

# Integration of Program and Services for First Nations Communities

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## Introduction

Integration of programs and services for Aboriginal people (status and non-status Indian, Metis and Inuit peoples) is often regarded as a way for the government to reduce its funding and in many cases abdicate its fiduciary obligations. While there is a great need for the effective delivery of early childhood services in Aboriginal communities, safeguarding against processes that promote the assimilation of Aboriginal peoples is even more critical. Program integration is a complex, government process used by governments since World War II. How it is defined and for what purpose is belied by government ideologies and policies. An examination of government policies for Aboriginal peoples along with current implementation strategies and initiatives reveals clarity around integration and its current purpose as it relates to Aboriginal peoples. The following paper seeks to provide: an overview of the past and current policy context, examples of program implementation and service delivery models, a description of current attempts at program integration, considerations for implementation of program integration, and defining integration as a continuum.

## The Policy Context

The history of Canadian Indian policy is a story of assimilation. These policies coupled with Canadian social policies and directions impact Aboriginal peoples' lives on a daily basis. As Canada entered an era of philosophical and structural modernization following World War II, revisions and changes to Canadian government structure and policy served to continue the assimilation of Indians (status Indians or First Nations peoples) into Canadian society. Specific Indian legislative and policy changes presented in the guise of citizenship, equality, integration and rights in the 1960s and 1970s, as local control and partnership in the 1980s and 1990s, continued to assert the goals of assimilation set out in the 1876 *Indian Act* (Di Gangs & Jones, 1998; Tobias, I., 1991; Weaver, S., 1986; Dyck N. Ed., 1985; Hawthorne, Ed., 1966). Assimilation as set out in the

Act, refers to the collective loss rights for Aboriginal peoples, along with their cultural, economic, and social integration into the broader Canadian society. The intent and practice of assimilation for immigrants differs from that of Aboriginal peoples by emphasizing cultural, economic, and social integration, whereas Aboriginal peoples also experience a loss of collective rights and titles.

In the 1940s the goal of assimilation was to be achieved by turning responsibilities for services to Indians over to the provinces. The 1946 Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on Indian Affairs, struck to study Canada's Indian administration with a view to revising the *Indian Act*, affirmed and perpetuated this political policy direction. Although their recommended policy guidelines could not ensure speedy assimilation of Indian people into the broader Canadian society, it was the alternative the Canadian government, was looking for. These policies would eventually erode barriers provided by the reserves and Indians' special status under the constitution through a new policy of provincial intrusion on reserves (Tobias, 1991).

The underlying goal of assimilation and provincial involvement was already being implemented in program areas by the federal government. In 1946, the Department of Indian Affairs entered into formal agreements with local and provincial governments to provide hospital services for Indians. Agreements with local school boards for the integration of Indian children into provincial schools also occurred. In 1950, Canada and British Columbia signed the first federal-provincial agreement designed to integrate Indian children into the provincial school system (Di Gangis & Jones, 1998). The federal government was not only setting the stage for provincial jurisdiction over Indians but at the same time reducing their responsibility for Indian peoples.

The 1950s also saw

A revised Indian Act [...] passed in 1951. This new Act returned to the philosophy of the original Indian Act: civilization was to be encouraged but not directed or forced on the Indian people. Assimilation for all Indians was a goal that should be striven for... (Tobias, 1991, p. 140)

The clearest statement of utilizing provincial powers to produce assimilation rested in Section 88 of the new Act. Section 88 reinforced the legitimacy of the new policy direction.

Subject to the terms of any treaty and any other Act of the Parliament of Canada, all laws of general application from time to time in force in any province are applicable to and in respect of Indians in the province, except to the context that such laws are inconsistent with this Act or any order, rule, regulation or by-law made there under, and except to the extent that such laws make provision for any matter for which provision is made by or under this Act.

This section continues to be pointed to as proof of provincial jurisdiction over First Nations social programs, raising questions of First Nations jurisdiction and establishing a foundation for resistance to First Nations autonomy.

