Income Security Reform
A Joint Initiative of the
Assembly of First Nations
with the Department of Indian and Northern
Affairs Canada

**A Policy Framework
Discussion Paper
<u>DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION ONLY</u>**

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The Context of Social Reform

In the fall of 1997 the *Income Security Initiative* was initiated during a joint meeting with the Assembly of First Nations, the Government of Canada and First Nations on First Nations Income Security Reform and the National Child Benefit Program. A commitment was made at that meeting by INAC to support community-driven demonstration projects that would enable First Nations to design and manage income security programs and to contribute to the design of a more effective national policy framework on social assistance.

In January 1998, through the *Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan* the Government of Canada further articulated their commitment to work with First Nations to reform social assistance. Their specific objective was:

> *..to support First Nations in their efforts to re-orient their welfare systems away from passive income maintenance toward active measures. A central focus of this initiative will be linking the welfare system with work and training opportunities within the community.*

Specifically the aim of the initiative was to:

- Provide training and skills development opportunities that would reflect both individual abilities and labour market needs; and

- Strengthen the ability of First Nation communities to develop and implement effective income support programs.

Under *Gathering Strength,* resources were made available to First Nation communities to develop and carry out a series of demonstration projects. These demonstration projects were designed to provide First Nations the opportunity to develop innovative responses to the diverse and unique needs of their communities with respect to social assistance policy, programming and service delivery, as well as, an opportunity to build capacity to implement and manage a reformed income security system.

Income Security Reform a Chronology

Currently the day to day work of First Nations social assistance administrators is guided by regional policy manuals closely based on provincial guidelines. The use of these regional manuals is coordinated under a national policy set by INAC entitled *National Standards: Social Assistance Program* (**1983**).   These national standards were last revised in December 1982. The document describes social assistance primarily as an income support program. It does not reflect the sophistication of First Nations governments today, the current federal and provincial policy environment or the role which First Nations want social assistance to play in their communities. For example, it does not adequately emphasize employment oriented measures which First Nations view as essential and part of any proactive community development.

The First Nations, AFN, INAC Partnership on Income Security Reform began in *September 1997* with a joint meeting on First Nations Income Security Reform and National Child Benefit. The outcome of that first meeting was a commitment by INAC to support community driven demonstration projects and draft principles for review by the AFN Chiefs Council on Social Development.

In January 1998 the Minister of INAC announced *Gathering Strength –Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan* and allocated $2.8 million for 1998/99, $12.6 million for 1999/2000 and $15 million per year for the succeeding years until 2003.

May 1998 AFN sponsored a Social Security Reform Symposium to present the findings of their two-year research program financed by HRDC entitled *Sharing Solutions: First Nations Social Security Reform – an Aboriginal Strategic Initiative.* The social security document focused on four themes: sharing, capacity building, jurisdiction and self-sufficiency.

June 1998 AFN issued a national call letter with project guidelines to all Chiefs and Councils inviting participation in the Income Security Reform initiative. By April 2000 more than 148 demonstration projects were underway involving 395 First Nations communities.

FY 1999/2000 First Nations organizations designed and implemented ISR demonstration

projects across Canada. To date there are 176 demonstration projects in 545 First Nation communities underway. These projects are providing First Nations with an opportunity to test innovative approaches to the design and delivery of social assistance.

January – March 2000 Income Security Reform workshops were held in all regions.

May 2000 A sub-committee of the joint Policy Coordinating Committee – the Working Group on Small/Remote/Exceptional Needs Communities met to ensure the needs of these communities were being addressed. The group agreed on the need to address five key issues: governance/leadership, capacity for program development and delivery, opportunities for economic development and employment, the need for programs to address the special needs of isolated/remote communities, and the need to change entrenched views on social assistance.

November 2000 A joint presentation was developed highlighting lessons learned from the Community Demonstration Projects and next steps on the ISR policy development process.

December 2000 The AFN and INAC co-hosted a National Income Security Reform Workshop which provided First Nation participants with the opportunity to share ideas and network, learn more about the federal government's policy development process, and develop issues and suggestions for a national policy framework outline on ISR.

January – March 2000 First Nation dialogue sessions were held in each region: to engage First Nations in a policy framework dialogue and to share with First Nations a summary of the feedback and information gained from the national workshop, demonstration projects, research and policy analysis.

September 2001 draft of a discussion paper on a redesigned national policy framework based on demonstration project results and best practices, regional dialogues and research conducted.

What will a revised policy framework look like?

A revised policy framework will lay out the principles and objectives to guide a First

Nation Social Assistance Policy and support First Nations in meeting the diverse needs of their communities while remaining publicly accountable. As is the case now, regional policies will be more specific, putting those principles into effect by laying out precise terms for the design and implementation of social assistance programs by First Nations governments. The national framework will set the direction for on-reserve programming across Canada. Regional policies will set out terms and conditions which reflect the needs of different regions.

Factors Affecting the Income Security Reform Initiative

Demographic Pressures

The Aboriginal working age population (ages 15-64) is expected to grow by 72% by 2016 from 1991 levels, compared to only 23% for non-Aboriginal Canadians. There is an enormous gap in unemployment rates between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people (RCAP). Income security reform can help to address this gap.

Provincial Social Assistance Programs

Social Assistance programs on-reserve are designed to offer services comparable to those offered by provincial governments in off-reserve communities of similar size and location. This is due to two factors:

First, there is no active federal legislation regarding social assistance on-reserve. INAC has been involved in on-reserve social development since the early 1950s purely as a matter of policy. Only provincial laws relating to social assistance are currently in effect; these laws apply both on- and off-reserve.

Second, courts have interpreted Section 15 of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* to mean that governments cannot offer benefits to some Canadians and arbitrarily deny these benefits to others. This reasoning applies to social assistance since an on-reserve program might be seen to be less generous or more generous than the equivalent provincial program. If benefits or eligibility criteria significantly differ on and off-reserve, both the First Nation and the Government of Canada could be challenged in court.

Under a longstanding federal-provincial agreement, First Nations in Ontario deliver

social assistance programming as agents of the provincial government. If this arrangement continues, many aspects of a redesigned federal policy framework would not apply in that region. If federal-provincial arrangements change, the redesigned policy framework may have to accommodate new, direct funding relationships between First Nations and DIAND.

The Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA)

This is an agreement between the Government of Canada and the Governments of the Provinces and Territories that was signed in February 1999. The Social Union initiative is the umbrella under which governments will concentrate their efforts to renew and modernize Canadian social policy.

The Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA) takes an approach to government policy, which could be applied to a redesigned social assistance policy framework. Generally speaking, SUFA outlines national principles and standards, which can support flexible program design and implementation while maintaining a strong framework of public accountability.

SUFA also sets out specific principles, which could be relevant to a redesigned social assistance policy framework:

1.   *fair and equitable treatment for all applicants*
2.   *access to reasonably comparable programs*
3.   *consistent application of programs to the targeted population of the programs*
4.   *the absence of residency based barriers to programs*
5.   *publicly available, appropriate appeal mechanisms*

Although First Nations are not signatories to SUFA, it does contain the following commitments:

- *Governments will work with the Aboriginal peoples of Canada to find practical solutions to address their pressing problems.*

- *For greater certainty, nothing in this agreement abrogates or derogates from any Aboriginal, treaty or other rights of Aboriginal peoples including self-government.*

The Governance Continuum

First Nations governments are expanding their control over programs for First Nations people. Some First Nation leaders and INAC officials have developed a draft matrix articulating the governing capacity required for different functions that a First Nation government may have to perform as it grows in responsibility and authority.

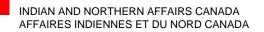This matrix traces different governance capacities for several functions of government: They are:

a. *Core governance* - the fundamental decision-making structures and processes, including those for appeal and redress

b. *Fiscal relationships* - the scope, content and required management capacity for increasingly complex financial arrangements

c. *Lands and resources* - the institutional and human resources required for increasing authority and responsibility over Indian-owned lands

d. *Programs and Services* - institutional and human resources required for increasing authority and responsibility over service design and delivery.

A redesigned national policy framework for social assistance could support the progress of First Nations governments along this continuum of responsibilities.

First Nations Initiatives in Accountability

A number of initiatives are underway between Canada and First Nations, which specifically address accountability:

• A national model has been completed for the Canada/First Nations Funding Agreement.

• The AFN and Canada have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to establish the National Table on Fiscal Relations to communicate First Nation financial and reporting standards.

- The AFN-Certified General Accountants (CGA) Association of Canada accountability project has recommended ways of improving First Nation financial accountability through the consistent application of accounting standards.

- Income Security Reform demonstration projects are applying new approaches in accountability to the administration of social assistance.

The goal for a redesigned national Policy Framework

The anticipated outcome for the ISR initiative is to generate recommendations and facilitate dialogue that will eventually result in a framework that would consist at a minimum of the following components:

Operational and Procedural guidelines: in terms of what can be implemented immediately and be addressed at the community and regional levels of responsibility

A Policy Framework – suggested revisions to the existing policy frameworks of INAC and /or other federal departments

A structural Framework – suggested amendments to intergovernmental agreements or legislative frameworks which might affect self-government processes, or which hold some other major implication for stakeholders external to the on-reserve social assistance system.

It is acknowledged that during implementation operational and policy changes will be easier to implement than structural changes.

Guiding Principles for the Income Security Reform Initiative

The AFN in partnership with INAC developed Guiding Principles by which the ISR initiative would proceed. They are as follows:

a. *The objective of the welfare system should be to assist people to achieve individual well-being and financial independence to the greatest possible extent.*

b. *Improving the social well-being of members of First Nations must be based on the needs, wishes, hopes and plans of the members themselves, individually and collectively.*

c. *Reducing dependence on social assistance can and should be a result of First Nations' activities, but it cannot be the only objective. There will be many instances in First Nations, as is true among other peoples, where dependence on social assistance will continue.*

d. *In cases of long-term dependence, welfare programs should focus on active developmental programs.*

e. *Social assistance programs should also include a tool-kit of active measures to assist clients in making the transition to the labour force.*

f. *First Nations' social safety net should be based on First Nations' values of personal and communitarian contributions.*

g. *First Nations should have the authority and the responsibility for the provision of welfare in their communities including the design, development, administration and evaluation of programs and services.*

h. *The welfare system should support a client focussed, community-based holistic approach to well-being and financial independence that draws on federal, provincial, private-sector and community programs.*

i. *Program development and delivery must respect the diversity of First Nations including, but not limited to, diversities of tradition, social and economic circumstance and the special roles of the extended family.*

j. *The administration of the welfare system should facilitate the accountability of First Nations' governments to their members, and of the Minister to the Government of Canada.*

k. *The right and responsibility of the individual to take initiative and to seek out programs and interventions of personal benefit should be affirmed.*

l. *Programs should be results-focussed and measurable with respect to the well-being of individuals.*

A Historical Overview of Social Assistance Policy

According to On-Reserve Social Assistance data for 1991-97 (IANC Estimates) dependency rates were between 24% and 60% depending on the province of residency. The national dependency rate in 1997 was 45%. First Nation traditional economies need to be strengthened and re-established. Co-jurisdiction and co-management arrangements are required where governments and First Nations share responsibility for resource development. Thriving, economically viable communities are required so that First Nations people have an opportunity to see something for themselves in the future. This means investments in education, training and economic and community development.

