soon as the child reaches the age of mobility, he or she is considered a person and is left relatively free to create and explore the environment, developing a sense of independence and autonomy with minimal age-graded behavioral expectations. Although as the child grows older, he or she may be ridiculed for failing to meet expectations, there is limited stimulation or feedback from adults.

This difference does not go unnoticed by Indian people. According to a Mowhawk youth leader, Shirley Witt (1968), "We do not restrict children the way non-Indians do. Let the children learn about the world. Let him stumble and fall and learn to get up. If he needs help, help him, but don't stand over him with a psychological test and punish him everytime he disobeys Dr. Spock. That's the Indians' usual attitude. Some people say it's too permissive. But the child grows up to be strong and independent."

Given those attitudes, it is not difficult to understand that native children are different than their non-native counterparts. Contrasted with the Puritan Ethic which requires obedience, discipline and strict accountability, the Indian way appears to be extremely lax and with much less parental contact. A native parent who gives a child the freedom to roam and explore and learn from the environment may be perceived by the out-culture as one who abandons or neglects. And, of course, the native child who is less attentive and disciplined in school or in other mixed-culture situations is easily singled out as different and perhaps "bad".

It is no wonder that social workers who have no adequate knowledge of the differing values, customs and traditions of native people makes comparisons to familiar values, customs and traditions and labels the Indian ways as wrong or aberrant and thus feels obliged to apprehend the children to provide a "better" lifestyle.

The key to understanding Indian child rearing, according to Wax (1972), writing in "Nutrition, Growth and Development of American Indian Children," is that it is person oriented and that the nature of this upbringing is such as to place great value on

relationships with other people in the community and to place negligible value on objects. Thus the child learns to define him- or herself in relationship to other people and not in relationship to such abstractions as "career" or "occupation" or "money". While reformers stress objects, Indians stress personal relationships.

However, lest the tenor of this look at cultural differences reinforce the stereotype of the "noble savage", it must be pointed out that there is much question as to how much of the Indian culture has survived. In a study of the Indians of British Columbia, Hawthorn (1958) reports: "...we have arrived at the conclusion that no customary actions, elements of belief or attitude, knowledge or techniques, have been transmitted from earlier generations to the present without major alterations."

Zentner sees an "advanced state of anomie" on Indian reserves, characterized by: high rates of child neglect; alcoholism; minor crime; truancy; illegitimacy; divorce; marital or occupational maladjustments; accidents, and other forms of dependency. He says as a type of social structure which is highly conducive to such a state, the typical reserve is perhaps unique. He identifies the

structural elements which have contributed to this uniqueness as: an underlying residue of a hunter-gatherer type of culture with an overlay of thin veneer of disparate ideological, technological and organizational elements which have been borrowed or arbitrarily imposed on an ad hoc basis from the dominant society.

The differing views and perceptions of Indian culture serve to reinforce the tenuousness of arguments based on these differences and the difficulty of the out-culture in attempting to prescribe ameliorative action.

### 3. The Impact of Colonialism

From the sixteenth century on, European rulers began to build extensive colonial empires. Spanish priests and conquistadores, French trappers, British, Portuguese, Italian and Dutch adventurers spread out across the world, enslaving or decimating whole populations, claiming control of vast lands and sending tribute home to their monarchs.

Colonialism was later rationalized by cultural arrogance spawned by Darwin's "natural selection" theory which, although chiefly concerned with biological evolution, had distinct social and political overtones which were quickly grasped. It was only a

short leap to the idea that whole societies evolve according to the same laws of selection.

According to Fanon (1963), there are five stages of colonization:

1. Pre-contact
2. Invasion (in this case, settlement)
3. Maintenance and consolidation of power
4. Recovery (this is a stage where violence -- which may be inner or outer directed -- most often occurs)
5. Return to transformed state.

These steps of colonialism were repeated across the globe, including North America. However, unlike the situation in the United States, Canadian Indians were not, by and large, subjugated by force. Their lands and their labor were nonetheless exploited to feed the gaping maw of imperialism. As a "less-developed" race, they were simply used and swept aside.

Colonialism is strongly rooted in assimilative strategy and devaluation of Indian culture, perpetuating existing patterns of inferiority and dependence. It serves to reinforce the low status of the subordinate group, not only in the perceptions of the colonizer, but also the colonized (Hudson, McKenzie, 1981).

Institutional racism, which involves the laws and relationships that are built into major social institutions, act to promote existing inequality and the social exclusion of minority groups, can obviously be tied to colonialism (Anderson, Frideres, 1981). Human services organizations are seen as failing to recognize Indian cultural rights and practices, thus discriminating against them. The institutions act as controlling agents for the dominant society, reinforcing acculturation through culturally biased enforcement of regulations and Acts (Galper, 1975; Leonard, 1966). This would help to explain why so many children are placed in non-Indian care where it might be expected that cultural differences would be expunged.

## Chapter 3

## An Important First Step

As has been seen, the method of delivery of child and family services to Indian people, although a fairly recent occurrence, has resulted in a disproportionate number of Indian children taken into substitute care, placement in non-native homes and poor outcomes for the children.

As Indian people became conscious of this situation, their concerns were primarily two-fold: (1) the method of service delivery which brought about this plight and, (2) the most important, the effects of large-scale removal of Indian children to non-Indian resources. This effect was angrily labelled "cultural genocide". These concerns led to intensive lobbying of governments and planning by Indian organizations to undertake control of their own child and family services.

And their efforts eventually bore fruit. In 1981, the Dakota Ojibwa Tribal Council signed two agreements, one a contribution agreement with the Government of Canada to fund the establishment of their own child and family services program, and the other with the



Government of Manitoba which effectively delegated responsibility for provision of child and family services to a new child caring agency with full authority under the Child Welfare Act of Manitoba. The new entity was called the Dakota Ojibwa Child and Family Services (DOCFS) agency and it came into being in July, 1981.

In February of the following year, the tri-partite Canada-Manitoba-Indian Child Welfare Agreement was signed. This agreement identified the general principles, processes and financial arrangements for the provision of on-reserve Indian child welfare, related family services and juvenile probation services. It also made provision for the signing of subsidiary agreements which would encompass 25 bands. In April, 1982, subsidiary agreements were signed with the Southeast, West Region and Interlake Tribal Councils. These agreements provided for executive or implementive control over service delivery, but not legislative or judicial control (i.e. there was no provision for tribal courts, nor was there an Indian child welfare act). In February, 1983, a Northern Indian Child Welfare Agreement was signed to provide similar service delivery arrangements for 25 northern Manitoba reserves.

A component of the agreements was provision for the education and training of Indian people to be the front-line delivery agents on the reserves. Dakota Ojibwa Child and Family Services contracted with the Manitoba Department of Labor to provide training through its New Careers Program. The other southern tribal councils elected to contract with the University of Manitoba for a program which would offer credit towards a bachelor of social work degree for successful trainees. The training was to combine classroom instruction and on-site tutorials along with on-the-job training.