Paralleling the development of Indian policies in the 1940s and 1950s was the federal government's broader social policy direction, that is, implementation of universal programs that were either fully funded by the federal government or cost shared with the provinces. It was during this time that the *Unemployment Insurance Program*, *Family Allowance Program*, *Old Age Security Act*, the *Old Age Assistance Act*, and the *Blind Persons Act* first appeared. However, these programs, though held to be universal, were not always implemented for Aboriginal people in the same way they were for non-Aboriginal people. For example, the *Family Allowance Program* (1945) provided cash directly to mothers based on the number of children in the family. However, the government did not always provide a similar benefit directly to Indian mothers. Instead, the Department of Indian Affairs administered the program through local Indian Agents as an extension of welfare rations. This deviation in federal policy left Indians vulnerable to local Agents who were in a position to withhold or threaten to withhold goods to exact compliance with a desired behaviour such as sending children to residential schools or withholding goods when children were absent from schools. This was not the case for non-Indian families. What was seen as a right to other Canadians was manipulated as coercive charity for Indians.

In many cases provincial governments organized their legislation so they could take advantage of the new federal monies provided through the implementation of the universal programs. In some cases this meant realigning provincial legislation to meet national standards, in other instances it meant cost sharing programs with the federal government (i.e., using provincial monies for Indian people living off-reserve). In effect, the federal government forced provincial governments into either providing services to Indian peoples or receiving no monies.

The 1960s were guided by a policy of intention and equality that sought to "normalize relations with Indians by discarding assimilation and separateness (reserves) in favour of a principle of assimilation through integration and mainstreaming of Aboriginal peoples" (Di Gangis & Jones, 1998, p. 22). This new policy continued to reflect the common assumption that to be citizens of Canada, Indians must be integrated into the broader Canadian society. Laws prohibiting Indians living on reserve from becoming citizens were eliminated. Citizenship was no longer dependent on acceptable levels of assimilations. Indians could now be Canadian citizens without being forced to relinquish Indian status.

The federal government continued to develop national programs that would be administered by provincial governments. In 1964, the federal government sought provincial agreement with their plan to have the provinces administer welfare and community development programs on-reserve. Only one province agreed, Ontario. By 1965, however, several provinces had signed Master Tuition Agreements with the federal government for the delivery of education services to Indian children within the provincial system (Di Gangis & Jones, 1998). The Hawthorne report, *A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada, Economic, Political, Educational Needs and Policies, Part 2* released in 1967, describes the plight of Indian children in provincial schools.

... The atmosphere of the school, the routines, the rewards, and the expectations provide a critically different experience for the Indian child than for the non-Indian child. Discontinuity of socialization, repeated failure, discrimination and lack of significance of the educational process in the life of the Indian child result in diminishing motivation, increasing negativism, poor self- images and low levels of aspiration. Until some compromises can be made by the school and the Indian and non-Indian communities, the impasse will remain and the sense of worth of the Indian student will remain low, inhibiting adequate academic achievement. (p. 130)

Despite these findings, education continued to be seen as means to prepare Indians for the inevitability of interacting with the broader Canadian society.

... the key to the full realization of self-determination and self-government and mutual self- respect for the heritage and culture of Indian and non-Indian, will be found in the field of education.... Education is necessary if Indian

people are to be able to fit properly and competently into our economic and social structure and effectively fill the role, which will be demanded of them in years to come, as spokesman and leaders of their own people. (Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on Indian Affairs, 1961, pp. 610-611, as quoted in Hawthorne, 1967, p.30.)

The desire was to "see Indians integrate completely in the economic and social life of Canada and to live on an equal footing with other citizens of the country" (Hawthorne, 1967, p. 23). Although clouded in idealistic words of equality, integration, and citizenship the underlying desire of assimilation remained. Socialization of Indian children continued through integrated education as provincial schools replaced residential schools and on-reserve day schools. Despite the assimilation underpinnings, the democratic ideology espoused in the Hawthorne Report (1967) continues to impact Canadian Indian policy.

Like the integration of Aboriginal children into the provincial education system, the federal government had not abandoned its desire for the provinces to also assume responsibility for delivery of social services to Indians. The *Canada Assistance Plan Act* (CAP) was introduced in 1966. This Act consolidated all federal income support programs into one open-ended 50-50 cost-sharing arrangement with the provinces. There were two parts to the plan: Part 1, included Indians living off reserve; Part 2, provided opportunities for provinces to administer services to Indian residing on-reserve. None of the provinces took advantage of this with the exception of Ontario who had signed an agreement to that effect in 1965.

