

# **For The Next Seven Generations: Early Learning and Child Care Programs for Children in First Nations and Inuit Communities**

## **AFN Consultation with BC First Nations Community Representatives Hosted by the Aboriginal Child Care Society**

**Richmond, BC September 19 and 20, 2005**

### **Background**

The Aboriginal Child Care Society (ACCS) was contracted by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to facilitate the second round of consultations in the BC Region. The meeting materials and the facilitation plan were guided by materials and plans developed by the AFN, in collaboration with the ELCC Advisory Committee, which includes the relevant Federal Departments. The two-day consultation session was facilitated by an independent facilitator, according to the agreed-upon facilitation plan. The report was written by an independent writer and contains a summary of the input provided by participants, and from participant workbooks submitted at and subsequent to the meeting. The full minutes of the sessions, and the flip-charts of the discussion groups, are attached to the report. Participants had very limited opportunities to comment on the report due to time frames established by the Federal Government. Regional reports will be rolled up by the AFN into a national report.

### **Representing Voices**

The process of regional engagement results in a multiplicity of voices that may at times represent divergent perspectives. The views contained in the report are meant to have equal representation in that no view was intentionally portrayed as more or less valid. In preparing the report, we found it important to try to capture and represent the multiple perspectives, to accurately reflect and respond to the ELCC discourse that the region is currently engaged with, and to demonstrate the reality and complexity of the regional issues and positions that need to be considered for creating a responsive and reflective transition plan. The Aboriginal Child Care Society requests that participants in the BC First Nations direct any comments about contents, language, representation, etc. to our attention for further discussion, where necessary.

## **A. MERGING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

### **1. What Integration Might Look like in BC First Nations Communities / Existing Integration Examples.**

Notes were taken of the input provided by the participants and circulated to participants before they left the meeting; this section captures the essence of responses about what integrated services might look like. Subsequent sections of the report are based upon summaries of the main themes:

- Community involvement, including Elders and all ages;
- Incorporate holistic approach: Emotional, Physical, Mind, Spiritual;
- All frontline programs – health, social, education, etc. - working together;

- Accessibility: low and fixed income families are limited where there is no funding for registration and transportation costs; need free access and transportation;
- Head Start provided where there are no day care program”;
- Every program should be equitably represented and funded;
- Communication and coordination; for example: Stolo has two funded daycares that are run separately and don’t link into these other programs;
- No more competition for funding;
- Long term funding and ten year agreements;
- Integration at national level reflecting regional priorities;
- Meaningful collaborative process, not surface consultation, to develop plan for all First Nations children and access;
- People don’t want to change, need level, open process between Departments, programs, and services at the local, regional and national level;
- Think big;
- Develop child plans of care, identify children needs (including parenting programs and all players involved in child’s life);
- Should have proper adequate infrastructures, facilities;
- Refocusing existing program definitions;
- Baseline service delivery;
- What does holism look like on the ground – therapists, sports nutrition, access to health care;
- Service providers need to work through their issues of non-participation;
- Openness for participation – reprogramming mindsets;
- Capacity and community development need to be included with process – strategic planning (re-designing) at community planning (e.g. maternal health not part of this, yet “education begins in the womb”);
- Integration must provide services, support, infrastructure for children, parents, community;
- Model: Child in the middle circle, surrounded by family circle, surrounded by community circle;
- If communities want to go beyond the areas of integration, they should have option for further integration, in ways that suits community;
- Potential for MOUs within community, with federal departments, with AFN;
- Barriers: unmet needs in communities – infrastructures; differing reporting requirements; this initiative feels externally mandated;
- Put aside differences and work for children;
- Streamlining reporting = 1 funding body at federal level = 1 report;
- Master report: pooling of resources for children – interdepartmental and intergovernmental engagement;
- Communities need to be decolonised, strengthened and healed;
- Integration should be based on traditional structures, society;
- Integration = re-invigoration of traditional systems and ethos;
- Develop protocol agreements with Tribal Councils so community is not politically driven – minimize political interference with services;
- Integrated community plan = give direction to Federal Department;
- Extension of renewed relationship;
- Resources for capacity building – training;
- Needs to be a baseline of infrastructures;
- Need access to health care, recreation;
- Needs to be redesigning and strategic plan (e.g. include maternal health);
- Ownership of data and resources;

- Need for political leadership but needs to occur at the right level;
- Resources for training, administration and capacity building;
- A lot of integration is already happening
- Flexibility needs to be maintained – should have option for parent program instead of daycare if that is what is best;
- Consider licensing and monitoring through Aboriginal body or through funders;
- Should be open to all children;
- Involve more parents, Elders;
- Include older children 0-12;
- Enough funds to make a program work;
- Need more aboriginal ECE;
- More support for special needs;
- More support for administration and communities developing administration skills;
- Decision can't be rushed;
- Cautious about the rush;
- Integration is a good concept, messy proposition;
- Feeling like we are just getting moving on child care in AHRDSs;
- Who better to work on the issues than the local community – we like the regional concept with AHRDSs on the Island;
- Don't want INAC to look after this – need a regional authority process;
- Regional is best way to go – we know everybody – chiefs, councillors, educators, administrators;
- Political organizations aren't always supported;
- QUAD – also need to look at capital \$, programs linked to specialized diagnostic services;
- Need proper mapping, environmental assessments;
- Need to be realistic re QUAD and the budget – the funds don't match with the QUAD principles;
- Needs to be year round funding for all services as well as continuity;
- If mapping shows the services that exist, does it show services that don't exist?
- Only community can determine what is best for children;
- Need for a secretariat or coordinating position to look after all services;
- Accessibility to all families (currently limited by fixed income and/or transportation);
- If no daycare or head start in a community it needs to be started there – need equitable access for all;
- Currently programs are competing for funding;
- It looks like Government is trying to integrate financing to flow from one agency;
- We need more information and we need to take a long term approach and planning;
- How are Aboriginal organizations involved?
- What is our track to Treasury Board?
- Aboriginal organizations need adequate funding;
- We need a new organization focused on children and absent from political rivalries;
- Need to be able to influence licensing and add to licensing that allows cultural practices and life skills at preschool (e.g. butchering fish);
- We can only access credentialed ECEs (staff), but if they are non First Nations, we need resources to be able to teach cultural practices to them;
- We don't want INAC to handle this;

