

INFORMATION SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT :

THE PROJECT OPIKIHAWIN EXPERIENCE

BY

ROBERT ALLEC

**A Practicum Report Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate
Studies of the University of Manitoba in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of**

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

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ABSTRACT

This practicum report introduces an information systems development framework which integrates participatory principles with an analytic component. The framework is then applied as an intervention in a Human Service agency to assist the agency in documenting the nature and scope of services. The agency, Project Opikihawin, is a post adoption service in Winnipeg, Manitoba for non-native families with adopted native children. The Project provides support to over 85 families including crisis counselling, family support groups, referral and advocacy. They also perform public education and outreach functions.

After applying the framework in the agency setting, the consultant explores the relationship between the variables "participation" and "user satisfaction" as well as the theory on "power shifts" as it relates to information systems. While more systematic investigation is recommended, the findings suggest the framework is a useful model for systems development in Human Services.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report discusses the process used in developing an Information System¹ in a small social service agency. The presentation is broken down into five major areas. The first part is a review of the literature focusing on information systems development theory. The review attempts to integrate the somewhat fragmented social service knowledge base on information systems with that of other disciplines in order to provide a framework which can be applied to agency settings.

The second part describes the agency setting --Project Opikihiwawin-- and the motivating factors which led up to the intervention of the information system (I.S.). The intervention was intended as a mechanism which would assist the agency to provide information² on its services. An assumption was that information would assist in demonstrating program effectiveness and provide data which would help the Project establish a source of funding to keep the operation going.

The third part describes the process used to develop the information system as well as the various issues faced at each stage of

1. **Information System (I.S.)** is a systematic, formal assemblage of components that performs data processing operations to a) meet legal and transactional data processing requirements, b) provide information to management for support of planning, controlling, and decision making activities, and c) provide a variety of reports, as required, to external constituents (Burch and Strater, 1974, p. 71). An information system may rely upon manual, automated or some combination of these methods (Kucie, Sorensen and Hanbery, 1983, p.63).

2. **Information** is a resource of processed data that reduces the uncertainty in an organization (Federico, p.64). Conversely, Burch and Strater (1974, p.23) define information as the aggregation or processing of data to provide knowledge or intelligence; they also describe information as the primary product of the information system (p.36).

development.

In an attempt to link methodology and theory, part four explores the concept of "participation" as a determinant of "user satisfaction" and the role of "power shifts" as it relates to information systems.

Part five is an analysis of the systems development framework and its application in this case as well as an evaluation of the student's role in the systems development process.

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Information Systems Development Theory

Ferdico (1985) argues that there is no universal theory which exists that is adequate for the proper development of an information system. In a review of trends on I.S. research from the mid 1950's to the mid 1980's, Bubenko (1986) observes that no generally accepted or workable theory on information systems development has evolved. On this issue, Langefors (1973) argues that there is a need not only for a formal theory suggesting procedures for analysis and design, but also for a theory which provides a context for the systematic analysis and presentation of existing empirical evidence. Despite the lack of a widely accepted model for systems development, Geiss (1981) suggests there are a number of essential considerations in the creation of any system regardless of which particular form the system takes, i.e., a human system, manual system, or an automated information system.

The human factor is one of those important considerations. Bower

and Siefert (1974) state that human factors include all those personality traits that consciously or unconsciously shape the actions and reactions of the people who must use the system as finally designed as well as those same traits reflected in the systems analyst which may affect his/her ability to achieve a successful design. There is a growing body of literature on the importance of the human factor in information systems development. Lucas (1982) says the starting point and main source of inspiration for this concept started with a series of experiments conducted in the 1920's at the Hawthorne Western Electric plant from which researchers concluded that human factors are extremely important in affecting the way in which people work. For example, in one of these experiments, the Bank Wiring Room Observation Study, researchers found that financial incentives of piecework in the wiring room did not urge workers to ever-increasing levels of production. Rather, group norms on productivity held its members in check and they produced at a steady two units per day. This discovery of the social dimension of organizations led to a rash of studies of "informal" organization. A number of these studies detailed how people in organizations cope with working conditions created by various structural and technological arrangements.

Likewise, human factors have an impact on the systems development. Hawgood, Land, and Mumford (1978) argue that it is gradually being recognized that systems design, like management in general, is primarily about people. They also make the point that many past failures of information systems can be directly attributed to a lack of knowledge of human needs and motivation on the part of technically oriented systems

analysts and designers. Bower and Siefert (1974) apply this knowledge by discussing a number of important human factors that should be considered by the systems consultant in developing the system. Examples of human factors which they say apply to the three levels of personnel --top management, middle management and non-supervisory employees --are as follows:

Top management issues

Resistance to organizational change- Some managers want to maintain the status quo and are simply not prepared to make substantial changes in the organization or in methods of operation. For example, an executive may feel he/she holds their present position because of some procedure or method he/she introduced many years ago and therefore would not welcome any change.

Individual personalities- One executive may be what is referred to as a detail person who likes to have a hand in designing procedures. Another may be an idea person interested only in end objectives.

Management climate- One aspect of management climate is the extent to which authority has been delegated to lower levels. If all decisions have traditionally been made from above, the analyst is likely to find managers and employees alike hesitant to make suggestions and express opinions.

Middle management issues

Pressure during system change- During the entire system design period, middle management's work load will be increased e.g., learning new procedures, being interviewed and attending meetings. To a large

extent these factors also apply to non-supervisory employees.

Fears- Middle managers will be anxious about possible decreases in employment resulting from the new system and the effect on them. Also, managers may be worried about their ability to learn new techniques and keep ahead of their subordinates.

Non-supervisory employee issues

Concern for visible benefits- Desire to produce a visible product as evidence of work accomplished.

Social needs- The importance of status in the eyes of co-workers, friends and family; the social need for working in groups.

Fear of change- The tendency for non-supervisory employees to be resistant to the new, strange and unknown.

Consistent with the above indication that "change" is an issue at all three levels within the organization, Williams (1974) suggests that people are resistant to change because it upsets their established patterns of behaviour so that change is often seen as a threat to their security. At the systems concept level, Woodson (1981) argues that one of the principle considerations for the consultant is determining what human constraints will impact on the system design and eventual performance, and then deciding how to ensure that humans will not become the weak link in the system. While a vast amount of the literature concentrates on the technical aspects of systems development, the following discussion suggests "participation" as the key to dealing effectively with such human factors.

Authors, teachers, enlightened managers and consultants all have

stressed the necessity of participation in all phases of information systems -- planning, design, implementation, and maintenance (Ferdico, 1985). Through a case study, Henshall and Mumford (1979) emphasize the need for user involvement at all levels within the organization and demonstrate the benefits of a participative approach to systems design. Lucas (1976) describes the benefits of the approach as follows. First, participation helps the user retain some control over data processing. Secondly, if the user has helped design the procedures for a system, he or she should understand them better and be prepared to use the system. If an individual or work group has personally invested in a new system, the system's success provides ego rewards. If individuals participate, they make changes consistent with their own social systems. Participation also creates familiarity with the system, and thus contributes to training as well as better preparation for the actual implementation. Finally, because of participation, more salient features are included in a new system and it should provide more benefits for users. To make the point on the value of participation, Weissman (1984) states that an information system succeeds or fails depending on staff interest and commitment to it. The approach stems from the belief that participation is necessary for systems success. Hawgood, Land and Mumford (1978) suggest this belief is based first on the value position that people affected by new technical systems should have a right to influence the design of these systems. Secondly, they state the approach is based on the practical proposition that future users of the system will possess a detailed knowledge of both the efficiency requirements of the situations in which they work and their own job

satisfaction needs.

Schoech, Schkade, and Mayers (1981) stress the need for ongoing and meaningful communication and involvement of different levels of staff in the systems development process because of the ultimate dependence of the system on its users. On the same theme, Bennet and Trute (1983) state that an information system must be supported by a wide range of agency personnel and that it is critical that all persons directly affected by the system understand its basic objectives from their perspective.

Participation of management level personnel in systems development is a prerequisite for success. Swanson (1985) notes that lack of managerial involvement and appreciation are partly responsible for failures in the implementation of information systems. On the other hand, Bower and Sefert (1974) state that if top management has a genuine desire to solve any systems problem discovered to exist, it is likely that the consultant will also find the desire and courage to make the changes necessary to implement the solution. Schoech, Schake, and Mayers (1981) argue that top managers must show commitment and involvement in the preparation and planning of information systems and must convey to the workers that the information system is not just "another work project". The involvement and commitment of top decision makers throughout the several years needed to design, implement, debug, and reap the benefits of the system are seen by many as the key to a successful system (Shoech, 1985; Trute, Tefft and Scuse, 1985). Top decision makers must be willing to do the extra work required e.g., give moral support, attend relevant meetings, keep communication channels open, and

coordinate the conflicting interests (Schoech, 1985).

If the system is to work, the participation of line staff in system development is also very important. In order for front-line staff to have continued commitment to the system Trute, Tefft and Scuse (1985) argue that the system must provide them with some "pay-offs". With similar sensitivity Weissman (1984) states that consideration must be given to the additional workload which results from an information system. Therefore, serious attention must be given to the "time factor" in the data-gathering process and data must not be collected at a level of accuracy beyond what is needed. Furthermore, Trute, Tefft and Scuse (1985) state there is a need for regular feedback to front-line workers which demonstrates the utility of the information system.

Another factor in the systems development process is that of the analyst or consultant who plans and designs systems (Davis, 1983). Ciborra, Gasbarri and Maggiolini (1978) describe the consultant's work in systems development as a dialectical process of abstraction, model building and action. However, because the objective of systems development is change, Hawgood, Land and Mumford (1978) suggest a new I.S. is likely to be a threat to people unless the different groups associated with the change believe they are participants in the change process. To minimize resistance to the system, Goodfriend (1979) suggests user involvement in each step as well as the consultant consistently reminding users that it is "their system". Bower and Sefert (1974) suggest one of the consultant's best opportunities to obtain supervisory cooperation and reduce fear is during the analysis phase of the study through interviews with middle management and employees.