In 1967, the federal government was pressured by the public to review and change the *Indian Act*. Changes were to focus on two goals: 1) to prepare and enable Indian band councils and individuals to take more responsibility, authority and initiative in municipal-type government and economic development; and 2) to facilitate arrangements and understandings with provinces and the territorial governments that would permit the extension of their education, welfare and health, municipal and other services to Indians according to the same legislation and standards applying to non-Indians (Di Gangis & Jones, 1998). In 1969, with the transfer of services for Indians to the provinces seemingly near completion and in response to the public pressure, the federal government brought forth a *White Paper on Indian Policy* (1969). The *White Paper* announced,

...the government[']s ... intention to absolve itself from responsibility for Indian affairs and the special status of Indians and to repeal special legislation relating to Indians

- that is, the Indian Act. By adoption of this policy and by repealing the Indian Act the Indian would be assimilated by government fiat, and what the Indian Act of 1876 had sought as a long-term goal - the extirpation of the Indian and Indian lands - would be realized (Tobias, 1991, p. 141).

[It] sought to end the collective rights of Aboriginal people in favour of individual rights. Included were plans to eliminate the protection for reserve lands, to terminate the legal status of Indian peoples, and to have services delivered to them by provincial governments. (*Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, 1996, p. 202)

The White Paper resonated with the ideology found in the *Hawthorne Report* (1966).

The White Paper argued that 'equality' or 'discrimination', as it was often phrased, was the key ingredient in a solution to the problems of Indians, and that special rights had been the major cause of their problems. The goal of equality was to be achieved by terminating the special legislation and bureaucracy that had developed over the past century to deal with Indians, and by transferring to the provinces the responsibility for administering services to Indians. Henceforth Indians would receive the same services from the same sources as other Canadians after a transitional period in which enriched programs of economic development were to be offered. The large Indian Affairs bureaucracy would be dismantled within five years, and the federal government was to retain trusteeship function only for Indian lands, which would be administered through an Indians Lands Act. By implication, the result of the policy would see Indians with 'Indian problems' become provincial citizens with regular citizen's problems. The policy was essentially one of 'formal equality' to use Cairns' phrase from the Hawthorne Report (1966), [however,] the question remained as to whether [formal equality] would foster equality of opportunity for this disadvantaged minority. Cairns had argued three years previously that such a policy would not: 'The equal treatment in law and services of a people who at the present time do not have equal

competitive capacities will not suffice for the attainment of substantive socio-economic equality" (Hawthorne, 1966, p. 392, as quoted in Weaver, 1981, p. 4).

Aboriginal peoples across the country protested the *White Paper* (1969). They gathered in strength and formed their own organizations to respond. Harold Cardinal, then president of the Indian Association of Alberta, responded with the *Red Paper* (1970). This paper described how Indian peoples with distinct cultures wished to contribute to Canadian society, while at the same time exercising political and economic power at the community level. Faced with strong resistance from First Nations, an equally negative lobby from the provincial governments, and possible legal challenges, the federal government was forced to shelve the *White Paper* (1969) and in 1973 announced its withdrawal. However, the federal government continued to pursue its policy of assimilation under the guise of integration, partnership, consultation and local control tied to federal and standards and laws. Components of the *White Paper* policy were to be broken down and implemented separately using a low-key approach so that the larger goal of assimilation was not lost (Di Gangis & .Tones, 1998).

The early 1970s was a time of general prosperity and rapid expansion in programs and services for Indian peoples. The result was the enhanced dependency of Indian peoples. Increased amounts of money were put into social programs but none targeted the root dilemma of dependency. By 1978-79, Indian and Inuit Affairs program expenditures for social assistance and support accounted for 22.3% of its budget compared to 6.6% allocated for Indian economic development (Thalassa, 1983, as quoted in Di Gangis & Jones, 1998). The late 1970s saw a shift from the development of social welfare programs and increased expenditures to a time of evaluation and accountability (Di Gangis & Jones, 1998).