- Maybe Health Canada in the beginning and then an Aboriginal organization once capacity is built;
- Sharing of funding – reallocate unused to another First Nation instead of having to send the money back to Treasury Board;
- Needs to expand past 0-6 age group;
- This current plan should be an interim plan, so we can really look at this.

## **2. Barriers and/or Challenges to Program Integration.**

- Inadequate funding – the current basket of Federally-funded services is too limited and does not support universal access to high quality services, therefore, effective integrated services aren't possible;
- Too narrow of scope – the limited basket of services will result in limited integration of services; other relevant ECD programs and services should be included, including access to Provincial Government ELCC program resources;
- Services should be equally available to First Nations living away from home, i.e., off-reserve;
- Distrust and cynicism about Government motives and reliability, i.e., “we've already been here too many times with Government, why would this process be any different”;
- A process that “feels rushed and externally driven”;
- Fear – about the potential for negative impact on children, families, communities, existing programs and administering bodies;
- Resistance to change from existing systems that are working for some organizations – particularly those organizations currently administering the FNICCI initiative who prefer continue the investment in infrastructure by either maintaining the status quo or by rolling all of the early learning services into the regionalized delivery system through AHRDAs;

## **B. ELCC VISION STATEMENT**

### **3. Key Elements in Our Vision for a BC First Nations ELCC Program.**

#### **Suggested Vision Statement**

Programs and services are integrated to provide the necessary supports and resources for children and their families in a holistic manner that maximizes their potential for life long learning.

- One size does not fit all;
- Recognize diversity of First Nations, especially in BC;
- Pan aboriginal or pan Canada or pan BC approach will not work;
- Must be based on our values such as interconnectedness, balance and harmony;
- Must be transparent and reciprocal accountability;
- QUAD has to be community driven;
- Local First Nations driven and approved process;
- Continual and ongoing First Nations engagement at the local, regional and provincial level;

- Resources for establishment of transition process at a pace First Nations approve;
- Detailed communication strategy including database of contacts;
- Up to date funding formulas that are needs driven;
- Funding for data collection for research and planning;
- All applicable provincial and federal programs and services must be able to come together like First Nations gather today;
- We need to educate bureaucrats that the statistics they review are actually children and lives.”<sup>1</sup>

**Other Comments from Discussion Groups:**

- “Local, culturally focused programs that are taught by qualified ECEs;”
- “Draft language needs to include: cultural sensitivity, sustainability, self sufficiency, empowerment, inclusive of extended family, Elders, community members”;
- “The vision for ELCC is to have our children be proud of who they are – strong in their cultural identity, their parents empowered to be the primary role model and a continuum of life long learning for the child (draft language)”;
- “Premise: There are traditional ways of ELCC, i.e., stressed “belonging and responsibility” within community (started at conception and extended over life time)”;
- “Programs should meet specific needs of the family: inclusiveness means addressing the family unit so they are empowered and able to access educational, social assistance, financial and remedial assistance that will enable parents and caregivers to attain sustainability, self-sufficiency and empowerment”;
- “Geography should not be a barrier. Aboriginal children should have the same opportunities as other children in Canada/province, e.g., access to speech and language support”;

**Summary of Primary Themes**

The Program Design:

- Supports the healthy development of children through universal access to high quality, culturally responsive programs and services under the control of First Nations;
- Delivers what communities need to be able to meet the needs of families to care for and promote their children’s early learning;
- Is adequately funded to meet the needs for the healthy development of children;
- Builds First Nations capacity and developed through collaboration between First Nations and Government based upon mutual trust and respect, leading to First Nations authority and jurisdiction for children 0 to 6 through transfer of the program to First Nations authorities;
- Transparent and accountable, i.e., based upon full and timely disclosure of Governmental program funding resources and decision-making, with reciprocal accountability mechanisms;

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<sup>1</sup> Written submission from Tyrone McNeil, Stolo Tribal Council.

## C. ELCC GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### 4. BC First Nations ELCC Guiding Principles Relative to our Vision for Our Children.

