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**ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS**

**FIRST NATIONS INCOME  
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM STUDY**

*An Analysis of Needs and Program  
Effectiveness*



**June 20, 2005**

**Final DRAFT Report**

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**Assembly of First Nations  
1 Nicholas St. 10<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7B7**

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June 20, 2005

To the Chiefs of Canada,

The AFN received funding from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada in January 2005 to undertake an important First Nations Income Assistance Program evaluation. This evaluation will give us the opportunity to have significant input into making a strong case for government to increase resources for the program. This evaluation is unique in that it is a *First Nation driven, First Nations perspective qualitative analysis*, of an INAC social program.

This study consisted of three phases: a literature review, data collection via a national survey of income administrators, as well as, site visits to First Nation communities. The third, and final phase, consisted of national and regional focus groups of Income Assistance Program administrator representatives to discuss and arrive at national recommendations based on the data collected.

The purpose of the study was to get feedback from First Nations Income Assistance Administrators in order to gain a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities in First Nation communities. The results of this study will support policy development and assist AFN to determine, and justify along with INAC, more accurately, the funding requirements of the Income Assistance program from a First Nations perspective. This study was also required to validate and document the needs identified during the ISR process.

Please consider the findings of this study. We look forward to your strong support for implementation of the recommendations contained herein.

*Phil Fontaine  
National Chief  
Assembly of First Nations*

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**RESULTS IN BRIEF**

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of Income Assistant Administrators in First Nation communities. The results of this study discuss and justify the policy issues and funding requirements of INAC's Income Assistance program to better meet First Nation community needs.

Data was collected utilizing a method of triangulation where data sets were compared against one another in an overlapping manner, therefore, validating the study conclusions from the perspectives of local, regional and national level program operators, program recipients and First Nations political leaders and administrators.

Questions were asked of study informants related to three major themes: (1) the day-to-day realities of Income Assistance program operation in terms of needs; (2) the effectiveness of the program funding; and (3) recommendations for improvements. The selected sites for field level data collection provided for size, geographic and demographic variances adhering to the unique rural, urban and remote characteristics of First Nation communities nationally. Large and small size community variances were also factored in to the site visit selection, which resulted in a sample size of 8 communities from 4 different regions. Two additional regions were visited and data was collected via focus group and survey methodologies. Finally, a national focus group and survey mail out to all First Nations in Canada augmented the data set to ensure validity and comparability among data sets.

The resulting data indicated that First Nations view the implementation of the Income Assistance Program as delegated authority, which to be effective must be devolved from INAC to First Nations. The income assistance program is not First Nation designed, nor is it adequately funded or flexible enough to meet the unique needs of the First Nations of Canada. The fundamental principles of *empowerment* and *self-governance* are not evidenced in current INAC Income Assistance policies.

Furthermore, study respondents were adamant that culturally appropriate and relevant interventions are required to address the

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needs of First Nations clients who have been traumatized by residential school and historical colonization efforts, which have resulted in intergenerational impacts that somehow the modern day Income Assistance program has been expected to address.

Comprehensive programming is required that addresses the *whole* person and that factors in First Nation community realities. Income assistance recipients are generally undereducated, lack transportation and life skills, have no access to employment, suffer from alcohol or substance abuse and live in communities characterized by *severe poverty*. The reality for First Nation income assistance recipients is 10 year waiting lists for housing, lack of infrastructure for running water or electricity, lack of public transportation or adequate health and safety facilities. These are also the conditions under which First Nation program administrators must operate inadequately resourced, inflexible, non-First Nation subsistence programs. This does not empower our people, it only disillusions and subjugates our people.

What is required is proactive First Nation driven programming that allows for community development, employment and training, and for the empowerment of clients and their communities. Capacity development and training is required along with resources for the strategic planning of a new program that is proactive and active measures oriented. Partnerships are required with other government departments and key programs such as Human Resources Development Canada and Health Canada, education, health, economic development, housing, childcare/daycare, disability and special needs programs, women's shelters, Non-Insured Health Benefits, etc. *All partners* must come together to design a program that is *seamless for the truly needy* who require this program of last resort.

This report documents the need for the redesign and adequate resourcing of the INAC Income Assistance program so that it focuses on self-reliance, self-esteem and the empowerment of our people. For the program to be successful it must also address and accommodate the real poverty that exists in First Nation communities and strategically accommodate interventions that will address life long health and well being at the individual, family community and national level.

