
Background

First Nations Child and Family Services (National)

Today, First Nations children are the fastest growing segment of the Canadian population. Historically there has been no federal child welfare legislation. As a result, the Government of Canada, through Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), formed agreements with many provincial governments to deliver child welfare services on-reserve. INAC would then reimburse the provinces for services which were provided.

The goal of INAC's First Nations Child and Family Services (CFS) program is to support First Nations communities in providing culturally sensitive child welfare services comparable to those available to other provincial residents in similar circumstances. The First Nations CFS program is one of many INAC programs and services dedicated to individual and family well-being.

Since the creation of this program, there has been a significant increase in the number of First Nations CFS agencies from 34 in 1989 to 108 in 2007. In 2006-07, INAC funded 108 First Nations CFS agencies across the country. INAC provided \$450 million in funding to support 8,262 children in care (in foster homes, group homes and institutions.) In Budget 2008, the federal government committed \$43 million over two years for prevention-based models of child and family services on reserve.

First Nations CFS – Enhanced Prevention-Focused Approach in Saskatchewan

The Province of Saskatchewan used community-based organizations for prevention services. It has found value in restructuring the provincial CFS program model to include enhanced prevention services. The framework endorsed by First Nations, INAC and Saskatchewan outlines a broad set of provincially comparable goals and objectives.

The enhanced prevention-focused approach will support:

- Families getting the support and services they need before they reach a crisis;
- Community-based services and the child welfare system working together so families receive more appropriate services in a timely manner;
- First Nations children in care benefiting from permanent homes (placements) sooner -- such as helping families to plan alternative care options; and
- Services and supports coordinated in a way that best helps the family.

Child Welfare Service Delivery in Saskatchewan

There are 70 First Nations communities in Saskatchewan served by the 17 First Nations CFS agencies. On March 31, 2007 there were 1,159 Saskatchewan First Nations children in care on reserve.