First Nations young people are dropping out of school at alarming rates. They know there is no future for them so they abandon all hope. Suicide rates among registered First Nations youth ages 15-24 are *eight times higher* than the national rates for females and five times higher for males (MSB Health Canada). There is a strong inverse relationship between the level of cultural continuity in a community and the youth suicide rate. According to research (Chandler 1998) there are six protective cultural factors such as self-governance, land claims negotiation, cultural facilities (as defined by the community) and local jurisdiction over education, health services and police/fire services that are associated with *substantial decreases in youth suicide.* The presence of three or more of these protective factors are required to result in *a decrease* in suicide rates.

Since the early 1980's there have been several attempts to change the relationship between First Nations, the provinces and the federal government. This has been within the context of debates over jurisdiction and fiscal restraint efforts. *Section 35 of the Constitution Act* (1982) recognized and affirmed Aboriginal and Treaty rights, and the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (Section 25 and 15), individual rights. Bill C-31 provided for the reinstatement of women previously disenfranchised for marriage to non-*Indians.* In 1990 the *Pathways to Success* program set aside $100 million for Aboriginal Employment and Training to raise the skill levels of First Nation and Aboriginal workers. In 1994 the *federal government announced the Social Security Reform process.* The immediate response by First Nations, however, was that mainstream programming did not meet the unique and diverse needs of First Nation communities. In 1994 the *Report*

of the Auditor General **emphasized that social assistance dependency rates were** *continuing to rise.* **As a result questions were raised about what to do to improve the situation. In 1996 a review of AFA and FTA mechanisms was undertaken to attempt to balance minimum program requirements and conditions while supporting implementation of** *inherent right.* **This balance is still a principal concern to First Nation jurisdictions where provincial cost shares interfere with the ability of First Nations to apply flexible solutions to First Nation program realities and circumstances.**

Current Policy Initiatives and the Goal of Self Sufficiency

The ISR policy process draws on five main sources of information where First Nations play a central role. The basis of any policy dialogue, therefore, must be based on these data sources. They include:

- *Demonstration project results*

- *Joint First Nations/Canada Policy Coordinating Group Expertise*

- *Regional and National First Nations ISR Workshops*

- *Reviews of existing research*

- *Reviews of existing practices*

For example, more than 40% of the demonstration projects are exploring how to invest in the fundamentals of economic development by using social assistance spending to build social capital and nearly 60% are designed to improve the ability of communities to design and deliver social assistance programs.

Some of the lessons learned so far are:

Enhancing community capacity to design and oversee programs prepares First Nations to move toward self-government. **Activities include: orientations to community leaders, regional policy frameworks and community planning. The benefits are the use of ISR funds to support long term objectives and to better respond to community needs.**

Demonstration projects are identifying ways to improve the ability of First Nations to deliver

social assistance programs. **Activities include: data management projects, training for welfare administrators and improved accountability practices. The benefits are increased capacity for both social assistance recipients and welfare administrators.**

Many projects are building connections between programs at the community level. **Activities include: linking social assistance and economic development, single window delivery models, building links with training providers and program integration. The benefits are shifts in resources from income support to economy-building.**

Demonstration projects are investigating new ways to support individual and community self-reliance. **Activities include: case management, personal and employment counseling, training and youth programs. The benefits are increased access to employment, training and education opportunities.**

The next step is to work in partnership to develop a redesigned policy framework that encompasses national principles and standards, flexible regional and community implementation mechanisms and an open and transparent accountability framework. First Nations will look to INAC and AFN to pursue policy coordination at the national level with other federal departments such as HRDC, Health Canada, Aboriginal Business Canada and various divisions within IANC itself.

A Traditional View of Social Assistance

Traditionally, First Nation economies were based on hunting and gathering, trapping, fishing, farming and inter-First Nation trade relations. The land and its resources provided the basis for traditional social and economic *security systems*. First Nations occupied specific territories, regulated relations with neighboring nations and, in respect of their own lands and resources, established systems of tenure, access, conservation and management (ASI, 1998).

When periods of economic instability were experienced, First Nations utilized various strategies to ensure the equitable distribution and sharing of needed resources. These were modified as periods of scarcity or abundance occurred. As part of the social security system, these strategies also ensured that episodes of scarcity would be infrequent and there would be sufficient food for all (ASI). This was achieved through respectful management of the nation's lands and resources.

Traditional First Nation social/income security systems were based on a traditional land and resource base, and social institutions such as the family. These systems were formed in accordance with the local culture and values of the community. Non-First Nation social security systems have been replaced, and *displaced*, along with the traditional forms of "social security." For the most part, traditional lands and resources as the foundation of First Nations social security have been replaced by a system of cash transfers aimed at maintaining First Nations people and communities at or *below the poverty level*, and denying access to social and economic development opportunities that ultimately could transform the conditions of human development. This is changing through the current ISR initiative.

Poverty for any individual or family has consequences for the whole community. Nearly fifty percent of all people on-reserve are receiving welfare, versus just over 10% in mainstream society. This also includes non-First Nation beneficiaries resident on reserve. According to the research conducted by the AFN *Sharing Solutions: First Nations Social Security Reform an Aboriginal strategic Initiative*, changes are required that are designed and implemented based on First Nation defined visions and outcomes. What needs to occur for a self-determined income security system to emerge is:

- *First Nations governance that is supported through restructured relationships, resources and program and service arrangements.*

- *There must be links between a First Nation Income/Social Security System and mainstream programs where First Nations see this as desirable.*

- *First Nations governance must be effectively exercised in respect of social development and security to achieve First Nations defined visions e.g. self-determined health and community development, well-being and security.*

- *Current systems must be rebuilt to reflect First Nation governance.*

First Nation populations are much younger and the population growth rate is higher than the non-Aboriginal population. Individual and family health and social dysfunction is higher than in the non-Aboriginal population and housing and infrastructure conditions are poorer. The basic problem experienced by First Nation people is the safety net is federal/provincial in design and financing. Only some First Nations are funded to deliver only some of the various provincially regulated social and health programs. This results in gaps in services across the country. Social assistance programs, employment insurance, child tax benefits and other social support services comprise the gambit of programs that are necessary to ensure services are holistic and meet the needs of First Nations.

Strategies for change must encompass resourcing arrangements that provide First Nations with improved access to lands and resources, economic development opportunities and opportunities to develop resources such as human capacities, infrastructure and technology. Arrangements for social development must be linked with resourcing of long term economic development strategies to ensure a dynamic and productive approach. There must be inter-jurisdictional arrangements to support autonomous First Nations governance and programming. First Nations must be able to facilitate and sustain social development that promotes self-determined health, community development, well-being and security. First Nations must be able to facilitate the empowerment and building of capacity in order to foster community development and end welfare dependency. First Nations must be able to promote and secure a way of life that produces "whole health" in communities in terms of well-being and prosperity.

The long term vision of First Nations are improved living conditions and communities that are safe and healthy. To meet this end First Nations envision that they be able to :

- *Ensure a sustainable economic base (the means to provide food, shelter, clothing, medicine, etc.) and health and human relationships.*

- *Build on existing capacity, First Nations institutions, programs, expertise, partnerships, etc.*

- *Ensure flexibility in programming to respect the lifestyles of women, Elders, youth and the disabled.*

- *Address the policy challenges of unemployment, underemployment and poverty as the highest priority.*

To meet this end First Nations see as a pre-requisite for reform the following:

1. *That the process be rooted in and carried out in accordance with the traditions, cultures and values of the people.*

2. *Community and governance capacities must be promoted through leadership, human resource and community development.*

3. *Viable mechanisms, participation, consultation, information sharing and decision making by First Nations people at the community level must be established*

4. *The system must be integrated and holistic.*

Finally the essential elements of a framework from a First Nations perspective (ASI) are as follows:

- *An accountability mechanism must be in place to ensure community and economic development.*

- *There are mechanisms to ensure community capacity building with First Nation goals and objectives*

- *Contracts and agreements will be utilized based on community capacity.*

- *There is a clearly defined purpose for the initiative*

- *There is an organized structure of team members to oversee the initiative*

- *There is representation from First Nation communities to make decisions concerning the initiative*

- *There is a team that will work for the common purpose of attaining the vision for the initiative*

- *There is access to funds based on the degree of problems and needs*

- *There is monitoring of the initiative through evaluation procedures and input on service delivery*

- *There is a central interconnected communications system or network*

- *There is technical support to communities.*

Purpose of this Document

This **Policy Framework Discussion Paper** is a reflection of the joint effort of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) to produce a summary of First Nations feedback from demonstration projects and regional and national workshops on issues, options and recommendations for a redesigned policy framework on social assistance. The knowledge and experience of First Nations experts and front-line workers has laid much of the foundation for what will be a common understanding for how reformed on-reserve social assistance programs and services reflect the diverse and unique needs of First Nations communities and members.

The objectives of this discussion paper are to:

1. Provide an overview of information to facilitate First Nations participation in discussions and sharing on ISR policy issues, options, recommendations and implementation issues;

2. Provide a mechanism for First Nations to participate in meaningful dialogue on a redesigned social assistance policy framework;

3. Establish a scope and direction for a national ISR policy framework that can be enhanced through ongoing dialogue and discussion;

4. Outline parameters for the vision, principles and objectives of a redesigned policy framework;

5. Share information on policy issues and recommendations gained from the national and regional workshops, demonstration projects, research and policy analysis on the themes of governance, capacity building, partnerships and self-sufficiency;

6. Define and outline a management accountability framework that is consistent with First Nations values and philosophies;

7. Discuss options and summarize recommendations that are sensitive to the political and financial considerations of First Nations and government and that will ensure success and sustainability over time;

8. Describe implementation issues, next steps and time lines necessary for implementation over time of a redesigned policy framework.

Directions for Policy Reform

Building on the themes articulated in the AFN Aboriginal Strategic Initiatives research, the redesigned policy framework will address the following themes:

Partnerships and Linkages – the potential to re-establish partnerships that enable communities to combine social assistance with First Nations traditions and cultures and to eliminate barriers to the effective linking of social and other programs;

Supporting Capacity-building – at the individual, community, administering authority and government levels,

Advancing First Nations Governance – in a way that recognizes the variation in goals and timeframes of individual First Nations with respect to self-government.

Strengthening Self-Sufficiency - in a way that acknowledges self sufficiency through healthy human relationships, as well as, through a sustainable economic base.

This process is designed to be, *and must continue to be*, First Nation driven. First Nations are an integral part of the discussion of the principles, structure and development process for a revised national policy framework on social assistance.