Each of the tribal councils established a local child welfare committee on each reserve, and the chairpersons of those committees comprised the incorporated child care committee. The responsibilities of these committees, as outlined under the tri-partite agreements, included: "Services normally provided under the Child Welfare Act that incorporate the traditional beliefs, values and customs (of Indian people)..."

These agreements in effect recognized the importance of cultural and value consistency in the administration of acts and regulations pertaining to Indian child and family services. Although the

standards were to remain the same as for the rest of the province, the agreements provided for perceptions and subjective judgments used in implementation of those standards to be based on the culture of the people being served.

Indian people are struggling for a system of child and family services delivery which is parallel to that enjoyed outside the reserve; one which recognizes their culture, heritage and traditions and which is answerable to the people of the reserve. The devolution of services to Indian control is one part of the process of decolonization and, in some respects, can be said to be the leading edge of it.

### Summary

There can be little question that the disproportionate number of Indian and native children who are in substitute care establishes the need for change in the administration and delivery of child and family services. The issue in child welfare is the same as that for "recovery" phases for all other aspects of Indian life - towards decolonizing the relationship.

There is great commonality between the two peoples by sheer virtue of their humanity. However, the differences of culture and class status and, most importantly, power relationships, can only be ignored at our own peril. The fact that these differences have been ignored for so long has brought us to our current state and reinforces the need and importance of remedial action.

The important first step has been taken. The devolution of responsibility for the delivery of child and family services to Indian control is an attempt to recognize those differences and to counter their deleterious effect both on Indian children and on the future of Indian people.

## PART II

## THE PRACTICUM

## Introduction

It is in the context of child and family services operated by Indian agencies for Indian people as a leading edge of decolonization that the practicum described in this section took place. The concern of the author was focused on some of the difficulties which were being experienced in the early stages of this process and on barriers to its success.

Potentially these are many, and include resistance to change from mainstream agencies and from the client group, adequacy of funding and, of course, the level of service which these new agencies might be expected to deliver.

The focus of the author in the practicum and in this report is specifically toward the role of the native line social worker as a central part of successful service delivery and hence the success of the entire process. Special attention is given to the stresses experienced by these workers and what measures might be implemented to counter the effects of stress and to support them in carrying out their central role.

### Description of the Practicum

As partial fulfillment of the requirements of a Master of Social Work degree, a practicum was undertaken involving a comprehensive review and evaluation of one of the native child care agencies and programs in Manitoba.

The objectives of that evaluation were to:

- o determine the effectiveness of the native child and family services program in relation to its stated goals and objectives and to critically examine issues and problems in the delivery of service;
- o identify the pressures on the front-line native social workers and to identify supports required by these workers;
- o sharpen and enhance the author's skills in program evaluation.

The review process included evaluation design, data collection, statistical analysis, conducting interviews of staff and community members, evaluating, drawing conclusions, making recommendations and participating in the preparation of an evaluation report.

In addition, in the professional capacity as a field instructor attached to another Indian tribal

council which was engaged in similar provision of service, the author was in constant contact with the Indian social work trainees and was able to gather extensive information -- both as an observer and anecdotally -- concerning the pressures placed on them from a variety of sources and which impacted on their ability to perform their duties.

The evaluation of the one program, coupled with regular visits to Indian communities, meetings with local child care staff and their committees, agency staff and supervisors, along with contact with other field instructors engaged in similar work, formed the basis of this practicum and gave rise to its special focus on the stresses experienced by these new native social work trainees.

### Methodology

During the early stages of the author's employment as a field instructor with the native child and family services program, it was recognized that the trainees were experiencing difficulties that were unique to their studies and employment.

In consultation with the Practicum Advisor, it was decided that the maintenance of a field diary would be an invaluable aid for recording observations made of interactions with the trainees. Accordingly, factual

data concerning discussions with the trainees (such as the trainee being upset about having to apprehend a relative's child or expressing concern over lines of responsibility) were entered, along with pertinent information gleaned from meetings with child care committees and other residents of the community. Each community visit was recorded in detail and provided a "running record" of meetings and conversations with significant personnel.

An average of 18 meetings/interviews was held with each of 11 trainees over a two-year period, both formally and informally. This was augmented by discussions with trainees from other tribal councils which provided comparative data.

Through systematic content analysis of the field diary, information was compiled as it related to the areas of stress. If a particular stressor was mentioned more than four times, it was considered to be an area of particular concern and became a specific category of stress. For instance, if the lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities was identified four times, it was deemed to be a major category. Because of the numbers of stressors identified, it was necessary to arbitrarily establish four as the cut-off point to distinguish major stressors from lesser ones.



In addition, during the course of the program evaluation of the native child care agency, all local child and family services staff (a total of 16) were formally interviewed and a questionnaire was completed for each. A portion of the questionnaire attempted to elicit data regarding stressors. These questions included:

- o how does the job relate to other people's roles (i.e. agency, workers, band employees)?
- o how would you describe the workload (i.e. manageable, difficult, unmanageable)? Explain.
- o problem areas of job - specifics (i.e. working with relatives as clients, working in own community).
- o issues that need to be attended to.  
who are you accountable to? (What difficulties if any are there with the system?) - how are differences worked out?
- o with so many people involved in the system (agency, local child care committees, co-workers, clients) who do you answer to and for what?
- o decision-making - what decisions are made

at local level (i.e. is it clear who makes what decisions - personnel, case management, community programming)?

- o what problems are encountered with this system?
- o Child Welfare Act, regulations and policies - examples of when they are inappropriate.
- o Conclusion - what could use improvement and how would this happen?

The questionnaire then became part of the formative evaluation as part of this process. In addition to questions of stressors, it also addressed the following areas of specific interest to this study:

A. Background and Job Description

1. Previous experience
2. Educational background
3. Method of hiring
4. Job description

B. Job Function

1. Workload and working conditions
2. Strengths and weaknesses in job
3. Accountability

C. Local Control and Decision Making

1. Decision-making process

- 2. Strengths and weaknesses of local committee
- 3. Frequency of meetings
- D. General Overview of Agency
- E. Training
  - 1. Past experience
  - 2. Needs
- F. Child Welfare Act
  - 1. Applicability
  - 2. Difficulties

Through this process, both quantitative data (usually statistical in nature) and qualitative data (usually subjective,, involving opinion and judgement) were collected. The opportunity of being both an observer in one setting and a participant-observer in another served to strengthen the data collected, and provided the writer with additional insights which might not have been forthcoming in strictly an observer role. In addition, it enabled the writer to provide counselling and support assistance to the trainees in dealing with the stresses which they encountered.