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**BACKGROUND**

The First Nations Income Assistance program *has the broad objective of providing families and individuals living on reserve with the means to meet basic needs for food, clothing and shelter.*

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) is responsible for carrying out the Crown's legislative and treaty obligations to First Nations on-reserve. As a matter of policy, therefore, INAC provides funding for the delivery of the Income Assistance program.

Income assistance is delivered mostly by First Nation authorities but in a few cases INAC delivers the program directly. Funding for the program is provided through block funding arrangements and contribution agreements. In the province of Ontario the province funds First Nations directly, and INAC reimburses on a cost shared basis.

Every five years INAC, seeks and obtains from Parliament, through Appropriation Acts, authority and resources to provide income assistance to First Nations. *Treasury Board Minute 627879 dated July 16, 1964* enables INAC to adopt and follow provincial government rates and eligibility criteria for the administration of Income Assistance to First Nations. Program funds are expended and governed according to the *Federal Financial Administration Act*.

The delivery of Income Assistance is funded by INAC to First Nations under various funding mechanisms. These mechanisms include the Comprehensive Funding Arrangements (CFAs) and the Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFAs). CFA's cover a one-year period as a contribution agreement, and are subject to audit. An AFA, a form of block fixed funding, is designed to allow more flexibility to First Nations to adapt programs to address its particular circumstances. An AFA is a five-year agreement also subject to audit.

Funding for the Income Assistance program in 2003-2004 was \$611 million. Funding agreements with First Nations include provisions for financial and program reporting on a monthly or annual basis depending on the type of agreement.

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Funding agreements include requirements for program reporting as outlined in the INAC First Nations National Reporting Guide. These data are summarized in INAC's Basic Departmental Data report annually and are used by the department to measure program delivery.

Income assistance funding provides support to individuals and families at rates and eligibility according to those of the resident province or territory. Because of this, Income Assistance policy on a reserve in Manitoba will be very different from the Income Assistance policy on a reserve in British Columbia.

When provincial Income Assistance laws and policies change, which in recent years has happened several times in some provinces, INAC has up to 90 days to make “comparable changes.” This is to ensure that policy is *comparable for clients both on and off reserve*.

To be eligible for income assistance recipients must meet all of the following criteria:

- ordinarily resident on reserve
- be in need of basic or special financial assistance, as defined by the province or territory of residence and confirmed by an assessment
- have a demonstrated requirement for income assistance programs and services support and no other source of funding to meet such needs as defined by the province or territory.

Income assistance on reserve is divided into three categories:

- regular benefits
- special needs benefits
- additional benefits and services

Regular benefits have three parts – food, shelter and clothing.

The maximum amounts payable under the contribution authority to a First Nation Income Assistance Program are based on the service standards and rate schedules of the province or territory of residence. The maximum payments to recipients are limited to covering the expected direct costs, up to \$50,000 per recipient per year for the costs of basic, special and pre-employment

needs. Funding arrangements may provide First Nations up to \$650,000 per year to cover the costs of delivering both the Income Assistance and Assisted Living programs and services. The maximum amounts payable under the grant authority are based on the service standards and rate schedules of the reference province or territory.

Payments are made monthly based on a cash flow forecast from the recipient or by reimbursing eligible expenditures. Recipients are required to reapply or confirm their eligibility monthly for income assistance. Payments are made monthly. In 2002-2003 Income Assistance was administered by 532 out of 564 eligible First Nations with funding provided through a number of contribution arrangements (Basic Departmental Data 2003). The percentage of First Nations administering income assistance in Canada between 1993-1994 and 2002-2003 are illustrated below:

**Table 1.0  
Percentage of  
First Nations  
Administering  
Income Assistance**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Number of First Nations</b>	<b>First Nation's Administering the IA Program</b>	<b>Percentage of Administering First Nations</b>
1993-94	575	536	93.2
1994-95	574	539	93.9
1995-96	566	531	93.8
1996-97	566	536	94.7
1997-98	565	535	94.7
1998-99	564	535	94.9
1999-00	567	538	94.9
2000-01	563	534	94.8
2001-02	564	531	94.1
2002-03	564	532	94.1