The development of a national policy framework is a unique partnership approach based on the insight and pragmatic experience of First Nations demonstration project holders. Since the implementation of the ISR demonstration projects, AFN, INAC and First Nations have undertaken the following activities to facilitate First Nation feedback in redesigning an effective social assistance framework:

Progress Reports and Project Evaluations

Progress reports provide regular updates on the progress of First Nation demonstration projects. They are a means to share lessons learned and to provide continual, community based feedback into the policy redesign process.

Evaluations of demonstration projects are essential for the development of a redesigned social assistance policy framework. Project evaluations are a "community voice" or means to share lessons learned from demonstration projects; from the community to the national level.

AFN/INAC Research

The AFN has completed a two-year research project, entitled *Sharing Solutions: First Nations Social Security Reform*, funded under HRDC's Aboriginal Strategic Initiative. INAC has completed a discussion paper entitled: *First Nation Social Assistance Research – Lessons Learned* that summarizes the lessons learned from a variety of research sources. Both research projects provide valuable information for a redesigned social assistance policy framework. Conclusions drawn from these research initiatives are based on various practical and theoretical resources to support and complement First Nation feedback at the community level.

Regional and National Workshops

Workshops are a forum for First Nation demonstration project holders to draw lessons learned from their projects and to share their expertise, experiences and working level knowledge in the redesign of a national policy framework. The ISR Joint Policy Coordinating Group which consists of representatives from First Nations and INAC, in collaboration with AFN, have co-sponsored:

• Nine regional workshops with First Nations representatives who are participating in

demonstration projects   (November – March 2000)

- A National Income Security Reform Policy workshop forum (November 29-to December 1, 2001).

- Nine regional policy dialogue workshops designed to further develop policy issues and recommendations from the National Workshop. These were held between February and March 2001.

This discussion paper, therefore, is based on the information collected to date through these activities.

The feedback resulting from workshops, progress reports, evaluations and AFN/INAC research, plus the policy dialogue data collected during February - March 2001, are the basis for the next four sections of this report which are clustered as follows:

Governance A First Nations Perspective

- **Reflecting First Nation Realities**
- **Flexibility**
- **Accountability**

Capacity Building - What is Required for Success

- **Job Training and Education**
- **Community Development**

Partnerships and Linkaging Resources

- **Program Integration**
- **Comparability**
- **Information Management**

Self-Sufficiency – Sources of Prosperity and Well-being

- **Financial Resources**
- **Supports for Social Assistance Staff**

- **Case Management**

Small and Remote Communities
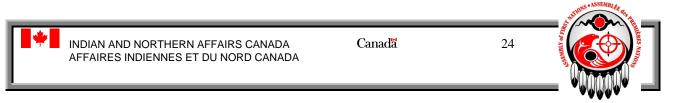
Governance A First Nations Perspective

The element of governance and its relationship to First Nations Income Security is a complete and sometimes complicated phenomenon. That is because it is interlinked with the concept of *jurisdiction* which First Nations understand as referring *to the right and responsibility of First Nations to possess and effectively exercise authority (legal, decision-making, moral, spiritual, etc.*). First Nations jurisdiction is generally exercised by First Nation governments. It encompasses the authority to make and implement decisions of public matters, and to have the legitimacy of these acts recognized by First Nation people, as well as, by other governments (ASI, 1998). For First Nations, the concept of jurisdiction is closely associated with self-determination and self-government.

All aspects of *governance* – jurisdiction, self-determination and self-government – are important because in order for a First Nation determined and controlled income security system to be established, change must occur with respect to federal and provincial jurisdiction over First Nation income security so that there is space for the exercise of First Nation authority over income security reform and development. First Nation governance mechanisms must be acknowledged and supported in order to respect First Nation defined visions (for self-determined health, well-being and security) and to ensure rebuilding of First Nations social security systems. Finally, inter-jurisdictional arrangements are required to dramatically transform and restructure relationships, responsibilities, resource methodologies and program arrangements that will respect First Nation governance mechanisms. These inter-jurisdictional arrangements will ultimately serve the dual purpose of supporting First Nation governance initiatives and linking First Nation social and income security frameworks with mainstream Canadians security programs and services in areas where First Nations see this as desirable.

In the context of income security reform strengthening governance is seen as prioritization of policy issues based on demonstration project activities and lessons learned. These priorities consist of:

> *Strengthening governance policy and program capacity via:*
> • *agreements with provincial authorities to address issues in providing social assistance to*

off-reserve members;
- *developing long-term options for social assistance savings;*
- *promoting community awareness and participation; and*
- *supporting second level service organizations in order to deal with social, education and economic issues.*

Governance
Feedback From Regional Dialogues

Regional dialogue participants clearly stated that a reformed ISR Policy Framework *must* support increased authority and responsibility for First Nations governments in the following areas:

- *Core governance* – in terms of decision making structures; including those for appeal and redress

- *Fiscal relationships* – in terms of management capacity for increasing complex financial arrangements

- *Lands and resources* - in terms of institutional and human resources required for increased authority and responsibility over First Nation owned lands

- *Inter-governmental relationships* – in terms of agreements with the provinces for on and off-reserve issues

First Nation governance mechanisms must be consistent with the cultural traditions of the community. Community governance must be characterized by strong leadership, good management practices, and healthy communities. First Nation leadership, management and administration must reflect and enhance community capacity to design and oversee programs in order to move towards self-government. A reformed ISR Policy Framework must be reviewed and approved by First Nations leadership. First Nation governments must ensure that other governments recognize the jurisdiction and funding for program and service delivery. The federal government must secure the appropriate mandate, authorities and approvals to develop legislation to provide recognition of First Nations' jurisdiction over income security reform and social assistance. The federal government must work with First Nations to break the connection with provincial welfare policy by jointly developing a First Nations Income

Security Reform policy that truly reflects the realities of First Nation communities demographically and philosophically.

In recent years, many First Nations have assumed responsibility for many sectors of their community administration for such programs as: education, health, social services and human resource development. This has led to the creation of long-term and stable structures that are better adapted to suit the needs of a First Nation population. One example is the increased role of Elders in community decision making and as repositories of First Nation language and culture. Success can be measured by healthy management, self-management and community self-sufficiency.

Reformed relationships with provincial authorities are required to address the migration of First Nation members outside of First Nation jurisdictions. On and off-reserve issues also need to be addressed. Funding must be stable, community based and provide for long term program development and delivery. First Nation governments must be flexible, provide equality and allow for consistency with the First Nations values and traditions of each community. Communication mechanisms are required to facilitate cooperation and support for policy changes and community development. First Nations must have control over funding, reporting and be able to exercise flexibility in order to address cost of living and reallocation of funds so that priority issues can be addressed. Programs and services must be flexible enough to accommodate the diverse needs and conditions of each First Nation community.

First Nations need to be able to develop protocols and guidelines to enhance community capacity to design and deliver programs. These protocols will assist First Nations in preparing for self-government. Capacity must be supported through leadership training, human resource and community development. Government jurisdictions must acknowledge First Nations input on policy and program development. The commitment to entrench a new policy must ensure the protection of the rights of individuals, First Nations, and Canadians, and must make a commitment to acknowledge and protect Treaty rights.

First Nations programs and services cannot be streamlined into mainstream programs and governance mechanisms. They must be reflective of and supportive of First Nation realities and priorities.

First Nation Realities

Feedback From Regional Workshop Dialogues

Most First Nation people living on reserve who receive social assistance do so through INAC. Many First Nation communities deliver social assistance in their communities but federal government criteria oblige them to conform to program models and regulations that are provincial or territorial in philosophy and design. As a result these programs do not address the unique needs and circumstances of First Nation communities. The rate of social assistance recipients in Canada is fives higher than the national average. In some First Nation communities over 80% of the residents receive social assistance benefits. *Mocovitch and Webster, 1995: 209.* **First Nations demographic circumstances suggest program design must be reflective of a population that generally is:**

- *younger and experiences a higher growth rate;*

- *experiences a higher level of individual and family health and social dysfunction;*

- *experiences higher unemployment rates and greater difficulties in achieving economic development;*

- *experiences poorer housing and infrastructure conditions; and*

- *leaves school earlier.*

In developing community strength many First Nations have been working to break down barriers such as:

- **mental health,**
- **alcoholism and addictions,**
- **handicaps and disabilities,**
- **language loss,**
- **inappropriate school curriculum,**
- **violence,**
- **abuse, and**
- **racism.**

Health and Well-Being

As a result of harsh social and economic realties and other social and cultural issues, many First Nations clients experience poor physical and mental health. The goal of an effective social security system must be to promote wellbeing and prosperity at the individual and community level. Basic physical needs such as adequate nutrition, clothing, shelter, pure drinking water, sanitary waste disposal and access to medical services is required. Adequate income and sustainable economies are required so that First Nations can access resources to sustain life at a level that permits the development of human well-being, as well as, processes of economic engagement that are capable of producing sustainable prosperity (ASI, 1998). Adequate power and a reasonable level of control and voice in shaping one's life and environment through processes of meaningful participation in the political, social and economic life of one's community and nation is also required.

Suicide rates for First Nation youth are six times the national rate. Programs that focus on, and target First Nation youth, are required to promote and support healing and social development, as well as, to protect the most vulnerable so that they may live lives of dignity and achieve adequate levels of well being. Communities require programs to provide recreation, address language barriers and provide resources for role models to enhance self-esteem development and motivation for living. There is presently no federal legislation on social programming for First Nations. Current programs do not address the needs of First Nations so they must develop their own.

Employment

First Nation needs are greater than available resources. There is a high cost of living, high cost to provide training courses, and in remote and isolated communities, employment opportunities are non-existent. If there were adequate employment and training programs in First Nation communities less people would be on social assistance. Drug and alcohol addictions are a major problem in First Nation communities because of high unemployment rates, poverty and illiteracy. Employment and training programs are required to provide work opportunities and long term sustainable incomes for First Nation community residents.

Funding for communities to purchase technology is especially a problem, and in remote and isolated communities, technology is non-existent. First Nations need a strong foundation on which to build self -government. There needs to be proactive

mechanisms in place to address poverty and job creation opportunities. First Nation communities must protect their land and resources, and build on them. First Nations culture and traditions must be acknowledged and incorporated into employment and training programming. The ISR Policy Framework must provide for a gradual transition from social assistance to self-reliance. Programs must provide for employment opportunities that include participation in traditional economies. Participants must be able to proceed through training at their own pace, including apprenticeship and resource opportunities in traditional economies. Programs must also address the needs of youth and provide skill development, education and employment incentive programs.

Youth

Youth represent a significant portion of the First Nation population and their needs must be recognized and addressed. Programs must encourage individuals, families and communities to take responsibility for children and youth. Funding for special needs children and youth is inadequate and resources must be improved. Youth need to be involved in community programs, policy planning and development so that program solutions are reflective of their realities and needs. Peer counselors, youth centers, tutoring and summer school programs, promotion of role models and language and cultural programs are just a few examples of viable solutions for youth related problems. Program activities must be based upon First Nation cultural traditions and values. Programs must also provide opportunities for job experience, identity development, counseling support for addictions and other social issues.