### Personal Evaluation

The training program through the University and through which the author was employed was set up so that students came from their reserves to Winnipeg for

one week of training and then returned to the reserves for six to eight weeks during which they were expected to put their training into practice. This cycle continued for two years. During the time they were on the job, it was the author's responsibility to visit each trainee (11 trainees - 10 reserves) to assist them with the classroom material, to provide support and counselling and to provide guidance and consultation for their casework.

As such, self-evaluation was an on-going process in the form of feedback from students concerning the training course, its cultural relevance and its practical application. During these visits, meetings were held, both formally and informally, with the chief and council, the students' co-workers (e.g. alcohol rehabilitation workers, community health workers, etc.), the child care committees and clients who also provided important feedback.

In order to ensure the students received training that met University standards while at the same time was relevant, constant monitoring and self-evaluation occurred. Assistance in the form of personal evaluation and feedback was given on a regular basis by the Program Director, who was also the primary advisor for the purposes of the practicum.

During the program evaluation, the writer's progress was evaluated through meetings of the evaluation team which provided feedback and criticism, as did the interviewees during the course of the project.

## Chapter 4

### The Program Evaluation

Canada's first Indian-controlled and -operated child and family services agency commenced operation in Manitoba in 1981, a response to generations of neglect by the dominant culture followed by a period in which itinerant social workers, painfully unaware of cultural differences, community standards of child care or of traditional resources and supports available on the reserves, intervened with repeated apprehension of Indian children and subsequent permanent placement of them in non-Indian substitute care.

The objectives of this new agency were to:

1. carry out the duties of a child caring agency as outlined in the Child Welfare Act of Manitoba;
2. strengthen and unify Indian families who are members of the tribal council bands;
3. place Indian children coming into care of the agency within their own communities or with native families within Manitoba;
4. assist in returning local children to their families or bands if they were previously placed in the care of a traditional child-caring agency and/or placed outside of Manitoba;

5. develop preventive services for the prevention of circumstances requiring the protective placement of children.

In its third year, the Indian agency requested a review of its operations, not because of major concerns with the program, but as an opportunity to critically reflect on program accomplishments and needs. With funding provided by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND), the evaluation was undertaken by Professors Pete Hudson and Brad McKenzie of the Manitoba School of Social Work, supported by student Vern Morrisette and this writer.

The terms of reference of the evaluation included:

1. Based on a review of relevant program documents and interviews with program managers, regional DIAND staff, regional board members of the agency, chiefs and front-line workers, describe the original and current rationale, purpose and objectives of the agency.
2. Examine and assess the agency's delivery of services to Indian families, focusing on the following considerations:
  - a description of the services received in the following areas: prevention/development, protection, placement and adoption, emergency

assistance and crisis intervention, and other significant service elements;

- an examination of the roles and relationships between: band-level workers and the child care committees; the local community to the regional structure, including local staff to regional staff and local committee to regional committee; the child care committee to chief and band councils, and the agency to the tribal council;
- an examination of the procedures for the evaluation of staff at all levels, as well as an assessment of the two previous training programs for line staff. Procedures and plans for general staff development will precede an examination of the issue of on-going training of staff;
- a description of the general levels of resourcing of the agency, the methods of funding in terms of timing and flexibility, and the relationship between funding and mutual accountability of the three levels of government.

3. Describe the existing mandate of the agency for the provision of services to its off-reserve



members, as well as existing and possible protocols between the agency and other child-caring agencies.

4. Describe the relationship of the agency and external bodies such as other child-caring agencies, the Child Welfare Directorate and the Ministry, other Indian Child and Family Services agencies.
5. Provide a written report of findings and conclusions of the overall effectiveness and success of the program, and suggestions for improvement, related to the general purpose and goals, and the program's administration, if appropriate.

Inasmuch as that evaluation was completed and the final report produced in June, 1984, it will not play any further part in this practicum report. The second objective of this writer's participation in that evaluation - to identify the pressures on the front-line Indian social workers and to identify supports required by these workers - will form the foundation upon which the remainder of this report is based.

## Chapter 5

## Observations

The specific program focus of this practicum was predicated on the assumption that the native social work trainees were a vital component of the assumption of service delivery. At the outset, there was evidence - largely anecdotal - that there was a high attrition rate among trainees, which led to the author's decision to focus special attention on this question. A high turnover rate would naturally be potentially damaging for the continued existence of community-based service delivery. Therefore, it was of prime importance to establish whether there was an abnormal turnover and, if so, to determine its underlying causes and pose some potential remedies.

During the evaluation of the Indian child and family services referred to previously, it was determined that of the original 16 positions which were filled as of February, 1981, only six remained occupied by the same person by June 30, 1984.

The turnover rate was as follows:

February, 1981 - June 30, 1982	-- 2 staff
July 1, 1982 - June 30, 1983	-- 2 staff
July 1, 1983 - June 30, 1984	-- 9 staff

This represents a turnover rate of approximately 81 per cent over the period studied, or approximately 27 per cent on an annual basis.

By comparison, in 1982-83, Manitoba Community Services and Corrections reported a staff turnover rate of nine per cent, of which approximately one-third was due to maternity leave. This rate was considered to be unusually high, with the norm being estimated at around four per cent per annum. That would mean that the attrition rate for trainees of the agency was almost seven times higher than the accepted norm. Although it must be noted that three of the 16 staff changes involved promotions, nevertheless, 13 staff had left the agency, either voluntarily or involuntarily.

Through the program evaluation, interviews with trainees and other interested parties, and study of the field diary, it was possible to identify possible causal links between this abnormal rate of attrition and high degrees of stress encountered by the trainees.

Categories of these stresses were compiled by noting the number of times specific occurrences were identified by trainees as being stressful to them and that these stresses were of a recurring nature.

### Categories of Stress

In the course of the practicum, five broad categories of stress were identified, and they were classified as follows:

1. Lack of Skills/Workload Requirements
2. Multiple Accountability or Systemic
3. Environmental
4. Cultural
5. Personal

These categories are by no means discrete; neither are they precise, as it was sometimes difficult to arbitrarily assign a particular example to one category. Because of this, no attempt was made to quantify these particular categories in terms of which type induced the greatest amount of stress. Therefore, it was not possible to rank the five categories in any particular order.

#### A. Lack of Skills/Workload Requirements

The success or failure of community-based service delivery is heavily dependent upon the line social workers who are the actual deliverers of the service. As such, it follows that inadequately prepared workers not only jeopardize the program but also place greater stress on the workers themselves.

The program developed for the training of native social workers could certainly be described as rigorous. It

consisted of four major components: classroom instruction; on-site assignments; field instruction, and on-site child welfare duties. As a university certificate program, standards acceptable to the university had to be established and achieved. These included classes of 35-hour duration to achieve 3.0 credit hours for each class and maintenance of a C+ average based on a grading system congruent with university standards.