Repatriation of the Canadian constitution, land claims and Aboriginal rights, along with fiscal restraint, improved federal-provincial relations, and job creation strategies characterized the 1980s. National Aboriginal political organizations continued to grow and the courts held differing views on Indian matters from those of the federal government. Public support for Aboriginal people and their struggles increased across the country. Non-Aboriginal organizations pressed the government to address Aboriginal rights to land and self-determination.

In the repatriation process, Aboriginal leaders were able to successfully ensure that the *Constitution Act* (1982) would contain sections that would recognize Aboriginal rights and ensure that individual rights could not annul or diminish Aboriginal collective rights. The 1983 constitutional conference resulted in amendments to the *Constitution of Canada* and a commitment to a formal First Minister's conference. The

constitutional conference resulted in amendments to subsections 35 (3) and (4) of the Act, which now reads:

(3) For greater certainty, in subsection (1) "treaty rights" includes rights that now exist by way of land claims agreements or may be so acquired.

(4) Notwithstanding any other provision of the Act, the Aboriginal and treaty rights referred to in subsection (1) are guaranteed equally to male and female persons."

As a result of the constitutional conference, subsection 25 (b) was also amended to include:

(b) Any rights or freedoms that now exist by way of land claims agreements or may be so acquired.

In December 1982, Parliament established the Special Committee on Indian Self-Government. Aboriginal leaders used this time of recognition to clearly articulate their desire for self-government and control over all aspects of service delivery, in particular child welfare. However, earlier in the year, INAC (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada) had issued a circular ruling that any further developments in Indian child welfare services must be based on tripartite negotiations where Indian agencies are responsible for the administration of provincial legislation and procedures funded by the federal government (INAC, 1982). Indian bands/agencies would have executive powers but not the legislative or judicial powers associated with self-government. Aboriginal leaders across the country protested but to no avail. Indian organizations signed these agreements between federal and provincial governments in the name of progress but never fully accepted the relationship between the provinces and Aboriginal agencies (Taylor-Henley & Hudson, 1992).

Despite constitutional changes and a move towards self-government in the 1980s, the government never deviated from its policy of involving provincial governments in service delivery or reducing government expenditures for Indian peoples. The Tory platform of reduced government spending and overall reduction in government's role and size mirrored the call for fiscal restraint that started in the 1970s. In 1985, then Deputy Prime Minister, Erik Nielsen, was directed to conduct a review of government programs and services. This *Task Force on Program Review* "focused on identifying areas of overlap between federal and provincial governments, and programs which could be eliminated, reduced, or shifted to another Level of government" (*Indian and Native Programs: A Study*



*Team Reports to the Task Force on Program Review, 1986*, as quoted in Di Gangi & Jones 1998, p.165).

The task force found that although federal government expenditures for Indians had increased to about three billion dollars in 1984-85, the money had only marginal impact on Indian living conditions. Rather than examining the root of this problem, the task force looked for ways to reduce government funding. The task force reported that 25% of expenditures were related to treaty or *Indian Act* obligations, 38% would 'normally' be provincial responsibilities, and 37% was discretionary spending. This gave the government the rationale it needed to reduce programs to Indians thereby reducing expenditures and to invoke provincial government and private sector involvement in delivery of Indian programs and services. At the same time the government sought to pass on its responsibility for Indians and limit expenditures to Indian communities, in the guise of local control, thereby forcing Indian governments to resolve current and historical problems themselves (Di Gangi & Jones, 1998).

Despite this resistance, Indian Affairs began a process of devolution in November 1986, based on a long-term strategic objective put forth in the Nielsen report:

Devolution of native problems to native communities from the federal government for resolution through negotiation of local community plans based on community priorities and funded on a multi-year block basis. (Memorandum to Cabinet, *Report of the Ministerial Task Force on Native Programs, 1985*, p.168).

The Treasury Board was reassured by Indian Affairs that there would be no increase in programs nor program size, and that over time existing legislation, administrative arrangements, and programs and services would be given over to Indian people. Programs consistent with this direction, including Alternate Funding Arrangements (AFA) and the Community Based Self-Government process, and transfer of INAC programs to other departments such as fisheries and economic development were quickly implemented.

The federal government emphasized the benefits of this new policy direction for First Nations peoples as local control, more flexibility in program expenditures certainty in funding levels, etc. However, these advantages also benefited the federal government.