Finally, the consultant should keep in mind that information systems are anything but static. Since no single information system designed at a particular point in time will meet the needs of everyone involved in the system for long periods of time, Lequin (1982) recommends that systems be constructed so that they can be changed. She asserts that short-term additions and deletions can make the system more useful.

The preceding discussion on human constraints and issues suggests a systems development approach based on human considerations and objectives. Woodson (1981) states that the principle objectives should be to design a system that is "adapted" to humans as opposed to creating a system in which humans have to do all the adapting. He goes on to say that the system should not subject the human to extreme physical or mental stress but that it should provide personal satisfaction for the user in terms of both successful operation and pride of ownership. In terms of an approach, writers on the participative model of systems development such as Trute, Tefft and Scuse (1985); Schoech (1985); Holland (1977); Schoech, Schkade, and Mayers (1984) offer similar strategies for effective systems development. The first step involves determining the level of organizational support for the initiative; the second step is the analysis of the existing I.S.; and thirdly, strategic planning which involves the task of determining agency information needs (Holland, 1977; Sorenson and Elpers, 1978). The specification of data needs is accomplished by the host agency through the articulation of their perceived requirements for service information (Trute, Tefft and Scuse, 1985). Finally, systems design, implementation and maintenance of the system is accomplished through consultation between the system

planners and agency staff. An assumption of the participative approach is that the process will result in a system which meets agency needs and a system which is relevant to agency functioning.

2.2 A Framework for Systems Development

Lucus (1982) describes a "framework" as a conceptual model³ that helps us understand and communicate about information systems. He argues that although there is no one theory on information systems, a designer of such a system needs a conceptual model. In a paper called "Theoretical Assumptions and Research Methodology Selection" presented at a research colloquium on information systems at Harvard University, Weick (1985) states that several taxonomies of organization theory reveal options to information systems research, but that the most useful is the six theoretical perspectives outlined by Kling. To help explain these six perspectives Kling (1980b) has developed two broad categories -- systems rationalism and segmented institutionalism-- which give the general orientations and themes of the various perspectives. They are summarized as follows:

System Rationalist perspectives assume consensus on goals relevant to the use of information systems, view efficiency as a predominant value, focus attention on the user more than on the context in which the user operates, assume a top-down view of change and implementation, and treat the formal authority structure as an accurate map of the way

³ A model is an imitation or abstraction from reality that serves the purpose of ordering and simplifying our view of the reality while still representing its essential characteristics (Nachmias, p.47).

activities are carried out (Weick, 1985). System rationalism is a collection of approaches borrowed from management science, managerial rationalism and the systems approach (Kling, 1980b).

The three perspectives that fit into the broad category of system rationalism are listed below in Figure 1 followed by the distinctive features of each perspective as described by Kling (1980a).

Figure 1

SYSTEM RATIONALISM
Rational perspective Structural perspective Human Relations perspective

1)Rational perspective

-emphasis on the formal ends which information technologies are supposed to serve.

-emphasis on economic payoffs of information systems, explaining their value, successes and failures by the ways the applications help increase the information processing capacity of the social actors and thereby help them satisfy their espoused goals.

2)Structural perspective

-share with rational analysts an emphasis upon the formal tasks claimed to be important by the most credible officials in an organization.

-concerned with the ways in which "structural properties" of organization such as size, complexity and centralization are influenced by information systems.

3)Human Relations perspective

-concerned that the people using an I.S. are not constricted by its use.

-focuses upon the way in which different I.S. arrangements alter the

quality of working life of participants.

-concerns with job satisfaction, motivation and alienation are focal for human relations analysts.

Segmented Institutional perspectives assume that conflict is more common than consensus, that definitions of the situation are multiple, that goals are diverse, that the implementation is affected by vested interests and power, that relevant social forms consist of much more than task groups, and that technology can take on a variety of meanings (Weick, 1985).

The three perspectives that fit into the broad category of segmented institutionalism are listed below in Figure 2 followed by the distinctive features of each perspective as described by Kling (1980a).

Figure 2

SEGMENTED INSTITUTIONALISM
Interactionist perspective Organizational perspective Class politics perspective

1) Interactionist perspective

-view information technologies as objects that can take on rich social meaning for people who deal with them.

-concerned with the ways people define their social situations, and the ways in which they create strategies of action in line with their perceptions and intentions.

2) Organizational politics perspective

- select the power dimensions of social life for careful scrutiny.
- interested in the extent to which users of information technology increase their control over the activities of other social actors.

3) Class politics perspective

- uses Marxism as a point of departure.
- examines how the use of information technology in organizations reinforces existing class relationships.

2.2.1 Comparison of the Human Relations and Organizational Politics perspectives

The six perspectives described above provide different terms or "storylines" with which to understand how people live and work with information systems (Kling, 1980a). Two perspectives which have different orientations but which offer an opportunity for developing a useful information systems development framework are the **Human Relations** and **Organizational Politics** perspectives. As discussed in more detail later, the advantage of the human relations perspective is its emphasis on the human factor. This focus provides managers with studies informing them how best to organize so that their workers will be both happy and productive (Kling 1980a). On the other hand, the advantage of the organizational politics perspective is that it is much more informative for understanding the effects of the information system on the organization (Kling, 1980b). Prior to discussing the framework, the two

perspectives are compared along several dimensions to establish their differences in assumptions, values, and theory which form the basis for competing arguments on information systems:

1) Conflict -Human relations analysts assume a consensus on important goals and values and therefore typically ignore social conflicts by defining problems as if there were a commonly agreed upon objective function whose optimization is collectively valued (Kling, 1980b). Organizational politics analysts assume that intergroup conflict is as likely as co-operation; they view social life as a continual contest for power by groups with conflicting interests and view information technology as an instrument turned toward aggrandizing power (Kling, 1980b).

2) Dominant values -Human relations analysts place efficiency, whether economic or organizational, as the predominant value. Political analysts on the other hand, identify as dominant values the sovereignty of individuals and groups over critical aspects of their lives, the integrity of individuals, and social equity; economic or organizational efficiency is subservient to these values (Kling 1980b).

3) Systems specifications -The human relations perspective argues that if system designers attend to the "humanistic needs" of users, they will mitigate users' uncertainties and keep them satisfied when using an information system. Organizational politics analysts view the shifting conflicts from a variety of distinct interests as an intrinsic part of system specification dynamics (Kling 1980a).

4) System design and implementation -Human relations analysts continually emphasize the importance of user participation in system

design as the key to I.S. success (Lucus, 1982). Organizational politics analysts would attend to how the design and implementation activity is operationally defined by different actors, the constraints on their involvement and the placements of value on managerial versus technical objectives as characterizing features of the social process of system design and implementation (Kling, 1980a).

5) Evaluation of system -Human relations analysts often assume that optimal system utilization is the important user need. On the other hand, organizational politics analyst's might argue that specialists' or managers' use of system performance measurements can serve to legitimate attempts on their part to establish or reconfigure information technology patterns according to their desires (Kling, 1980a).

6) Power -The human relations perspective emphasizes power of the formal authority in organizational life as something that is fixed. (Kling, 1980b). Organizational politics analysts suggest that data custodians will gain power relative to other staff, and that full-time administrators will gain power relative to elected officials (Kling, 1980a).

As the preceding comparison indicates, the human relations model offers advantages over the organizational politics model and vice-versa; this situation provides justification for combining elements of both perspectives into a useful framework.

2.2.2 Rationale for the Framework

The rationale for combining elements of two perspectives is to maximize their complementary strengths into an integrated systems

development approach. As discussed earlier, the advantage of the human relations perspective is that it is primarily concerned that people using information systems are not constricted by its use. In describing the human relations perspective, Kling (1980b) states that the theory promotes smooth interaction between users who specify and specialists who develop the system as being essential for achieving a successful information system. As such, various writers in the Social Work profession promote user participation as the solution to developing useful information systems. Trute, Tefft and Scuse (1985) who have written one of the few comprehensive books on I.S. in human services also promote the human relations approach. They argue that, given the unique characteristics of human services, a human relations perspective becomes fundamental to information system construction. These authors also make the point that the strength of the perspective is its recognition of the necessity of ensuring that, as well as being technically sound, the I.S. must be understood, accepted and of utility to those who are expected to maintain and employ them. Given the participatory power of the human relations model, its principles will form the process component of the proposed systems development framework.

Kling (1980a) argues that the human relations model provides little insight into other aspects of information systems in organizational life, for example, the alterations of power between users and others. Organizational politics analysts, on the other hand, keep people sharply in focus and are usually less biased toward the interests of managers than are human relations analysts. Overall, the advantage of the organizational politics perspective is that it provides more

analytical bite under a wider variety of circumstances (Kling, 1980). In empirical inquiries, a political analyst would examine the orientations and interests of a wide array of participants in the I.S milieu, rather than assume they were all relatively homogeneous. Given the strength of the organizational politics perspective, an analytic component is integrated into the systems development framework. As the systems development process evolves, the utility of the analytic component will be to examine the interplay between the various interests involved.