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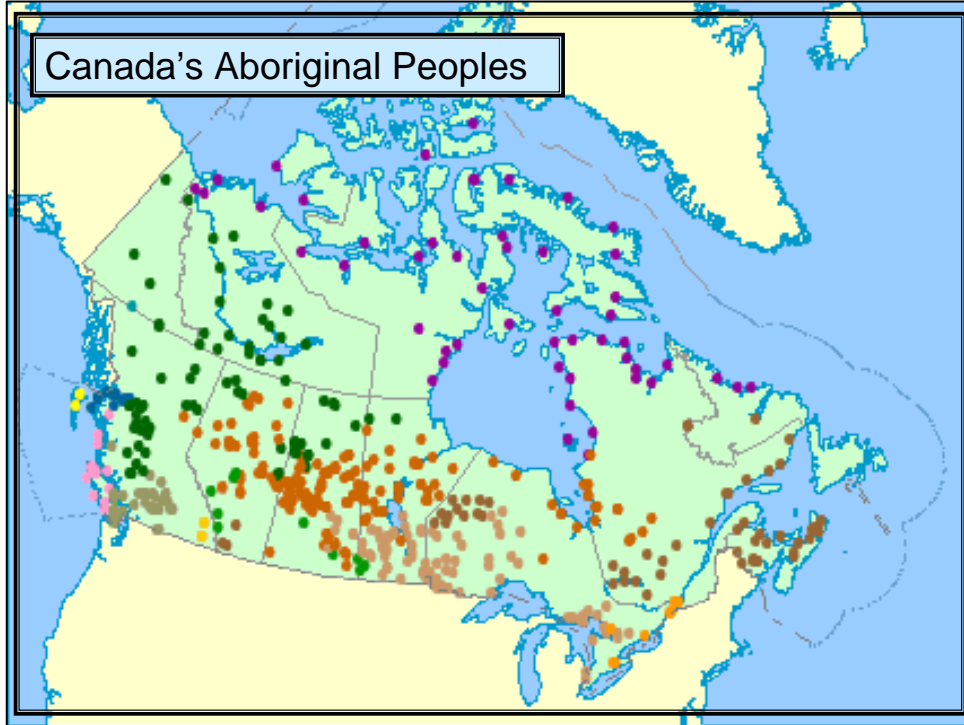
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**SCOPE AND  
METHODOLOGY**

The consultant, Dr. Rose-Alma J. McDonald (Katenies Research and Management Services), visited eight First Nation Income Assistance Program sites to obtain information on (1) the day-to-day realities of their program operation in terms of needs; (2) the effectiveness of the income assistance program funding; and (3) recommendations for improvements. The selected sites provided size, geographic and rural, urban and fly-in data information for the program year 2005.

The Income Assistance Program is provided to eligible First Nation citizens in Canada by 532 INAC funded First Nation communities and organizations. The sample was not intended to be representative of the program as a whole but to provide examples of how local First Nation programs operate under various situations and circumstances. To supplement for this fact a national survey instrument was mailed to all First Nations in Canada by the AFN. This data was designed to result in parallel information to that collected during the site visits. Additionally, a national and two regional focus groups were conducted to collect recommendations and summary data from national and regional representatives to further augment the site visit, survey and document review data.

**Where First Nation communities are located**



**Table 1.1 Breakdown of the First Nation Population in Canada:**

Province	First Nation Population
Alberta	71,297
Atlantic Provinces	22,380
British Columbia	96,808
Manitoba	88,161
NWT	13,209
Ontario	130,149
Quebec	55,848
Saskatchewan	88,857
Yukon	6,948
Canada (source: Statistics Canada)	573,657
Average community population	500
Communities with no year round access	113
Communities located 50-360 KMS from service centres	261

**Table 1.2 Population Projections for On and Off-Reserve First Nation Population by Residence** (Source: Pop. Projections of Registered Indians 2001-2021 INAC 2003)

Year	On-Reserve	Off-Reserve	Total Registered
2006	485,400	284,000	769,500
2011	556,100	275,400	831,600
2016	629,200	259,200	888,400
2021	703,200	236,500	939,700

**Table 1.3**  
**Distribution by Province of Survey Respondents by Caseload Size and Region**

Caseload Size	Alberta	British Columbia	Quebec	Manitoba	Atlantic	Ontario	Saskatchewan	Yukon	Total Percentage
0-49	1	11	-	1	4	4	1	-	20%
50-99	4	6	-	4	1	1	-	-	15%
100-149	1	3	-	1	1	1	4	-	10%
150-199	1	-	-	3	-	-	2	-	5%
200-249	3	1	-	3	-	-	2	1	9%
250-299	2	-	-	-	1	-	3	-	5%
300-349	3	2	-	-	-	-	2	-	6%
350-399	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	2%
400-449	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	2%
450-499	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	2%
500+	3	-	-	4	-	-	12	-	18%
Total	20	23	4	18	7	6	27	1	94%