To an informed public, a transfer of responsibility to Native people would make the government appear responsive to Native demands to "get government off our

backs.” It would also leave Ottawa less accountable politically and legally for the conditions of Native people [who could now be held responsible for their own fate]-“they’re managing their own affairs now.” (Angus, 1990, p. 26 as quoted in Di Gangi & Jones, 1998, p. 170)

Although disguising policies as beneficial, the federal government continued to support recommendations put forth by the Nielsen Task Force. Wherever possible, unilateral decisions were made to off-load cost and obligations to the provinces or simply to cut direct expenditures to Aboriginal people, for example, the halting of off reserve social assistance charge-backs in 1993. In other instances, programs were simply eliminated, for example, funding for Aboriginal political associations (Di Gangi, & Jones, 1998).

Following unsuccessful constitutional talks, the 1990s attempted to resolve the growing rift between Aboriginal people and government. In 1991, the federal government created the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples with a mandate to find new ways of rebuilding relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada. Consultation and deliberation took four years.

Constitutional talks included the full participation of Aboriginal people. The constitutional conferences of 1992 resulted in the *Charlottetown Accord*. The most significant provision of this accord was the recognition of the inherent right of Aboriginal self-government. It was put before the Canadian people in a national referendum on October 12, 1992 and was defeated. For Aboriginal people the most significant provision of this accord was recognition of the inherent right of Aboriginal self-government. Despite earlier polls showing wide national support for self-government, the complex contradictory provisions for greater provincial powers, and apparent undermining of women’s rights led to its defeat in a nation-wide referendum.

In 1993, a Cabinet Task Force was struck under the leadership of Marcel Masse. The task force was to conduct a review of all government programs with a view to: 1) cutting government spending and reducing the deficit; and 2) overhauling the bureaucracy and reducing the actual size of government. Although this Program Review differed from the Nielsen Task Force, being conducted by internal government bureaucrats, it also focused on expenditure reduction and government downsizing with an underlying goal of reduced federal government responsibility. Likewise, it did not consider Aboriginal rights, land claims, and fiduciary obligations of the federal government nor were Aboriginal people consulted.

A second Program Review was undertaken by the federal government in 1995-96. Once again the focus was on fiscal restraint with

little or no regard for neither the rights of Aboriginal peoples nor consideration of federal duties and responsibilities to them. In fact federal responsibilities were reduced to meeting minimum infrastructure, social assistance, and education up to grade 12 for those Indian people living on reserve.

Federal-provincial relations also suffered as a result of the budget reductions. Unilateral decision-making became the mode of the day. Federal-provincial social transfer payments through the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) and the Established Programs Financing (EPF) were phased out to be replaced with the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST). This change translated into a 7.4 billion dollar reduction that would be block funded, allowing provinces to set their own priorities as long as they met federal standards. The provinces, who had become dependent on the federal government, now had to face their own deficits just as First Nations governments and communities were being forced to (DJ Gangi & Jones, 1998).

These budget cuts were also accompanied by additional off-loading of responsibilities to provincial governments including services to First Nations peoples. The Premiers responded by taking the position that "the federal government [should] accept full responsibility for all programming for Aboriginal people, both on and off reserve, with a gradual transfer to Aboriginal communities" (Di Gangi & Jones, 1998, p. 183). Neither the federal government nor the provincial/territorial governments wanted to take responsibility for Aboriginal peoples, yet each had maintained the dependency of Aboriginal peoples through the denial of Aboriginal rights, land claims and treaty rights. This federal-provincial argument is a tradition that began with the colonization of Aboriginal peoples and will continue until Aboriginal peoples are self sufficient and self-governing.

To counter the federal government's unilateral decision making, in 1996, the Premiers established the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Council on Social Policy Renewal. This council was mandated to develop an approach to over' arching social policy issues of national importance. According to Minister Day, the council is "committed to finding ways to reduce overlap and duplication in social policy and program delivery. This will enhance the effectiveness or social program to the benefit of all Canadians" (<http://socialunion.gc.ca/news/96nov27e.html>, Feb., 21, '01). This examination of program overlap and duplication are not new. The Tory Task Force on Program Review undertaken in 1985 carried the same mandate. Likewise, Aboriginal voices in the design of the initiatives were absent in 1985 and continue to be absent.