Elders

Elders and spiritual leaders provide valuable guidance and support in terms of carrying out cultural and spiritual activities at the educational and community level. They serve as positive role models and help to create a positive environment for learning and cultural development. Traditional ceremonies provide an opportunity for Elders and cultural leaders to teach children, community members and staff members about culture. First Nations must design a social safety net that is based on cultural values and traditions and assist members whether they are on or off reserve. First Nations service delivery staff must be of First Nations heritage and have the support of their leadership.

Some First Nation communities have good support from their Elders for their leadership and administration. This support encourages leaders (both political and administrative) to communicate, be accountable and to develop positive working relationships in, and outside, their community. Elders must be considered when making social and income security reform decisions. Policies and reform initiatives that do not include the opinions of Elders and Chiefs from First Nation communities weaken the principal structure of any reform effort. The inclusion of Elders legitimizes the reform process. It assures everyone that decisions affecting the lives of First Nation people were not made in isolation. Our Elders represent the wisdom of our communities and are the repositories of our culture. There must be a balance of traditional and conventional knowledge in the reform process.

Leadership

First Nation Chief and Council leadership provide a central location for input into the income security reform process. They hold the key position to link with all other stakeholders and have the resources to inform them of the ongoing maintenance required for an effective First Nations income and social security safety net.

First Nations service delivery staff must have the support of the leadership. First Nation Leadership must encourage and support social assistance administrators with developing activities to engage community involvement and support for income security reform. Leadership is key in creating job opportunities which requires additional funding for employment. Funding arrangements have to change to integrate employment and social assistance. Leaders, managers and adminstrators must create jobs and opportunities to enhance self-sufficiency, community self worth and esteem for First Nations members, and especially First Nation youth. First Nations leadership must also provide for healing initiatives to deal with social issues at the community level. Longer term and permanent employment are also needed to provide long term sustainable incomes for community residents.

Healing

Entire community systems have been severely traumatized and are unable to manage their collective recovery from, for example, the residential school experience. A very critical aspect of the community healing process is to move beyond healing from the past to the life long task of building and maintaining a healthy present and a

sustainable future. Essentially this means building new patterns of life such as: creating viable economic opportunities; opening up the political process so that everyone has a real voice in shaping community governance and social and economic development; utilizing cultural resources such as Elders, ceremonies and traditional knowledge to deal with trauma and healing; creating healthy recreational opportunities for children, youth and families; and training youth people to be effective parents.

Elders need to be able to utilize traditional medicines in client healing programs. Dispute mechanisms must be designed and based on traditional healing approaches and values. This includes the incorporation of First Nations culture and language in educational institutions and programs, the education of First Nation students, and the public, about First Nation culture, spirituality and history. There also needs to be recognition that negative energy is also part of the healing process. Leaders, administration, and social assistance administrators must acknowledge anger and confront it compassionately. First Nations' organizations need to develop support systems to provide for debriefing staff members who deal with grief and anger daily.

Reform

In the past efforts to reform the social assistance program failed because they addressed the wrong set of problems. It was assumed that the problem was the social assistance program *when social assistance dependency is connected to a far larger problem.* Caseloads and expenditures are high because there are few alternatives for growth in First Nation communities. Without a sense of community partnerships fundamental reform will not be successful. Reform comes from *within the community* and only First Nation people fully understand their own values and traditions.

A new social assistance system for First Nation communities must consider several different components.

- *First, the government of Canada must acknowledge the right of First Nations to self government and the right of First Nations government to work in partnership in determining the nature and level of services to their people.*

- *Second, First Nation governments must be free from the obligation to follow those models, regulations and policies that characterize provincial and territorial programs.*

- *Third there must be adequate funding so communities can remain flexible in the use of existing social resources according to their own social and economic agenda.*

- *Fourth, there has to be an funding mechanism that includes clear guarantees for increases in spending that results from demographics and economic conditions.*

- *Finally, communities must be able to retain any savings that results from program changes (ASI, 1998).*

In addition, the INAC national and regional offices must meet meaningfully with First Nation communities to share information about income security reform and the activities that are taking place nationally and regionally. There must be adequate communications mechanisms in place to ensure that regional and First Nations people are informed and involved in the design, development and approval of any policy framework. Income security reform to be successful must ultimately be controlled by First Nations with the jurisdiction, power and resources that go along with it. This will require First Nation sanctioned policy that allows First Nation leadership periodic assessment of progress. *Without sanctions, reform will not be accountable to First Nation communities.* The design will require an understanding of First Nation culture and practices that can be integrated into public policy. This will require income security reform to be First Nation specific. It must be culturally and socially relevant to First Nation philosophy and beliefs. In practice ultimately *this will require reform to be managed and delivered within First Nation communities as an integral component of First Nation self-government and governance.*

Flexibility
Feedback From Regional Workshop Dialogues

First Nations need the flexibility to design and implement social assistance programs that will meet the needs of clients and accommodate their cultural, geographic, and socio-economic differences, as well as, to empower individual communities and their membership. This means creating a new role for social assistance in First Nation society as a whole.

First Nations must be able to develop their own social development policy manuals based on community needs, values, customs and traditions. This is a vital alternative to the provincial standards and guidelines that *do not respect or reflect* First Nation cultures

or beliefs. There needs to be greater flexibility with the use of federal and provincial dollars in order to support innovative approaches. This includes client incentives, support programs to gain independence, etc.

First Nations need to be able to set their own priorities regarding social assistance which must be a collaboration of employment and training, education and economic development programming. ISR is an example where First Nations had the opportunity to design their own policies through pilot projects. Communities decided their own priorities and invited community members to provide input and direction on project activities.

Flexibility is required at several levels within First Nation communities. This can be accomplished by:

- *allowing for First Nations to adopt change at their own pace;*
- *allowing for community based decision making regarding use of funds;*
- *taking into account size, remoteness and cultural differences;*
- *appreciating cultural diversity regionally and nationally;*
- *allowing for clients to make choices regarding programs and services that meet their needs; and*
- *ensuring that program design accommodates the needs of Elders, women, youth and the disabled.*

Program reporting requirements must be streamlined to encourage linkages, program integration and increased accountability. Centralized data collection using technology would facilitate monthly reporting at the national and regional levels. Through the policy framework ultimately INAC must seek flexibility in program authorities to enable work opportunities, adult education/literacy, transportation, childcare, healing and community development to evolve as holistic program delivery systems. In addition, INAC needs to seek adjustment to other departmental and federal policies in regard to housing, childcare shelter allowances so as not to penalize individuals who are trying to become self sufficient. Some programs which specifically require greater flexibility are:

- *the Work Opportunities Program,*
- *Adult education and literacy programs,*
- *Transportation,*

- *Childcare, and*
- *Healing*

With adequate funding and more flexible policies First Nations can invest according to their own needs and circumstances. When savings are achieved, First Nations must be able to retain these funds in the community for other projects and activities of importance, as determined by the leadership and membership. Government must relinquish control and thereby empower First Nations to design, develop and implement social assistance programs that reflect the realities of their communities. This will require a dialogue between governments and First Nations to discuss the terms for the transfer and responsibility over time.

Accountability
Feedback From Regional Workshop Dialogues

In the exercise of First Nations governance within a First Nations social security system First Nations governments will be re-assuming a much higher degree of political responsibility than they have enjoyed in the past. With this First Nations governments will need to inspire, develop and sustain public confidence in the leadership, institutions and policies, programs and services that make up the system. In order to enhance legitimacy and exercise jurisdiction First Nation governments must do the following:

- *Ensure transparency and accountability for the use and management of the social security system's fiscal and other resources (human, lands and resources).*

- *Establish and communicate a First Nation vision with standards and performance measures for a First Nation social and income security system.*

- *Establish and maintain high quality review, monitoring and data systems to support policy, program and service evaluation and development.*

- *Establish opportunities, processes, structures and other mechanisms to facilitate the ongoing participation of First Nation citizens in all aspects of social security system design, maintenance, operation, monitoring, evaluation and adjustment (ASI , 1998).*

There will be increased unity in First Nation communities and with staff, council and

community members through shared visioning. This will be reflected in the improvement of community well being; through increased autonomy at the local level; governance infrastructure development; engaged, involved and supportive communities; increased community awareness and communication; and improved and integrated programs and services.

Open and transparent communication is required regarding accountability for First Nations in regard to federal and provincial law. First Nations need to understand the government organizational structure for program development, communication protocols and in order to work with INAC to influence policy change. The bridging of this gap is required at all levels of government.

Complexity in jurisdiction and lack of formal protocol agreements for first Nation, federal and provincial governments create conflicts regarding policy, programs, resources and accountability. Any accountability mechanism to be effective must acknowledge the fact that First Nations social assistance administrators are accountable to community members and Council first and then funding agencies. Community involvement in the development of transparent accountability mechanisms that define clear measures for results that report to communities first and then to funding agencies are therefore required. It is important that program information be made available to all community members and leadership. Communication and information are important elements to accountability and ultimately to the success of any policy reform.

Capacity Building - What is Required for Success

Community capacity refers to the development of the ability or capability of people, organizations and communities to run programs effectively. Developing skills and competence – developing capacity – is a crucial part of this. If we do not build the skills needed, programs will not succeed (ASI, 1998).

There is a lot of knowledge and expertise in our First Nation communities that we do not recognize. Mentoring and specialized training programs provided to First Nation communities are options for providing the training and skills for capacity building. The key is ensuring the skills are obtained by a number of community residents and that they, in turn, transfer these skills to others. Because First Nation communities experience:

- *significantly lower levels of education,*
- *inadequate housing conditions,*
- *high unemployment,*
- *low income levels,*
- *high levels of welfare dependency,*
- *high suicide rates among particularly youth,*
- *domestic violence, and*
- *limited access to transportation, health care and economic development*

capacity building is critical to enhancing the opportunity for First Nations to change the conditions that exist in their communities.

Capacity building involves the *whole* community. Elders, women, leaders and youth all have different gifts to offer. Each has a different way of thinking. Individual and group needs must be assessed to achieve a complete human resource directory. There needs to be increased capacity with the aim of gaining more work and responsibility at the First Nation community level. A vision must be developed and then a "master plan". There has to be an integrated strategy where each stakeholder understands the big picture.

First Nation administrators require capacity in policy, community, social and economic development. The policy framework must provide sufficient resources to develop the

capacity of First Nations as directed by community priorities. Some requirements for First Nation capacity building are:

- *Research, development and planning to support community development initiatives*

- *Technology (such as computers, software, Internet, network and data management.) to facilitate and support program/service delivery and reporting*

- *Second level services for administrators to provide professional development, training, policy guidance for social assistance administrators*

- *Second level services such as maintenance, follow-up and counseling to assist clients upon entering the workforce*

- *Formal social development administrator training, accreditation and support*

- *Leadership training on measures-based social programming including policy, administration, accountability and reporting.*

Communities need to incorporate First Nation culture and values into program and service delivery. Through restoring pride in First Nation cultures, communities may then address the root cause of dependence (attitudes, values and self-esteem). Programs and services must go beyond teaching life skills of the larger society and teach the culture beliefs and values that have sustained our ancestors for generations.