**Table 1.4**  
**Distribution by Province of Survey Respondents by Population Size**

Population	Alberta	British Columbia	Quebec	Manitoba	Atlantic	Ontario	Saskatchewan	Yukon	Total Percentage
100-499	2	11	-	2	5	4	6	-	28%
500-999	5	6	1	3	-	2	6	-	22%
1000-1499	-	-	-	4	-	-	6	-	19%
1500-1999	3	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	4%
2000-2499	1	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	4%
2500-2999	-	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	2%
3000+	3	-	1	5	-	-	2	-	9%
NR *	5	6	-	4	1	-	2	2	18%
Total	19	23	4	19	7	6	27	2	100%

Note: the NR\* indicates where some respondents did not include their population data in their data collection instrument.

**Table 1.5**  
**Distribution by Province of Survey Respondents by Classification**

Classification	Alberta	British Columbia	Quebec	Manitoba	Atlantic	Ontario	Saskatchewan	Yukon	Total Percentage
Urban	1	7	2	1	-	-	3	1	14%
Rural	10	13	-	12	5	3	18	-	57%
Remote	1	2	2	7	-	1	2	-	14%
NR	7	1	-	-	2	2	4	-	15%
Total	19	23	4	19	7	6	27	1	100%
Large	11	6	-	12	1	2	19	1	48%
Small	6	11	2	5	4	2	5	-	33%
NR	3	6	2	2	2	2	3	-	19%
Total	19	23	4	19	7	6	27	1	100%

Note: the NR\* indicates where some respondents did not include their population data or classification in their data collection instrument.

In selecting the sites to be visited, the project team stratified the 633 First Nation communities into five groupings according to the size (small, large) and demographic characteristics (rural, remote/fly-in and urban).

Eight sites were selected from the 9 AFN regions based on suggested site locations provided to the Project Team by the AFN Regional Vice Chiefs.

**Table 1.6 Income Assistance Program Selected Site Visits**

Program Site	Location	Classification
Seabird Island First Nation	British Columbia	Rural
Squamish First Nation	British Columbia	Urban
Kawnlin Dun First Nation	Yukon	Urban
Carcross First Nation	Yukon	Rural
Garden Hill First Nation	Manitoba	Remote/Fly-in
St. Theresa Point First Nation	Manitoba	Remote/Fly-In
Wendake First Nation	Quebec	Urban
Kahnesatake First Nation	Quebec	Rural

At each of the eight sites, the consultant met with program representatives and conducted a site interview consisting of questions geared at getting a better understanding of the day-to-day

activities of the program administrators and the challenges in serving the needs of their clients.

**Table 1.7 Types of Data Collected**

Province	National Survey	Director Interviews	Client Interviews	Council Interviews	Local Focus Group	National Focus Group
Alberta	X				X	X
Atlantic Provinces	X					X
British Columbia	X	X	X			X
Manitoba	X	X		X		X
NWT	X					
Ontario	X					X
Quebec	X	X				X
Saskatchewan	X				X	X
Yukon	X	X	X	X		X

Overall, 8 program administrator site interviews, 6 client site interviews (1 female/urban, 2 male/ rural, 1 male/urban, 1 female/rural) and 2 focus group sessions were held with local First Nation Council leaders and representatives. Three additional data gathering sessions were held: 1 with National First Nation Income Assistance Administrators in Ottawa, Ontario, and 2 with regional administrators in Edmonton, Alberta and Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. A national survey was also conducted of the 9 AFN regions through a national mail out resulting in a return of 109 surveys or 20.5% return out of 532 INAC funded First Nation Income Assistance Program administrators.

**Table 1.8 Number of Survey Returns**

Province	Number of First Nation Communities	Number of Surveys Returned	Percentage of Total Area Surveyed
Alberta	43	19	44.1%
Atlantic Provinces	31	7	22.5%
British Columbia	197	23	11.6%
Manitoba	61	19	31.1%
NWT	26	2*	7.7%
Ontario	126	6	4.8%
Quebec	39	4	12.3%
Saskatchewan	70	27	38.4%
Yukon	16	2	12.5%
Canada	609**	109	17.2%

Note: AFN includes 24 First Nations who are not recognized by DIAND bringing the total to 633

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In addition to performing the detailed data collection activities at the 8 program sites, the team also conducted a document review of Income Assistance Program manuals, evaluations and research reports for the site visit locations and the program nationally.

The work was conducted between January 15th and March 31, 2005. An extension was provided to May 15, 2005 to collect additional data and for data analysis and report writing.