#### Summary of the Guiding Principles:

As a matter of principle, it is the view of BC First Nations that the ELCC Program should

- ***Recognize First Nations children’s inherent Aboriginal right to healthy development, i.e., lead to universal access to high quality, culturally-responsive services for all First Nations children without regard to barriers of any kind, including geography, residence, affiliation, ability or special need;***
- ***Recognize and support First Nations authority and jurisdiction for healthy child development, through a collaborative program design and transition process, and First Nations capacity building at all levels for program design, transition, service delivery, evaluation, administration, management and governance through the transfer of the ELCC Program to First Nations authorities mandated by their communities;***
- ***Provide an adequate, timely level of program financing to support universal access to high quality, culturally-responsive services for all First Nations children, delivered by First Nations organizations.***

The substance of those primary guiding principles include the following details:

- **Foundation of Culture and Language:** Culture and Language as the foundation for the ELCC Program to ensure cultural and linguistic continuity;
- **First Nations determined QUAD Principles:** Universal access to high quality programs and services, according to First Nations determined “QUAD Principles”, that meet or exceed provincial standards; to include delivery from appropriate, safe and well-equipped and well-supplied facilities, with access to safe, enriching outdoor play areas;
- **Universally accessible and fully inclusive:** Universally accessible and fully inclusive services supporting the provision of services to all children, without regard for potential barriers such as geographic location, residence, ability or other special need;
- **Minimum services:** Ensure that, at a minimum, all First Nations children have access to early learning services that reflect the principles and the programming approaches of the First Nations Head Start Program;
- **Flexibility and community priority-setting:** Although the ELCC Program is national in scope, communities must be able to use available funding to meet the identified needs of children and families, including parent-identified needs; the baskets of services must also be flexible enough to respond to changing demographics on a year-to-year basis;
- **A contextualized service delivery approach:** A service delivery model that places our children at the center, in the cultural context of their family (i.e., the “extended” family system), their community and Nation; i.e., that builds on assets and strengths to meet needs, that identifies what our Nations need to

support each community, what each community needs to support families, and what families need to support their children;

- **Strengthens parents/families:** Delivers services, such as parent education and family support services, that strengthen parents/families and promote healthy attachment, recognizing that parents/families are the most significant source of early learning experiences and, as such, can make the largest contribution to the healthy development of their children;
- **Balanced between center-based and family-based:** The provision of child care services, with integrated early learning programming, through center-based and family-based programs, on a priority basis to families who require child care to support their participation in the labour force and/or education/training programs, with sufficient flexibility that care can be provided according to the needs of parents/families, including the provision of services beyond the usual “9 to 5”, Monday to Friday work week; i.e., including part-time care, and evenings, nights, weekends, etc. where parents are unable to access no-cost child care from family and/or friends;
- **Lifelong learning:** Support for children’s lifelong learning, to help to instill a love for learning, improve school readiness, support important transitions and be linked to the school system;
- **Critical linkages:** Linkages between critical service delivery systems, especially the education and health care system, at the community level as well as at other service planning levels, with a priority for maternal/child health because of the traditional belief that “education begins in the womb”, including support for individualized child and family support planning, i.e., “plans of care”;
- **Expanded integration:** Support for communities that are ready to integrate other services as well as the current basket of services, i.e., in education and health care;
- **Community networking:** Communication, cooperation and collaboration amongst First Nations ELCC programs within and between communities, on a regional, provincial and national basis;
- **Research and Integrated information management:** An integrated, long-term, community-based research, planning and evaluation framework that supports accountability and “evidence-based decision-making”, “seamlessly” linked to the development plans and programs for all children, youth and young adults (i.e. including children up to 12 years of age, youth aged 13 to 18 and young adults 19 years and older), including building capacity for community-based research programs, especially longitudinal research into child outcomes to track children to determine the short, mid and long-term impact of ELCC program approaches, to support flexible service delivery where changes can be made in program approaches based upon findings from research and the monitoring and evaluation of programs;
- **Reciprocal accountability and improved funding streams:** Two-way accountability, transparency and full disclosure and distribution of financial information, as well as Inter-Departmental/Inter-Ministerial and Inter-Governmental communication and coordination to improve the delivery of funding streams and to maximize the amount of funding that is delivered to First Nations communities for programs, and the building of First Nations capacity at all levels - including community, regional, provincial and national

levels - for the most effective and efficient governance, management, administration and delivery of the ELCC Program;

- **Human Resource Development:** An ELCC human resource development strategy that supports the delivery of high quality programs.

## **D. ELCC PROGRAM GOALS**

### **5. BC First Nations ELCC Program Goals Relative to our Vision and Guiding Principles.**

Measurable goals for an integrated First Nations ELCC Program should include the following:

1. The full and equitable participation of First Nations communities, early learning and child care programs and organizations, and the First Nations Leadership, in program design and transition processes, leading to the recognition of First Nations authority and jurisdiction through the planned transfer of the ELCC Program from the Federal Government to appropriately mandated and constituted First Nations governance structures, according to the preferences and priorities of First Nations communities;
2. The integration of early learning and child care services through the elimination of the fragmentation that currently exists, by creating a single program and funding stream at the Federal Government level and single programs at the community level providing child care services informed by early learning programming, and stand-alone early learning programs in communities that do not currently have child care programs;
3. Establishing an integrated ELCC program without disrupting current service delivery, i.e., preventing disruptions to children and families currently receiving services;
4. Supporting service delivery models that prioritize the interests of children and place children at the centre, within the context of culture, family, community and Nation;
5. Supporting cultural and linguistic continuity through the integration of culture and language into all of the ELCC programming components and by supporting the participation of Elders and language speakers/teachers in service delivery;
6. Ensuring that working and in-school parents have priority access to early learning enriched child care services that meet their needs;
7. Supporting both centre-based and family-based child care, early learning, parent strengthening and family support services;
8. Defining “special needs” in the cultural context of First Nations communities, identifying the numbers and the needs of children with special support needs, building capacity and access to resources to meet those needs within the context of the integrated service delivery system;
9. Supporting lifelong learning, to help to instill a love for learning, improve school readiness, link to the school system and support important transitions from the early years into the 7 to 12 years age group;
10. Ensuring that communities have the decision-making authority to define the “QUAD” principles that will apply in their community, and to design and deliver