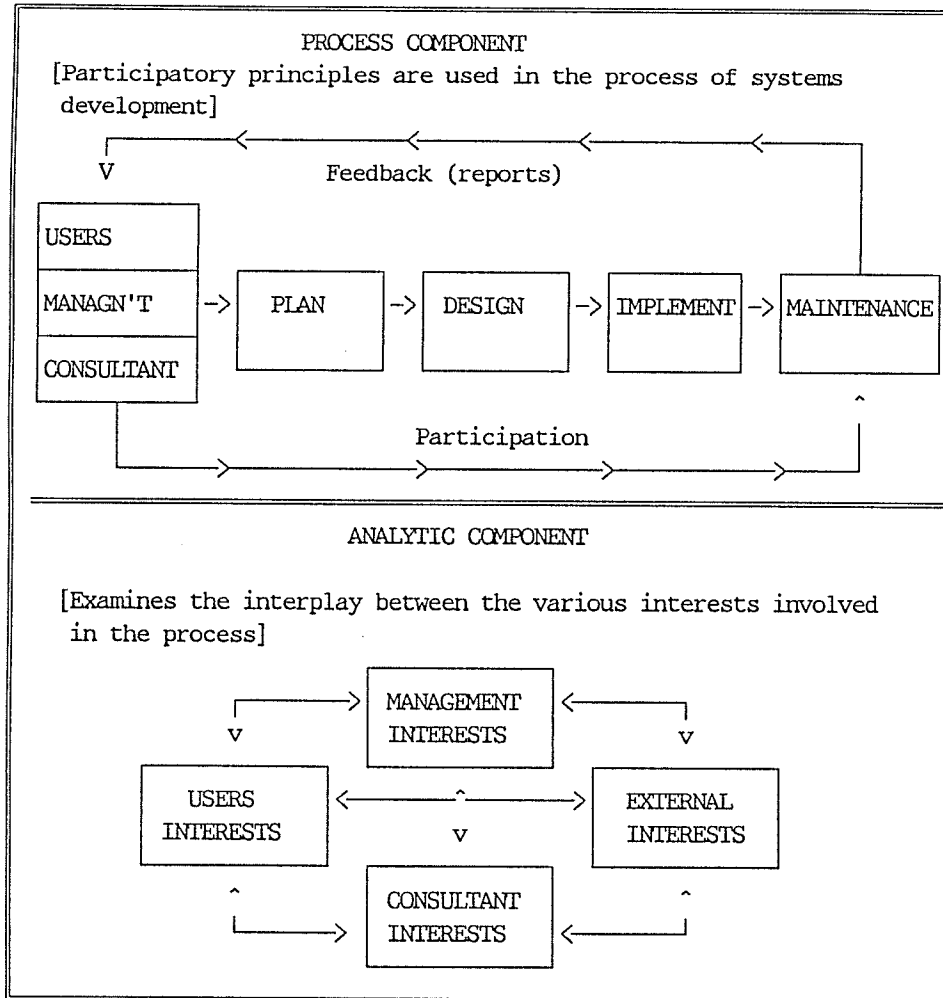
2.2.3 The Framework

The organizing concepts discussed above have been synthesized into Figure 3 which is a conceptual model of the framework. At first glance, the physical appearance of the diagram gives the impression of two distinct components working in isolation from one another. The intention is to the contrary. The two components are integrated, work hand-in-hand and, in a sense, operate in a dialectical manner. In using this framework the analyst has to consider, on one hand, the human factors and interests of the social actors involved in the process; and, at the same time, be sensitive to how the dynamics of interests and human factors affect the information system or vice versa. While all this activity is happening, the challenge for the consultant is to proceed in developing the system through the application of participatory principles. To maximize utility of the framework, an attempt should be made to consider the needs of the interest groups first. The analyst then proceeds with the system development process while attempting to satisfy the different interest groups in terms of the issues they face. The application of

this framework to a specific agency situation is discussed in the following section.

FIGURE 3

FRAMEWORK FOR SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT AND ANALYSIS



3. PRACTICUM SETTING AND INTERVENTION

3.1 Agency Setting and Problem

Project Opikihiwawin is a post adoption service in Winnipeg for non-native families with adopted native children. OPIKIHAWIN is a Cree

word meaning "the act of raising up or helping to grow". The name is reflective of agency activities. The project currently provides support to approximately 85 families under the direction of a Co-ordinator. Some of the services include counselling, referral, family support groups, public education, outreach and advocacy. The project benefits from the involvement of parent volunteers who offer support to other families in similar circumstances. In terms of organization of the Project, direction is provided through a Board of Directors consisting of parents, members from the native community, one person from the Board of the Ministry with Native People and a part-time Project Co-ordinator, Ms. Verna McKay. A part-time office assistant provides additional support to the Project. Voluntary support by parents is provided in some Project activities. The Project Co-ordinator performs the day to day work of the organization and, given the small size of the agency, her activities vary. For example, she is involved in administration, counselling, co-ordinating group activities as well as providing information workshops for outside groups such as schools and social agencies.

Material written on Project Opikihiwawin indicates that the organization has been experiencing difficulty in establishing an ongoing funding source for the services it provides (Proposal dated March 24, 1987). A major contributing factor which appears to account for the difficulty of the Project in establishing itself is the non-traditional nature of the program and the fact that it does not fit in the mainstream child and family service system. Material written on the project and interviews with persons involved with the agency indicate that traditional funding sources recognize the program as one that is filling

gaps in the spectrum of child and family services. But, lack of empirical evidence of the Project's effectiveness puts the program at a disadvantage in being recognized as a legitimate service worthy of funding as an extension of the established child and family service system. This situation is symptomatic of the times for human services. Elkin (1985) states that resource providers and others with the authority to require accountability are moving increasingly towards concern for efficiency and effectiveness.

Project Opikihiwawin did not have formal documentation which quantifies the nature and extent of services provided by the Project to their member families and the public-at-large. To address this issue, the agency wanted to improve its documentation of agency activities. The following section discusses the intervention set up to help the organization realize this goal.

3.2 Intervention Methodology

Prior to my involvement in the summer of 1987, Project Opikihiwawin [through consultation with the Child and Family Services Research Group at the University of Manitoba] had determined the need for an intervention which would enable the organization to document its activities.

As a student looking for practicum experience, I agreed to work on the project and proceeded to submit a proposal based on the systems development framework discussed earlier. Figure 4 is a critical path of the systems development strategy approved as part of the proposal.

FIGURE 4

CRITICAL PATH OF SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Task	Month					
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
Analysis of Existing system						
Design						
Implementation						
Data collection and review						

As discussed earlier, the participatory principles from the human relations perspective were to serve as the overall direction to the consultant for the process of systems development. The analytical strengths of the organizational politics perspective were to be used to examine the interplay between the various actors involved in the process.

The intervention approach is also consistent with some aspects of program evaluation theory. A review of some of the program evaluation literature suggests that evaluators, like information system consultants, are faced with the problem of designing processes which result in useful end-products. To deal with this issue, Patton (1982) recommends a collaborative approach in which the evaluator works directly and in partnership with the stakeholders (people who have a stake in the outcome of the evaluation). The collaborative process is one of shared decision making about important aspects of the evaluation such as determining key

evaluation questions, designing the evaluation study, interpreting results and applying findings.

The role of the evaluator using the collaborative approach and that of the I.S. consultant using the participative approach are similar in many ways. Patton (1982) states that the evaluator applying the "user-focused" evaluation approach plays a consultative role vis-a-vis the people who have primary responsibility for utilization and application of findings. Also, the role of the evaluator is described by Patton (1982) as "active-reactive-adaptive" in facilitating an evaluation process that addresses the concerns, interests, questions, and information needs of a group of stakeholders. The preceding discussion suggests that, although the jargon used to describe the role of the evaluator is different than used to describe the I.S. model being explored, the principles are much the same.

Finally, the literature in these two disciplines suggests that program evaluation and information systems are complementary. In providing rationale for program monitoring, Rossi and Freeman (1982) suggest it is usually needed for accountability purposes and to seek information to the question, "Who is getting what and how?". These are the basic questions which the I.S. intervention would attempt to address.

3.3 Objectives of Intervention

The objective of the intervention was to design and implement an information system to be used by staff at Project Opikihiwawin for monitoring services provided by the agency. The system was intended to be used as a tool to identify and quantify services provided.

A secondary aim of the intervention was to analyze data collected for three months after the implementation phase to determine who was being served and the type and level of service delivered by staff. As a side benefit, it was assumed the system would improve the evaluability of the project for subsequent impact assessments.

Theoretical questions which the systems development experience would explore are discussed in the following section.

3.4 Theoretical Questions

Human relations theory suggests that the success of an I.S. is directly related to user participation. The hypothesis is this: the higher the level of participation in systems development, the higher the degree of user satisfaction. To test the theory, a question to be explored after the implementation phase is **-Did the process of user participation have an impact on user satisfaction?** Also, theory suggests that the higher the level of participation, the more useful the information system will be. As such the question is **-Did the process of user participation have an impact on the usefulness of the system?**

The organizational politics perspective does not address user satisfaction specifically. The theory suggests that the systems development process is to a large degree affected by the dynamics of the "shifting power" between the actors involved in the I.S. milieu. Weber (1949) defines power as the ability to influence the actions of another. But, for the purposes of this practicum, "power" will be used to refer to the ability of an actor to have his/her interests met. The concept is important to the analysis since the different actors may have conflicting

or divergent interests which impact on the operation of the organization. This approach follows Saunders' (1979, 1981) direction in objectively trying to determine what outcomes would most benefit each actor. The outcomes are viewed as "ideals" for each actor. These ideals are then compared with the actual effects of the introduction of the information system. When an actor's ideal and the actual outcome match relatively closely, that actor is said to have gained power. When the ideal and actual are relatively dissimilar, that actor is said to have lost power.

One aspect of power which the I.S. literature examines is "intra-organizational" power shifts i.e., the interplay between the various actors such as supervisors, technicians and support staff within the organization. Downs (1967) found that the final payoff which results from information technology goes to management. It is assumed that since Project Opikihiwawin is such a small organization (two staff members), power shifts within the organization are not as relevant to the analysis as they would be if it were a traditional large organization. Therefore, instead of "intra-organization" power shifts, the major focus will be on "inter-organizational" power shifts i.e., power shifts between organizations. The rationale follows.

