NATIVE FAMILY WELL-BEING IN URBAN SETTINGS

A CULTURE BASED CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES MODEL

Native Child and Family Services of Toronto

December, 1990

NATIVE CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES OF TORONTO

VISION STATEMENT

"Native Child and Family Services of Toronto strives to provide for a life of quality, well being, caring and healing for our children and families in the Toronto Native Community. It does this by creating a services model that is culture-based, respecting the values of Native peoples, the extended family, and the right to self-determination."

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INTRODUCTION

This document describes an organizational and service model for Native Child And Family Services of Toronto. The model summarizes a core statement of service philosophy, principles, goals and objectives, and practices.

The model evolved from:

(a) broad consultation with N.C.F.S.T.'s staff and Board;

(b) action research with a sample of elders and traditional people, local Native service staff, clients, community members and government officials; and,

(c) a sample review of existing Native service literature and program descriptions. For details, see Appendix "A".

Many services described in the following pages are now being provided by Native Child and Family Services. However, the agency does not currently offer all services. Budget limitations will likely prevent immediate full implementation of the model. However, the model stands as a comprehensive system of services which, with time, financial support and development, will respond to the needs of Native people in Toronto. In short, the model is a service ideal which guides the agency's planning and development. The vision, principles and goals provide the foundation, direction and energy for its eventual implementation.

I. THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THE MODEL

The service model described in later sections is consistent with Native Child and Family Services' core philosophy. The agency's philosophy refers to its general values, beliefs and concepts. The service model is somewhat more specific in spelling out the anticipated community and client changes, as well as service approaches implied by the philosophy.

This section presents a statement of N.C.F.S.T.'s philosophical core.

1. GENERAL PRINCIPLES, VALUES AND BELIEFS

(a) The cultural base of organization and services

The vision statement indicates that the agency's operations and services should be based in the culture of Native people. From a service view-point, this means that the fundamental meanings of Native culture, particularly those ideas concerning why certain things are desirable, should be reflected in organizational forms of service, as well as in service practice.

It is assumed that the fundamental meanings of all traditional forms can be recovered and provide the basis for health-promoting helping practices and organizational structures. For example, the talking circle embodies several important values. These include: the right and opportunity for everyone to express his/her point of view, the right to be heard without interruption or disagreement, and the importance of clear understanding of all view-points. These fundamental meanings or values can be incorporated into other current practices, such as community meetings, family counselling, and self-help groups.

(b) Supreme values

Supreme values refer to the core, general ideals giving direction to thinking and action. They provide ideas of the desirable in human life. In an organization like N.C.F.S.T., such values should ideally permeate the agency policies, programs and practices. The agency vision statement emphasizes the importance of values by indicating that services shall respect the supreme values of Native people.

The following values have been identified:

- kindness
- strength
- bravery
- humility
- friendship

- honesty
- sharing
- wisdom
- trust
- respect

As the implementation of the service model proceeds, efforts will be made to draw out implications for agency policies and practices.

(c) Beliefs

Interviews, meetings and writings by Native people suggest a number of beliefs which may be common to all Native cultures.

- the child is sacred

- parents do not own the child but are granted the responsibility from the Creator for raising the child

- the importance of extended relationships with the family and community at large; this belief gives emphasis to tribal or community (i.e. collective) care and responsibility

- knowledge is viewed as a group rather than an individual resource; this idea is reflected in the norms and practices embodied in the talking circle.

- the importance of living in harmony with nature; there is no real separation between persons and nature; one is an extension of the other and both are needed to make a whole.

- must consider the effects of today's decisions seven generations into the future.

- the importance of family unity in the natural family; as one Elder said, "Never give up on the biological family!"

- Native people have the right to self-determination.

- the ultimate mandate comes from the Creator.

Given the vision's emphasis on culture-based services, the identification of Native supreme values needs to be entrenched in the operations of the agency through such activities as training and community education.

(d) Holistic understanding and service

The agency's emphasis on developing productive and integrated inter-relationships between children and families and between families and the community implies a holistic approach to assessment and service. Simply stated, family and community problems or strengths are best understood from a perspective which includes the influence of several interacting factors.

Service plans reflecting holistic perspectives typically work with several negative influences in the family's life while building on existing strengths. As well, a holistic service philosophy encourages co-ordination of several levels of support and healing. Social planning approaches, activism, or community development methods aim to change the root causes of problems often found in the larger social and economic environment.