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## **HISTORY**

INAC has been involved in delivering income assistance to First Nations people on reserve since the early 1950s. In 1950, the Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on Indian Affairs reported that First Nations peoples on reserve were excluded from many federal social programs and most provincial and territorial services. It recommended that provinces and territories be more involved in delivering and funding social services to First Nations. Throughout the 1950s, little progress was made toward this goal.

Through the early 1960s, the federal, provincial, and territorial governments failed to reach agreements for sharing the costs of delivering social services to First Nations people, except for Ontario. This led INAC to adopt an income assistance policy that did not involve provincial or territorial participation. In 1964, Treasury Board authorized INAC to administer income assistance at provincial or territorial rates and according to provincial or territorial eligibility requirements.

In 1965 the Indian Welfare Agreement was signed with the Province of Ontario. Under the agreement, INAC provided the municipal share of 20 percent to First Nations. Ontario therefore provides the provincial share of 80 percent to First Nations. Ontario invoices INAC for the provincial share according to the provisions of the agreement.

Throughout the 1970s, INAC decreased attempts to reach cost-sharing agreements with the provinces and territories and increased attempts to pass on income assistance programming to First Nations. In 1972, the Work Opportunity Program authorized using income assistance entitlements to fund First Nations' job creation projects.

In 1976, a Cabinet committee on social policy concluded that First Nations people had poor access to social, political and economic resources, and that the lack of coordination and cooperation between the federal, provincial and territorial governments was inhibiting progress in these areas.

By the 1980s, federal policy was directed towards self-government negotiations and agreements. In 1985, a Memorandum to Cabinet suggested that the federal government

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negotiate with the provinces and territories to have income assistance programs administered by local First Nations authorities. Alternate Funding Arrangements in 1986 and Flexible Transfer Payment Agreements in 1989 affirmed the idea of transferring program administration to qualified First Nations.

The 1990s were dominated by administrative, legal and financial concerns. INAC reviewed accountability and compliance frameworks in relation to income assistance provided to First Nations. Actions were taken to increase the autonomy of First Nations.

The research of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) throughout the 1990s added significantly to understanding First Nations' goals for social development. First Nations objected to their lack of inclusion as primary partners in social policy development given the direct impact it had on their governments and people.

In 1998, the federal government responded to the RCAP recommendations with Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan, which laid the foundation for the future direction of the INAC-First Nations relationship and for including First Nations in social policy development. Under Gathering Strength, funding was committed through the Income Security Reform (ISR) initiative to test and recommend fundamental changes to the system and to develop a redesigned national policy framework for income assistance. Over the five year span that the ISR was in existence, community demonstration projects were the foundation for this work. Testing was conducted on innovative approaches for replacing the passive delivery of income assistance with a program that provides income support with a greater access to skills development, training and employment opportunities. Even though the initiative has now ended, the principles developed over those five years continue to influence and guide the work conducted on the Income Assistance Program.

In September 2003, Treasury Board issued the current Income Assistance funding authority. The authorities issued by Treasury Board in September 2003 were in the form of a funded submission, which means that the changes requested and approved are to be managed from within the current allocation. If they



cannot be managed from within the current allocation, they will have to be deferred until resources are available in the future.

INAC's current involvement in income assistance activities is primarily to provide funding to First Nations, who in turn deliver programs and services to community members. INAC also provides program policy guidance.

According to Health Canada in 2000 the Potential Years of Life Lost (PYLL) was almost 3.5 times higher for First Nations than for Canada. Tuberculosis rates in 2000 were six times higher in First Nations than across Canada. According to INAC Basic Departmental Data 2003, the percentage of students enrolled in Grade 12 or 13 who graduated in 2001-2002 was 29.6%. In the year previous the graduation rate was 30.7%. In 2002-02 and 2002-03 the proportion of adequate on-reserve housing declined from 56% to 53% respectively. All four of these data are indicators of poor economic and social conditions in First Nation communities. These data are particularly comparative to third world conditions and not those expected in a developed country such as Canada. It is in this context that First Nations Income Assistance programs operate.