- programs that reflect their culture, needs and priorities, that are flexible enough to accommodate diversity and respond to changing demographics;
11. Finding the best efficiencies and most effective ways of organizing, funding, administering, managing and governing integrated early learning and child care services, including the aggregation of expertise, functions and funding at appropriate national, provincial, regional and community levels, so that the maximum amount of funding reaches communities for high quality, culturally responsive services targeted to our visions for our children;
  12. Ensuring that all program funding is delivered by the Federal Government in full, on time, and through long-term funding agreements (this will require the full and timely disclosure of Federal funding resources);
  13. Providing access to community and information technology, including the Internet and computer-based data management systems, and creating an integrated, technology-enabled, framework linking research, community needs assessments, gathering and analysis of service delivery data, information management, evidence-based decision-making, planning, evaluation and compliance review, reporting, reciprocal accountability mechanisms, licensing, regulatory regimes, administration, management and governance structures, in support of: the information and program management needs of First Nations programs; transparent decision-making; the effective and efficient use of financial resources; and Government's need for financial accountability and "results-based monitoring";
  14. Building capacity, expertise, structures and systems to create a solid service delivery foundation which can be used to build an expanded service delivery system by adding other programs and services beyond the current basket of services available for integration at this time;
  15. Building linkages with other critical service delivery systems at the community level, especially health and education, and supporting integrated, community-based planning focused on the needs of children and families;
  16. Supporting community networking to share knowledge, best practices and resource materials and to build cost-efficient structures and systems;
  17. Developing an action plan and working in a timely, planned manner towards universal access to high quality, culturally responsive ELCC services for all First Nations children and families, without regard for barriers of any kind, by building on our increasing expertise and capacity;
  18. Developing an action plan and working towards a First Nations ELCC Program that is equally available to children and families currently living off-reserve, including coordinated access to Provincial Government ELCC funds, through the negotiation of political accords and/or memorandums of understanding between the First Nations Leadership and the Government of BC, for the provision of services to community members living off-reserve, according to First Nations determined preferences, priorities and service delivery mechanisms;
  19. Developing a human resource development strategy in support of the current and future needs of ELCC programs and linking those needs to the planning and funding of post-secondary education and employment training programs;

## 6. Framework for Implementation of Principles and Goals, i.e., Required Supports.

To implement the identified principles and goals, the national ELCC framework will require three primary supports:

- ***Adequate funding – for the program design and integration processes, and most importantly, to ensure universal access to high quality, culturally-responsive early learning and child care services, without regard to barriers of any kind, including geography, residence, affiliation or special need;***
- ***Culture and language as the foundation;***
- ***Capacity, Authority and Jurisdiction: Recognition and support for First Nations capacity building, authority and jurisdiction.***

### Detailed Supports Required:

- **Increased funding:** Resources and support for universal access to high quality, culturally-responsive ELCC programming;
- **Authority and Jurisdiction:** The development of a new policy, legislative and regulatory regime under the jurisdiction of First Nations authorities; provincial jurisdiction for child care and early learning needs to be addressed since, under the current constitutional division of responsibilities, early learning and child care falls under the jurisdiction of Provincial Governments; it will also require supporting communities to design, implement and achieve standards that meet or exceed standards established by the Provincial Government and resources and support to build a First Nations capacity to monitor programs to ensure compliance with standards, i.e., to develop effective, culturally-responsive, collaborative compliance monitoring systems and mechanisms to support communities to achieve standards;
- **Culture and Language:** Resources and/or support to develop/design the curricular framework and to implement culturally-responsive programming, including resources to support the involvement of language speakers/teachers, Elders and other cultural advisors in program design, service delivery and evaluation processes;
- **First Nations capacity building and cost efficient structures:** The pooling of existing financial resources, finding efficiencies through choice of administrative, management and governance structures and access to new funding resources as required to build capacity at all levels, including national, provincial, regional and community levels; First Nations capacity building structures may take the form of Centre(s) of Excellence for Early Learning and Child Care and/or First Nations ELCC Secretariat(s); there is considerable, although not universal, support amongst BC First Nations for the creation of a BC-wide mechanism such as a BC First Nations ELCC Secretariat, with a province-wide mandate to support the equitable, effective and efficient participation of all BC First Nations communities in the program design and transition processes, according to the principles and priorities identified in this document;