Finally, the principle of holistic service requires strong and consistent efforts to integrate the various organizational parts of the agency and to assure that organizational arrangements support service delivery.

(e) A life of quality

N.C.F.S.T. services strive to help Native families in Toronto live a life of quality. This commitment emphasizes that, unlike the crisis or "problem-solving" approach of many agencies, N.C.F.S.T. services will contribute to the positive growth of families and communities.

In the process of developing this service model, a number of community groups were asked to discuss their enjoyments in life and their typical hopes and aspirations. Many of the answers, for example, "affordable housing", "accessibility to community resources", "affordable social, recreational, and sports activities" are shared with the population at large. Other aspirations, such as "interactions with other Native people, with opportunities to learn culture and other sources of Native pride" represent fairly unique life of quality matters. A "life of quality" is difficult to define and means different things to different communities. To understand and contribute to a life of quality, N.C.F.S.T. will continue these kinds of focused discussions with community groups.

For more details on the discussions with community groups, see Appendix "B".

(f) Family well-being

N.C.F.S.T. helps Native families achieve a life of quality through the enhancement of **family well-being**. Again, N.C.F.S.T. must continually discuss and seek clarification of this quality. Community discussions suggest that well-being can be achieved through ...

- the family's ability to access and use available resources in the urban environment

- its ability to take responsibility for its own problem-solving and healing, thus gradually achieving independence from formal services

- establishing strong and meaningful relationships within the city for fulfilling a life of quality

- maintaining an appropriate balance between the family activities (eg. child-rearing, employment, love and affection, household tasks, etc.) so that some things are not done at the expense of the others

- finding ways to share and maintain values and sentiments including those (eg. kindness and respect) which are particularly important to Native people.

(g) The child in the family: family focus

A child and family services model based on holistic understanding will help the child as an individual through such services as counselling, art, play therapy and the like. However, the services or programs will be planned from a family perspective or focus. This means that the child's behavior, including the presenting problems, would always be viewed as interconnected with family processes.

As well, the appropriate service planning for the child will consider both the beneficial consequences for the child and the positive or negative consequences for the family as a whole. Efforts will be made to seek greater balance over disharmony. For example, a customary care placement with an aunt may meet the child's needs for temporary care while the parents receive treatment. However, if tensions exist between the customary care-giver and the natural parents, the over-all harmony may be disturbed. Such an arrangement may not provide a stable over-all healthy placement and may even weaken relationships after the child returns to the parents.

2. SERVICE, PROGRAM, AND ORGANIZATIONAL PRINCIPLES

Service and program principles refer to somewhat more specific guidelines for how one actually provides services and designs programs. They help staff and board make action decisions relevant to the day-to-day life of the agency. Principles typically reflect the agency's philosophical core, including the vision. Thus far, the following principles have been identified:

(a) SERVICE AND PROGRAM PRINCIPLES

(i) Customary care

Where possible, the family's extended family members or local Native community will be involved in the care of the child when the parents are in need of support.

In the case of child placements, the following options will guide placement decisions. Specific priorities will depend on whether the placement is an emergency placement, temporary or long-term. Also, decisions will take into account the parents' wishes. The following summarizes placement options:

1. First Nation communities

2. Extended family members within the city

3. Extended family members outside the city

4. Close friends of the family within the city, i.e. members of the immediate "family network"

5. Friends of the family outside of the city

6. Other Native families within the city

7. Other Native families outside the city

8. Non-Native families within the city

9. Non-Native families outside the city

(ii) Parental consent

As much as possible, the immediate parents of the child will fully participate in service planning, placement and other key service decisions. Ultimately, parents will be fully involved and agreeable to the steps taken to work towards their well-being.

(iii) Planning for family well-being

Service activities and temporary placements will be guided by an over-all plan to restore the family's well-being. Placements, services and other arrangements for clients will be recognized as means towards ends, and not as ends in themselves.

(iv) Self-help

Service programs, plans and practices will be designed and conducted to help individuals, families and communities be independent, resourceful and eventually able to solve their own problems. Services will aim to enhance people's control over their own lives. The client is assured of rights and choices and is helped to access the resources for enacting these choices. In programs and services, the professional-client relationship is one of collaboration. Clients have natural skills and competencies which can be used to resolve their own problems in living.

(v)   Self-Advocacy

Related to the above principle, the advocacy roles in the
agency aim to help clients become self-advocates. This
means that clients will eventually have the knowledge,
skills and confidence to look after their own interests
in relation to the various institutions in urban
settings. Clients will gradually become independent of
service agencies.