The classroom requirements alone would appear to be arduous for the normal high school graduate entering university. However, of the staff of the agency which was evaluated, 36 per cent had less than a Grade 12 education, compared to only nine per cent for three rural non-native agencies used for comparative purposes. (When we look at front-line workers about whom this paper is about, it should be noted that statistics used include supervisory and management staff in all cases.) Of 37 students entered in the university certificate program, more than 75 per cent had less than a Grade 10 education. As well, more than 81 per cent of workers in the agency studied had no university degree, compared to only 23 per cent in the non-Indian agencies. And the latter agencies had almost five times as many workers with social work degrees. (See Table 1)

----- TABLE 1 -----

COMPARISON OF STAFF QUALIFICATIONS\*

	MSW	BSW	Other Degree	Grade 12 Or More	Less Than Grade 12
Agency in Study	1	2	1	10	8
Agency X (other Indian)	0	3	4	4	8
Agency A (non-Indian)	7	16	7	7	2
Agency B (non-Indian)	11	14	1	3	0
Agency C (non-Indian)	6	13	3	2	0

\* Includes Regional Staff

Source: Final Report, Evaluation of Indian Child and Family Services Agency, June, 1984

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Of course, these students were not expected to perform solely in the academic realm; they also had caseloads to manage on the reserves which were not dissimilar from those of experienced professionals with considerably more formal education. For instance, the program evaluation revealed a total caseload for the agency of 629 cases as of March 31, 1984, broken down as follows:

Family Service	264
Adoption	19
Brief Service	115
Active Foster Homes	48
Foster Homes Under Study	68
Children in Care	115

This translates into an average caseload of approximately 40 for each worker. However, looking only at

children in care and family services workloads and comparing them to those of a more-established, non-Indian child welfare agency, the Indian agency workers had a somewhat lower caseload (See Table 2).

While experience can, in many ways, make up for a lack of formal education, the statistics in Table 3 show that 59 per cent of staff in the agency under review had less than three years of experience compared to 31.5 per cent in the non-Indian agencies used for comparison. However, it must be pointed out that these figures could be even more dramatic, as the table includes regional and supervisory staff who could not be separated out of the statistics. The non-Indian agencies used for comparison were rural-based Manitoba agencies.

----- TABLE 2 -----

COMPARISON OF AVERAGE CASELOADS

	Agency in Study	Non-Indian Agency
Family Care	264	508
Children in Care	<u>115</u>	<u>272</u>
TOTAL	379	780
No. of Line Staff	16	29
Average Caseload	23	27

Source: Final Report, Evaluation of Indian Child and Family Services Agency, June, 1984

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These figures indicate that agency staff are at a serious disadvantage as compared to workers in other agencies in terms of educational qualifications and experience. Yet they were expected to manage roughly comparable caseloads while at the same time undertaking a rigorous training program.

The lack of skills also surfaces in the training aspect of the native social worker's position and is also potentially stressful, especially for the 36 per cent of workers with less than Grade 12 education. It is difficult to expect people with limited education to perform at university-level expectations.

----- TABLE 3 -----

COMPARISON OF STAFF EXPERIENCE\*

	More Than 10 Years	7-9 Yrs.	4-6 Yrs.	1-3 Yrs.	Less Than 1 Year
Agency in Study	1	4	4	12	1
Agency X	0	3	3	11	2
Agency A	22	6	5	6	2
Agency B	12	5	7	4	1
Agency C	5	5	5	7	3

\* Includes Regional Staff

Source: Final Report, Evaluation of Indian Child  
and Family Services Agency, June, 1984

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Because of these limitations, General Education Development (G.E.D. - Grade 12 equivalency) was added to the training program and an instructor was hired to deliver this



component. This was additional work for those who did not have their senior matriculation and meant they had to do extra educational assignments in addition to regular classroom work and their caseloads.

Language also posed a problem for several workers, with training and supervision conducted in English only. In one particular case of a student with only limited use of the language, fellow students attempted to translate classroom instruction and found themselves falling behind in their studies. As a result, the student eventually had to leave the program.

As well, both the training and the duties of a social worker require basic written language skills and in the case of many trainees, this was a skill which was lacking, making performance difficult and stressful.

Much of the difficulty caused by lack of skills can be attributed to the hiring practices of the agencies and the individual local child care committees. On reserves, where unemployment rates are considerably higher than for the rest of society, these social work positions are greatly coveted. In more than one instance, the jobs were given to people who were related to or who are friends with the power structure on the reserve with no regard to academic qualifications or job aptitude.

In one instance, a chief's relative was hired as the local child care worker. She had an extreme alcohol problem and was unable to function or to carry out her responsibilities. However, she could not be removed or assisted to get treatment as the chief did not want anyone else in that position. Another example was of a local committee composed mainly of younger men who hired another man on the basis of friendship and would support him no matter what he did. A neighboring reserve called the University and the tribal council, insisting the man be let go because he was traveling to their reserve, taking out teenaged girls and supplying them with alcohol. A meeting was held with the child care committee and members of the nearby reserve, but the worker received only a reprimand. In another instance, the local committee kept insisting the band worker was not doing her job, but when pressured could provide little evidence, but did cite the fact the worker was not a Treaty Indian (she was a band member who lost her status through marriage). The worker finally succumbed to pressure and malicious gossip from the community and resigned. At that point, a relative of three members of the committee was appointed -- something the worker suspected was behind her ouster.

The university had no control over who became a student, as it had been agreed that whomever was selected at

the local level would be trained. Thus, some of the students hired had no idea of what the job entailed and weren't prepared to do this kind of work, nor were they prepared to cope with the demands of training both in class and on the job.

Some students perceived their function in their new job as "policing" - all they had to do was to check on people to make sure they were at home looking after their children - and they felt they didn't need a lot of training to be able to do that. It prompted reactions such as "I know how to do my job on my reserve" as well as absenteeism in class, failure to complete assignments and resistance to learning new skills.

Of course, the students were not the only ones who did not know what the program entailed. In some instances, child care committees, chiefs and councils would not be aware of what skills were necessary to be a child care worker. Because they were unfamiliar and unclear about what the job should be, there was confusion about roles and responsibilities. For instance, often the worker would be wanted to "fix" problems with juveniles, but no one had any suggestions or ideas how that might be done. Workers would be accused of not doing their job when problems still existed -- "We told you about that kid months ago and still you have done nothing". There was little understanding at

the local level about how much the worker could do or appreciation of the limited resources available and, many times, there were simply no clear answers to perceived problems.

Another difficulty for these workers is the fact that their formal training is interspersed with on-the-job training. When the workers are not in the classroom, they are performing the normal duties of a social worker, thus having limited time to study or to work on classroom assignments. And in most instances, while workers were away at class, work was accumulating back on the reserve.