The average number of on-reserve Income Assistance recipients and beneficiaries per month in Canada from 1993-94 to 2002-03 were as follows:

**Table 1.9 Average Number of Income Assistance Clients**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Average Number of Recipients per Month</b>	<b>Average Number of Beneficiaries per month</b>
1993-94	65,666	145,020
1994-95	69,890	153,613
1995-96	69,029	151,564
1996-97	68,790	152,746
1997-98	70,927	156,629
1998-99	72,612	152,658
1999-00	73,974	151,737
2000-01	72,465	148,236
2001-02	73,975	146,194
2002-03	74,481	147,300

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**Participant  
Characteristics**

Overall, the sample of program year 2005 focus groups and survey data showed that of Income Assistance recipients, on average,

- 100% lacked work experience or good work skills
- 98% had family responsibilities or problems that made it difficult for them to maintain employment or complete training
- 95% had peer or community pressures which interfered with their motivation to succeed
- 94% lacked necessary life skills
- 93% didn't understand what it takes to get and keep a job
- 93% lacked reading and writing skills they need to succeed
- 93% lacked transportation to employment or training
- 92% were reluctant to pursue distant job opportunities because of their community ties
- 74% had difficulty maintaining employment or attending training activities due to their desire to attend cultural ceremonies

Comparatively, the site visit interviewees exhibited consensus on the characteristics of their clients. 100% of the interviewees reported the following characteristics of their clients

- under-educated
- alcohol or drug abusers
- young or unemployable
- single parents
- lack life skills
- had no incentive to graduate from school

88% to 75% of the interviewees indicated their client characteristics also included:

- not ready for employment off reserve
- no job opportunities
- frustrated with lack of services on reserve
- a social assistance lifestyle
- residential school survivors
- single

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**Services Provided**      On average the services that were administered by respondent programs and site visit interviewees indicated that:

- 100% provided for shelter
- 100% provided for food
- 100% provided heating, electricity and water supply allowances
- 90% provided for special needs costs
- 89% provided for funerals and burials
- 82% provided for essential household items
- 81% provided maternal nutritional allowances
- 78% provided clothing allowances
- 67% provided employment related income assistance such as accommodation, transportation, relocation and moving costs
- 65% provided assistance on behalf of a child outside of the parental home
- 59% provided transportation
- 59% provided employment related training e.g. training allowances, employability training and basic work experience
- 57% provided support to employment e.g. career exploration, program allowance, incentive allowances, childcare, etc.
- 52% provided employment related services e.g. counseling and life skills, job seeking skills and personal development plans
- 47% provided pharmacare

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## Program Goals

According to the survey respondents, the *most important goals* for the unique population served and the cultural context of First Nation communities include:

- 100% providing participants with their supportive needs (childcare, counseling, transportation assistance, etc.)
- 99% providing participants with training
- 98% providing a place in the community where people know they can come for help
- 95% providing participants with temporary income while they were in training or subsidized
- 94% helping participants find jobs

In terms of policy guidance the respondents reported that:

INAC clearly communicates the Income Assistance program policies:

- 50% agreed
- 48% disagreed

The program has enough flexibility under the funding regime to address the needs of participants:

- 35% agreed
- 63% disagreed

INAC policy requirements are too complex:

- 70% agreed
- 26% disagreed

INAC provides accurate information about the program when asked specific questions:

- 31% agreed
- 45% disagreed

INAC answers questions promptly:

- 43% agreed
- 53% disagreed

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## Partnership with INAC

According to the survey respondents, when asked whether they agreed or disagreed with statements regarding the partnership efforts by INAC to improve communication program collaborations and dialogue between them and First Nation organizations:

- 48% agreed that partnership efforts have made working with INAC a more positive experience
- 40% agreed that the partnership effort has established trust and respect between INC and their organization
- 77% disagreed that INAC does a good job of getting opinions from First Nations before making decisions
- 51% agreed that the internet is a good way of giving and receiving information
- 42% agreed that AHRDS as a partner helps to provide enhanced services to their clients
- 49% disagreed that Health Canada as a partner makes it easier to meet the special needs of their clients.

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**Funding**

62% of respondents reported they received funding via a Comprehensive Funding Arrangement (CFA)

24% reported they received funding via a Financial Transfer Agreement (FTA)

14% reported they received funding for their program via a Canada/First Nations Funding Arrangement (CFNFA)

4.7% reported they received their funding via an Alternative Funding Arrangement (AFA)

In terms of affect of this arrangement on the distribution of Income Assistance program money for program delivery:

- 53% reported it limited their ability to meet their program requirements
- 35% reported it gave them more flexibility
- 12% reported they didn't know day to day what resources were available to them

**Staffing**

The average qualifications of full time Income Assistance service delivery staff reported was:

- 53% had High School
- 21% had an Associates degree
- 18% had a Bachelors degree
- 5% had a Masters degree
- 9% reported *not applicable*

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**Training**

The kinds of professional development training provided annually to service delivery staff included:

- Case management skills training 24% yes/51% no
- Counseling skills training 20% yes/53% no
- Assessment skills training 18% yes/64% no
- Language, culture and customs of community 10% yes/65% no
- Reporting requirement and preparation training 13% yes/27% no
- Functions and programs of the local First Nation government 16% yes/59% no
- Computer skills and technology training 28% yes/40% no
- There are no resources for professional development training 23% yes/51% no

Limitations in terms of providing training for service delivery staff included:

- 69% lack of money for travel and accommodations
- 55% funding cut backs
- 52% limited access to the training required
- 48% the cost of replacements while staff are on training
- 12% limited number of staff interested in training

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**Technology**

When asked what technologies respondents had available to their office to assist in providing service delivery to their participants and their level of satisfaction with these:

- 86% reported satisfaction with their desk top computers
- 8% reported they had no desk top computers available
- 16% reported satisfaction with their lap top computers
- 74% reported they had no lap top computers available
- 58% reported satisfaction with their Internet services
- 29% reported they had no Internet service available
- 60% reported satisfaction with their e-mail service
- 31% reported they had no e-mail service available
- 47% reported satisfaction with their web site service
- 41% reported they had no web site service available
- 26% reported satisfaction with their cellular phone service
- 63% reported they had no cellular phone service available

**Reporting**

Survey respondents reported the following regarding INAC reporting processes:

- 65% reported that the annual report covers all the information that needs to be reported
- 58% reported that reporting forms are too complicated
- 56% reported that data generated from the reporting forms are not useful to their organization
- 54% reported that reconciliation time is too slow and not timely enough for billings
- 49% reported that there are too many reports required
- 43% reported that submitting reports electronically is very convenient



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## **Technical Assistance Received**

Survey respondents when asked how satisfied they were with the assistance they received they reported:

- 42% dissatisfaction with the assistance received from INAC headquarters
- 42% satisfaction with assistance received from their local INAC regional office
- 35% were satisfied with assistance received from their local provincial agencies
- 23% were dissatisfied with assistance received from their local First Nation provincial/territorial organization

## **Challenges to Program Delivery**

Survey respondents indicated that the following factors make it difficult for them to meet the needs of their income assistance clients:

- 90% reported lack of adequate job opportunities in their area
- 89% reported lack of funds to provide the services participants really need
- 79% reported lack of access to other services
- 78% reported lack of adequate training providers in the area who can service their clients
- 70% reported INAC reported requirements
- 69% reported restrictions and limitations imposed by INAC on how income assistance funds can be spent

Comparatively, site visit interviewees reported that the biggest problems facing their clients were:

- inadequate policies to meet their needs
- lack of transportation
- lack of education
- poverty
- lack of housing
- inter-generational mentalities towards income assistance

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## **Partnerships Internally**

When asked what services respondents accessed within their local community and what their level of satisfaction with these services was in terms of relationship and partnership they reported:

- 65% satisfaction with local education program services
- 28% dissatisfaction with local education program services
  
- 57% satisfaction with local health services
- 38% dissatisfaction with local health services
  
- 50% dissatisfaction with economic development services
- 36% satisfaction with economic development services
  
- 52% dissatisfaction with local housing services
- 37% satisfaction with local housing services
  
- 56% satisfaction with local childcare/daycare services
- 24% dissatisfaction with local childcare/daycare services
  
- 43% dissatisfaction with local disability program services
- 23% satisfaction with local disability program services
  
- 16% did not have childcare/daycare available
- 33% did not have disability program services available
- 42% did not have women's shelter services available
  
- 3-8% respectively did not have education program, health services, economic development or housing services available in their communities.

## **Gaps in Services**

Gaps in the services available to First Nation communities were reported by site visit interviewees as:

- lack of adequate housing and shelter
- programming that is First Nation driven
- lack of emergency funds
- lack of economic development
- lack of adequate program policies
- lack of employment and training opportunities
- communication between programs

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**Impacts on Success** When asked how important various characteristics of clients were in explaining why some of them don't achieve their goals:

- 100% reported lack of work experience or good work skills were an important factor affecting success
- 98% reported family responsibilities or problems that make it difficult for clients to maintain employment or complete training was an important factor affecting success
- 95% reported peer or community pressures which interfere with client motivation to succeed was an important factor affecting success
- 95% reported substance abuse as an important factor affecting success
- 94% reported lack of necessary life skills as an important factor affecting success
- 93% reported lack of reading and writing skills was an important factor affecting success
- 93% reported limited understanding of what it takes to get and keep a job was an important factor affecting success
- 93% reported lack of transportation to employment or training was an important factor affecting success
- 92% reported reluctance to pursue distant job opportunities because of communities ties was an important factor affecting success
- 89% reported lack of motivation was an important factor affecting success