(vi) Natural parent participation

Where children require temporary placement, the natural
parents will be involved with the co-parents and the
child in a "temporary parenting system". This
arrangement will benefit all parties and help reinforce
the natural parents' primary responsibility.

(vii) Natural family permanency

As best as possible, the ultimate aim of planning is to
maintain or return the child to natural parents.

(b)   ORGANIZATIONAL PRINCIPLES

(i)   Service role flexibility

To encourage the interdependence of services, staff will
not work according to overly rigid specialized roles.
As much as possible, those responsible for the various
agency service areas will be aware of, and contribute to,
other services.

(ii) Organizational co-operation

A holistic service model requires special organizational support. Efforts to improve so many aspects of peoples lives require broad co-operation between specialized approaches encouraged by constant interchange between community agencies and groups. N.C.F.S.T services and roles will mesh with services delivered by other Native organizations resulting in joint program and case planning, mutual training and consultation, team work and collaborative problem-solving.

(iii) The entrenchment of culturally-based services and organizational arrangements

The agency will work towards a holistic system of culturally-based services, programs and practices. Although the details of these may not be known in advance, regular "organizational learning" arrangements will be put in place to identify appropriate principles of practice according to Native culture.

(iv) The decentralization of service delivery

Native Child and Family Services will provide services in safe, natural and familiar locations. Client comfort and access will be strong considerations. Strong co-operation with other agencies, neighbourhood groups and institutions will be necessary.

The agency will consider using neighbourhoods of heavily populated Native people as equivalent to the small community. Service delivery, programming, volunteer and customary care mobilization, community-based training, local decision-making by family support committees could all be neighbourhood-based.

(v) Evaluation and service development

Innovation in servicing Native people in urban settings will be an on-going commitment. This will be supported by regular evaluation of all efforts. This suggests that all staff should consciously describe and share their rationales linking service plans and desired outcomes. At the program level, all programs should be evaluated for (a) how closely they reflect original planning (b) efficient use of financial and human resources, and (c) impact on program participants.

The agency will consider the development of a "participatory evaluation" or self-study model for program evaluation in which staff and clients are involved in design, data collection and interpretation of results. This approach to evaluation and program decision-making is educational and empowering.

II. THE N.C.F.S.T. ORGANIZATION AND SERVICE MODEL

1. Introduction: Four Direction Developmental Process

The Native Child and Family Service of Toronto model was developed using the traditional Medicine Wheel design, containing the four stages: VISION, TIME, KNOWING and DOING. Each stage of the four directional framework holds its own special significance and leads to the unfolding and to the understanding of the subsequent stages. Movement around the circle is from VISION to DOING.

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                    DOING
                    ____
                   /    \
KNOWING           |      |           VISION
                   \____/

                    TIME
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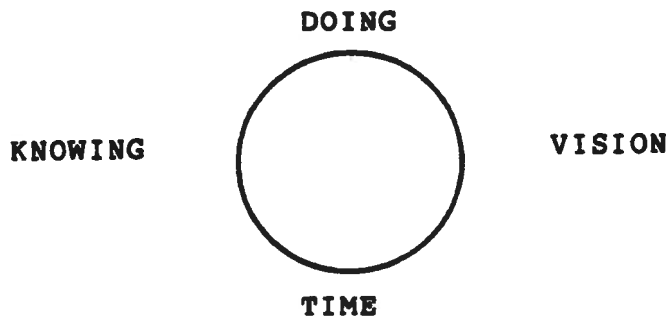
Everything always begin at the VISION stage, i.e. seeing the design with all its interconnected relationships determines the direction and integrity of the whole model. Our VISION is to create a context of caring, good relationships and positive community experience that will sustain a life of quality and promote respect and well-being for our families and our children. This VISION, recognizing the holistic relationship, will enable the development of the most successful and meaningful service and create the opportunity for healing to begin in our community.

TIME actually refers to the time it takes to experience or relate to the people, to the community and to the situation as it exists. If we have a good VISION, we begin to see relationships that nurture the kind of community imagined in the VISION. It takes time to know and understand the relationships.

The next section of the circle deals with **relationships.** The recognition of the importance of a healthy community comprised of healthy extended families is critical to both understanding and realizing the VISION. The VISION can only be realized in the context of a caring community aware not only of its right to self-determination but of the responsibilities that accompany this right. N.C.F.S.T. understands its responsibility to assist in ensuring that the means are available to strengthen the extended family and to develop a caring community aware of its responsibility for our children.