The ISR policy framework must provide adequate resources to communities so that they match the requirements identified through First Nation human resource development strategies. Short term funding does not work with long-term planning and community development. The policy framework must provide for the following:

- *Capital resources for hardware for information management systems,*

- *Assessment of the role of INAC to allow for a shift from monitoring and compliance to support,*

- *Revisit and recognize First Nation jurisdiction and income security reform policies,*

- *Increase resources to support hiring of social development administrators to deal with increased workloads*

Successful program delivery is dependent on capacity and skills development. These include, but are not limited, to the following:

- *Leadership and management skills*
- *Strong administrative institutions*
- *Reporting mechanisms that monitor results and make innovations*
- *Access to other funds and resources*
- *Flexibility to adapt programs and allocate funds according to need*
- *Separation of politics and business development*

The policy framework must ensure sufficient funding for capacity building through a long term commitment for funding First Nations capacity building. These funds need to be directed to identified capacity development priorities which include:

- *Consultation*
- *Communication strategies*
- *Needs assessments*
- *Organizational development*
- *Professional development*
- *Reviewing and providing clarity in policy procedures*
- *Developing and negotiating partnerships with public and private sector stakeholders.*

With increased capacity at the community level success will be evidenced by increased employment, increased income levels, increased community participation in program planning design and evaluation, and through long term plans and visions that reflect the goals, lifestyles and beliefs of the community membership.

First Nations leadership, community members, staff and local businesses need to identify community strengths and challenges and work together to develop community strategic plans and development strategies. INAC must work with provincial and territorial governments to develop support mechanisms for changes that are emerging through ISR. Overall funding is required for professional development and strategic planning to strengthen First Nations capacity. The policy framework must provide for program integration, pooling of resources and making policies flexible for First Nations. All programs and services must be integrated at the community level to improve access for clients. Education and economic development must be a priority. Clients need encouragement and support to pursue opportunities in education, training and employment. There must also be a focus on youth, culture and language. First Nations

need to concentrate and build on community strengths and healthy environments. More funding must also be made available for standardization of requirements for resourcing and reporting and to ensure coordination of funds regionally.

Capacity building is the sharing, learning and processing of information that will benefit all First Nation communities. It is an investment in human resources. There are many indicators or success. The most tangible indicator is a decrease in dependency and increase in people's motivation towards employment and life.

Education and Training
Feedback from Regional Workshop Dialogues

Education is viewed by First Nations people as the key to the future. It will give First Nations the ability to address the issues of their communities in the context of the outside world. It will also help develop economies and provide jobs (ASI, 1998). First Nations communities are predominately young and education is a prime concern as First Nations attempt to ensure that opportunities for education are accessible and equitable.

One of the most effective ways to become self-sufficient is to get job skills through education and training. The focus of training and education is too narrow and must change to provide for a continuum of basic life and specialized skills development such as employment readiness skills that will ultimately lead to self sufficiency. These programs must also take into consideration the *special needs* of individuals with FAS/FAE, disabilities and women who are single parents.   These programs must be long-term and consist of realistic phases that include:

>   **Phase One***:*   *Education*
>   **Phase Two:**   *Life Skills Training*
>   **Phase Three:**   *Employment Readiness*
>   **Phase Four:**   *On-the-job Training and ongoing support*

Many First Nations experience difficulty in accessing resources from HRDC - AHRDA program funds. Funding for employment, economic development and training are insufficient to meet community needs. More flexible programming is required to permit First Nations to develop, design, deliver and evaluate programs to meet priority needs. First Nations education and training programs must be flexible enough to meet the needs of populations characterized by members who:

>   •   *Leave school earlier than the non-First Nation population*

- *Have literacy rates that are half the national average*
- *Have First Nation children who receive, in most cases, separate and unequal schooling*
- *Have students who receive insufficient support in school*
- *Experience educational attainment that has only improved slightly, yet economic disparities continue to widen*
- *Have students who fail to develop adequate academic and social skills*
- *Have low education levels that lead to unnecessary and avoidable losses of social and economic benefits to our communities.*

There needs to be consistency in the flow of training program dollars. Programs must be people and community driven and provide flexibility in the pace of training. Individuals need the opportunity to define and establish their own academic and personal growth. Linkages amongst First Nations departments and programs are required to provide for a shared responsibility and allow for follow up, monitoring, education and evaluation of students. Alternative school formats are also required to allow students to receive a split of fifty percent academic training, and fifty percent work skills training, to ensure balance. Curriculum should focus on developing pride, confidence and healthy self-esteem in First Nation youth. Integrated case management is also required to combine client training with career planning.

Requirements for effective training includes:

- *Early client assessment*
- *Skilled trainers*
- *Flexibility in program requirements*
- *Sufficient Resources*

Client aspirations need to be identified at an early age in order to develop a foundation of life skills and begin career planning as early as possible. Education programs must incorporate traditional and cultural philosophies into their curriculums. There is also a need for increased parental involvement, and strengthened relationships between schools, parents, students and the community at large. Resources, affirmative action policies, and incentives to attract First Nation teachers to work and teach in First Nation schools and communities are needed. Cultural education and training is needed for teachers working in First Nation educational institutions with a focus on special education. As well, First Nation leaders and managers must be included in the recruitment and hiring of educators in local places of learning.

Programs that link the generations, such as Elders with youth, create opportunities for interaction and sharing of knowledge which enforce positive teachings. Elders Councils are an example where linkages with health, social and educational programs can enhance traditional and cultural programming. A balance between modern and traditional teachings has to be reached within the education system. Back to the land projects also are needed that are locally designed and adequately resourced to ensure success.

Skills Training

First Nations need funds to invest in the human resources of their communities and in higher education opportunities to help further career development opportunities for their local membership. There needs to be collaboration among First Nations program and service providers in the areas of economic and social development and education and training in order to develop a long-term strategy for community development. There also needs to be increased resource sharing within First Nation communities.

To reflect more community-based programming, administrators of income security reform demonstration projects have linked job training initiatives to community projects such as home repair and community clean ups. They have also developed training programs that reflect First Nations values and traditions by incorporating traditional activities such as hunting and trapping into employment opportunities. '*Back to the land'* projects have been developed and training efforts are being made in forestry, oil, and gas resource areas. A comprehensive approach to training must be considered that addresses short-term skills training, on-the-job training, higher education and professional development while emphasizing cultural training and special education. Evaluations, assessments and follow-ups are also required to measure the quality and the effectiveness of training long term.

Community Development
Feedback from First Nations Policy Dialogues

In order for a community to develop there needs to be community support and involvement. Programs require a *single point entry* and need to address issues such as self-esteem and self-confidence. First Nations' programs and services must be reorganized and work together to maximize the resources available within the community. Comparability with other levels of government is required to ensure equity

and access for First Nations community members. First Nation youth need to be *empowered and supported.* Leadership needs to support new initiatives and work to ensure long term sustainability of effort. Our Elders are an integral part of change and must be involved along with the youth. Personal and community healing initiatives are required as an integral part of policy development and must be part of the ISR policy framework reform initiative. It is important that community members take ownership of their wellness plan, activities and outcomes. Program administrators can support community ownership by providing sufficient knowledge, information and support to make decisions regarding program development, delivery and evaluation. First Nations are challenged to meet the balance of providing both qualified counseling staff to work with clients and combining cultural and traditional people to support culturally appropriate activities.

Community development begins with the development of *a strategic community plan* based on a comprehensive vision of an ideal future. Through needs assessments, communities can identify priorities, needs and quantify gaps in programs and services. Identifying and building upon local community resources and assets is a community organizing tool that can motivate and commit a community to change.

In order to achieve positive and meaningful change community membership participation and support is required. This will require a good communication plan and strategy for sharing and receiving information. This requires communications that encompasses two way feedback from community members, clients, government departments and First Nations organizations.

The new policy framework needs to provide additional resources to provide for carrying out communication and education activities. Community support is critical to the success of community development initiatives, especially as it relates to income security reform. Additional resources for capacity development are required to support continuing knowledge development through best practices, toolkits, networking, and professional development. The federal government must develop a policy framework that supports program integration and provides for community driven solutions. Several federal departments deliver programs and funding to support the development of First Nations communities. These departments need to integrate programs nationally, regionally and locally. Ultimately a reformed policy framework must provide First Nations with control over the decisions regarding social assistance eligibility. In addition, this framework must also provide resources to support community development especially for communication, education and professional development long term.   This will allow First Nation communities to:

- *Identify the needs and interests of its members*
- *Encourage individual participation and integration*
- *Provide placement and work experience to individuals*
- *Ensure follow up*
- *Have an evolutionary approach to change*

The chief indicator of success will be the greater number of well-trained resource people for the community. Long term, community members who gain greater autonomy and pride for the future will be another important indicator of success.

Partnerships and Linkaging Resources

The current system of income security has created a sense of isolation among First Nations by focusing on the procedures of funding while excluding the traditional process found in *partnerships.* Traditionally activities such as trading, bartering and constant informal networking played a key role in our communities and helped First Nations cope with economic and social dependency. The focus on the *individual* and *not on partnerships with others in the community* has created dependencies on outside government sources for a personal sense of well being in our communities. Partnerships in the context of income security reform must blend economic resources with traditional forms of networking and sharing. The combination of economic, emotional and spiritual endeavors creates a broader base for reform to be effective.

Income security reform must provide a holistic range of programs, services and support that are available through a *single window delivery system* based on linkages and partnerships. There must be communication and team building as a common focus to program and service delivery. Leadership must work with community members to develop a *common vision* and communicate a vision for social reform that supports improvement based on:

- *Partnerships with neighboring communities*
- *Setting up of business collaborative groups such as a Chambers of Commerce*
- *Providing small business training*
- *Creating a market place for goods and services*

A reformed national policy framework must provide the opportunity for First Nations to develop multi-departmental comprehensive First Nation funding agreements that provide for cost-sharing agreements, resource sharing and simplified reporting. A short list of potential partners includes:

- *First Nation Chief and Councils*
- *National and Regional Native organizations and affiliates*
- *Federal and Provincial governments*
- *Economic development programs*
- *Health and social service programs*
- *Education and training programs*
- *Disability service programs*

- *Finance and justice programs, and*
- *Language, culture and literacy programs*

The reformed policy framework must provide for annual multi-departmental funding that is available for individual programs that are flexible and meet First Nation communities' needs. These agreements must provide flexible funding for the delivery of programs and services and permit inter-fund transfers to meet local priorities. Funding formulas need to be reviewed to ensure that services are comparable to local area labor markets and demographics. First Nations need to consult with their membership and identify gaps in programs and services at the local level. Based on this information they can work with First Nation regional organizations and develop lists of regional priorities for partnerships with federal departments and others. Through partnerships, a communication strategy must be developed that addresses the interests of all partners and supports and promotes linkages. This is also required on the national level between various federal departments and their respective programs.