On February 4, 1999, *A Framework to Improve the Social Union for Canadians An Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Governments of the Provinces and Territories* was developed by the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Council on Social Policy Renewal and signed. This framework will guide social policy including the *National Children's Agenda* for years to come. The Agreement was designed to "reflect and give expression to the fundamental values of Canadians - equality, respect for diversity, fairness, individual dignity and responsibility, and mutual aid and responsibilities for one another." The words and ideals put forth in this agreement were no different than those of previous government initiatives. ([Http://socialunion.gc.ca/news/020499\\_e.html](http://socialunion.gc.ca/news/020499_e.html), February 21,2001).

As the forgoing overview of policy initiatives reveals, Aboriginal people have been virtually left out of all policy decisions that affect their lives. Each decade has its program reviews, and new terms and ways of promoting government directions and policies. The goal of assimilation on the other hand has remained constant across the decades. As a result, Aboriginal peoples wage a constant struggle for recognition and rights that go unheeded by the federal government. It is within this historical and contemporary context that Aboriginal communities strive to develop their own early childhood services.

If anything, this history of assimilation cautions us to develop services that provide Aboriginal children with an opportunity to learn their own languages, values, and traditions. As children continue to live in a context of assimilation they fall prey to being a focal point for further assimilation policies and institutions. The implementation of formalized early childhood services in Aboriginal communities could easily become such institutions. The greatest violation of Aboriginal children's rights would be to develop and implement early childhood programs that would serve to assimilate them into a society other than that which is their birthright.

The following section examines current delivery of early childhood programs and services.

### **Program Implementation and Service Delivery**

Currently many programs and services are fragmented and lack coordination. The current thrust of Canadian social policy focuses on combating child poverty in Canada. Existing social programs are being examined for overlap and duplication. Where these characteristics exist the government offers integration and coordination of services as a solution. In their review of current early childhood program delivery, Morgan and McGettigan (1999) identify the lack of integration between programs and services as one of the most significant barriers to First Nations communities

in addressing the inadequacy of early childhood programs on reserve. They offer the First Nations Inuit Child Care Initiative and the Head Start Programs as examples saying that these programs are compartmentalized and take a narrow programmatic approach to their implementation by not having formal integration or coordination mechanisms built into either initiative.

Treasury Board and ministry specific requirements further limit the degree to which communities' needs can be met. Likewise these requirements, external to First Nations communities, restrict the amount of control communities have over services and programs. Traditionally governments "consult" with First Nations communities around program implementation, but rarely for assessing need or designing the program itself. In this program development model community control over services can only happen at the service delivery level thereby maintaining structural control with government.

In other instances, fragmented community delivery systems are often a result of federal and provincial programs separated and held apart by slightly different mandates or perceived differences. For example, the First Nations Inuit Child Care Initiative was promoted as a support for parents working or undertaking education or training while the Head Start Program focused on specific areas of children's development. Both programs are involved in the care and education of children regardless of parents' activities. In most cases these programs serve the same target group of children. While the First Nations Inuit Child Care Initiative does not have specified program components like those of the Head Start Program, the program principles of the Child Care Initiative serve the same purpose. In fact, the Child Care Initiative principles encompass the Head Start Program's components and go beyond to include other aspects of children's development. Despite these similarities there were no formal linkage, integration or coordination processes built into either program.

The following section describes examples of current attempts at the integration of unrelated programs.

### **Current Attempts at Program Integration**

In 1998, the federal government, through Human Resources Development Canada, implemented the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreements (AHRDA). These agreements included a one-envelope concept of funding that combined three new programs: (special needs, youth, and childcare) with the existing training and employment program. As a result of this integration of programs under one funding mechanism, British Columbia's overall budget was substantially reduced. This budget was further divided amongst 10 regional organizations

increasing administration costs significantly. In most other provinces, administrative expenditures were kept to a minimum by being divided between only one or two regional organizations.