- **Delivery off reserve as well as on-reserve:** Increases in funding and/or equitable access to Provincial Government funding streams, especially for services for First Nations community members that live away from home (i.e., off-reserve), on the basis that First Nations ELCC programs shouldn't distinguish between on-reserve and off-reserve members because people live off-reserve for a number of reasons, including the lack of opportunities and access to education, employment and other resources;
- **Access to Provincial Government funding:** Partnership arrangements with the BC Government to access provincial funding, rather than through proposal-driven processes, reflecting First Nations as well as Provincial Government priorities, targeted at the outset to support services in unfunded and under-funded communities to eliminate some of the current funding discrepancies;
- **Elimination of all proposal-driven processes:** All proposal-driven processes must be eliminated because they promote unhealthy competition for funding by First Nations communities, and are "capacity rewarding" rather than "capacity building" processes, and the provision of funding to communities based upon identified needs; Until all proposal-driven processes are eliminated, First Nations capacity must be built to support the equitable access of First Nations communities to available funding streams; supporting equitable access will require a full "mapping" of existing programs and services to identify "unfunded" and "under-funded" communities and the building of consensus on the criteria that will be used to allocate available funding; this approach will require that proposal-driven processes accommodate close "targeting" to ensure that available resources are directed to the communities that most need the funding; Universal access to services will require a significant increase in overall funding and a realistic baseline funding formula;
- **Community needs assessments:** Resources and support to identify and assess the early learning and child care needs of each community, including:
  - The identification of service delivery gaps, such as communities that do not currently have any services and under-served communities;
  - The preparation of demographic profiles for each community, and their needs for specialized / early intervention services, which will identify, on a community-by-community basis, the numbers and needs of children to be served, including the numbers of children with special support needs (according to First Nations determined definitions of special needs, rather than the current definitions which leave many First Nations children outside of the special needs support system), and the identification of specialized/early intervention services needed, i.e., speech and language, etc.;
  - The needs for transportation, for children and parents/family members, to support their participation in programs;
  - The needs for fully subsidized or low-cost services, including coverage of transportation costs, to ensure that programs are affordable to low-income families;

- The numbers and needs of community members that live away from home (i.e., off-reserve) and service delivery mechanisms to meet their needs;
- **Minimum services:** Universal access to Head Start programming, at a minimum;
- **Community-based decision-making:** Decision-making authority - for defining “holistic” services, and for creating and modifying the baskets of services to be provided – must be vested at the community level and supporting the building of capacity at the community level to determine demographic profiles and to engage parents/families, community members and Leadership in processes to identify current and changing needs and priorities;
- **A contextualized approach:** Resources and support to engage community members and community decision-makers in dialogue about the need for a contextualized approach and the harmonization of policies and priorities, to ensure holistic, culturally-responsive service delivery models that build on strengths and assets to meet needs, and community-based strategic planning processes to design the basket of early learning and child care services that will be provided in each community to coordinate planning, resource allocation and service delivery for all of the systems and resources potentially available to support children and families, including employment training, post-secondary education, job development, economic development, health care, housing, social development, education and so forth, to eliminate contradictory/counter-productive policies, get maximum positive impact of available resources and to ensure that all programs/sectors are working to the same goals and objectives;
- **Research into culture-based approaches:** Resources and support to research attachment and parent/family strengthening beliefs and practices, in the cultural context of First Nations and in the context of evidence-based practice to promote healthy child/parent/family attachment, with an emphasis on research with Elders and other First Nations knowledge experts to identify culture-specific beliefs and practices about attachment, child development, family roles and responsibilities and parenting;
- **Priority care for working and in-school parents:** Planning and decision-making structures integrated at the community level to determine and respond to the child care and early learning needs of working/in-school parents, recognizing that limitations on the abilities of communities to meet those needs will negatively impact each community’s employment training, post-secondary education, job creation and economic development strategies and may create and/maintain family poverty and instability by preventing individual parents from accessing available employment training, post-secondary education and/or employment opportunities;
- **Awareness of importance of early learning:** Resources and support for initiatives intended to educate parents/families, community members and Leadership about the importance of healthy child development and the critical

role of parents/families in promoting the healthy development of their children, and supporting the development of early childhood development “champions”;

- **Lifelong learning:** Supporting life-long learning by supporting communities to build capacity for early learning programming that builds a foundation for cognitive development, provides positive early learning experiences, facilitates the transition from early learning and child care environments to the formal school system, ensures school readiness and that, generally, instills a love for learning, a desire to succeed and an awareness of education as a lifelong journey; specific interventions may be required to overcome any negative attitudes towards learning and the education system that may have been created by the residential school system;
- **Community networking:** Resources and support to build and maintain communication links, and to develop mechanisms for inter-program sharing of information, knowledge, skills and resource materials, to support the lateral transfer of knowledge, skill sets and “best and/or promising practices” between First Nations communities;
- **Formal agreements:** Memorandums of Understanding (MOU), Protocols and/or Partnership Agreements as specific tools for formalizing agreements within and between communities, and with Government Departments and Ministries, and organizations such as the Assembly of First Nations;
- **Critical linkages:** Communicating an understanding of the importance of communication, coordination and collaboration between critical service delivery systems, especially health care and primary education, and building the commitment of community-based service providers to engage with those collaborative processes;
- **Integrated framework for research, data gathering, planning, evaluation, monitoring, reporting and accountability:** The pooling of available First Nations ELCC expertise, technical expertise, financial and other resources, and providing access to new resources for equipment, training and technical costs as necessary, to build First Nations capacity within an appropriately centralized organizational structure to ensure economies of scale, for the purpose of designing and implementing an integrated, technology-enabled framework linking research, data collection, analysis and management, monitoring and evaluation/performance measurement, planning, and community engagement to support parents/families, community members, Leaders and service providers to articulate their visions for their children, the ELCC strategies, principles, goals and programming components that will be put into place to achieve those visions, and the indicators that will be used to measure success and to determine the need for any mid-stream changes; this framework will:
  - Provide a First Nations designed mechanism for monitoring and measuring performance at all levels;
  - Streamline the data gathering and reporting processes;
  - Support sustained dialogue about visions and performance at the community level;