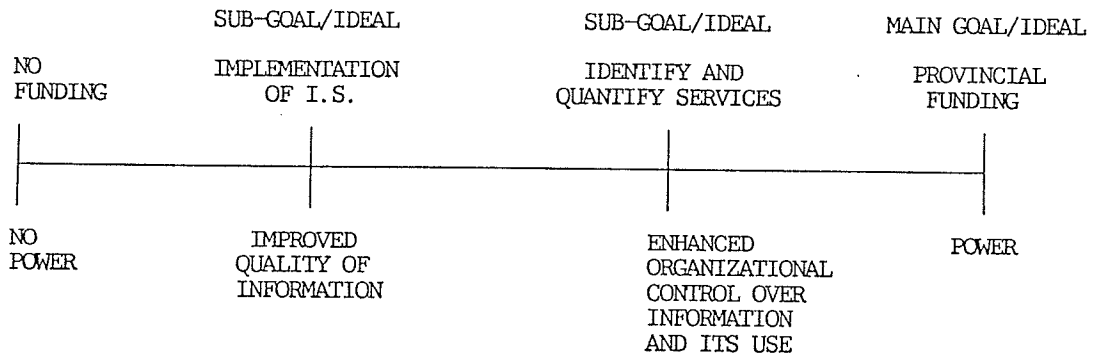
In the case of Project Opikihiwawin, the ideal of management [one organization] is to obtain funding from the province [the other organization]. Presently Project Opikihiwawin has minimal power as compared to the funder. But, according to organizational politics theory, the introduction of the information system could alter the power. For example, the introduction of the system may result in improved quality of information, thereby increasing the power of Project

Opikihiwawin in negotiations. This would be one step towards the major ideal of provincial funding. As such, the question is: **Does the organization perceive its power differently as a result of the information system?**

The measure of power as used in this framework is dependent on success in accomplishing an ideal or objective. This is problematic when the ideal is so bold that there is a limited chance of success. In the Project's case, the ideal of provincial funding is a giant step and therefore not a useful measure of power. The measure is not sensitive to incremental or gradual "power shifts" in the transition from the position of no power [i.e., no funding] to the position of power [i.e., the point at which funding is provided by the province to the project]. It is more appropriate to break major ideals into segments or sub-goals of the main ideal which can then be measured by the same criteria of success. For example, in the case of Project Opikihiwawin, a sub goal or ideal is to implement an I.S. to identify and quantify services provided. Therefore one aspect of power shifts which we will want to examine is the outcome of the information system in terms of actual implementation. Once the I.S. has been implemented, an argument can be made that the outcome matches relatively closely to the ideal of improved quality of information and therefore the actor is said to have gained power. Another aspect of power which could be affected through the I.S. is **enhanced organizational control over information and its use** through achieving the goal of identifying and quantifying services provided by the agency. The preceding discussion suggests that power is not static. Rather, as figure 5 indicates, power is a dynamic process of "power

shifts" along a continuum.

Figure 5



4. THE PRACTICUM EXPERIENCE

The systems development experience at Project Opikihiwawin is discussed in this section. The discussion elaborates on the various phases and issues faced during the systems development process.

4.1 Assessment of Preparedness and Feasibility

The first step is to determine if the agency has the motivation, capacity and opportunity to proceed (Shoeh, Schkade and Mayers, 1981, p.83).

From the start, the project had the main ingredient for success -- organizational commitment and support for the initiative. The Co-ordinator of the agency participated in the initial planning stages and was a member on my practicum committee which was involved in the approval of the terms of reference for the systems development project. Also, the board of the agency was supportive of the initiative and open to discuss the status of the initiative and to provide feedback on drafts of the system at various stages of development. The commitment of Project

Opikihiwawin staff and management to the proposed change in the system helped get the project through the various phases of development.

4.2 Analysis of Existing System and Strategic Planning

Before initiating any new plans for an information system, it is important for the consultant to become intimately familiar with the workplace setting of the host agency (Trute, Tefft and Scuse, 1985, p.53).

The analysis of the existing system and planning a new one was realized through a number of interviews with the project Co-ordinator and review of agency documents and records. What follows is a discussion on the outcome of the various steps involved in the analysis.

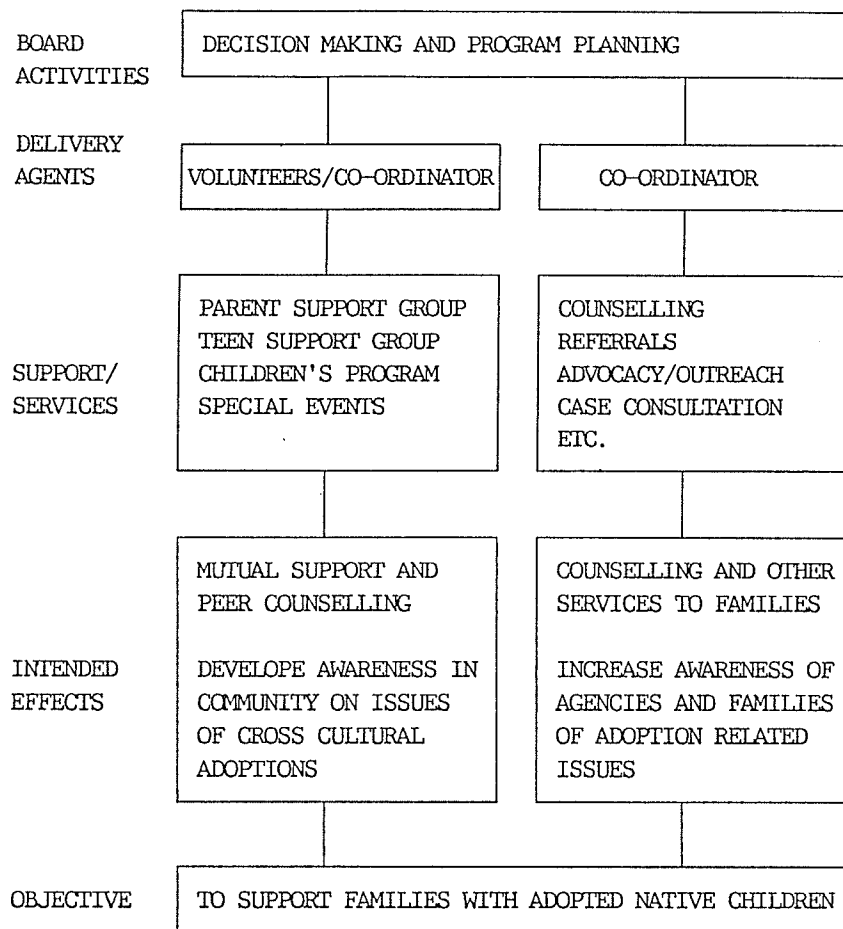
A) Inventory of services, programs and their objectives

As a first step in the construction of a new information system, it is necessary to be well aware of the responsibilities and roles of staff in the agency. Also, an inventory should be prepared of all services delivered by the host agency that will ultimately come under the aegis of the new information system (Trute, Tefft and Scuse, 1985).

Agency documents did include service definitions but, they were fragmented and incomplete. To deal with this and the need to get to know the agency, the consultant simultaneously developed service definitions and a program logic diagram showing the link between objectives of the organization, the services the agency provides and roles of the various actors within the organization. After a few interviews, the consultant presented a draft of the program logic diagram and service definitions to the Co-ordinator for discussion. This material was re-drafted until both the Co-ordinator and consultant felt satisfied that the material represented what the agency did. The service definitions have been incorporated into the I.S. Manual (appendix C) and the program logic

diagram is illustrated in Figure 6.

FIGURE 6 -Program Logic Diagram



Overall, the process of drafting service definitions and the program logic diagram and then reviewing them with the agency co-ordinator proved to be a useful process to understand the agency. Also, the material provided a good foundation for determining data needs i.e., having a diagram showing the link between services and the objective of these services gave ideas on data which the I.S. should capture since ultimately the data would be used to measure impacts of the program.

B) Review of existing information storage practices and documents

The logic of the existing record keeping system of the host agency should be carefully reviewed (Trute, Tefft and Scuse, 1980, p.57).

A review of the existing system indicated that the agency did have a good record of its general activities through sources such as board minutes, newsletters and activity files. But, it did not have formal documentation which quantified the nature and extent of services provided by the Project to their member families and the public-at-large.

The review of the existing information system indicated that the following type of information was stored:

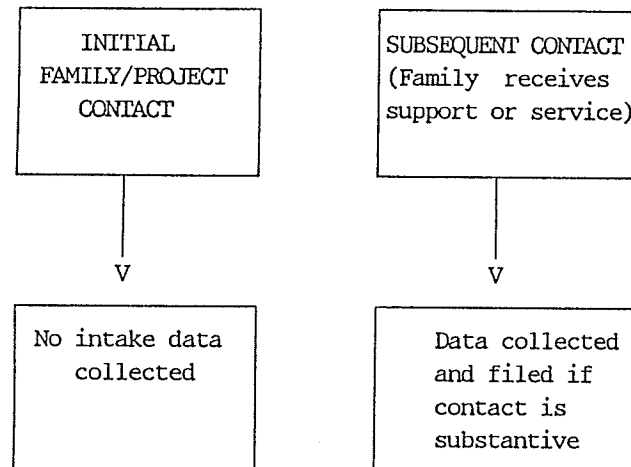
- 1) Individual files on the families that received services such as counselling. Files contained notes and in some cases, family history.
- 2) General files containing cultural and educational material for reference.
- 3) Files on each planned activity e.g trips and support groups.
- 4) Minutes of board meetings.
- 5) Project Opikihiwawin newsletters which included descriptions of project events.

Another observation was that the manner in which the agency treated referrals and intake was informal and as such, not recorded. Initially, the assumption of the consultant was that the organization wished to retain this informality. This assumption was tested and confirmed at various times during meetings with the agency co-ordinator and board members. The implication was a challenge to design an information system which met the information needs of the agency without changing the informal manner in which the agency dealt with its

clientele.

Figure 7 is a simplified diagram of existing record keeping for services provided to families and individuals.

FIGURE 7- Diagram of Existing Record Keeping



D) Identify basic purposes and intended uses of the system
It is critical that the objectives of the information system be clear and made known to all concerned (Trute, Tefft and Scuse, 1985, p.43).