There are many diverse needs that face First Nations social assistance administrators. In fact there is a tendency to think of social assistance recipients as a homogenous group. In reality, research indicates that these individuals have greatly varying degrees and causes of dependency. Social assistance recipients often face multiple barriers to employment which can include illiteracy, poor health, substance abuse, discrimination, and lack of work experience, among other things.

Most government programs are designed to address specific barriers to self-sufficiency one at a time. The divisions between these funding programs are replicated in service delivery structures at the local level. It is the failure to adequately appreciate the inter-relatedness of social and economic problems which has made dependency worse over the years. For example, short-term employment and training programs such as job search, work experience and on-the-job training have had limited success among disadvantaged clients because they *do not address the social and systemic barriers endemic to First Nation communities.* Social security for First Nation people must promote a way of life that produces "*whole health*" or well-being and prosperity. An array of programming is required to address the unique and varied needs of people who are dependent on social assistance and they must be coordinated to improve the likelihood of independence. Program integration is an efficient way of ensuring that the social assistance regime offers a holistic, manageable, client-centered range of programs.

By making it easier for First Nations to combine funding and consolidate reporting; ways of addressing income, health, employment, family circumstances, education and

other related factors can be planned for together. Social development offices can then design a continuum of services geared to the varying levels of independence of their clients.

In summary, the reformed policy framework must provide funding policies that meet First Nations needs. Flexibility for community program design and the ability to carryover funding surpluses to the next year is required to ensure that First Nations maximize results from available resources.

Comparability
Feedback from Regional Workshop Dialogues

A *one-window approach* is required for program and service delivery. Partnerships with other First Nations and the provinces will provide opportunities to learn about available programs. Income security reform policies need to be fair and equitable. There is inconsistency between the federal and provincial interpretation of policy. As a result comparable and equitable treatment of First Nations community members needs to be guaranteed. In some regions, for example, there is no comparability between the programs the province provides and the programs offered on-reserve. There are blatant inequities, for example, in health benefits, and in terms of access to mainstream programs and services. Federal legislation is required to establish a standard of comparability to ensure First Nations members receive programs and services comparable to those generally offered to the citizens of Canada. The reformed policy framework must address "bottom line" needs and provide more funding, more time and more flexibility. Reporting and program administration must be simplified by reducing the number of forms required. Program development should provide for community designed guidelines that reflect cultural and community values. First Nations require more resources, more control and more decision making authority for the development, design and evaluation of programs and services.

Provincial and territorial governments have initiated reform of their social assistance programs from passive systems of income support to more active case-managed systems. Social assistance programs on-reserve are designed to offer services comparable to those offered by the provincial governments in off-reserve communities of similar size and location. As there is no active federal legislation regarding social assistance on reserve, INAC follows provincial laws relating to social assistance. Courts have interpreted Section 15 of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* to mean that governments cannot offer benefits to some Canadians and discriminate against others. In other program areas (health and education) the federal government has attempted to

coordinate programs in order to ensure that services on-reserve are comparable to services off reserve.

To this effect federal social assistance policies must complement provincial/territorial policies by providing similar levels of funding and access to employment, training and education programs for First Nation citizens. Separate on-reserve social assistance regimes are required that establish rates and eligibility requirements that are sensitive to the needs and demographics of First Nation communities. Federal legislation may be required to accomplish this long term goal.

The reformed income security policy framework must create equality for everyone and address input from First Nations. First Nations need more access to training programs and policies need to be changed regarding status versus non-status First Nations members. A bill back agreement among First Nations and between the federal, provincial and territorial governments is required to address shortages and disputes regarding eligibility for services.

Success will ultimately be measured by achieving one of the following:

- *When every First Nation works together without borders*
- *When all levels of government work together for the benefit of First Nation peoples*
- *There is recognition of First Nation governance.*

Information Management
Feedback from Regional Dialogues

Information and data are valuable resources to First Nations. Technology serves to reduce the time required for information management and staff members use data as a tool to make change and measure progress over time. First Nation communities need adequate resources to be able to effectively collect and analyze data for reporting and to monitor change.

Structure

To implement an effective case management or *single window delivery system*, detailed client files must be created and readily accessible. Internally, this will require linking various departments through infrastructure and mechanisms such as unified filing

systems. Organizational networks which link programs and services will also support information sharing e.g. between health, social assistance, employment and training, and housing programs for client monitoring.

Externally, effective and responsible services require that information be shared between First Nations, relevant federal departments and provincial agencies. These exchanges of client information must be governed by codified standards of confidentiality.

Equipped

Computerized database systems are essential. The current state of technological infrastructure in many First Nations is inadequate, or non-existent. Funding is required to purchase up-to-date hardware and software. Most First Nation social development offices operate without computers, for example. Many remote communities lack adequate internet access. Although proprietary software is available to a few communities, these applications often lack flexibility. National standards for software and hardware are required to facilitate networking within and between Fist Nation communities. Standards would also help to guide First Nations who are just beginning the process of developing information management systems.

Trained

Investments in people are required as well. Social development staff need training to manage information electronically and this training must be ongoing in order to address staff turnover and changing technology. It may be necessary to pay higher salaries in order to recruit qualified staff. Finally, technical support is required to assist in the interpretation of data on an ongoing basis.

A reformed income security framework must ensure that adequate expertise, skills and resources for computerized programming and reporting systems are available to First Nations. Case management must be linked to computerized delivery and through one coordinated system that meets the needs of funding agencies such as HRDC, INAC and other departments and ministries. Communities must have access to support for the collection, interpretation and management of data. This framework must also provide standards for hardware, software and networking.

Standards and protocols must be developed so that information sharing respects confidentiality and security concerns. Funding is required so that First Nations may

establish technological infrastructure, secure technical and financial management support and develop administrative regimes for effective long term program and service delivery. The end result will be good information to support strategic planning and the proactive identification of development opportunities.

Self Sufficiency – Prosperity and Well being

Self-sufficiency means that people are able to meet their basic needs for well-being without having to be provided for out of the wealth controlled by others. Self-sufficiency then is predicated on the idea that people *have control over the resources they need* and *they have the capacities they require to produce their own wealth* in order to meet their own needs and to participate meaningfully in regional, national or global economic activities. Self-sufficiency means *prosperity and well being for all* (ASI, 1998).

The overall objective of a reformed income security framework must be to have a social development program that assists individuals and families to achieve well-being and independence to the greatest extent possible. The INAC *National Standards: Social Assistance Program* was last revised in 1982. This document describes social assistance primarily as an income support program. As a result, the current funding formula focuses on program and financial administration. *Gathering Strength* on the other hand provides policy direction that moves the focus from a *passive welfare system* to an integrated program that provides income support in combination with a greater emphasis on skills development, training and employment opportunities. Given this new policy direction, it is appropriate to re-evaluate the formula for program and financial administration to address client ratios that reflect increased workloads and client activity.

In addition a reformed income security policy framework must provide for the following:
- *Transitional support (counseling and mentoring)*
- *Personal development initiatives*
- *Salaries and training allowances*
- *Employment supplements for single parents and youth*
- *Child care*
- *Transportation*
- *Living allowances*
- *Counseling and mentoring support, and*
- *Increases in the work opportunities program by increasing the number of years in education/training, employability skills, and job placement to improve employability and access*

There also needs to be programs for clients with disabilities. Sequential programming

needs to be aimed at providing participants with training that is relevant and applicable to economic opportunities through:

- *Life skills training,*
- *Job search skills development and training,*
- *Job maintenance training,*
- *Follow-up counseling, and*
- *Internships or job placements.*

A reformed policy framework must acknowledge that it takes time for social assistance recipients to transition, make changes and to complete skills training. This initiative, therefore, should be considered a long-term activity based on the goals and objectives of self-sufficiency and long term employability.

Programs must be client centered and nurture employability, training and education partnerships with other organizations and departments. Allocation rates and training allowances need to be standardized between programs to ensure consistency e.g. post-secondary education, professional development and adult education.

In addition, where permanent jobs do not exist economic opportunities need to be enhanced through tourism, other sustainable employment initiatives and through holistic service provision, based on collaborations with such programs as social services, education and housing. The objective of the income security system must be *to assist individuals in gaining new skills to achieve individual well being and to find meaningful employment that will lead to financial independence.* Through comprehensive programming that includes traditional parenting classes, life skills, adult upgrading and mentoring, clients will be able to make choices regarding their personal growth. In addition to being comprehensive, programs must also be flexible enough to meet the *special needs* of clients who include the Elderly, youth, women and persons with disabilities.

Social assistance recipients demonstrate a wide variety of needs and dependencies. Programs must respond to disincentives that affect the ability of clients to be successful in initiatives such as income security reform. These disincentives include:

- *Lack of job opportunities*
- *Poor quality jobs*
- *Work reduced income*
- *Taxation reduced income*
- *Loss of health care benefits*

- *Financial insecurity*
- *Low self-esteem*
- *Problems caused by stressors such as alcoholism, dysfunctional families, etc.*
- *Lack of education and illiteracy*
- *Lack of technology*

The current social assistance program is based on a philosophy that is over thirty years old and obliges communities to adhere to provincial and territorial models, regulations and benefit levels that do no consider First Nations as co-partners. A reformed policy framework must provide clients with earned income exemptions as an incentive, involve extended family members with childcare, provide for transportation for persons with disabilities and allow for increases in living allowances. Diversity in client needs can also be addressed by different phases of programming such as:

Basic: *the encouragement to seek employment*

Intermediate: *the art of maintaining employment*

Advanced: *the life-long learning, awareness and dedication of continuous upgrading and learning of new skills for the changing workplace.*

Communities will experience an improved quality of life as a result of income security reform and improved policy initiatives. This will be demonstrated over time by:

- *Increased skills and capability*
- *Increased work placements and economic development opportunities*
- *Full-time employment opportunities*
- *Reduced client work loads*
- *Clients meeting their personal career plan goals*
- *Improved self –esteem and increased community capacity*
- *Reductions in social assistance claims*
- *Reductions in community poverty*
- *Reduced crime and social problems*
- *Healthier communities*

Financial Resources
Feedback from Regional Policy Dialogues

There must be a shift in the use of social assistance funds to a more dynamic and constructive system of programming that will support social and economic

development in First Nation communities. Flexible long-term block funding supports First Nations in identifying needs, designing programs and allocating funding to their particular requirements and needs. Capital funding is required to support program delivery as many First Nation communities lack the facilities to deliver programs. Income security reform must result in flexible policies that provide incentives and opportunities for both social and economic development. Communities must be able to retain for an extended period of time, any savings from program and policy changes. Recognition of Aboriginal and treaty rights is essential. This political process must be recognized and addressed by INAC during the development of any reformed policy framework.