KNOWING comes next. In order to achieve that quality of life we envision, we need to develop the awareness within ourselves, our families and our community of the values and the cultural foundations that inform us of our potential for integrity as individuals and of our potential for strength as families coming together in a healthy community. We need to learn those skills and acquire those resources that will enable us to take the greatest advantage of the opportunities that are available to provide for our livelihood and to fulfil our responsibility to provide for the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being of our families. The development of this fundamental understanding of our culture, combined with the knowledge and skill necessary for successful every day family living, are the necessary foundation for any initiative of N.C.F.S.T.

DOING is the fourth step of this circular process. It results from paying careful attention to the VISION, TIME and KNOWING processes and acting accordingly. The most effective action toward personal, family and community healing must acknowledge this holistic process leading to the development of an empowered community which has the opportunity to build upon the strength of its own culture.

In order to provide appropriate and effective service to the families and children of the Native community of Toronto, N.C.F.S.T. will always recognize the knowledge base of our culture and promote the most positive values within the context of a caring community committed to self-determination. The belief in our ability to heal ourselves and our potential to achieve a life of quality as Native people will direct our behaviour.

2. VISION

The agency's Vision Statement is an ideal which summarizes the direction and integrity of the whole system within the agency:

> " Native Child and Family Services of Toronto strives to provide for a life of quality, well-being, caring, and healing for our children and families in the Toronto Native community. It does this by creating a service model that is culture-based, respects the supreme values of Native people and the extended family, and the right to self-determination."

3. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Vision Statement, combined with communications from community consultations, produced four broad goals for agency development and service delivery.

Goal 1:   To create and maintain a culture-based agency of service, healing and well-being for Native individuals and families that contributes to the development of a whole and healthy Native community.

Objectives (to achieve the goal)

o   To create and maintain an organizational framework that reflects the Native model of development and service.

o   To implement the appropriate mechanisms for entrenching in the agency culture-based methods and operations which promote self-determination and interdependence, of individuals, families and communities.

o   To develop a secure and on-going resource base to guarantee quality operation, programs and services that meaningfully respond to the needs of the Native community.

Goal 2:   To develop an integrated network of effective programs and positive relationships for a caring and supportive environment.

Objectives (to achieve the goal)

o   To foster the reunification between urban Native families, their extended families and home communities

o   To develop a Native appropriate program and network of intervention for temporary and long-term care.

o   To develop Native community involvement programs relevant to children, youth, relationships, family life, child-rearing and living in the community.

o   To develop the natural helping network within the Native community.

Goal 3:   To develop awareness of the culture, along with the knowledge, skills and attitudes for contemporary Native health, well-being and self-determination.

Objectives (to achieve the goal)

o   To develop culturally appropriate approaches and activities to facilitate Native teaching, cultural awareness and cultural revitalization.

o   To develop skills for the application of Native knowledge, values and culture for Native-appropriate services and family living.

o   To develop the knowledge and skills for strengthening wholesome parenting and family management.

o   To develop appropriate individual and organizational skills for enhancing community leadership, self-sufficiency, and access to resources.

Goal 4: To provide Native-appropriate support services and resources for child and family care, healing and well-being.

<u>Objectives</u> (to achieve the goal)

o To protect Native children whose physical and emotional well-being are at risk.

o To help restore personal and emotional well-being to the victims of child neglect, sexual abuse and family violence.

o To help restore child and family well-being through counselling, referrals and family-focused or individual treatment.

o To support families whose intra-familial developmental or external life stresses weaken the quality of parenting

o To advocate on behalf of Native families who are experiencing difficulties in meeting their needs in relation to urban institutions.

4. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The N.C.F.S.T. model proposes a comprehensive set of organizational activities and services to help build strong Native communities, and to provide care and teaching to enhance Native family well-being while offering a healing process to those experiencing stress and pain.