In British Columbia, regional groups were expected to administer these new programs (i.e. special needs, youth and child care) that were for the most part unfamiliar to them. There was no orientation or education provided to administrators or staff of the regional groups about the new programs. In some cases the integrity of services is inadvertently compromised when administrators are asked to undertake administration of programs they are not familiar with. As a result, communities experienced confusion, delays in funding, and lack of program specific support. Transfer of the administration of childcare services from the British Columbia Aboriginal Child Care Society to the ten British Columbia Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreement holders in 1999 was a clear example of the problems.

Another significant implication of the integration of programs in the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreements (AHRDA) was its impact on existing regional organizations and structures already undertaking administration of the programs. Prior to the implementation of the AHRDA, programs had built their own infrastructures and were being delivered by First Nations program specific organizations. With the implementation of the AHRDA, this regional First Nations capacity was dismantled and the program specific focus of the administrative structures was lost. For example, in one region, the regional childcare office was closed and many centres that were once meeting community need were no longer sustainable with changes to the subsequent distribution formula at the regional level. In British Columbia, the First Nations childcare organization was forced to assume a different role and seek core-funding elsewhere. There was no regard for the destruction of the First Nations childcare capacity created since 1995 through Human Resources Development Canada's First Nations Inuit Child Care Initiative nor recognition of the organization's continued support of existing childcare services even after their core funding was stopped.

The Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreements (AHRDA) are an example of integrating the administration of four unrelated programs. As a result of this diversity many challenges arise. The new federal government Early Childhood Development Initiative is attempting to integrate related programs, however, there are many more considerations in the integration of programs. Some of those are listed below.

## **Considerations for Implementation of Integrated Programs**

The question of accountability is one that merits exploration when examining integration of services. Childcare is an area that requires accountability to many stakeholders, that is, children, parents, communities and funders. While fiscal accountability or administration of the accounts is relatively uncomplicated for either single or multiple programs, delineation of adequate and specific fiscal resources to program components is a much more complex undertaking. Linked to specific funding allocations is accountability with respect to quality and effectiveness of programming for the individuals it is serving. These processes require professional knowledge of the program as well as administrative skills. Simply administrating and reporting appropriately on paper is not enough when dealing with children's lives and the future of our communities, and nations.

Another point to consider in the integration and coordination of services is that these processes must happen at all government levels to be effective. Programs integrated at the federal level require reporting that encompasses more than one program, theoretically reducing the amount of administrative reporting required by communities. However, if federal programs are delivered in an unrelated manner, as they are now, the burden of multiple reporting structures remains despite communities being encouraged to integrate programs at the service delivery level. Current integration of programs and services at the community level are a result of fiscal necessity not because of program duplication or overlap, or an abundance of funding. In many cases, if funds were reduced programs and services would cease to exist.

Integration as described in the previous paragraphs, focuses on some of the realities of implementing programs and services. In their examination of service integration, Morgan and McGettigan (1999) identified opportunities for broad program and service integration by identifying common issues and challenges to integrating four different social programs, i.e., health, education, childcare, and child welfare. These areas included:

- ❖ **Jurisdiction:** - must be recognized in each program area.
- ❖ **Conflict of laws:** - a process is required for resolving any conflicts between the laws of different jurisdictions that apply concurrently in each of the programs.
- ❖ **Ability to contract:** - each service provider needs to be able to contract with its funder, employees etc.

- ❖ **Structures for accountability and oversight:** - each service provider needs to have a system of accountability to a political body and, in some cases, it may be helpful for a separate body to have a role in overseeing how it conducts its affairs.
- ❖ **Mechanism to protect from liability:** - each service provider should have a mechanism to protect the governing body and employees from liability for their actions and decisions taken in their general line of work.
- ❖ **Funding:** - A mechanism is required to fund:
  - 1) Capital costs such as: construction, furnishings and equipment, extensions, renovations, and replacement of buildings
  - 2) Operational costs such as design, delivery, and evaluation of programs, maintenance and operation of buildings and facilities.
- ❖ **Empowerment of officials:** - in some cases officials must be granted specific powers allowing them to require that others abide by their requests (e.g., right to remove children from an unsafe environment, right to require a facility to close until certain standards are met).
- ❖ **Enforcement mechanisms:** - are required in order to enforce decisions made by certain officials or tribunals.
- ❖ **Development of regulations and policy:** - First Nations statutes must allow for the development of regulations and administrative policy.
- ❖ **Mechanisms for linking to existing system (intergeneration):** - are needed to delegate to and receive delegations from other governments.
- ❖ **Transferability between First Nations and other systems:** - mechanisms must be developed allowing individual First Nations people to transfer into the federal or provincial system or another First Nation's system in a particular area.
- ❖ **Civil service:** each of the service providers must have employees and contractors to run its programs and may need to develop a civil



service structure to deal with employees of First Nations or First Nation authorities.