In interviewing the Co-ordinator about priority data needs, she indicated a need to document what the project was doing to present to potential funders. This was reinforced by the board in subsequent meetings. In addition, according to the Sept-Nov. 1987 Project Opikihiwawin newsletter, the ultimate goal of the board is to acquire funding for the Project from the provincial government. The board believes that the financial responsibility for support of post-adoption services lies with those who have ultimate responsibility for placing children in adoption homes --the provincial government, through the department of community services. As such, one basic purpose of the

system was to identify and quantify the services provided by the agency for funding purposes.

Also, the agency Co-ordinator stated she would like to determine the effectiveness of the Project. There are questions such as whether families that participate in the program are better off than those that do not. Therefore, another objective of the system was to set up an I.S which would be useful for addressing evaluation questions.

E) Determine priority data needs

The most fundamental task in designing an information system is determination of agency information needs (Holland, 1977, p.21).

Through interviews with the users of the system it was determined that the following were the priority data needs:

- 1) Identify who receives services from the agency
- 2) The number of people in crisis that contact the agency
- 3) Why people contact the agency
- 4) What are the needs of the families who contact the agency

As will be discussed later, determination of priority data needs was never finalized until the latter part of the design phase.

4.2 Design of Data Collection Instruments

Data collection instruments should be designed with the user in mind; methods of collection must be uncomplicated and form design should be simple though ensuring the collection of all necessary data (Hansen, Johnson and Williams, 1972, p.140).

Prior to starting the actual process of drafting forms the actors agreed that the "utilitarian principle" should prevail i.e., information

should be useful rather than just interesting. This forced the consultant and agency co-ordinator to keep re-examining the relevance of questions being asked on the various forms. Through numerous meetings and telephone conversations with agency staff and practicum advisor in October and November, the contents of the "mock" forms were re-drafted a number of times prior to being tested. Finally, in early December, the board was presented a draft manual which included the forms, recording procedures and service definitions (See Appendix C for final version). The board suggested minor revisions and agreed to proceed with the system. Forms were officially implemented on December 7, 1987 and reviewed with the staff after a two week testing period. During the testing period, one problem emerged involving the question of where to record the outreach activity of Newsletter. It was resolved by modifying the Services to Community activity form.

Overall, the consultant found the process of designing, reviewing, and modifying forms an excellent approach for designing data collection instruments as well as confirming priority data needs. In addition, the process of staff and board involvement appeared to serve as a catalyst for organizational control over the information system and its use.

4.3 Implementation

Two major issues of system implementation are conversion⁴ and training (Trute, Tefft and Scuse, 1985, p.88).

Conversion

Factors which impacted on conversion to the new I.S. were as

⁴ Conversion is the process of moving from the old system to the new system (Shoech, Schkade and Mayers p.84).

follows:

Size of Agency: The fact that Project Opikihiwawin has only two staff made the conversion rather simple and inexpensive in terms of staff time and energy. Also, the few people involved made it easy to get a consensus of the players within the organization on a strategy for implementation.

Volume and Complexity of Service: While the services provided by the agency are varied and non-traditional, the volume [due more to number of staff than need for service] is fairly low. This helped to simplify the conversion in a number of areas; for example, developing a master list and codes of member families.

Number of Changes Introduced: Introduction of the I.S resulted in no major changes such as staffing or organizational structure. The only major change was that staff would now have to complete forms to document services provided.

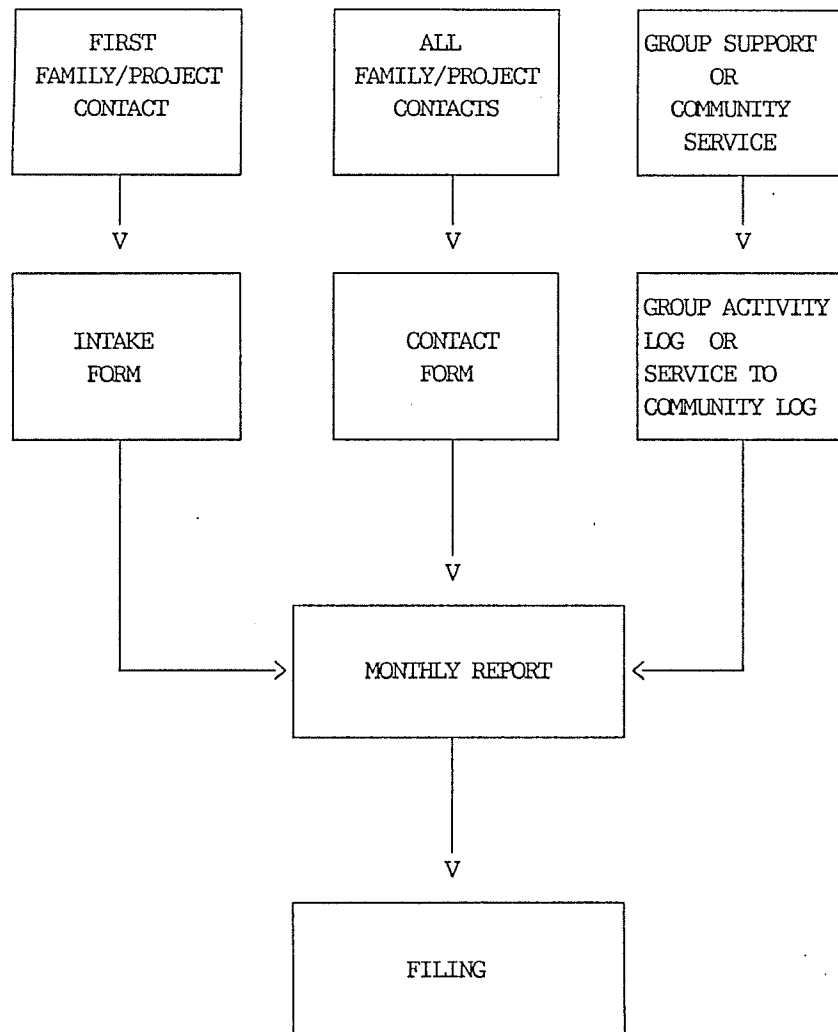
Adequacy of Existing System: Management (Board and Co-ordinator) indicated that the existing system did not meet their needs. This factor alone seemed a great impetus for user involvement in all stages of systems development.

Data Collection Protocols

Figure 8 is a simplified diagram of the logic of the new system

implemented to collect data on services provided to families, individuals, groups and to the community.

FIGURE 8- Logic of New Information System



Training

Where the agency has been closely involved in the design of its own system, disagreements about basic data collection issues are less likely to surface. Forms will be understood and taken seriously rather than being seen as foreign and resisted (Trute, Tefft and Scuse, 1985, P.92).

Training was minimal in this case because of the substantial input staff had in developing the data collection forms. The ongoing process of reviewing and modifying the I.S. manual with input from staff in itself seemed to serve as a training function. The fact that staff were involved in decisions to modify forms seemed to result in users being fairly familiar with the "raison d'etre" of the content of the forms.

4.4 Data Collection/Review

A formal review should occur after the information system has functioned long enough to identify confusing, non-productive, or missing components. Appropriate modifications should then be made (Trute, Tefft and Scuse, 1985, p.202).

The data collection/review phase referred to here is really an extension of the implementation phase and lasted three months (Jan. to March). Throughout this phase, on a regular basis, the consultant met with agency staff to review completed forms and to discuss problems and issues of the system. The review process helped to ensure support and mutual understanding of recording procedures. As well, the process helped establish whether the forms were actually addressing the central questions being asked of the system i.e., Who is being served? and, What type and quantity of service is delivered by the agency?

During this phase, after each month's activities had been recorded by staff, the data produced by the system was analyzed and summarized by the consultant into a mock monthly activity report. This served as feedback from the system to the users. As well, the process served as an opportunity to discuss optional monthly reporting formats which the Project Co-ordinator could use. Here again the consultant stressed the

concept of agency ownership of the system and that the mock reports were strictly to be seen as options. The final version of the monthly report is included in the manual of the system (Appendix C).

In the latter part of March, final modifications were made to the data collection forms. The modifications were cosmetic in nature in that they were intended to correct minor difficulties such as insufficient space to write names of children and their ages.

5. FINDINGS

This section explores the relationship between the information system and power shifts as well as the question of participation as a determinant of user satisfaction.

5.1 Information Systems and "Power Shifts"

An assumption we started with was that, since Project Opikihiwawin is such a small organization, power shifts within the organization were not as relevant to the analysis as they would be if it were a larger, more complex organization. This assumption proved to be valid. The actors relevant to the introduction of the I.S. are the board members, the co-ordinator and secretary of Project Opikihiwawin. Observations of the interaction between these actors indicates that members within the organization had a consensus on the I.S. objectives. Also relevant is the consultant as an external member of the organization. While it is more difficult to be objective about one's own involvement, the sense is that my role supported the organizational consensus on the objectives of

the information system. As such, the systems development experience at Project Opikihiwawin does not support Kling's findings on the tendency of I.S. to be used as an instrument turned towards aggrandizing power. The consensus on the system objectives as well as the system being a manual one in a small organization are assumed to account for "power shifts" between social actors within the organization being a non-issue in this case.

From the inter-organizational perspective, the finding is that the I.S. had a limited immediate impact on the power of Project Opikihiwawin as defined in terms of the Project's ability to secure funding. The question was whether the introduction of the information system would result in Project Opikihiwawin increasing its power. We had defined power as the ability of an actor to have his/her interests met. The ideal of Project Opikihiwawin is to get funded by the Province. But, when we compare the ideal to actual effects of the introduction of information system we see no noticeable change i.e., there is no indication that the organization perceived its power differently vis-a-vis the Province. On the other hand, since the system has been in place for only a few months, it is premature to make any conclusions on impacts of the information system as it relates to inter-organizational power shifts of this scope. The system may result in improved quality and quantity of information in the future, which could be useful for the organization in its quest for establishing a funding base. At that point, relevant information may have the persuasive value of altering the power between the funder and Project Opikihiwawin.