The model anticipates four broad outcomes:
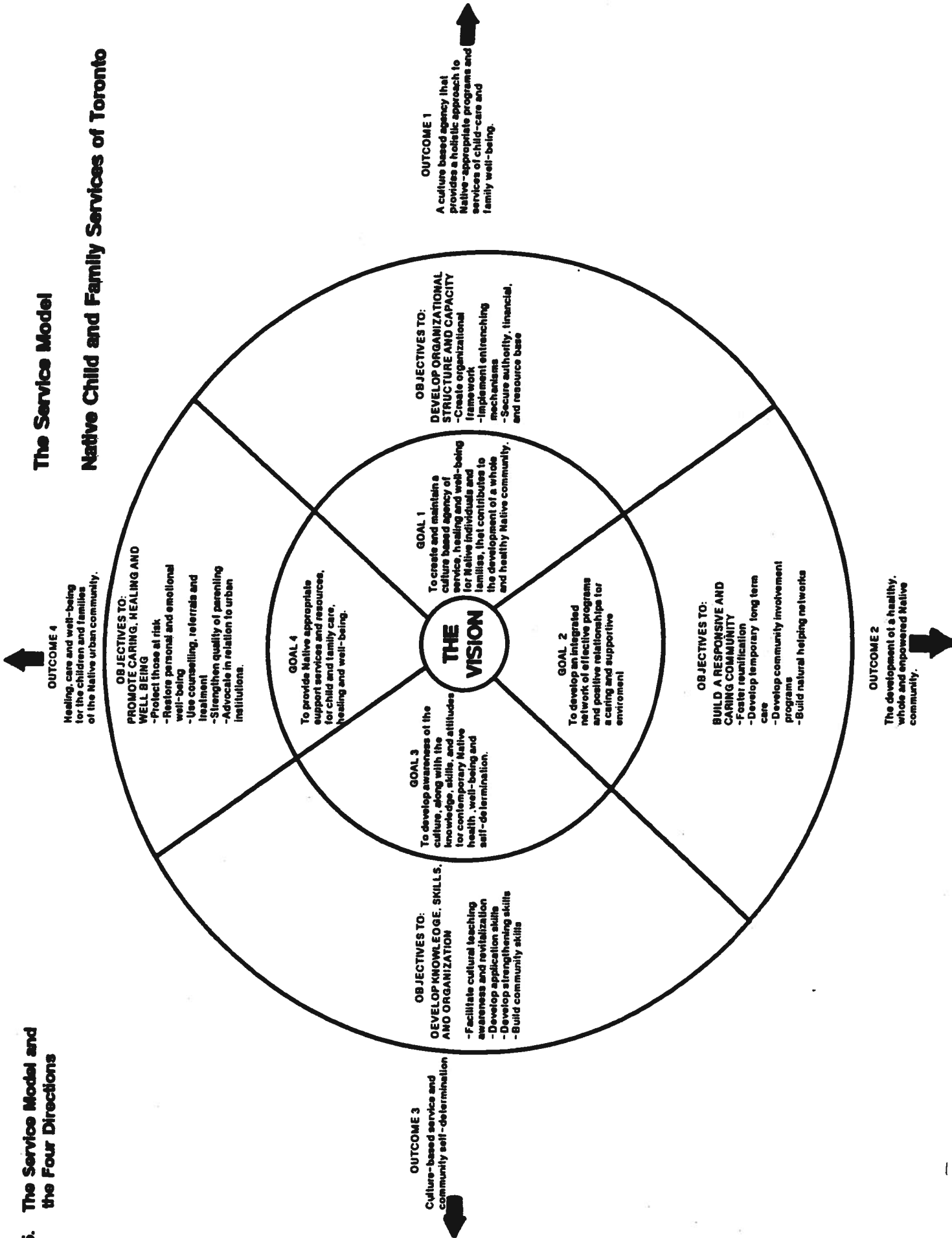
(1) A culture-based agency that provides a holistic approach to Native-appropriate programs and services of child-care and family well-being.

(2) The further development of a healthy, whole and empowered Native community.

(3) Culture-based service and community self-determination.

(4) Healing, care and well-being for the children and families of the Native urban community.

5. **The Service Model and the Four Directions**

The Service Model

Native Child and Family Services of Toronto

OUTCOME 1

A culture based agency that provides a holistic approach to Native-appropriate programs and services of child-care and family well-being.

OBJECTIVES TO:

DEVELOP ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND CAPACITY
- Create organizational framework
- Implement entrenching mechanisms
- Secure authority, financial, and resource base

GOAL 1

To create and maintain a culture based agency of service, healing and well-being for Native individuals and families, that contributes to the development of a whole and healthy Native community.

THE VISION

GOAL 4

To provide Native appropriate support services and resources, for child and family care, healing and well-being.