- ❖ **Capacity building:** - on-going mechanisms are required to ensure each of the service providers can, to an increasing degree, hire the skilled people it requires from among the First Nation's citizens.
- ❖ **Administration:** - each of the program areas will each require administrative support.
- ❖ **Libraries and resource materials:** - resource materials and library should be available to employees or clients of the programs.
- ❖ **Research and program development:** - each of the service providers will be required to conduct research and develop new culturally-appropriate approaches to and programs for providing services in all program areas.
- ❖ **Standards:** - each of the service providers will need to be able to develop and implement standards in each of the four areas for issues including; building codes for special facilities (such as schools, hospitals, day cares), standards for the program delivery and standards for the employees delivering the programs.
- ❖ **Emergency measures:** - for dealing with emergencies affecting the whole community must be developed.
- ❖ **Access to information:** - for planning and strategic purposes, First Nations need to have access to information and data from government and other sources. First Nations also need to have input into the design of information collection initiatives, such as the census, to ensure that the final product reflects their needs for information.
- ❖ **Evaluation:** - each program will require a process for evaluating the effectiveness of programs meeting their goals (Moran & Mcgettigan 1999, pp. 57-60).

This list represents challenges that may or may not exist for one program or another, although attaining self-sufficiency and self-governance is common to all. Early childhood education development programs offer a unique situation, in that, several discrete programs share, if not all, parts of a common vision for children, families and communities. The greatest

difference between these programs is their program parameters and administrative procedures. Integration of related programs seems to make sense from both a content and administrative perspective. The programs share pieces of a common vision while at the same time restoring and maintaining the integrity of each. In an even broader context, related early childhood programs provide structural and moral opportunities for communities to assume control and be accountable for the care of their children.

### **Integration, A Continuum ...**

Despite barriers and challenges and the risk of assimilation, there is a critical need to consider effective ways of program and service delivery in First Nations communities. Integration of programs and services as defined by First Nations communities may occur as the following:

- 1) Full Integration: where administrative structures including one body undertake licensing and monitoring of services. This body may be at the community, provincial or federal levels from for the integration and coordination of children' s services and programs. For this structure to be effective programs integrated must share both philosophical and administrative commonalities. In this model program implementation are undertaken together in a seamless manner.
- 2) Administrative Integration: Common administrative structures service more than one program thereby streamlining and reducing the administrative capacity demands at the community level. Implementation of services occurs independently for each program. They may employ coordination agreements or informal linkages between programs.
- 3) No Integration: This may also be called the status quo. There are no formal mechanisms for integration of programs or services either administratively or in implementation at any level. Different approaches are applied to each program. These diverse approaches are sometimes necessary when considering the unique needs of communities.

### **Conclusion**

More effective delivery of programs and services in First Nations communities is a common goal to all stakeholders for many diverse reasons. Whatever mechanisms or processes, be it integration models, coordination agreements or informal program linkages, that First Nations communities

decide to employ they will have to be vigilant about government agendas and policies that seek to reduce funds, undermine the integrity of programs, dismantle existing productive structures and off load federal responsibilities to either provincial or First Nations governments. Perpetuation of assimilation into broader Canadian society remains an unacceptable goal.

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# NATIVE SOCIAL WORK JOURNAL

*Aboriginal Children & Youth, Issues & Challenges*

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The Native Social Work Journal is a member of the Canadian  
Association of Learned Societies

Volume 4, December 2003

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Published by the Native Social Work Journal  
Laurentian University  
Sudbury, Ontario  
[www.laurentian.ca/www/nhs/](http://www.laurentian.ca/www/nhs/)

Printed by the Laurentian University Press  
Sudbury, Ontario

Cover Artwork by Leland Bell (Bebaminojmat)

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