There are other problems associated with training which are of lesser concern but which still contribute to elevated stress levels, such as pressures associated with being away from home, lack of familiarity with training locations, travel logistics and the lack of time available with field instructors.

#### B. MULTIPLE ACCOUNTABILITY STRESS

Any new program can be expected to contain certain "bugs" which need to be worked out over time. The native child and family services programs is not exceptional in this regard, although due to the uniqueness of the circumstances and the fact that there are no established models after which it may be patterned, the start-up problems might be expected to be greater than the norm. The

Indian child and family services programs involve many key stakeholders, each with specific expectations and each making demands on the programs. They include:

- o The federal government -- as the source of funding for the program and as the entity charged under the Constitution and the Indian Act with the responsibility for Indian people;
- o The provincial government -- as the legislated authority for the provision of child and family services in Manitoba;
- o The tribal councils -- as the elected regional authority on the reserves which comprise the council area;
- o The band -- as the elected local authority on the reserve;
- o The child and family services agencies -- which, although incorporated entities distinct from the tribal councils, are still dependent and answerable to the councils; they have the delegated responsibility for the provision of child and family services;
- o The Child care committees on each reserve, and The people of the reserves, who are the ultimate benefactors of the program.

Although the line social worker does not deal directly with each of these entities, the pressures they apply may be

felt down the chain of command. For the Indian social worker trainee, formal direct pressure begins with the tribal council and the regional committee of the agency. The regional committee has the legal mandate for service delivery which it delegates, through an executive director, to a regional management team. Administrative matters, including policy development, staffing and budgeting, are supposedly handled at the regional level.

At the local level, the appointed or elected child care committees are supposed to have primary responsibility for case management and prevention programming.

This division of responsibilities varies through the four tribal council areas and is by no means a rigid one. For instance, hiring practices are unclear. Local committees undertake much of the local hiring with no input from the regional level. This causes confusion as there is a lack of communication about the process. This gives rise to the situation referred to in the previous section when sound hiring practices may not always be followed. This has also led to other problems, such as who is responsible for disciplining staff, for conducting staff evaluations and for ensuring that staff carry out their responsibilities?

As well, decisions made by the regional worker and the child care committee would be overturned by the chief and council for what appeared to be purely political reasons.

One example was a decision to fire a trainee who, after numerous chances, demonstrated an inability to function at the required level. The chief and council elected not to fire the person, but instead opted for a two-week suspension. The inconsistency of disciplinary action was referred to several times during the course of the agency evaluation.

This inconsistency was magnified by the number of people the trainee was responsible to, either formally or informally, as well as differing policies between child and family agencies. For instance, the trainees are employed by the Indian child caring agency which is organized on a regional tribal council basis but are responsible to this regional structure. However, the bands consider them to be their employees and attempt to exercise power over them as well. When you add the regional committee, the executive director, the regional supervisors, the field and classroom instructors, as well as the clients and the community at large, the possibility -- or probability -- of confusion is amplified.

In the absence of clearly defined roles and responsibilities, the potential for conflict is obvious as is the potential for stressful working conditions for the trainees. Conflicts arose over such matters as the local committee giving a worker the day off, but the tribal

council insisting the worker attend a meeting, to larger program issues such as committees deciding not to apprehend a child and then regional workers and tribal council executives overturning that decision and picking up the child without consulting the committee or the line worker.

### C. ENVIRONMENTAL STRESS

Environmental stress for the trainees revolves around the fact that they must live in the small community in which they work. For many of the workers, this means their caseload is comprised of family, relatives and friends.

For a conventionally trained social worker, the stresses of the more sordid cases they encounter -- rape, suicide, spouse abuse, assaults, child abuse, sexual abuse -- are extremely difficult to handle. However, in the majority of cases, they are dealing with strangers and they are able, at the end of the day, to escape the pressures. For an untrained or semi-trained worker, these excesses are even more difficult to manage. But when the victims, or the perpetrators, are well known to the worker, the stresses are magnified.

All the students indicated concern about having to work with relatives as clients, and nothing in the training program prepares people to counsel relatives. Many of the cases they reported were more than just marital or parental concerns, but were in the realm of child abuse, sexual



molestation and suicide, where brothers and fathers were involved. One worker insisted that a teenaged boy who was in care in a city institution be returned to the reserve for a family visit with the intention of working towards re-integrating him to the reserve. The boy was in a stable situation in the city, but was extremely lonely and isolated, with few visitors. While he was home he raped and murdered a young woman -- the worker's sister-in-law. The worker tried to remain objective about her reasons for allowing the visit, she had to continue to be a support to him, she had to deal with her own loss and the blame from the family of the dead girl -- and, she had to continue her employment and training!

Another worker came to his field instructor to relate the fact that his brother was sexually abusing his three-year-old daughter. He didn't have the strength to confront his brother and couldn't discuss it with his committee or anyone else. Similarly, another trainee discovered that her five-year-old daughter had been sexually assaulted when the child was diagnosed as having a venereal disease. Her pain at having to try to discover who had done it and how to get help was overwhelming!

As well, the worker must continue to live among the client group and, being considered on call 24 hours a day, there sometimes appears to be no surcease from these

problems. Workers are then constantly accessible to any community member who wishes to question, harass, intimidate or threaten a worker over a particular situation. Even when the cases were not of a severe nature, the fact that the worker must respond to calls at all hours creates stressful working conditions. Sometimes workers would complain, "These people don't know what my job is...they call and complain because they hear parents arguing and expect me to stop it."

Trainees report being ostracized by segments of the community for "just doing their job" and they are subjected to much verbal abuse. There was also one incident in which a trainee was physically assaulted when he responded to a middle-of-the night report that small children were alone -- he was hit on the head and suffered a concussion.

Community members would also rally support from family and friends when workers would confront them about issues such as alcoholism, child abuse or neglect. The workers in turn would be subjected to criticism of their own lifestyle and family matters or, failing that, the client would talk about (and start rumors about) how the worker was "always having coffee" or was always out of the office, thus trying to make a case for the worker being incompetent. Workers reported many times that these rumors would be believed by many people in the community, making it difficult for the

worker to talk to or get appropriate counselling for the client.

And workers are also "molded" into roles which the community perceives for them based on their own past. Thus they are forced to pack their history around with them, as their community cannot see them from a fresh perspective. Many of the trainees had overcome personal problems prior to (and during) their participation in the training program, but they related having extreme difficulty finding respect for what were, in effect, new identities. For example, some trainees had previously had alcohol problems which they had managed to overcome, but this was not readily recognized or admitted by the community. Some trainees had criminal records and some had lost their own children to the child welfare system. Even when a history of serious problems was absent, the history of past relationships (e.g. girl friends, family feuds) became important and served to make adoption of a professional role difficult. The community was, to a major extent, unable to accept that the trainees had indeed changed, or to separate the professional role from their life in the fabric of the community.