OBJECTIVES TO:

PROMOTE CARING, HEALING AND WELL BEING
- Protect those at risk
- Restore personal and emotional well-being
- Use counselling, referrals and treatment
- Strengthen quality of parenting
- Advocate in relation to urban institutions.

OUTCOME 4

Healing, care and well-being for the children and families of the Native urban community.

GOAL 2

To develop an integrated network of effective programs and positive relationships for a caring and supportive environment

OBJECTIVES TO:

BUILD A RESPONSIVE AND CARING COMMUNITY
- Foster reunification
- Develop temporary long term care
- Develop community involvement programs
- Build natural helping networks

OUTCOME 2

The development of a healthy, whole and empowered Native community.

GOAL 3

To develop awareness of the culture, along with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes for contemporary Native health, well-being and self-determination.

OBJECTIVES TO:

DEVELOP KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ORGANIZATION
- Facilitate cultural teaching awareness and revitalization
- Develop application skills
- Develop strengthening skills
- Build community skills

OUTCOME 3

Culture-based service and community self-determination

6. **PRACTICES AND ACTIVITIES**

To fulfil the above goals and objectives, the agency will
utilize a broad range of community development, teaching,
supportive and healing activities.

(a) **Agency organizational development**

*   development and on-going refinement of a culture-
    based service model in the context of an urban
    environment

*   entrenchment of supreme Native values in the
    policies and operations of the agency

*   enlisting a Board of Directors representative of
    the people who accept the value of the culture-based
    approach and who are empowered with the authority
    and policy to direct a sound and productive approach
    to Native child and family services

*   foster the effective cooperation and a support of
    the urban Native organizational network with respect
    to serving children and families

*   on-going consultation with Elders and traditional
    teachers to advise and provide guidance for the
    culture-based direction of the agency

*   encourage the development of a "direct service
    providers network".

*   affect government policy to assure that off-reserve
    community controlled Native child welfare services
    are legitimized and entrenched

- link with on-reserve and Native community agencies and Native communities to assure that services are consistent from the reserve to the urban environment

- establish effective working relationships with the dominant society agencies (eg. development of protocols)

- further the right to self-determination through the community control of institutions

(b) Practices for building responsive and caring community relationships

- cultural awareness workshops on the subject of traditional family life and child-rearing for Native service agencies and institutions. Such workshops would aim to create discussion and learning of Native fundamental values for urban living.

- cultural awareness and revitalization workshops for the Native people in Toronto focusing on family, children and "helping" themes. Such workshops could aim to help people apply fundamental values

- mobilization of natural helpers and care-givers within the Native community including recruitment, preparation and support of volunteers, Native foster homes, customary care homes and the like.

- consultation and cultural awareness meetings for non-Native agencies. These could be either special events or on-going collaborations with other agencies.

- traditional methods for building a "sense of Native community", concentrating on children and family themes (eg. Elders' workshops, teaching circles, summer camps)

- repatriation practices: community education, agency awareness, identification of families and children, assessment, location, facilitation of home visits, legal status clarification, research on child, facilitating community adjustment.

- institutional linkage-building with other Native and non-Native agencies

- locality development: local institutional/organizational development and other community development methods for helping communities initiate changes towards well-being for families and children

- lobbying for government policy response to important issues affecting Native families and children.

(c) Practices for teaching knowledge, skills and organizational capacities

- public education for Native people

- life skills training for specific Native groups such as single parents, adolescents and recent arrivals to the city

- one-to-one life skills coaching

- peer support and other mutual help programs directed to urban adjustment and survival with emphasis on role modelling and the sharing of peoples' natural skills

(d)   Practices for the promotion of care, health and well-being

- customary care placements for short-term, long-term, indefinite and emergency living arrangements

- individual counselling and therapy

- family-focused counselling and therapy

- group counselling and therapy

- in-home parental support (home care providers)

- family support referrals

CONCLUSION

The N.C.F.S.T. now faces the challenge of the implementation of this culture-based service model. The vision is clear. The responsibility to provide the means to assist in the healing process has begun. The implementation of the model will demonstrate the Native community's right to self-determination.

APPENDIX "A"

STAGES IN THE PROCESS OF AGENCY MODEL DEVELOPMENT:
TIMING, SOURCES OF INFORMATION, PRODUCTS.

STAGES IN THE PROCESS OF AGENCY MODEL DEVELOPMENT:

TIMING, SOURCES OF INFORMATION, PRODUCTS

INTRODUCTION

The following pages contain a summary of the main stages and events in the Native Child and Family Services service model development project. For each stage, a list of the available written documents is provided.