- Support staff performance evaluations in the same positive manner;
  - Build an appreciation of evaluation as a learning exercise, as ways of increasing knowledge, skill and performance, in collaboration and partnership with the evaluators;
  - Improve programs and outcomes for children.
- **Reciprocal accountability:** Implementing a system of reciprocal accountability, transparency and full disclosure will require:
    - Holding Government funding agencies to same standard of accountability as the First Nations programs that they fund;
    - Building the capacity of First Nations for effective and efficient program governance, management, administration and delivery;
    - The full and timely disclosure of information on ELCC program budgets, including the relative allocation between program delivery and program administration costs – clearly differentiating between the administrative budgets of Government funding agencies at all levels and First Nations program delivery agencies at all levels;
    - The elimination of all delays in the release of new and ongoing funding;
    - Cost/benefit analysis to identify the cost drivers and the most effective and efficient ways of governing, managing, administering, delivering and evaluating high quality, culturally-responsive programs, including the identification of cost/scale efficiencies through aggregating certain functions at levels beyond the community, and using this information to provide First Nations and Governmental decision-makers with opportunities to choose between particular configurations, which represent the best cost efficiencies and acceptable trade-offs between efficiencies of scale and community-based decision-making and administration; i.e., the analysis will identify the required knowledge and skill sets, and where each knowledge/skill set and function is best aggregated, to maximize cost efficiencies while keeping decision-making processes as close as possible to the communities to be served.
- Designing and implementing a human resource development strategy to support the ELCC program will require:
    - Providing each First Nations community with access to training, post-secondary education and on-going professional development;
    - The delivery of such programs to isolated, remote, northern and/or coastal communities through programs that are balanced between distance education and on-site delivery methods;
    - “Laddered” programs, where discrete, shorter-term certificate and diploma programs can be laddered into degree programs;
    - Supporting community members to be the labour force for community-based child care and early learning programs;
    - Ensuring that the ELCC labour force acquires all of the necessary knowledge and skills to provide high quality programs;
    - The integration of planning and decision-making structures and processes at the community level to ensure that the community’s ELCC labour force needs informs the community’s employment training and post-secondary education strategies and resource allocations;

## **E. QUAD STATEMENTS**

### **7. Implementation of QUAD Principles in BC First Nations Programs.**

- The QUAD Principles must be defined in the cultural context of BC First Nations, reflecting the cultural and geographic diversity that exists in the province;
- First Nations must be supported to define and implement their own QUAD Principles;
- First Nations QUAD Principles will meet or exceed standards established for the mainstream ELCC system;
- QUAD Principles need to match up to program budgets; i.e., funding is required to operationalize the principles; principles without funding to achieve them lack effect;
- The principles identified in #4 above – ELCC Guiding Principles – apply to the QUAD principles;
- The QUAD Principles need to address capital costs, including the need to maintain or upgrade aging infrastructure that programs depend on; and
- QUAD Principles need to be linked to specialized diagnostic services for children with special support needs.

## **F. ELCC PROGRAM DESIGN AND DELIVERY**

### **8. Program Design and Delivery Features.**

#### **a. Program Design and Delivery Elements.**

First Nations in BC confront considerable challenges in designing an integrated program for young children and their families, given the limitations of the current basket of Federally-funded ECD services available for integration.

Despite these challenges, this integration initiative provides a significant opportunity to improve outcomes for children, through a more effective service delivery model and more efficient funding stream.

Although there are differences amongst us, and considerable cultural and geographic diversity, our BC First Nations ECD experts – those who work with and/or for children in direct service delivery, policy making and program development - are generally united around the key elements of an integrated service delivery model.

Although some participants did not endorse the integration initiative, and recognizing the limitations imposed by the current basket of services, there was general agreement, by the majority of participants, that the specific programming components to be delivered to First Nations children and families should include:

- Accessible child care services, with flexible service delivery hours and integrated early learning programming, delivered through centre-based and family-based programs, prioritized for working and in-school parents;

- Culture and Language programming, with the participation of Elders and First Nations language speakers/teachers;
- Holistic focus: supportive of school readiness / cognitive, physical, emotional and spiritual development; i.e., “holistic, including spirituality, respect, tempered with grace”;
- All six Head Start program components and principles;
- Nutritional programs, to increase awareness of the importance of nutrition, targeted to children and parents/families, and including the provision of healthy foods for snacks and meals and access to traditional foods and the sharing of traditional foods preparation skills with children and parents;
- Child-centred social support programs;
- Parent/family involvement in all aspects of the program, including peer support, governance, volunteer service delivery and evaluation;
- Parent education and parent/family strengthening;
- Family support services;
- Home visiting; i.e., “home visiting program for parents/families and utilizing non-professionals that are linked to professionals”;
- Parent/child drop-in and play groups;
- Resource “library” for lessons learned and success stories;
- Services for children with special support needs, physically accessible service delivery sites, speech and language therapy, early intervention, and so forth;
- Maternal and child health, including pre-natal, birthing and post-natal services and supports;
- Prevention, intervention and treatment of fetal alcohol syndrome disorder (FASD) and the prevention of secondary disabilities through early intervention services and long-term support;
- Developmental assessments and longitudinal research;
- Linkage to other programs and services, as necessary, for individual children and families;
- Linking non-professionals with professionals;
- Time for managers to prepare reports, documents, etc.

