

A SYNOPSIS:

The Ohsweken Branch  
of the  
Children's Aid Society of Brant County  
serving the  
Residents of the Six Nations & New Credit Reserves

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## PREAMBLE

THE OHSWEKEN CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY BECAME A REALITY  
IN THE FALL OF 1977.

ITS EXPLICIT PURPOSE IS TO PROVIDE AN EFFECTIVE RANGE OF SERVICES  
TO CHILDREN FOR THE RESIDENTS OF THE SIX NATIONS AND NEW CREDIT  
RESERVES UNDER THE MANDATE OF THE CHILD WELFARE ACT OF THE PRO-  
VINCE OF ONTARIO.

ITS EXPLICIT PHILOSOPHY IS THAT THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION  
OF SUCH SERVICES REFLECT THE DESIRES, ASPIRATIONS AND NEEDS OF THE  
NATIVE PEOPLES IT SERVES. THIS IMPLIES AN INFORMED, KNOWLEDGEABLE  
AND ON-GOING PARTICIPATION BY BOTH THE PROVIDERS AND RECIPIENTS IN  
THIS PROCESS.

## GENERAL STRUCTURE

The Children's Aid Society is a private organization, tax supported and operates under the direction of a Board of Directors, elected for three years by the Society's membership, all of whom are residents of Brant County. There are 28 members, and each serve on one or more of the following committee which report monthly to the Board.

1. Executive Committee
2. Services Committee
3. Personnel Committee
4. Property Committee
5. Finance Committee
6. Endowment Committee
7. Public Relations Committee

In addition, the County of Brant, the City of Brantford and the Six Nations and New Credit Band Councils appoint municipal representatives.

The day to day operation of the Society is the responsibility of the Local Director and the staff which is made up of two supervisors, approximately 22 caseworkers, and a complement of child care, clerical and support personnel.

There are two resident group homes, over 180 foster homes and a range of preventative programmes including pre-school, latency age and adolescent facilities, and teaching-homemaker and volunteer services.

## RANGE OF SERVICES OFFERED

A full range of services is offered including counselling to families and young people experiencing social, or emotional problems at home, in the school, and/or in the community.

Services provided are preventative in nature. Emphasis is placed on providing support to the family unit, thus, hopefully, avoiding the painful aspects of the family breakdown or the separation of family members.

Anyone in the community can contact CAS. Families in difficulty can voluntarily ask for help. The CAS is often contacted by people outside the family who are also concerned about the welfare of a child or children. It is mandatory, under the Child Welfare Act, for persons to report neglect or ill treatment of a child to the CAS. All referrals are kept in strict confidence and looked into by CAS as soon as possible.

The Society has a vast variety of services available, and while many people tend to believe that it "snatches" children from their homes, such is not the case. Wherever possible, attempts are made to keep the child in the home, and provide support to the family in periods of difficulty.

An addition, CAS offers many preventive and supportive services. Preventative programs offer assistance to families to work out problems before or at the time a crisis occurs. Through guidance and education, parents and children can come to understand and cope with problems that

can arise in family living. To the fullest extent possible, the Children's Aid Society works with the existing community services to provide a well balanced and effective social service programme.

Our spectrum of services looks like this:

- preventive programs
- intake and protection
- counselling
- alternate care
- foster homes
- adoption services
- single parent programs

A brief description of these programs follows.

## PREVENTIVE SERVICES

No individual or family is immune from social problems. Some recognize these problems and will seek assistance where a service is available. Others become detached and isolated, with the result that they and their conditions are virtually unknown until a crisis develops. When undesirable situations develop to the point of crisis, often alleviation of the problem is exceedingly costly, both in financial and in human terms.

Preventive programs in the social services are designed to preclude individual or family breakdown, to strengthen and preserve human initiative and to develop community awareness and resources.

In the area of personal development and inter-personal relationships, our society should provide support and resources to prevent social casualties. This can be accomplished through a variety of means such as self-development, the acquisition of certain skills and the adequate use of leisure time.

The Children's Aid Society's mandate to engage in preventive services is outlined in the Child Welfare Act, which gives recognition to the fact that service organizations which have traditionally dealt with problems at the point of crises have expert knowledge of the measures that are necessary to prevent the development of conditions that lead to that state and of the services necessary to foster those conditions that support healthy family and community life. The entire community shares responsibility for the development and provision of preventive programming.

Each local community, as a totality, should share responsibility for the development of local resources to meet its own unique needs. Service organizations in areas where there are fewer resources must, of necessity, apportion a larger amount of time and effort to the initiation of action than those in well developed areas. Most commitments, like individuals, must have a degree of desire, energy, and resources for self-improvement,

The following may be regarded as two basic principles essential to any preventive service program involving a Children's Aid Society.

1. Responsibility for initiating and carrying out the program rests with the local community, including the local Children's Aid Society, and when the community does not take action to initiate preventive services, such initiation is the responsibility of the CAS.
2. As large and representative a segment as possible in the local community should be involved in the planning process.

The task for the Children's Aid Society is challenging and complex. There is the constant need to co-ordinate with and complement services now existing and those planned for. As long as the objectives remain clear and decisions are made with the priority needs of the community foremost, effective planning and development can take place. New ideas are essential and at all times there should be a conscious determination to look to the future while utilizing past experiences.