MODEL DEVELOPMENT: DATES, SOURCES OF INFORMATION, AND PRODUCTS

1. **Literature review** (Dec. 27, 1988-May 23, 1989)

   Available Documents:

   (i) "Issues Document for a Model of Native Child Service" (Jan. 1989)

   (ii) "Notes on Analysis of Urban Native Services" (May, 1989)

2. **Community Consultation**

   (a) **Individual interviews** (Feb. 17-Apr. 17, 1989)

   Available Documents:

   (i) "Results of Individual Informant Survey: Raw Data Listing" (Mar. 1989)

   (ii) "Themes from Data Collection" (Mar. 1989)

   (iii) "Social and Cultural Realities of Urban Natives: A Theme Paper Based on Literature Review and Interviews" (Mar. 8, 1989)

   (iv) "Practice Options Discussion Sheet: Draft 1" (Mar. 1989)

   (v) "Practice Options Discussion Sheet: Draft 2" (Mar. 14, 1989)

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(b) Community and Staff Meetings (Mar. 13-April 27, 1989)

Available Documents:

(i) "Summary of First Meeting with N.C.F.S.T. Staff" (Mar. 17, 1989)

(ii) "Summary of Second Meeting with N.C.F.S.T. Staff" (April 20, 1989)

(iii) "Consultation With Groups of Native Agency Representatives: Summary of Main Points" (April 13, 1989)

(iv) "Meeting With Service Agency Representatives: Notes" (April 13, 1989)

(v) "Second Meeting With Service Provider Group" (April 27, 1989)

(vi) "Meeting With Gabriel Dumont Tenants: Summary Notes" (April, 1989)

(vii) "Discussion Notes With Children And Staff Of The Wandering Spirit Survival School" (Mar. 30, 1989)

3. Draft Model Writing (April 7, 1989-Jan.13, 1990)

Available Documents:

Several written drafts of model.

4. Viamede Conference (May 25-30, 1989)

Available Documents

"Summary Notes on the Vision-Building Meeting at Viamede Resort", May 26-28, 1989. (July 6, 1989)

5.   Board/Staff Discussions of Model Drafts   (July 6- Dec. 27, 1989)

6.   Development of Implementation Guidelines   (Sept. 20, 1989-Jan. 13, 1990)

      Available Documents:

      "Service Model Implementation: Notes And Guidelines" (Jan., 1990)

APPENDIX "B"

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION: PROCESS AND RESULTS

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION: PROCESS AND RESULTS

In preparing for the development of the N.C.F.S.T. service and organizational model a series of individual interviews and small group meetings were held with Native service providers, community members, clients, government officials and mainstream agency staff.

The results of these consultations were later shared with N.C.F.S.T. staff, management, and the project Advisory Committee in a traditional process of learning, sharing, discussion and further refinement. The Vision Statement along with cultural teachings were introduced into later discussions.

A number of ideas were communicated from consultations with community members.

A.   OBSERVATIONS ABOUT NATIVE PEOPLE IN TORONTO

1.   INTRODUCTION

From the view-point of good problem-solving, all service models should determine and make explicit observations about their communities. This helps to assure that services are appropriate and that the rationale for different services is clear. Such clarity also aids on-going development and evaluation of services.

The information in this section resulted from a series of community interviews. It is a starting point only and requires on-going up-grading and refinement. Not only does it help to clarify one's assumptions about the community, but as an information gathering process it hopefully leaves community members with a strong sense of their ability to discuss their lives and needs and contribute to their own destiny.

Source of observations

Below is a three-part summary of perceptions concerning the Native population in Toronto. This information is based on:

- interviews with Native service providers in Toronto

- three focus group sessions with members of Native communities in Toronto

- early meetings with the N.C.F.S.T. Advisory Group

These sessions produced a number of observations which can form a tentative set of assumptions about the potential service population. As the agency continues to grow, these observations should be expanded and refined through experience and research.