## **b. Funding Components.**

- Generally, there is a need for more funding at all levels in the ELCC service delivery and administration systems, and the need for new funding to support the program design and transition processes;
- Most of the identified principles and goals identified above have funding implications;
- Infrastructure maintenance and development: Supporting the creation and/or expansion of early learning and child care facilities has implications for the community’s infrastructure; planning processes need to incorporate a review of the infrastructure they will depend on, and the capital budgets need to accommodate the needs of new facilities.

### **c. Allocation and Funding Mechanisms**

- There is a need for short, mid and long term action plans, long term funding commitments and 5 to 10 year funding agreements;
- Funding should be centralized into one funding stream at the Federal Government level;
- Allocation formulas and funding mechanisms to be determined after full consideration by First Nations, according to our values and preferences, and including cost/benefit analyses of the potential options for administration, management and governance of the ELCC Program.

### **d. Reporting, Accountability Mechanisms and Evaluation**

- Support was expressed for an integrated framework linking research, data gathering and analysis, information management, evidence-based decision-making, planning, evaluation, reporting, accountability mechanisms, regulatory regimes, licensing, administrative processes, management structures and governance, that would include provisions for reciprocal accountability, including complete transparency and full disclosure of ELCC budgets, financial management and decision-making by the Federal Government funding agencies, as well as by First Nations programs, and would support First Nations program management objectives, as well as Government's need for financial accountability;
- In short, the proposed integrated framework is all about information – what information is needed, how it is gathered and how it is used: it is about supporting communities to build their own capacity to:
  - Articulate their vision, principles and goals;
  - Identify the indicators that will be used to measure whether their programs are successful in achieving those visions, principles and goals;
  - Identify the mechanisms that will be used to gather information to measure those indicators;
  - Defining the research that needs to be undertaken to provide more information about best practices and outcomes for children and families, including longitudinal research;
  - Analyze and interpret the service delivery and outcome data that is gathered;
  - Manage the data effectively and efficiently, through appropriate electronic management information systems;
  - Use the data to determine the effectiveness of their strategies, programs, services and human resources;
  - Use the data to make any mid-term changes to their strategies, programs, services and to determine the areas where their staff may need additional support, more information, knowledge, skills, etc., to improve their performance;
  - Use the data to inform the development and revision of policies, procedures, standards, legislation and regulations;
  - Prepare quarterly and annual reports – narrative and financial – to operate in a fully transparent and accountable manner;

- Participants noted that the current evaluation system is set up primarily to meet Government’s accountability requirements, and that program evaluation is undertaken on the basis of a set of beliefs and values that are, on one level, quite “simplistic”, and on another level, reflective of an entirely different mindset and value system that are specifically rejected by First Nations; that is, the belief that program evaluations have to be carried out by evaluators who are external to First Nations communities and systems, who don’t have any ongoing relationships with the people / programs being evaluated, in order to ensure objectivity and accuracy, i.e., “it would be difficult or impossible for community member to evaluate another because of their relationships outside of the evaluation context”; this mindset was rejected in favour of an evaluative methodology that:
  - Approaches evaluation in a positive manner, as a learning opportunity, where First Nations have the authority to determine definitions of “success” and performance standards, according to our values and beliefs, and the capacity to evaluate our programs, to carry out compliance reviews, determine where performance may be lacking and the reasons why, and to provide the support services needed to bring programs up to standards or to change standards, where practice indicates that the standard is not an effective indicator of quality;
  - According to this view, First Nations are best placed to evaluate their own programs because they know them best; what is required is the removal of the “either/or” approach and the fear of failure – factors which are not conducive to “frank and honest” discussions about what the challenges are;
  - To make this preferred system work, communities require flexibility to be able to change service delivery approaches that may not be performing as expected: i.e., if programs are not achieving the expected results, rather than being penalized, communities would be able to change the program; for example, where programs report that families are not accessing the program, and where strategies to engage them have not been successful, parents could be consulted as to what program would meet their needs, and that program could be offered, without fear of the loss of funding; individualized “plans of care” for child and family support (discussed elsewhere in this report) could be a mechanism for designing support systems that would meet the real needs of children and families, and that would be a better approach than trying to deliver a program that was designed persons far removed from the communities and the people to be served;
- The goals for this integrated framework would be to improve the funding process, to streamline funding delivery mechanisms (ideally, there would be direct funding and accountability relationships between the Federal Treasury Board and First Nations organizations, according to the most effective and efficient structure), to maximize the amount of funding that gets delivered from the Federal Government to First Nations ELCC programs and becomes available for direct service delivery, reflecting the real cost of drivers of program administration and program support functions and the affordability of such infrastructure relative to the overall budget;