Most importantly, there has been some power shifts as a result of

achievements on sub-goals such as implementing an information system. By implementing the system it appears that organizational power has increased through enhanced control and influence over information and its use. Currently, the agency is working on another sub-goal of determining the type and quantity of service delivered by staff. Once the agency has command of service information and improves its capacity to use the I.S. in its best interest, it can then be argued that a further shift has occurred on the continuum toward the overall goal of provincial funding.

5.2 Impact of user participation on user satisfaction and system usefulness

A theoretical question we started with prior to initiating the systems development process was: Did the process of user participation have an impact on user satisfaction? Overall, an analysis of the User Satisfaction Index (Appendix A) completed by the users of the system three months after the implementation phase suggests a relationship between user participation and user satisfaction with the system.

Prior to exploring the relationship, I will discuss the two related concepts separately. In the absence of a valid and consistently applied operational definition for the concept "participation", the index simply asked questions on satisfaction with the process of establishing the system and secondly, with the comfort level on the amount of involvement required. As well, the index asks the user to comment on the overall process of developing the system. While these questions do not "scientifically" measure participation, they do provide an

opportunity for the user to provide feedback on participation or lack thereof. Both respondents (Co-ordinator and Secretary) indicated they were always satisfied with the process of establishing the system as well as with the comfort level related to the amount of involvement required to establish the system. The written comments were consistent with this; for example "Our system developer was very 'tuned' to our needs , while responding to our concrete concerns --he would also pick up on areas not recognized previously by learning about and listening to our daily routines and concerns. The development of the system was adjusted to us --we did not have to adjust to it". Other comments were "The process has been good --the designer kept in close touch to the Project throughout the development period. I have especially appreciated his sensitivity to all involved in the project and his willingness to make time available and meet with them. His patience in preparing forms and then making changes, often several times, is much appreciated." As such, the feedback suggests there was substantial participation.

Measurement of the concept "User Satisfaction" is also difficult. The index asked four questions on different aspects of user satisfaction. The feedback ranged consistently from "Always Satisfied" to "Almost Always Satisfied" on the relevancy of information produced by the system, accuracy of information produced, amount (quantity) of information and, format of data collection forms. Some of the written comments on the usefulness of the information system were "The system gives us a sense of 'how much' and 'what' activities. It is helpful to have these activities recorded on paper and recorded systematically." Another comment was that the system "...gives us better, clearer view of our

processes and the needs we address." Both respondents qualified their comments by implying it is premature to assess the long term usefulness of the system. For example, one respondent stated "The actual usefulness will be determined in the months to come". The other stated "It also will, over time, give us numbers that may prove useful for funding searches." As such, the feedback indicates substantial satisfaction with the information system.

The above exploratory analysis suggests that, in this case, substantial user participation has resulted in substantial user satisfaction with the information system. Also, the limited operational definitions of the concepts "participation" and "user satisfaction" as used in this case suggest that work is needed to develop an instrument which could be used for more systematic investigation on the relationship between these concepts.

A question related to the usefulness of the system is: Does an I.S. really help small organizations? From the questionnaire results and observations throughout the process, the I.S. gives hope that the output of the system will provide sufficient justification for funding purposes. This suggests that an information system has the potential for justifying a small agency's existence to funders and therefore, potentially serves a useful function. Alternatively, the I.S. could provide justification for termination of the Project. As the organizational politics perspective suggests, this would depend on the information produced by the system, who uses the information, and for what purposes. On a more pragmatic note, comments from the User Satisfaction Index indicated that the information system provides a systematic way of quantifying activities

and gives a clearer view of process and needs. Whether or not such views are representative of other small organizations is beyond the scope of this study.

6.0 CRITIQUE

This section is an analysis of the framework and its application as well as an evaluation of the consultant's role in the process of systems development at Project Opikihiwawin.

6.1 Limitations of study

The nature of the setting provided practical limitations in testing the whole framework. Firstly, the methodology for feedback on user satisfaction may have resulted in biased results. The users were simply asked to complete the User Satisfaction Index and to hand it back to the consultant when completed. Since there were only two actual users, it was pointless to develop a feedback approach based on confidentiality. Even if the User Satisfaction Index had been returned in confidential envelopes, it would have been fairly easy for the consultant to determine who had written what. Although both respondents stated they were "up-front" with their feedback, it is difficult to determine whether the relatively direct feedback influenced the responses. The implication is that caution should be used in interpreting the results of the User Satisfaction Index.

Secondly, as stated earlier, the small number of staff and the consensus of goals within the organization made the setting somewhat unique in that power shifts between actors was not an issue which evolved in the process. This situation resulted in limited utility of the

analytic component and therefore that aspect of the framework cannot be said to be as generalizable as the process component. On the other hand, findings on power shifts in this case cannot be assumed to be generalized to other small organizations. The human factors and interests of staff in most other small organizations may be different and the introduction of an I.S. could raise power issues in those other settings. The suggestion here is that the absence of organizational power issues in a system development process are an exception rather than the rule and size is not the major determinant. Consensus over objectives of the system seem to be a bigger factor. Overall, the preceding discussion suggests that the analytic component of the framework is applicable to most organizations and should therefore be subject to further enquiry.

Thirdly, the exercise involved the introduction of a manual system. This intervention was appropriate given the limited volume of activity with families, individuals and groups. But, it could be argued that the framework does not apply to the more common "computer based" information systems. I would argue the opposite. Computer based systems are operated by humans and therefore the same human factors apply. In addition, the added dimensions of the computer and computer experts as other social actors in the process makes the analytic component even more relevant.

6.2 User evaluation

Evaluation involves creating a feedback loop in the information system improvement process, so system performance can be compared with design criteria and expectations (Schoech, Schkade, and Mayers, 1985, p.84).

The User Satisfaction Index completed by the users of the system

indicates that users were always satisfied with the process and the amount of involvement to establish the system. Users were also satisfied with the format of data collection forms, the instructions and the ease of using the system. The feedback from the users also noted they were always satisfied with the co-operation of the consultant. Each of the ten items in the index was given a rating ranging from 1-5 (1 indicating never satisfied and 5 indicating always satisfied). Overall computation of the ratings given by the respondents on the User Satisfaction Index resulted in a 4.6 average rating indicating a high level of satisfaction with the implementation process and the system itself.

6.3 Relevancy of Framework to Social Work Practice

The framework introduced in this practicum fits with the principles and values of Social Work practice. To clarify the point, it may be appropriate to briefly discuss the notion of values as a factor which impacts on a professional's actions in systems development. Baker (1987) describes values as standards of conduct and principles considered desirable. Kluckhohn (1961) expands the definition by saying a value is a conception distinctive of an individual of the desirable which influences the selection from available means and ends of action. To complement this, Parsons and Shils (1959) view values as persistent organizers of action; and, G. Inlow (1972) describes values as the determiners in man that influence his choices in life and thus decide his behavior. These deterministic assertions are qualified by Kolman (1961) who states that acts are always compromises among motives, means, situations, and values. In other words, individual actions are usually a

compromise between values and other aspects of a situation. Without getting into a debate on behavioral theory, the relevancy of this discussion is simply to point out that, whether the professional intervention is directed at a dysfunctional family or a data systems problem situation, values influence the manner of intervention. In the case of the framework explored in this practicum, the principles of user participation are very close in intent to Social Work principles⁵. For example, the Code of Ethics states that the Social Worker's primary responsibility is to the client; and that the Social Worker should make every effort to foster maximum self-determination on the part of clients. The framework applies these Social Work principles through the value position that people effected by new technical systems have a right to influence the design of those systems. As such, the framework introduced in this practicum provides a value base for systems development which is consistent with Social Work practice.

6.4 Self-Assessment

The practicum was a valuable experience in developing several professional skills related to systems development. On the practical side, the literature review was useful in developing analytical and research skills. The actual systems development experience was limited only in the sense that the application of the framework was in a small organization. The experience, as well as the literature review, reinforced the importance of the human factor in developing human

⁵ For further reference see the Canadian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics.

systems.

This final evaluation exercise includes observations derived from the Information Systems Development Checklist (Appendix B) which was self administered. To a large degree this checklist was used as a guide by the consultant throughout the system development experience and the outcome is reflected in the discussion in section four called Practicum Experience. The results of the self-administered evaluation and the feedback from the User Satisfaction Index indicate that the consultant had reasonable success in this particular case. As discussed in the following section, the success was largely due to adherence to key principles embodied in the Systems Development Checklist and the guide in Figure 9.

Figure 9- Guide to Systems Development

Phase	Guide/Principles
ANALYSIS OF THE HOST AGENCY	-Interview all agency staff affected by I.S. -Logic diagram of services and objectives
STRATEGIC PLANNING	-"Participation" of management and users regarding purpose and use of system -Principle of "agency ownership" of system
SPECIFICATION OF DATA NEEDS	-"Utilitarian" principle
FORM DESIGN	-"Simplicity & clarity" -"User involvement" -Agency has ultimate decision
IMPLEMENTATION	-Prepare agency for ongoing maintenance of system -Principle of "support"
REVIEW	-Modify missing, confusing components -Principle of "user participation"

Adherence to the principle of "agency ownership" helped ensure agency control and responsibility for the system. Also, by applying the "utilitarian" principle for determining data needs, the Project is gathering useful data. The principles of "simplicity and clarity" helped ensure clear and self-explanatory forms for data collection. Finally, the application of the "participation" principle ensured relevancy of the system for the users.