In the following pages, three important categories of information will be presented:

a) The nature of the Native community in Toronto

b) The nature of a life of quality

c) Problems faced by Native people

2. THE NATIVE COMMUNITY IN TORONTO

i) Native people do not live in one geographical area in Toronto, but live in several parts of the city.

ii) The Native population is comprised of groups who are permanent Toronto residents and people who are transient.

iii) Some Native people are highly traditional in their lives, others are acculturated to the dominant society. Some blend elements of traditional and urban social values and life-styles.

iv)   Many Native people in Toronto have a strong sense of being part of a Native community; others do not.

v)   Some, though not all, live a "commuter" pattern of back and forth mobility between Toronto and their rural communities.

vi)   Some Natives have broad connections to the wider urban scene, including urban institutions, but many others have few involvements with urban institutions.

vii) Many Natives have a wide range of contacts with friends and relatives within the city; those with problems tend to be socially isolated.

viii) Native institutional development within the city is more or less restricted to service agencies, political organizations, and a few small businesses.

ix)   Many tribal backgrounds and cultures are represented in the city.

3. THE NATURE OF A LIFE OF QUALITY

Native Child and Family Services of Toronto seeks to help Native families achieve a life of quality. Consultation with Native adults and children suggest that the following are highly valued:

i)   Affordable housing with good facilities and accessibility to valued community resources.

ii)   Accessibility to stores and recreational facilities.

iii) Interaction with other Native people with opportunities to learn culture and other sources of Native pride.

iv)   Affordable social, recreational and sports activities for children and adults.

v)   Close friendship relationships with members of the same and opposite sex.

vi)   Quality child care and parenting.

vii) Opportunities for interaction and strong relationships between groups of parents.

viii) Being able to count on neighbours for assistance as needed (eg. food, baby-sitting)

ix)   Relationships of liking, respect, and helpfulness between the age generations. (eg. older children taking care of younger kids)

x)   Being able to solve own problems through mutual planning and action: self-help, attendance at tenants meetings, etc.

xi)   Good jobs.

xii) To be unique but contributing members of society

xiii) Good educational system which responds to Native people, conveys positive images and helps them to get off welfare.

xiv) Pleasant peer relations, free of prejudice.

xv)   Opportunities for recreation and socializing in the open space and generally getting "relief from the city".

xvi) Opportunities to retain contacts with rural communities.

xvii) Health and nutrition.

xviii) Clean environments.

4.   PROBLEMS FACED BY NATIVE PEOPLE

The early community research and service provider meetings also yielded considerable information on the stresses and problems faced by Toronto's Native people. Whether the result of the well-documented negative social and economic conditions or unfortunate background events, some Native people conduct their lives in ways which are either harmful to themselves or others. These behaviors are a sign that they are not living a life of quality. A listing of such problem behaviors would include:

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- child abuse and neglect
- sexual abuse
- wife battery and family violence
- alcohol/drug abuse
- depression
- adolescent problems
- suicides/suicide attempts

Conditions which appear to contribute to the above problems

A broad range of interacting causes or conditions are perceived as responsible for these difficulties:

- inadequate parenting knowledge and skills.

- cultural conditions: differences, shock, loss.

- economic factors: poverty, unemployment, low paying jobs, discrimination, turnover.

- insufficient or inadequate housing

- broken or transient family structures (eg. single parents)

- limited support within the family

- social isolation

- inadequacies of agency structures and operations

- substance abuse

- alienation and social isolation

- not being raised by one's own parents (eg. foster family, residential school, etc.)

- weaknesses/disorganization in home and local community

B. EXPECTATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A SERVICE AGENCY

Several broad observations and community expectations are summarized below since they, along with the agency vision, have provided the main direction for model development. Community members recommended that:

- The agency should exercise a strong prevention approach in its service delivery through public education and teaching of high risk groups. Such efforts should respect and build on Native culture.

- Although the agency should take a strong prevention approach, services should also respond to the problems of family violence, child neglect, alcohol abuse, isolation and alienation within the city.

- The difficulties experienced by Native people in Toronto were attributed to cultural differences, economics, lack of family support, inadequate parenting skills, poor housing, substance abuse and unresponsive community agencies.

- Recommended general service approaches include: an emphasis on prevention, community education, culturally appropriate approaches, family support, promotion of family wellness, community institutional development, and crisis intervention.

- The agency should develop an identifiable style based on a clear, self-conscious and coherent approach.

- A broad range of volunteer helpers should be used, including: other parents, Elders, older children, friends and customary care providers.

- Native culture, beliefs and practices should be the foundation for service development and delivery including: informal natural helping, ceremonies, women's circles, the teachings of Elders, and talking circles.

- The main challenges which must be overcome for agency success are seen as: difficulties in inter-agency relations, the dispersion and fragmentation of the Native community, legislative obstacles and the continuing legacy of our colonial past.

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