Because there were few answers in their training, these workers must endure these stresses practically on their own.

#### D. CULTURAL STRESSES

As was examined in the review of the literature, there are striking differences between the cultures of the Indian and non-Indian. The Indian social work trainee is forced to walk a very thin line between the two cultures and their value systems.

Although reared in native culture and tradition in most cases, the trainees must, by law, work within the constraints imposed by the Child Welfare Act and regulations. From a culture which cherishes non-interference in the affairs of others, the trainees must somehow resolve the question of their professional mandate which requires their insertion into the lives of their clients whether that be in terms of preventive programming or investigation and resolution of specific problems.

Another example is the question of substitute care for children. The traditional native way is an informal and open system with friends and relatives caring for children without question. However, the "new" system requires a more formal arrangement, with social histories and licensing requirements needing to be satisfied before substitute care is approved. This led to reluctance on the part of workers to complete home studies or to provide follow-up services.

In addition, confidentiality of most transactions in this area is not an issue and, in fact, is enforced in the

mainstream system, but this is not the case in the native community where gossip easily and quickly reveals all the details. Naturally, this increases the reluctance of clients to confide in the worker or even to be seen in conversation with one. Many local child care committees and trainees do not believe in confidentiality, believing instead that child welfare is a community responsibility, and therefore confidentiality is secondary to the main issue. This is, of course, in contradiction to the mainstream system and causes difficulties for the local workers.

For example, a number of local workers were hoping to move toward a reserve (community) system of child care, whereby children and child rearing were the responsibility of the entire reserve rather than just the parents, and the reserve would, in effect, take custody of a child whose parents couldn't - or wouldn't - care for the child. This led to a situation where one worker who was a "traditional" native, was working with a pregnant 15-year-old who didn't want her parents to know about her situation. The worker did not accept confidentiality because she felt the "native" way would have been to involve the parents. She insisted the parents be told and offered to accompany the girl. When this came to the attention of the agency, the worker was

reprimanded for breaching confidentiality and was told to respect and carry out that rule in future.

As well, the level of service delivery seems to be affected when foster home parents are related to trainees. During interviews of foster parents, they said they weren't given the necessary support because they were related to the worker. Both sides seemed reluctant to talk about how things were going, as if somehow it went beyond the bounds of acceptable family discussion. The foster parents seemed to feel: "If I have a problem, the worker will think I don't measure up", while the workers appeared to feel that if they inquired, that would be construed as not thinking the relatives can perform adequately.

Similar problems were encountered by workers in following the legal route of having people charged with offenses. They found this route foreign and uncomfortable and would have preferred to handle it internally rather than bringing in outsiders (the law). They expressed feelings such as, "I've known this person all my life," and "if we do this, there will be a backlash from the community".

An additional source of stress involves the issue of control. Trainees reported they are perceived as policing and are therefore treated with suspicion, contempt and hostility in many cases. Other trainees have had difficulty because they were not from the reserve they were working on

or because they had lost their treaty status through out-culture marriage. In either case, trainees say they are ostracized and isolated, with a general community feeling that the jobs should go to resident status Indians rather than to "outsiders".

Another source of conflict and stress involves personal values regarding native traditions. Both within the client and the trainee groups, there are varying levels of and approaches to tradition. Within both groups there are individuals who favor a return to traditional values and who actively pursue this route and those of whom it might be said are further along the route of assimilation and reject all or many of the traditional values.

An example of these differences can be seen in the approaches taken to religion. Some of the students are now practicing a return to the more traditional Indian religion, with the burning of sweetgrass, the sweat lodge for meditation and purging, and so on. They are, of course, strong adherents to the more traditional way of life -- the non-interference, the extended family, etc. Others, who have been brought up in either the Catholic or Protestant religions, mirror the tenets of those religions and are less influenced by traditionalism and the return to the "old ways". One worker told about his grandmother, a Catholic member of the local child care committee, who would argue

vociferously with other members over implementing sweat lodges or feasts, calling them "pagan". The worker felt a commitment to support her and also to keep the peace with the rest of the committee.

What is obvious is that the native social worker trainees must have a very clear understanding of their own values before being able to function effectively in two value systems.

Another issue which inserts itself into the stress-inducing patterns for the students is the question of gender. While the lack of personal power for females is not unique to the native cultures, their low status is constantly reinforced, making it difficult for them to function in their role.

The majority of students were female, (12 out of 16) while the power structure at both the local and tribal council level is over-whelmingly male. The female is seen as the nurturer and thus there is great pressure -- from elders, from spiritual leaders -- to maintain the family unit at all cost. But in order to fulfill their duties, the social worker must insert herself into family situations and exert the "power" that comes with the responsibility. Of course, the role of the social worker itself is one of nurturing, which makes it more difficult to exert pressure on people.



One trainee eventually resigned because of the pressure put on her by her husband. She was gaining power, status and money and he could not understand or cope with these changes. His insecurity forced him to put pressure on her in the form of demands that she stay at home with the children like "other women". Despite the fact that he had no job and had a drinking problem, she was forced to give into his demands.

There is some conflict in the literature as to the amount of power Indian women have traditionally been accorded. For instance, Long, writing in 1791, found Indian women to be slaves to their husbands and reported that a common penalty for women who rejected that status was death. However, Dunning, in a study of northern Ojibwa in 1959, said that although the Ojibwa do not recognize a woman in a position of high status, she is able to validate her position on the grounds of personal achievement. And Zentner wrote in 1973 that although male dominance is variously emphasized and there is no evidence of a formalized masculine ideology in native cultures, neither has there been a tradition of chivalry.

At the opposite end of the argument is the 1913 report of the Geographic Board of Canada which wrote that under tribal conditions women held, in many cases, a place of management of tribal affairs.

In the author's experience, although there may be women elders, there are few women chiefs (in Manitoba, for instance, only one of 55 chiefs is female). And in the home, the husband, even when inadequate, exercises formal power in the family.

This contradiction in the culture leads to a situation of the trainees being told either implicitly or explicitly, "here's your job, but you don't have the power or the clout to carry it off," and adds yet more stress to the lives of the trainees.

#### E. PERSONAL STRESSES

Native social worker trainees have the same personal problems that exist in the rest of society. They have marital problems, problems with alcohol, normal child-rearing difficulties, problems with their health, etc.

Their family and relatives also run the normal gamut of problems of Indian people and, of course, this increases the stress for the workers who must deal with these problems professionally. These problems are not, of course, uniquely Indian. They are the problems associated with poverty, with oppression and with the clash of cultures.

But what exacerbates this stress for the trainees is the fact that they live their lives in the "goldfish bowl" which is the reserve. The expectation from the community reportedly is that the workers should be free of such

problems before they attempt to help anyone else with theirs. This becomes a form of "physician heal thyself" situation and workers find their own personal lives under fairly intense scrutiny and available for public comment. This pressure has forced more than one worker to abandon their position or to be removed from it.