As discussed earlier the biggest factor for the success of system was organizational support for the initiative. To a large extent this was a factor beyond the control of the consultant and it is assumed that the process would have been more difficult had power dynamics played a bigger role. Given the minimal application of the analytic component of the framework, it is difficult to make final recommendations on that aspect of the model. However, there are recommendations that can be made on the process component. The useful notion of principles suggests that, in applying the framework to other settings, the consultant use the key principles outlined in Figure 9 during the various stages of development. While this guide is not intended to be comprehensive, it does provide the systems consultant with a value base and therefore a general sense of direction in the systems development process.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INFORMATION SYSTEM USER SATISFACTION INDEX

(Adapted from R. McGrath)

Please circle the letter that comes closest to showing how satisfied you are with each of the following characteristics of the Information System:

	Always Satisfied	Almost Always Satisfied	Sometimes Satisfied	Rarely Satisfied	Never Satisfied
Satisfaction with the process of establishing the system	A	B	C	D	E
Comfort level with amount of involvement required to establish the system	A	B	C	D	E
Relevancy of information produced by the system	A	B	C	D	E
Accuracy of the information produced by the system	A	B	C	D	E
Amount (quantity) of information	A	B	C	D	E
Format of the data collection forms	A	B	C	D	E
Instructions for the use of the system	A	B	C	D	E
The ease of using the system	A	B	C	D	E
Co-operation of system designer	A	B	C	D	E
Usefulness of the system as a decision making tool	A	B	C	D	E

Comment on the usefulness of the Information System for the agency:

Comment on the overall process of developing the system:

APPENDIX B

INFORMATION SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT CHECKLIST

The items listed below will be used as a guide for the information system development process and subsequent self-assessment component of the evaluation. The guide is the result of integrating two sources; one source is the self-analysis checklist for conducting an evaluation in L. Braskamp and R. Brown (Eds). Utilization of Evaluation Information. San Francisco: Jossey-Boss, 1980. The other source is a system construction overview in Trute, Tefft and Scuse, Human Service Information Systems. Queenston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1985.

A. Determining the Consultant's Role

Assess level of personal congruence with the program's general goals and consider withdrawing if the congruity may result in unnecessary conflicts.

Make sure that consulting skills are sufficient to meet the demands and complexities of developing the system.

Establish congruence between personal role perception (consultant, expert, recommender, change agent) and audience expectations.

Establish a sense of credibility and trust with the program director, staff and other audiences.

B. Organization and Staffing

The development of an information system should begin with sound organizational support in the host agency.

C. Analysis of the Host Agency

Before commencing the detailed planning of the information system, the consultant should thoroughly research the host agency. Items to consider during this "advance review" include:

1. An analysis of existing information storage practices.
2. The "chain of command" in regard to data collection and information within the agency should be considered, including both the formal and informal networks.
3. The pattern of information flow should be diagrammed.

4. All existing forms in use in the agency should be catalogued and reviewed for purpose and function.
5. An inventory should be prepared should be prepared of all programs and services delivered by the host agency that will ultimately come under the aegis of the new information system.
6. Key actors in the host agency should be identified in regard to information collection.

D. Strategic Planning

An early planning task is identification of basic purposes and intended uses of the system. Among other tasks, two critical questions should be answered.

1. For whom is the system being created?
2. What kind of output is expected from the system:
 - a) Will it track services, clients, and/or staff? and
 - b) What basic questions will the system be expected to answer?

E. Consultation and Participation

Ultimate decisions in forms design and data collection routines should rest with appropriate staff in the host agency.

Close collaboration between the system planners and the agency staff so that the system meets the agency's needs.

Participation of staff at all levels of agency functioning should be encouraged on those aspects of the system that are relevant to their work activities.

F. Confidentiality

The consultant should consider the protection of confidentiality of information collected on service consumers.

G. Specification of Data Needs

The broad objectives for the information system should be screened against several limiting factors:

- a) The "Utilitarian" principle: that data should be useful rather than just interesting.
- b) The cost: in financial and human terms.
- c) Privacy: improper or irrelevant questions could jeopardize access to other information.

H. Approach to Form Design

Once the priority data needs of the host agency are specified, data collection instruments are developed through a process of drafting and re-drafting mock forms.

I. Type of Form

Results will generally be better with uncomplicated, logical forms that require an immediate, simple description of an aspect of service.

Forms should be self-explanatory, containing clear labels and instructions.

Consider the time available from staff and the time required to complete a form.

J. Training

Training agency staff to use the new system is an important part of the system consultant's work.

All staff should be trained in the use of forms with which they are directly involved.

K. Implementation

During implementation of a new information system, the host agency must exercise its responsibility for, and control over, the planned system.

APPENDIX C

**PROJECT OPIKIHAWIN
INFORMATION SYSTEM
MANUAL**

APRIL, 1988

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of services/supports

Description of services/supports

Recording Procedures

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-Contact Form

-Log of Group Related Activities

-Log of Services to Community

-Monthly Report

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-Forms

LIST OF SERVICES/SUPPORTS

Direct Services/Supports

Intake
Crisis Counselling
Supportive Counselling
Resource Counselling
Arrange Referral
Receive Referral
Provide General Information
Seek Information on Birth Families
Advocacy
Practical Assistance
Parent Support Group
Teen Support Group
Children's Cultural Program
Special Events
Mailing List
Case Consultation
Individual Education

Indirect Services

Recording
Correspondence

Services to Community

Group Education
Outreach

DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES/SUPPORTS

Direct Services/Supports

Intake

Initial contact with family whereby information is provided on post-adoption services available through Project Opikihiwawin. Involves the completion of an intake form completed by either the service recipient or Project staff. This first contact may also involve another service such as Crisis Counselling or Resource Counselling being provided to the family or individual; in such cases, only the service "Intake" will be recorded.

Crisis Counselling

These are usually short-term, intense, family contacts conducted for the purpose of helping families to achieve a state of equilibrium, the disruption of which occurred by some personal crisis, for example, the adopted child being truant from school. The intense, compressed nature of the contact, involves or could involve a range of activities in the category of services; for example, Resource Counselling, Supportive Counselling etc., but Crisis Counselling would be recorded rather than each activity.

Supportive Counselling

The prime purpose of such contacts is to provide on-going emotional assurance and support to families and individuals. Such contacts are designed to communicate on-going interest, and concern for the family and primarily seek to support and build system strength. Supportive Counselling may attend to the social context and developmental issues in child and family functioning.

Resource Counselling

Any contacts the prime purpose of which are to aid the family in understanding available resources, in deciding on their own needs, and/or in making a decision about a course of action. Activity is heavy on information giving, but may well include help with sorting out, coping, and understanding the initial feelings around the need for special resources, including family ambivalence and anxiety. While this category may overlap with others, the key is that the prime purpose is to help families acquire information about resources and make resource decisions.

Provide General Information

This activity entails responding to requests for general information on such matters as culture; native history; treaty status and rights; for example, information on tuition and books for education purposes.

Seek Information on birth families

Aid given to families or individuals who are seeking information on birth families. The nature of the assistance provided may involve providing suggestions and advice on organizations to contact, procedures to follow or letters to write. This service may include Project staff being directly involved with other organizations in seeking the information on behalf of the family or individual.

Advocacy

In instances where access to services or benefits is not readily provided or is denied, Project Opikihawin will help families with adopted native children to acquire those services and benefits they are entitled to. This could involve a variety of activities such as letter writing, telephone calls or meeting with representatives from other organizations.

Receive Referral

Activity which relates to contact from an agency worker or family who is referred to Project Opikihawin for services.

Arrange Referral

This category includes activities involved in the locating and arranging of resources for a family. It includes such activities as searching for appropriate resources, writing letters, and negotiating with potential resources or agencies to secure services.

Practical Assistance

Any family contact largely dominated by practical, concrete forms of assistance. It includes such contacts as helping a family complete and understand a form; accompanying and/or escorting a family to an appointment at an agency or assisting a family in writing a letter.

Parent Support Group

Group meeting activity of parents from Cross Cultural Families intended to provide mutual support, peer counselling and networking. These meetings may or may not involve a resource person but will involve volunteer families.

Teen Support Group

Group activity of adopted native teens which involve volunteer families. Activities vary; for example, roller skating, meetings, camp week-end.

Children's Cultural Program

Involves elementary school children from member families in various activities with other cross cultural families. Events involve volunteer families and take place eight times per year for two hours each time.

Special Events

This activity includes any planned family event not included in either the parent, teen support or children's program activities. Examples are trips, informational meetings, presentations by speakers and participation of parents in Native sponsored workshops and conferences. It includes recreational activities and events such as pot luck suppers and family weekends.

Mailing List

This service involves putting individuals or families on a mailing list. Persons on the mailing list receive the Project Opikihiwawin Newsletter as well as other material which may be of interest to families with adopted Native children.

Case Consultation

This case related activity involves the provision of consultation to any staff of an outside organization in order to assist them in providing services to a Cross Cultural Family. Focus is on assisting the consultee with a problem. An example would be providing consultation to an agency worker who needs advice on dealing with an adopted adolescent in crisis.

Individual Education

Education provided to individuals in response to general requests regarding post adoption services; for example, information provided to an agency worker on ways of handling issues in cross cultural adoptions.

Indirect Services:

Recording

Client related activity which includes time spent in the preparation and writing of material; for example, notes written as a follow-up to a direct service provided to a family or individual. Recording may follow a direct service such as "Crisis Counselling"; in such cases, both Recording and Crisis Counselling would be "checked off".

Correspondence

Client related activity which includes the preparation and writing of letters or reports addressed to families, individuals or other organizations. The written material may be related to a direct service provided such as Arrange Referral; in such cases both Correspondence and Arrange Referral would be "checked off".

Services to Community:

Group Education

This category includes all those activities involved in the preparation and presentation of material for the education of groups and organizations outside Project Opikihiwawin. This includes seminars, workshops, as well as in-service sessions with school or agency representatives. Also included are the four yearly open meetings; these meetings are open to any interested party and the goal is to provide information on general native issues. The themes of open meetings vary; for example, treaty status, treaty rights, education, racism.

Outreach

Activity to bring information about the availability of services to people. Outreach activity may involve "conscience raising" or education of families and agency representatives as well as information on services; for example, the outreach activity of the Newsletter.