- As part of the overall approach to the design of the ELCC program, this framework would support the shifting of responsibility for management, administration and governance from Government to First Nations structures, according to principles of self-governance; i.e., through a staged process, the responsibility to administer, manage and govern the program would be shifted from Government Departments to appropriately constituted First Nations organizations; the role of the Lead Federal Department – or Treasury Board – would be to deliver the funding through block transfer agreements and to ensure accountability, according to agreed-upon accountability mechanisms; all of the program support, administration and management functions and resources would be transferred to the First Nations organizations mandated by the communities that they will serve;
- The proposed integrated framework would support this model by researching best practices, gathering all of the service delivery information, i.e., inputs, outputs, etc., in the most efficient and effective manner, monitoring outcomes for children and families – according to agreed-upon indicators, considering results and performance by assessing the outcomes that may be the result of the financial investments made (recognizing that there are also many other factors that determine for children), comparing results to expectations (determined through community-based strategic planning processes), and providing financial and outcome reports to communities and to the Government funding agency; quarterly financial and narrative reports would be provided, as well as annual reports and audited financial statements; in sum, the proposed framework would support the effective First Nations program management and financial accountability; the Government funding agency would provide the same level of transparency and financial accountability;
- Implementing this framework will require:
  - Inter-Departmental / Inter-Ministerial and Inter-Governmental communication and coordination leading to the full integration of the basket of Federally-funded ELCC programs, and supporting further integration according to First Nations preferences;
  - Holding Government funding agencies to same standard of accountability as the First Nations programs that they fund;
  - Building the capacity of First Nations for effective and efficient program governance, management, administration, delivery and evaluation;
  - The full and timely disclosure of Federal Government ELCC program budgets, including the relative allocation between program delivery and program administration costs – clearly differentiating between the administrative budgets of Government funding agencies at all levels and First Nations program delivery agencies at all levels;
  - Cost/benefit analysis to identify the cost drivers and the most effective and efficient ways of governing, managing, administering and delivering high quality programs, including the identification of cost/scale efficiencies through aggregating certain functions at levels beyond the community;
  - Using timely cost/benefit analysis as a mechanism to provide First Nations and Governmental decision-makers the opportunity to choose between particular configurations, which represent the best cost efficiencies and acceptable trade-offs between efficiencies of scale and

community-based decision-making and administration; i.e., the analysis will identify the required knowledge and skill sets, and where each knowledge/skill set and function is best aggregated, to maximize cost efficiencies while keeping decision-making processes as close as possible to the communities to be served;

- Building First Nations capacity for effective and efficient program governance, management, administration, delivery and evaluation of the ELCC Program within a self-governance model and a system of reciprocal accountability;

#### **e. Regulatory Mechanisms**

- The development of a new regulatory regime would be guided by some of the same considerations for the creation of an integrated framework for reporting, reciprocal accountability and evaluation, discussed in “d” above, including building capacity towards:
  - First Nations monitoring of program development and delivery, such as First Nations licensing officers within the existing regulatory system;
  - First Nations licensing board, i.e., First Nations authority and jurisdiction.

#### **f. Evaluation Structures**

(see discussion above)

#### **g. Governance Structures**

In addition to the perspectives on governance discussed in sub-point “d” above, participants expressed the following views on governance structures:

- The most appropriate governance structures should be identified subsequent to the completion of cost/benefit analyses of the potential governance models; i.e., which model is the most effective and efficient, ensuring that service delivery objectives are met and that programs are administered, managed and governed in ways that deliver functions in the most cost efficient manner, while not trading off program quality, resulting in the maximization of resources available for direct service delivery;
- A clear preference was indicated for First Nations governance structures rather than continued Federal Government governance: the transition plan should accommodate transition to a First Nations ELCC Authority, according to a governance structure determined by First Nations;
- There was considerable opposition to INAC being the Lead Federal Department and a clear preference of a majority of delegates for Health Canada as the Lead Federal Department.

#### **h. Other Considerations**

## **G. ELCC Program - NEXT STEPS**

### **9. Necessary Next Steps to Facilitate the Transition**

#### **Concerns with the Process to Date**

Many participants in the BC First Nations ELCC Consultation expressed a level of support for the initiative because:

- There are potential benefits and opportunities in the integration of the current basket of Federally-funded early learning and child care services;
- The proposed changes are long overdue because there has been a long-standing call for the appropriate integration of services;
- The elimination of the current fragmented, “stove-piped” delivery system would be a welcomed improvement to the current system;
- There is some value in an expedited planning and development process, compared to the usual Government planning horizons;

A significant number of participants, especially participants involved in the delivery of the FNICCI program, expressed serious concerns with the initiative and the process, including:

- The possibility of undisclosed Federal Government motives and/or agenda that may negatively impact both existing services and the need for a planned growth in the programs to meet needs;
- A questionable rationale for the merging of the programs at this time, since, in the opinions of some participants, the programs are effective as they are now; i.e., “if it isn’t broken, don’t fix it”;
- The rushed time frame of the consultation process, especially the requirement that the report of the community engagement phase be provided within three days, which does not provide any time for a BC validation process, does not honour our decision-making structures and processes and may mean that we are unable to adequately and completely articulate our views on each of the key consultation questions, the result being that the program design does not reflect our preferences and priorities;
- More information, a long term approach and planning is required;

Other participants, especially those involved in the direct delivery of services, expressed a set of concerns focused on the limitations of integration initiative, i.e.,

- The lack of universal access to the current basket of services and the absence of a commitment to guarantee universal access through the integration initiative;
- The absence of any commitment to increase funding for the current basket of services to meet the needs of under-funded programs to ensure that programs are able to meet the needs in communities;

- The absence of any offer of resources to ensure the building of capacity in First Nations communities and ECD organizations to support our effective participation in the program design process;

### **Next Steps in the Transition Process**

- Development of a collaborative / partnership arrangements between First Nations and Government based upon mutual trust and respect;
- Implementation of a real, not token, consultation / engagement process, for all remaining phases, based on transparency and reciprocal accountability, including the full and timely disclosure and distribution of information about program financial resources and decision-making;
- Provision of new financial resources, delivered on a timely basis, to support First Nations determined structures and processes to enable the building of First Nations capacity for effective participation in the program design and transition processes, including adequate resources for sustained community dialogue and engagement; because of the expedited time frames for this process, realistic budgets to provide this support must be brought forward as a short-term priority.