Reforming a First Nations social assistance system requires new funds and resourcing mechanisms in order to ensure success. This means a substantial shift from the current use of social assistance funds to one that is more dynamic and supportive of social and economic development in First Nation communities. Any new methodology must acknowledge the entrenched nature of welfare dependence and the diversity of circumstances and objectives endemic to First Nation communities. Funding must be:

- *adequate,*
- *sustainable,*
- *stable,*
- *flexible,*
- *incentive-based,*
- *capable of adapting to the special circumstances of First Nation*
- *communities, and*
- *be directed to the appropriate agency.*

The long term plan must be for the transfer of resources to First Nation communities so that they may develop their own training and integration plans along with effective accountability mechanisms. The elimination of social assistance dependency is a challenging endeavor that will require well-resourced, stable and sustainable programs. Adequate funding is also required to support a diverse range of activities associated with an integrated active measures system that will match demographic growth and inflationary increases.

Partnerships with multiple funding sources may also be an option to enhance the stability of financing of income security initiatives. Stability in funding is essential so that programs can be longer term and multi-year commitments can be increased allowing for flexibility and sustainability over time. Flexibility in the use of social

assistance funding will allow First Nations to direct resources to social and economic initiatives which contribute ultimately to the self sufficiency of their communities long term.

Just as income security reform must change the passive way in which social assistance supports clients, it must also change the passive way in which First Nations are funded. The reformed system must use social assistance funding arrangements to provide not only opportunities for First Nations to pursue social and economic development holistically, these arrangements must include *incentives* to do so as well.

Finally, a reformed policy framework must allow for shelter allowances according to actual need. This framework must secure resources that meet the needs based on the priorities of the individual First Nation. There has to be a complementary service delivery and social services need to link with other departments to give clients *a single window approach* to program delivery which ultimately maximizes resource dollars.

Supports for Social Assistance Staff
Feedback from Regional Policy Dialogues

All changes must occur within First Nation communities. Canada must recognize First Nations as legitimate governments; third level governments. This has to be coupled with a real change in federal attitudes and perspectives. Complete jurisdictional authority must be transferred to First Nations. There has to be more developmental dollars for all operations so First Nations can assume federal program responsibility; but this must not be seen as a cost saving measure. Funding formulas also need to be re-evaluated. Provincial jurisdiction is a barrier and needs to be addressed as well.

When finalizing a reformed income security framework, training and supports for social assistance administrators needs to consider the following areas:

- *family finance*
- *counseling*
- *financial management*
- *policies and procedures*
- *home management*
- *technology*
- *communication*
- *working environment and peer relationships*

First Nations lack the human resources, professional development and training funds, as well as, the facilities for training. More staff are required for social assistance departments along with effective organizations and strong managers. First Nation social assistance workers need opportunities to work with other administrators to support one another, to learn and to share best practices. Social assistance administrators need the skills and opportunity to develop change skills such as:

- *employment development*
- *human resource development counseling services*
- *crisis intervention*
- *proposal writing*
- *job training programming*
- *pre-technology up-grading skills*

A reformed income security policy framework must provide resources to support the creation of a professional development association for information sharing and to develop formal accredited training. This association would be responsible for identifying and developing ongoing training and professional development for social assistance administrators. Resources are required to support First Nations in restructuring welfare offices into employment offices and to support new roles. Stable funding, staff and additional resources are required to support and implement an active measures format of programming. The policy framework must provide increased funding for the following:

- *living allowances that address actual costs for basic needs*
- *additional staff who can deliver a continuum of services*
- *competitive compensation for workers within an standardized salary grid, and*
- *resources for computers, software and training*

First Nations require resources to establish employment offices to encourage clients and community members to seek employment and training opportunities. These offices would work closely with health, social, child and family services, and education departments. Resources are also required for employment counselors, training programs and training allowance/incentives.

A reformed income security reform policy framework must address the opportunity for First Nation specific training, job-related type training and flexibility. The bridging of the gaps between human resource development, economic development and the federal government are essential elements of any viable framework.

Small and Remote Communities

The needs of the northern and remote communities need to be addressed. They need to be able to provide comparable services, and in the case of isolated communities, this is even more difficult. INAC must increase the basic formula to reflect the cost of living in isolated First Nation communities. Currently there are only three levels of entitlement: *central, semi-isolated and remote.* The cost for technology infrastructure in remote communities is expensive to set up, expensive to maintain and expensive to fix. Transportation is also a problem for isolated communities and this affects all aspects of program delivery.

A reformed income security framework needs to establish a cost of living index for northern and remote communities that ensures that basic needs are reflected in actual cost allocations. The isolation factor criteria also needs to be updated as that formula is over 25 years old.

Combating poverty in small and remote communities requires that a reformed policy framework provide special consideration to living allowances that can be considered an unearned income. Funding for small and remote communities is inadequate to provide for capacity building, recruitment of qualified staff and meeting community needs. High costs of living in northern and isolated communities creates diverse levels of wellness within communities and there is a danger of a "caste system" developing in communities as a result. Emergency services such as medical care and policing are often too far away for prompt and timely responses to community needs. Housing shortages also keep community members from being able to return to their communities.

A reformed policy framework to be successful must have built into it mechanisms for meeting the needs of northern and remote communities. Basic needs allowances must be adequate to meet the needs of clients for food, clothing and medical needs. Service delivery costs are more expensive in the north and remote communities and this also must be addressed in the framework. A successful framework will be characterized by:

- *increased economic development opportunities*
- *increased technology*
- *increased communication*
- *decreased racism*
- *economic recovery*

- *no language barrier*
- *cross cultural training and sensitivity*

The essential elements of a Framework
A summary of Regional Feedback

The following is a review of essential elements of a reformed income security framework based a summary of what the regional dialogues and research indicated:

In terms of governance:

A reformed ISR Policy Framework *must* support increased authority and responsibility for First Nations governments in the following areas:

- *Core governance*

- *Fiscal relationships*

- *Lands and resources*

- *Inter-governmental relationships*

Funding must be stable, community based and provide for long term program development and delivery. Programs and services must be flexible, provide equality and allow for consistency with the First Nations values and traditions of each community.

Communication mechanisms are required to facilitate cooperation and support for policy changes and community development. First Nations must have control over funding, reporting and be able to exercise flexibility in order to address cost of living and reallocation of funds so that priority issues can be addressed.

First Nations need to be able to develop protocols and guidelines to enhance community capacity to design and deliver programs. These protocols will assist First Nations in preparing for self-government. First Nations programs and services cannot be streamlined into mainstream programs and governance mechanisms. They must be reflective of and supportive of First Nation realities and priorities.

Health and Well-being

The goal of an effective social security system must be to promote wellbeing and prosperity at the individual and community level.

Adequate income and sustainable economies are required so that First Nations can access resources to sustain life at a level that permits the development of human well-being, as well as, processes of economic engagement that are capable of producing sustainable prosperity.

Employment

First Nations need a strong foundation on which to build self -government. The ISR Policy Framework must provide for a gradual transition from social assistance to self-reliance. Programs must provide for employment opportunities that include participation in traditional economies. Participants must be able to proceed through training at their own pace, including apprenticeship and resource opportunities in traditional economies. Programs must also address the needs of youth and provide skill development, education and employment incentive programs.

Elders

Elders must be considered when making social and income security reform decisions. Policies and reform initiatives that do not include the opinions of Elders and Chiefs from First Nation communities weaken the principal structure of any reform effort. The inclusion of Elders legitimizes the reform process. Our Elders represent the wisdom of our communities and are the repositories of our culture. There must be a balance of traditional and conventional knowledge in the reform process.

Leadership

First Nation Chief and Council leadership provide a central location for input into the income security reform process. They hold the key position to link with all other stakeholders and have the resources to inform them of the ongoing maintenance required for an effective First Nations income and social security safety net.

Reform

Without a sense of community partnerships fundamental reform will not be successful.

Reform comes from *within the community* **and only First Nation people fully understand their own values and traditions.**

A new social assistance system for First Nation communities must consider several different components.

- *First, the government of Canada must acknowledge the right of First Nations to self government and the right of First Nations government to work in partnership in determining the nature and level of services to their people.*

- *Second, First Nation governments must be free from the obligation to follow those models, regulations and policies that characterize provincial and territorial programs.*

- *Third there must be adequate funding so communities can remain flexible in the use of existing social resources according to their own social and economic agenda.*

- *Fourth, there has to be an funding mechanism that includes clear guarantees for increases in spending that results from demographics and economic conditions.*

- *Finally, communities must be able to retain any savings that results from program changes.*

Income security reform to be successful must ultimately be controlled by First Nations with the jurisdiction, power and resources that go along with it. This will require First Nation sanctioned policy that allows First Nation leadership periodic assessment of progress. *Without sanctions, reform will not be accountable to First Nation communities.* **The design will require an understanding of First Nation culture and practices that can be integrated into public policy. This will require income security reform to be First Nation specific. It must be culturally and socially relevant to First Nation philosophy and beliefs. In practice ultimately** *this will require reform to be managed and delivered within First Nation communities as an integral component of First Nation self-government and governance.*

Flexibility

Government must relinquish control and thereby empower First Nations to design, develop and implement social assistance programs that reflect the realities of their communities. This will require a dialogue between governments and First Nations to discuss the terms for the transfer and responsibility over time.

Accountability

In order to enhance legitimacy and exercise jurisdiction First Nation governments must do the following:

- *Ensure transparency and accountability for the use and management of the social security system's fiscal and other resources (human, lands and resources).*

- *Establish and communicate a First Nation vision with standards and performance measures for a First Nation social and income security system.*

- *Establish and maintain high quality review, monitoring and data systems to support policy, program and service evaluation and development.*

- *Establish opportunities, processes, structures and other mechanisms to facilitate the ongoing participation of First Nation citizens in all aspects of social security system design, maintenance, operation, monitoring, evaluation and adjustment*

Communication and information are important elements to accountability and ultimately to the success of any policy reform.

In terms of Capacity Building:

The policy framework must provide sufficient resources to develop the capacity of First Nations as directed by community priorities. Some requirements for First Nation capacity building are:

- *Research, development and planning to support community development initiatives*

- *Technology (such as computers, software, Internet, network and data management.) to facilitate and support program/service delivery and reporting*

- *Second level services for administrators to provide professional development, training and policy guidance for social assistance administrators*

- *Second level services such as maintenance, follow-up and counseling to assist clients upon entering the workforce*

- *Formal social development administrator training, accreditation and support*

- *Leadership training on measures-based social programming including policy, administration, accountability and reporting.*

The ISR policy framework must provide adequate resources to communities so that they match the requirements identified through First Nation human resource development strategies. The policy framework must provide for the following:

- *Capital resources for hardware for information management systems,*

- *Assessment of the role of INAC to allow for a shift from monitoring and compliance to support,*

- *Revisit and recognize First Nation jurisdiction and income security reform policies,*

- *Increase resources to support hiring of social development administrators to deal with increased workloads*

Successful program delivery is dependent on capacity and skills development. These include, but are not limited, to the following:

- *Leadership and management skills*

- *Strong administrative institutions*

- *Reporting mechanisms that monitor results and make innovations*

- *Access to other funds and resources*

- *Flexibility to adapt programs and allocate funds according to need*

- *Separation of politics and business development*

The policy framework must provide for program integration, pooling of resources and

making policies flexible for First Nations. All programs and services must be integrated at the community level to improve access for clients. Education and economic development must be a priority.