These personal stresses are difficult to cope with for anyone, but with the expectation that because the workers are trained in this area, their own families and personal lives should be free of such conflict, the levels of stress increase.

For example, from time to time students would experience marital difficulties. When this happened, the entire community would be aware of the situation and would take sides. In two cases (which led to resignations from the program) trainees were subjected to great pressure and condemnation from their communities because they were involved in relationships with people from other communities.

Personal problems which do not usually surface for the urban social worker become an issue for the native worker on the reserve, with resulting interference including advice giving, confrontation and, sometimes, ostracization.

## NEW DIRECTIONS

"The heritage of the past is the seed that  
brings forth the harvest of the future"

-- Inscription on National Archives Building  
Washington, D.C.

The conundrum facing Canada's native people as well as governments at all levels in the designing and implementing of new child and family service delivery is to effect a program which recognizes the heritage of native people -- their culture, customs and traditions, which is relevant to current conditions and yet which is sufficiently close to mainstream thinking and policy in this area as to gain approval (and funding) from governments.

We cannot continue to allow the past to be used as an anvil to pound out the present and the future for the Indians, but neither can we continue to "experiment" with new program ideas, no matter how well intentioned, which turn out simply to reinforce the "failure syndrome", whereby program deficiencies result in native people being blamed when the latest new idea fizzles.

If Indians are to be successful in assuming responsibility for the delivery of child and family services for their own people, they must be provided with the necessary tools and the necessary support to do the job

properly. One of the most-important tools is the line worker who is the primary delivery agent. No amount of strength in the rest of the system can compensate sufficiently for weakness at the field level.

As we have seen, turnover among the child and family services workers is currently plaguing the program, and unless remedial action is prescribed, its future can only be said to be in jeopardy. We have identified stress as a major contributor to this situation. How that stress might be eliminated, or at least alleviated, is crucial to the future direction of the program.

Having identified major stress categories, this report turns to an examination of possible remedies for these stressors.

#### 1. Workload Requirements/ Environmental Stress

For some of the trainees, workloads and demands are extremely heavy, with workers having to be on call 24 hours a day with no respite. The work is there wherever the worker turns -- at social gatherings, walking around the reserve -- he or she is always aware of who's doing what. There is always someone who wants to talk about their personal problems or else are informing on someone else. The demands are generally crisis oriented, with workers having to respond often to violent situations, often with family or friends involved.

This constant exposure to the pain of others with little or no ability to control changing events caused great stress and burnout.

Realistically, there is very little that can be done to shield workers from this type of trauma. However, the worker could at least be better prepared for the tribulations ahead with some forewarning of what the job entails. One way this might be accomplished is through a pre-employment training course, perhaps of a week's duration, in which the worker might be sensitized to the expectations and requirements of the position.

This would be an initial attempt at ensuring that the new employee has some idea of what they are getting into, as well as beginning to identify supports, and introducing them to the concept of stress management and coping skills.

On-going stress management workshops would be exceedingly helpful for all line workers. There is still a sort of "macho" attitude towards stress within management in the social services field that says if you can't handle the pressures, you just don't measure up. When employees begin missing work, pressure is exerted on them to shape up, but the root causes of the problem are often ignored.

Workshops -- away from the work site -- could include relaxation techniques which are culturally relevant, as well as other cultural programs as identified by the staff. An

on-going concern expressed by line workers is that their child care system not duplicate the mainstream system and there must be sufficient time to explore this area and to try and determine how this might be achieved. For example, many workers question the concept of adoption and foster care and want to explore alternative ways of accomplishing the same ends. These workshops would provide staff with a chance to ventilate their problems and to participate in the planning process in an environment in which they know they are being heard.

Job descriptions which reflect the expectations of a child and family services worker should also be prepared in cooperation with the local child care committees, the child and family services agencies, the bands and the tribal councils so that all stakeholders might be aware of the duties and responsibilities not only of the workers, but also themselves.

Criteria or standards must be developed to assist in selecting the kind of person who can do the job. Until there is true autonomy and economic stability on reserves, jobs of this kind will continue to be given to friends and relatives. By developing standards, some of this might be alleviated and workers would know they were hired because they possessed some skills, not simply on the basis of nepotism.

Concomitantly with the development of job descriptions, there must be orientation and training for the employing bodies as well, to ensure they fully understand and appreciate not only their duties and responsibilities, but also that of the people they employ. If the Indian child and family services program is to continue to build upon the successes already achieved, greater care must be exercised to ensure that candidates have a reasonable opportunity to succeed in the program.

One obvious step is to establish a minimum educational requirement, which would be grade 12 or equivalent. This must be accompanied by English language proficiency. In order for trainees to function up to university-level expectations, these would be minimum requirements.

Hiring must either be restricted to candidates who possess those qualifications or, more reasonably, academic upgrading must form part of the training program or be a prerequisite to acceptance into the program.

Without those basic qualifications, trainees are exposed to levels of stress which practically guarantee failure. In addition, other trainees are held back in the classroom because of the special attention which must be given ill-equipped students.

In addition, these job descriptions must reflect the fact that trainees are expected to maintain an extremely



heavy workload, combining their academic requirements with full-fledged service delivery. Expectations of these trainees must be reduced at the local level and more extensive use of professionals should be employed during the training period to prevent overload and possible burnout.

The work-study aspect of the program under which workers are trained is a good one, but trainees are forced into situations far beyond their ability to cope and the fact that they are constantly on call is deleterious to their academic performance and places needless and unacceptable levels of stress on them.

Every one needs to be aware of the pitfalls of the worker trying to do too much. There must be a recognition of mandatory compensation time away from the workplace for workers who put in long hours.

On the other hand, there are reserves with small populations and fewer problems requiring the worker's attention, resulting in a much-lighter workload. This, too, has caused problems for workers who, seeing and hearing about the heavy duties of their colleagues on other reserves, feel they aren't doing their jobs properly and feel something is wrong with them. In one instance, a worker resigned because he felt he wasn't doing his job right. He was a good worker, but because he didn't have enough to do (i.e. lots of problems to work on) he felt

there was something wrong with him. The "system" didn't help him understand that a lot of resource development could have been done on his reserve to assist others.

Such cases point to inadequacies in the training program. The training is necessarily geared towards problem- and crisis-solving in its early stages, because that is where the real needs are for most reserves. Orientation sessions and training must have a prevention and community development thrust so that the workers may be more generalist in their approach on their reserves. Community development and prevention is often seen as a luxury and not the main focus for child and family service workers. It should be integrated on an equal basis with other training program components.