RECORDING PROCEDURES

1. Intake Form

To be completed for each family or individual which contacts Project Opikihiwawin for the first time either by telephone or in person. The only exception will be when, for personal reasons, the family or individual does not provide family information. In such cases, this preference will be respected by Project Opikihiwawin and only a contact form will be completed to record the service provided.

The completion of an Intake Form will result in a file being opened on the family or individual.

Completed Intake Forms will be set aside in a monthly activity folder and recorded in the monthly report prior to being filed.

Date: Insert six digits to indicate day, month and year. For example 01 10 87 to indicate that the intake was completed on October 1, 1987.

Contact Type:

Check either telephone or Person to Person.

Family Code:

For purposes of confidentiality, a three number digit will be assigned to each family or individual receiving services from Project Opikihiwawin. For example, 085 to signify family number 85. Numbers 001 to 500 are reserved for this purpose.

Staff Code: For future use.

Family Information:

Complete the information in spaces provided.

Problem categories:

The following is intended to clarify which problem category should be "checked-off" on the Intake Form.

School

Any problem related to school such as poor grades and truancy.

Drugs

Any problem which involves alcohol, drugs or chemical abuse.

Suicide

Problems presented as concern about potential suicide, suicide threats, or suicide attempts should be recorded in this category.

Discrimination

Problems involving elements of racism or discrimination.

Child in Care of Agency

This category should be used when the adopted child has been placed in the care of an agency under the authority of the Child and Family Services Act for any reason.

Health

Any health related problem. Includes physical and learning disabilities as well as mental health concerns or problems.

Need General Information

Family seeking general information on such matters as culture; native history; treaty rights and status; for example, information on tuition and books for education purposes.

Need Information on Birth Family

Situation presented by family or individual who is seeking information on the birth family.

Delinquent Behavior

Any situation whereby the adopted child is or alleged to be involved in delinquent behavior such as stealing, vandalism. The police may or may not be involved.

Other

Any problem which does not fit the above descriptions should be recorded in this category. The problem presented should be described in a word or phrase in space provided.

2. Contact Form

The contact form is to be used for "client-related" contacts only. Any service-related contact between Project Opikihiwawin staff or volunteers and others such as families with adopted native children or workers from other organizations should be recorded on this form.

Indirect services will only be recorded in cases whereby they are related to a direct contact. The indirect services "Recording" and "Correspondence" are not performed directly with families, but are nonetheless integral prerequisites to the successful completion of direct services.

Any situation in which an Intake Form is completed will also require the completion of a Contact Form to record the type of service provided.

Completed Contact Forms will be set aside in a monthly activity folder and recorded in the monthly report prior to being filed in the individual or family file along with the Intake Form and other relevant material.

Forms should be completed as follows:

Surname: Family name

Family Code: Insert the three number digit assigned to the family or individual. Numbers 001 to 500 are reserved for this purpose.

Code 999 will be used to record contact with families or individuals that have received a service from the project but have not provided family information i.e in respect of the family or individual's wish, an Intake Form is not completed.

Code 000 will be used to record an activity which does not involve a specific family or individual. In cases involving a specific family or individual, the assigned family code will be recorded.

At month-end all contact forms coded 000 will be filed in a separate cumulative file for future reference. Same procedure for forms coded 999.

Service Provider: Indicate whether support/service provided by staff member or volunteer.

Date: Insert six digit number to indicate day, month and year. For example 01 10 87 to indicate that contact made on October 1, 1987.

Contact With: Check one.

Agency refers to staff and program personnel from other agencies who interact with Project Opikihiwawin.

Age & Sex of Adopted Children: Complete as required. If foster child(ren), indicate with by deleting the word adopted and replace with the word [foster].

Direct Service Contact Type and Location: Check one.

Community refers to any setting other than the Project office, family home or other agency. Examples of when community would be checked off is if contact was made at a restaurant or camp Arnez.

Was Indirect Service Provided? Check yes or no.

If yes, also check either Recording or Correspondence.

Support Provided: Check the appropriate service/support provided.

The only case in which more than one service is recorded will be when the direct service (1-13) is supplemented by indirect services (Recording and/or Correspondence). In such cases, the direct service and duration will be recorded as well the relevant indirect service(s) and duration.

Duration of Contact: Check one. If over 1 Hour, indicate the actual time in the last column (round off to the nearest quarter hour; for example record 2 1/4 for a meeting lasting 2 hours and 12 minutes or 2 hours and 21 minutes).

3. Log of Group Related Activities:

A Log of Group Related Activities will be recorded upon completion of each group event.

The form will be completed as follows:

Date: Record a two digit number to signify the day of the month. For example, 01 to signify the 1st day of the month.

Service: Check of the appropriate service provided. Refer to section on Description of Services if necessary.

Theme: Name of the event.

of People: Indicate the number of people that participated in the event including volunteers.

Duration: Indicate the actual time (round off to the nearest quarter hour; for example record 2 1/4 for an event lasting 2 hours and 12 minutes or 2 hours and 21 minutes).

Speaker Name: If relevant, indicate name of speaker.

Staff Involvement: Section used to record staff involvement as it relates to group activities. Complete the section keeping in mind the following distinctions:

PLAN Refers to the researching, planning and organizing of specific Project Opikihiwawin events. Meetings with volunteers and group leaders to organize events are included under this category.

CO-ORD Refers to staff participation in group events in which the staff member plays a co-ordinating type of role.

WORKER NUMBER Indicate worker number.

Group activities will be summarized and recorded in the monthly report prior to being filed.

4. Log of Services to Community

This log is intended to record Group Education and Outreach activities. Complete the form as follows:

Date: Record a two digit number to indicate the day of the month. For example, 01 to indicate the 1st day of the month.

Group Name: Insert name of the group to which education was provided.

of People: Indicate the number of people that participated in the event.

Theme: Name theme of event.

Duration: Indicate the actual time (round off to the nearest quarter hour; for example record 2 1/4 for an event lasting 2 hours and 12 minutes or 2 hours and 21 minutes).

Open Meeting, Seminar, Workshop, In-Service: Check the appropriate type of group education provided.

Outreach: When Outreach Activity is "checked Off", appropriate words should be entered under the columns Theme and Group. For example, to record Newsletter outreach activity the Group could be "Mailing list" and the theme "Newsletter".

5. Monthly Report

The Monthly Report is intended to summarize a full month of activities which have been recorded.

Intake and contacts will be summarized using the SUMMARY OF CONTACTS form.

The Log of Group Related Activities and Log of Services to Community forms will serve as the summary of those activities.

The monthly report will be presented at monthly board meetings.

INTAKE FORM

DATE

--	--	--

 Day Month Year

CONTACT TYPE:
 Telephone__1 Person to person__2

FAMILY CODE: __|__|__|

STAFF CODE: ____

FAMILY INFORMATION							
Mother's Name		Address		_ _	Postal Code	Phone #	
Father's Name		Address and Postal Code (Specify if different from above)			_ _	Postal Code	Phone #
ADOPTED CHILDREN (If foster child, indicate with an [F] beside name)				OTHER CHILDREN			
Name	Sex (M or F)	Date of birth	Age when adopted	Age	Sex (M or F)		

HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT PROJECT OPIKIHAWIN: (check one)

- ___1 Other agency or professional (specify): _____
- ___2 Friend or relative using Project Opikihawin Services
- ___3 Project Opikihawin staff member or volunteer
- ___4 Pamphlets, advertisements
- ___5 Newspaper Articles, television
- ___6 Other (specify): _____

TYPE OF PROBLEM PRESENTED	
___01 School ___02 Drugs ___03 Suicide ___04 Discrimination ___05 Child in Care of Agency	___06 Health ___07 Need General Information ___08 Need Information on Birth Family ___09 Delinquent Behaviour ___10 Other (Specify): _____

CONTACT FORM

----- FAMILY NAME ----- FAMILY CODE DATE

--	--	--

Day Month Year

SUPPORT PROVIDER: Staff ----- Parent Volunteer -----

CONTACT WITH	AGE AND SEX OF ADOPTED CHILDREN		CONTACT TYPE AND PLACE	WAS INDIRECT SERVICE PROVIDED?
	Age	Sex (M or F)		
Family 1			P.O Office 1	Yes ___ 1 No ___ 2 (If yes, indicate either recording or correspondence below)
Couple 2			Agency 2	
Indiv. Adult 3			Family Home 3	
Adopted Child 4			Community 4	
Volunteer 5			Telephone 5	
Agency 6				

SUPPORT PROVIDED		DURATION OF CONTACT			
		1 Under 10M	2 11-30M	3 31-60M	4 Over 1 HR
Intake	01				
Crisis Counselling	02				
Supportive Counselling	03				
Resource Counselling	04				
Arrange Referral	05				
Receive Referral	06				
General Information	07				
Birth Information	08				
Advocacy	09				
Practical Assistance	10				
Mailing List	11				
Case Consultation	12				
Individual Education	13				
Recording	14				
Correspondence	15				

MONTHLY REPORT

MONTH _____

YEAR 198__

SUMMARY OF CONTACTS

SUMMARY OF WHO CONTACTS WERE WITH	NUMBER
Family	
Couple	
Individual Adult	
Adopted Child	
Volunteer	
Agency	
TOTAL	

SUMMARY OF CONTACT TYPE AND PLACE	NUMBER
P.O Office	
Agency	
Family Home	
Community	
Telephone	

SUMMARY OF SUPPORT AND SERVICES PROVIDED	NUMBER	AMOUNT OF TIME
Intake		
Crisis Counselling		
Supportive Counselling		
Resource Counselling		
Arrange Referral		
Receive Referral		
General Information		
Birth Information		
Advocacy		
Practical Assistance		
Mailing List		
Case Consultation		
Individual Education		
Recording		
Correspondence		
TOTAL		

INFORMATION ON CHILDREN INVOLVED IN CONTACTS

NUMBER OF CHILDREN	RANGE IN AGE	AVERAGE AGE	AGE MODE	BREAKDOWN OF SEX	
				MALES	FEMALES