Additional resources for capacity development are required to support continuing knowledge development through best practices, toolkits, networking, and professional development. The federal government must develop a policy framework that supports program integration and provides for community driven solutions. Several federal departments deliver programs and funding to support the development of First Nations communities. These departments need to integrate programs nationally, regionally and locally. Ultimately a reformed policy framework must provide First Nations with control over the decisions regarding social assistance eligibility.

In terms of Partnerships and Linkages:

Income security reform must provide a holistic range of programs, services and support that are available through a *single window delivery system* based on linkages and partnerships. There must be communication and team building as a common focus to program and service delivery.

A reformed national policy framework must provide the opportunity for First Nations to develop multi-departmental comprehensive First Nation funding agreements that provide for cost-sharing agreements, resource sharing and simplified reporting. A short list of potential partners includes:

- *First Nation Chief and Councils*
- *National and Regional Native organizations and affiliates*
- *Federal and Provincial governments*
- *Economic development programs*
- *Health and social service programs*
- *Education and training programs*
- *Disability service programs*
- *Finance and justice programs, and*
- *Language, culture and literacy programs*

Funding formulas need to be reviewed to ensure that services are comparable to local area labor markets and demographics. Federal social assistance policies must complement provincial/territorial policies by providing similar levels of funding and access to employment, training and education programs for First Nation citizens.

Separate on-reserve social assistance regimes are required that establish rates and eligibility requirements that are sensitive to the needs and demographics of First Nation communities. Federal legislation may be required to accomplish this long term goal.

The reformed income security policy framework must create equality for everyone and address input from First Nations. First Nations need more access to training programs and policies need to be changed regarding status versus non-status First Nations members. A bill back agreement among First Nations and between the federal, provincial and territorial governments is required to address shortages and disputes regarding eligibility for services.

Information management

A reformed income security framework must ensure that adequate expertise, skills and resources for computerized programming and reporting systems are available to First Nations. Case management must be linked to computerized delivery and through one coordinated system that meets the needs of funding agencies such as HRDC, INAC and other departments and ministries. Communities must have access to support for the collection, interpretation and management of data. This framework must also provide standards for hardware, software and networking.

In terms of Self Sufficiency: Prosperity and Well-being

A reformed income security policy framework must provide for the following to ensure self-sufficiency, prosperity and well-being:

- *Transitional support (counseling and mentoring)*
- *Personal development initiatives*
- *Salaries and training allowances*
- *Employment supplements for single parents and youth*
- *Child care*
- *Transportation*
- *Living allowances*
- *Counseling and mentoring support, and*
- *Increases in the work opportunities program by increasing the number of years in education/training, employability skills, and job placement to improve employability and access*

A reformed policy framework must acknowledge that it takes time for social assistance

recipients to transition, make changes and to complete skills training. This initiative, therefore, should be considered a long-term activity based on the goals and objectives of self-sufficiency and long term employability

Financial resources

Reforming a First Nations social assistance system requires new funds and resourcing mechanisms in order to ensure success. This means a substantial shift from the current use of social assistance funds to one that is more dynamic and supportive of social and economic development in First Nation communities. Any new methodology must acknowledge the entrenched nature of welfare dependence and the diversity of circumstances and objectives endemic to First Nation communities. Funding must be:

- *adequate,*
- *sustainable,*
- *stable,*
- *flexible,*
- *incentive-based,*
- *capable of adapting to the special circumstances of First Nation*
- *communities, and*
- *be directed to the appropriate agency.*

The long term plan must be for the transfer of resources to First Nation communities so that they may develop their own training and integration plans along with effective accountability mechanisms. Adequate funding is also required to support a diverse range of activities associated with an integrated active measures system that will match demographic growth and inflationary increases.

Partnerships with multiple funding sources may also be an option to enhance the stability of financing of income security initiatives. Stability in funding is essential so that programs can be longer term and multi-year commitments can be increased allowing for flexibility and sustainability over time.

The reformed system must use social assistance funding arrangements to provide not only opportunities for First Nations to pursue social and economic development holistically, these arrangements must include *incentives* to do so as well.

First Nations lack the human resources, professional development and training funds, as well as, the facilities for training. A reformed income security policy framework must

provide resources to support the creation of a professional development association for information sharing and to develop formal accredited training.

A reformed income security reform policy framework must address the opportunity for First Nation specific training, job-related type training and flexibility. The bridging of the gaps between human resource development, economic development and the federal government are essential elements of any viable framework.

Small and Remote communities

A reformed income security framework needs to establish a cost of living index for northern and remote communities that ensures that basic needs are reflected in actual cost allocations.

Funding for small and remote communities is inadequate to provide for capacity building, recruitment of qualified staff and meeting community needs.

A reformed policy framework to be successful must have built into it mechanisms for meeting the needs of northern and remote communities. Basic needs allowances must be adequate to meet the needs of clients for food, clothing and medical needs. Service delivery costs are more expensive in the north and remote communities and this also must be addressed in the framework.

Options for Consideration

It is proposed that a redesigned National Policy Framework lay out broad, national principles to set the direction for income security programming across Canada and to guide regionally based policy manuals that would support First Nations in meeting the diverse needs of their communities. It is further proposed that, as is the case now, regional/First Nation policy manuals will remain specific, while the national principles will be upheld in the design and implementation of programs at the community level. A *Results-based Management and Accountability framework* is proposed as a support for the reformed national policy. The reformed framework is intended to facilitate the shared accountability of First Nations leadership to their members, and of the Minister to the Government of Canada, while remaining consistent with First Nations cultural values and traditions. Figure 1 provides a visual depiction of the proposed structure of a reformed policy framework for social assistance.

Figure 1: Policy Framework Model

VISION, PRINCIPLES, OBJECTIVES
Provide broad, national guidance for First Nations' social assistance programming across Canada.

FLEXIBLE IMPLEMENTATION
Regional/First Nation based policy manuals that support the design and implementation of programs that respond to First Nations priorities, while upholding national principles and objectives.

ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK
Shared accountability of First Nations leadership to their members and of the Minister to the Government of Canada.

The following outlines a proposed vision, principles and objectives for a reformed

national policy framework on social assistance.

Vision, Principles, and Objectives

Vision:

An effective income security policy framework that supports and acknowledges First Nations governance through programs and services designed to enhance the self-sufficiency and capacity of First Nation communities and their memberships;

An investment in First Nation communities that adequately resources, and is flexible enough, to provide programs and services that encourage youth and adults to have the self-confidence and skills necessary to lead active, productive lives and to access job opportunities; and

To build healthy, sustainable communities by removing barriers to employment and training through economic development and capacity building with the ultimate goal of supporting self-sufficiency, community empowerment and self governance.

Principles:

a) *The objective of the welfare system should be to assist people to achieve individual well-being and financial independence to the greatest possible extent.*

b) *Improving the social well-being of members of First Nations must be based on the needs, wishes, hopes and plans of the members themselves, individually and collectively.*

c) *Reducing dependence on social assistance can and should be a result of First Nations' activities, but it cannot be the only objective. There will be many instances in First Nations, as is true among other peoples, where dependence on social assistance will continue.*

d) *In cases of long-term dependence, welfare programs should focus on active developmental programs.*

e) *Social assistance programs should also include a tool-kit of active measures to assist clients in making the transition to the labour force.*

f) *First Nations' social safety net should be based on First Nations' values of personal and communitarian contributions.*

g) *First Nations should have the authority and the responsibility for the provision of welfare in*

their communities including the design, development, administration and evaluation of programs and services.

h) *The welfare system should support a client focussed, community-based holistic approach to well-being and financial independence that draws on federal, provincial, private-sector and community programs.*

i) *Program development and delivery must respect the diversity of First Nations including, but not limited to, diversities of tradition, social and economic circumstance and the special roles of the extended family.*

j) *The administration of the welfare system should facilitate the accountability of First Nations' governments to their members, and of the Minister to the Government of Canada.*

k) *The right and responsibility of the individual to take initiative and to seek out programs and interventions of personal benefit should be affirmed.*

l) *Programs should be results-focussed and measurable with respect to the well-being of individuals.*

Objectives:

To establish a reformed National Policy Framework for social assistance which will provide for:

1. *A more integrated approach to addressing the issue of dependency in First Nation communities by linking the welfare system with employment, education and training opportunities through the provision of a holistic sphere of programs and services that are based on First Nations values, beliefs and traditions.*

2. *Increased capacity in First Nations communities for implementation of reformed income security programs and services.*

3. *Support First Nations in their efforts to empower their communities to move away from passive income support programming towards active measures, case managed social assistance programs that focus on employment, training and case management functions aimed at the development of healthy sustainable communities.*

4. *For First Nations communities to achieve prosperity and well-being through self-sufficiency*

to the greatest extent possible.

In summary:

First Nations' governance requires empowerment and meaningful input into discussions regarding key policy, programs, funding arrangements, program delivery and accountability mechanisms. This policy redesign and dialogue process has facilitated that input. Through these dialogues, First Nations have shared their vision for the future; that governance, treaty implementation and First Nations jurisdiction are *fundamental prerequisites* to successful social and economic development and the development of a *First Nations Social Safety Net.*

It is our goal that a reformed income security framework, and any resulting redesigned policy, will bring about operational and policy changes that will ultimately revolutionise the way social assistance programs and services are fundamentally designed, funded and delivered.

A reformed policy framework will ultimately contribute to and support solutions over the long-term based on increased First Nation community control over the design, delivery and management of income security programs and services. First Nations must be empowered socially and economically which will enable them to realize their longer term goal of self-government.

Next Steps

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Appendix A - List of Issues

List of issues used during the Policy Dialogue Sessions
Based on feedback from progress reports, research and workshops

- _Program Integration_

- _Community Development_

- _Capacity Building_

- _Case Management and Employment Supports for Clients_

- _Reflecting First Nation Realities_

- _Job Training and Education_

- _Need for Flexibility_

- _Small and Remote Communities_

- _Comparability_

- _Governance_

- _Information Management_

- _Accountability_

- _Financial Resources_

- _Supports for Social Assistance Staff_

Appendix B – Issue Summary Template

Feedback to Date	Comments/Suggested Changes
1a) What do you want to change?	
1b) What is working? **(for groups to complete)**	
2. How will we know when we have achieved success?	
3. What factors affect this issue?	
4. What options can be considered to address this issue?	
5. Who needs to do what? <u>Locally</u> <u>Regionally</u> <u>Nationally</u>	
6. When can we achieve results? <u>Short term</u> <u>Medium term</u> <u>Long term</u>	