Workers must also be assisted to seek support from other sources. Because the mainstream system has been the model used for most of the reserves, it is hard to escape the specialist mentality and therefore many workers do not know how to work as a team with alcohol rehab workers, cultural workers and others on the reserve. Often when asked about specific cases, workers would respond, "I don't know...that's the alcohol worker's job." On-going training could assist these people to work together rather than in isolation from each other.

So, too, must the worker and the local child care

committee work in concert. Especially important is joint decision making involving difficult cases so that workers are not left on their own to make decisions which may be unpopular. Workers must have the backing and support of the committee and, at times, may even have to call on committee members for "hands-on" assistance in specific instances.

Two other ways in which the stress caused by the workload and the environment in which they work could be reduced would be through the provision of emergency services so that trainees (and other child and family workers) are not on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week and, instead, can refer people elsewhere, and the use of alternative resources in the case of clients who are related to the local worker. These resources would take some time to develop and, as they would likely have financial implications, would not be easily developed, but their need cannot be understated.

## 2. Multiple Accountability Stresses

Stress caused from within the child and family services system should be the easiest of the five major stressors in which change can be effected. That is not to say that it can be accomplished overnight. However, with proper education and with the use of the right tools, the impact of systemic stress can be greatly reduced.

The training of the stakeholders and the cooperative development of job descriptions referred to in the previous section will play an important role in this process. So, too, would be the development of a policy manual which, among other things, clearly defines roles and responsibilities, particularly in relation to decision-making practices. Arbitrary decision making by Indian child caring agencies and/or chief and councils undermines the function of the local child care committees. Training in the use of these tools and their understanding by all stakeholders will be of paramount importance to reduce stress in this area.

The development of consistent personnel policies across the system is also of great importance to ensure that both staff and others know what their rights and responsibilities are. If there is no consistency in this policy development, jealousy could arise among individual workers, causing dissatisfaction and unrest. The policy should also contain a clear statement which either accepts or rejects the employment of non-band members in social worker positions, for whatever reason. Non-band members who have been employed have in some instances not been accorded the support and respect which other workers receive in the community.

### 3. Cultural Stresses

The development of a culturally relevant child and family services program is probably the most important and the most difficult problem facing the program and is the area in which the most resistance may be expected. If the program is to be purely a reflection of mainstream policy, it is most surely destined to fail. However, given that these agencies are mandated under provincial child care acts and regulations, any change must walk a very fine line if it is to be acceptable to all stakeholders.

Some workers are already beginning to press for the development of an Indian Child Welfare Act, as well as a system of tribal courts. They are questioning the "carte blanche" adoption of the mainstream system in areas such as resource development and prevention.

Workers complain that mainstream guidelines and regulations for recruitment of foster homes are too restrictive on the reserve, placing too much emphasis on "material wealth". Similarly, the licensing of foster homes is said to be too formal and too restrictive to be of value on the reserve.

Among the suggestions for change which workers have made are: the use of band adoption of children, where the band would be responsible rather than an individual family; the creation of "safe homes" as opposed to group homes,

which would provide 24-hour care to a wide variety of children, and a formalized system of utilizing community elders for input and support to the program.

To effect positive change in the area of cultural relevance will take concerted, cooperative effort and probably a great deal of time. The latter will probably be the most contentious part of the equation, with the out-culture arguing that this is an evolutionary process which will require much patience, and Indian people responding that they have heard that before and demanding immediate change.

If the authorities are going to do more than provide lip service to the ideas of autonomy and self-determination for Indian people, they must play a pro-active role in this process, rather than simply a reactive one. And Indian people, too, must be prepared to invest a great deal of time and energy and thought towards the development of a child and family services program which is truly "their own".

## 5. Personal Stresses

There is not a lot that can be done to reduce the stress of living in the "goldfish bowl" that is the reserve. However, it is possible to ameliorate the effects of this type of stress.

Most important is the amount of support the worker receives from the committee, from elders, from the community

and from other sources. Workers must be able to have strong, supportive people they can turn to discuss their own problems.

In one case, a trainee had a teenager who had run away from home and was sniffing toxic substances. The trainee was reluctant to discuss the situation with anyone because she thought she should have her own house in better order. She finally talked to her field instructor, who encouraged to share her problem with her committee and solicit their support. She did, and was grateful to find they understood and were supportive.

Much effort must be expended to reinforce the concept that workers are not "perfect" -- both with the workers themselves and with the committees. It is imperative that there be understanding that everyone has personal problems and that does not disqualify or somehow diminish the ability of workers to perform their jobs. Within obvious limits, the Indian system is founded on self-help principles which acknowledge that those who have had problems/difficulties are best prepared to help others (eg. formerly abused child helping others; those who have lost children to the system working with those who face similar situations, etc.).

#### A Word on Training

Much of this section has dealt with the need for training in the non-institutional sense. However, it goes

without saying that if the native child care program is to succeed and to have credibility, trained staff must be in place.

There are several routes to education and to achieving this end, and the university is not the only one. The push for university education was to avoid the creation of "para-professionals", a trap which has marred many attempts at native education and employment. However, university training is not the only method whereby creation of a separate class of professionals may be avoided, and in fact, university training may not be adequate for many people.

However, having said that, staff should still be encouraged, where appropriate, to pursue social work degrees, whether at the bachelor or master level. To that end, an educational leave policy should be formulated for this purpose. The policy could include a "pay-back" feature, whereby the staff member would undertake to work a specific period of time for the child caring agency to extinguish their educational obligation. Such a policy would also avoid the pressure of staff having to be full time students and employee at the same time.

For those who do not have the academic qualifications for a university program or for whom the "culture shock" of the large institution would be self-defeating, the "distance-learning" model such as the University of Manitoba



is beginning to employ is more appropriate, providing instruction in the basic "how to's" of the job, while not over-burdening trainees with a theoretical perspective that is difficult to grasp without a basic foundation and allowing much more training on the job.

And, of course, as has already been mentioned many times, there is a continuing need for in-service training on an on-going basis, both for workers and for their child care committees. This training would cover a variety of topics, ranging from administration, personnel practices and service delivery to workshops on problem solving, communications skills, values clarification and cultural awareness.

## SUMMARY

Indian child and family services program delivery is still in its infancy in Manitoba. Certain problem areas have been identified, but that was naturally to be expected and in no way diminishes either the importance of the program or its accomplishments to date.

What is important is that the program continue to evolve in as rational and expeditious manner as possible until a truly Indian program is developed which meets the needs, wants and aspirations of native people.

The stakeholders in this process are many and it will take the combined efforts and energy of all of them if it is to ever reach a level which could be said to be successful. To a very great extent, Indian people themselves must take the lead role, as no amount of good will and benevolence on the side of the out-culture stakeholders can bridge the chasm which exists between the two cultures. Through sincere effort and commitment on behalf of all parties, a seed will be planted which will indeed bring forth a bountiful future for Indian people.

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