**Indicators of Success**

When asked how respondents would define success for their Program:

86% reported the ability of the program to provide services to clients to help them achieve self-sufficiency  
83% reported the program is a place where people from the community can come for help  
83% reported participants being able to obtain temporary income  
82% reported successful client placement in training  
81% reported clients finding employment  
77% reported submitting reports and meeting project goals and objectives

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## **Recommendations**

When asked what would make the biggest impact in turning around of the current income assistance program to make it more active measures based and proactive, respondents, site visit interviewees and focus group participants reported that what is required is:

- Adequate fiscal resources
- Adequate human resources
- First Nation specific training
- More policy flexibility
- Improved self-awareness in communities – health and well being needs to be resourced
- Staff training and professional development
- Linkages with training and Economic Development
- Clear understanding of the roles between First Nations and INAC towards the issue of Income Assistance
- Clear policy direction
- Adequate resourcing for technology especially in the many First Nation communities where there is very limited technology
- Infrastructure supports for the redirection of programming to ensure success

A revamped vision for the Income Assistance Program requires:

- A strong focus on empowerment and self-sufficiency
- A First Nation driven focus
- Resources to make program transitions and for implementation
- Leadership to help change the dependency mindset
- Healing as a program focus along with life skills development that is lifelong
- Cultural identity as an essential component
- Partnerships with: housing, health, education, Chief and Council, Elders, economic development, training, youth, early childhood development programs, childcare, disability, substance abuse and disability programs, etc.

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When asked what top four recommendations should come out of this study process, based on the data collected through the survey, site visits, literature review and focus groups, First Nation income assistance administrators' consensus was:

### **Recommendation #1**

The program must be devolved from INAC to First Nations. The problem is First Nations are administering INAC policy and programming. First Nations must design, implement and evaluate their own policy for Income Assistance programming with adequate resourcing based on self-governance and the fundamental principles of empowerment.

### **Recommendation #2**

More resources are required to run the program effectively. Resources are required for:

- Operations
- Service delivery
- Maintenance (O and M)
- Capacity Building
- Infrastructure and facilities
- Planning
- Salaries and staffing
- Technology
- Equipment

Flexible funding is required to cover:

- Basic needs
- Training
- Special needs for use where it is required most
- More employment and training
- Life skills training
- Case management
- Program modifications and improvements
- Surpluses so they stay at the community level

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### **Recommendation #3**

Adequate Policy is required to administer and upgrade Income Assistance programming so that it is:

- First Nation driven
- Equitable
- Recognizes First Nation jurisdiction
- Culturally appropriate and relevant
- Flexible so that it recognizes local and regional community demographics and unique characteristics
- Educational and based on community awareness
- Clear and concise with well defined roles and responsibilities for all administering parties
- Includes a code of ethics
- Includes an evaluation component
- Procedures oriented
- Incorporates good business and organizational practices
- Addresses disincentives

### **Recommendation #4**

Mechanisms are required to adequately measure program outcomes and data requirements such as:

- National data collection standards to establish equity in terms of data capacity across the country
- Information sharing and communication
- Common data sets at INAC to be able to track the programs, number of clients served, total amount spent for housing, special needs, training, work placement, transportation, allowances, employable/unemployables, single/family, etc. This needs to be well defined to eliminate reporting burdens.
- “Need to know” has to be defined. What is the interest of the Crown as the result of the Auditor General’s report?
- Program measurement to track clients; assess the impacts of active measures; and make program adjustments where needed based on sound information management practices.
- First Nation capacity development for program analysis. There is a need for First Nations to be able to do their own

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data projections for program management and evaluation purposes.

## **Implementation**

When respondents, site visit interviewees and focus group participants were asked what was required to operationalize the recommendations resulting from this study they reported that:

- Political will is required. First Nation leadership along with government need to follow through on the recommendations and findings of this study.
- This report needs to be distributed to First Nation Chiefs and government for implementation and follow through.
- A work plan needs to be developed from the community level up with phased in steps for implementation.
- Accountability and transparency is required to ensure follow up especially with Treasury Board and the Privy Council for the resources required for implementation.
- Piggy back this activity with other current processes such as authorities renewals (2006), SUFA, the National Policy Forum, etc.
- Establish and stick to an implementation time frame of no more than 2 to 5 years.

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