## INTAKE AND PROTECTION

The intake process includes all activity from the point of the initial contact to the establishment of a clearly defined and mutually understood plan of service/care for the child and parents. The purpose of intake covers these points:

1. to clarify to the parents and the agency the fundamental problem underlying the referral, the factors which precipitated the problem and the effect of the problem upon the individuals within the family as well as upon the family as a unit;
2. to determine with the family the course of action which would best meet the needs of the child and parents, whether it be placement of the child or service to keep the family intact; and
3. to plan with the parents and child the kind and degree of responsibility to be assumed by the parents, child and agency in carrying out the mutually understood plan.

The Child Welfare Act of Ontario under which the CAS of Brant functions clearly states: "Every CAS shall be operated for the purposes of .....

1. investigating allegations or evidence that children may be in need of protection;
2. protecting children where necessary;
3. providing guidance, counselling and other services to families for protecting children or for the prevention of circumstances requiring the protection of children;
4. providing care for children assigned or committed to its care under this or any other Act;

5. supervising children assigned to its supervision under this or any other Act;
6. placing children for adoption
7. assisting the parents of children born out of wedlock or likely to be born out of wedlock
8. any other duties given to it by this or any other act

The core of protection services lies in a social work counselling with the child's parents. Helping the parents to provide more effectively for the child's needs is preferable to removing the child from the family unit. This avoids the trauma of separation and at the same time is intended to prevent future abuse or neglect by involving the parents in a learning and growing process. The basic purpose, on a preventive level of social work with the parent (or the total family), is to change attitudes and thus to alter behaviour and to help parents learn more effective ways of handling their offspring.

## COUNSELLING

Counselling is a well-established therapeutic process employed with people who express a desire for change in their relationships, feelings, and/or ways of coping with their world. There are several important components in this process.

1. It requires that the client is or can be motivated toward change.
2. It is carried out through the sharing of thoughts, feelings, information and attitudes between the persons involved.
3. It is guided by a person with skills in helping people bring about change in feelings and behaviour.
4. It has specific goals.

The form which counselling takes varies with the kind and complexity of the problems presented, the individual differences of clients, and the composite of personal qualities and acquired skills which determine each counsellor's unique style. Common to all cases is the necessity to establish explicit goals and to create a climate and relationship which encourage the free and honest expression of thoughts and feelings. Beyond these requirements, the methods and techniques used may be drawn from traditional forms of casework and group work and/or other concepts such as family or reality therapy, transactional analysis, Gestalt, behaviour modification, psychodrama, fair-fighting skills, etc.

## ALTERNATE CARE

There are four types of alternative care which the CAS offers.

1. Non ward care or voluntary placement is a temporary arrangement entered into between the parent(s) and the society and is a means of providing relief, particularly in a time of crisis, to help the parents and to assure the child's safety. Written agreements are used which specify duration, any financial arrangements and the rights and responsibilities of the society.
2. Society wardship is a temporary court order where guardianship is transferred to the society for a period of up to one year at a time and may be extended up to two years. Parents may appeal such an order within thirty days.
3. Crown wardship is a court order transferring guardianship permanently from the parent(s) to the Crown, represented by the Society. Parents may appeal such an order within thirty days and the order may also be rescinded.
4. Adolescent day care is an emerging new service not yet fully developed with respect to the Ohsweken office, but one which holds promise as a preventative measure. It is designed for a short period of time, up to three months, and allows for a greater degree of flexibility in working with families. The young person comes into a CAS facility during the day and returns at night.

**ADOPTION SERVICES**

With respect to the Ohsweken CAS office, a renewed emphasis has been given to the placement of Indian children with native families. An objective of the Ohsweken CAS is to ultimately have a native adoption worker to more effectively facilitate these services.

The focus of the adoption is on meeting the needs of the child. The child to be placed will be legally free, either through consents or crown wardship.

A Child History and Social History are prepared for each child. In preparation for adoption, infants are cleared by the agency doctor as being fit for adoption. Older children are prepared for adoption by the foster parent(s) and social worker, through discussions with the child. When ready for a family a choice is made either from our own approved homes, or if no suitable home is available locally, provincial resources such as the Adoption Resource Exchange Conference, Today's Child and Family Finder are used. With infants, there are ample resources within our own county.

Children are placed on a probationary period of six to twelve months duration. At the end of this period, all legal documents are prepared by the agency and submitted to the County Court, where the Adoption Order is finalized.

## FOSTER HOMES

One of the primary services offered by the CAS is that of providing day to day care of children, who for some reason or another cannot remain within their natural homes. Placement resources are primarily foster homes, of which there are about twenty on the reserves. Group homes and institutional placements are for the more disturbed child which; with the exception of a girl's group home, a teenage day care facility and a co-ed foster home in Brant County, are located in other areas of the Province.

It has been necessary for some "difficult-to-place" children to be placed in these group homes and institutions off the reserves. It has become evident that traditional foster homes on the reserves, as elsewhere, cannot meet the needs of all troubled youngsters. The foster home programme is faced with a shortage of foster families able to deal with disturbed children. The demands placed on families fostering children are often overwhelming and the support provided by the social worker, is at times, insufficient to meet their needs.

It is consistent with the philosophy of the Ohsweken office that Indian children remain within their own social, cultural and religious environment. In response to this, attention has been given to the establishment of specialized native facilities on the reserves to service the more seriously disturbed youngsters.

Removal of the child from his own family should be considered only as a last alternative. Most parents who breakdown do so as a result of a

multitude of pressures that could have been relieved by the use of supportive services such as day care, nursery schools and teacher-homemakers.

Although the cost of providing what can be called family support systems may seem high, actually they are far more economical than the cost of keeping the child in care, exclusive of the savings in human terms.

## SINGLE PARENT PROGRAMS

Even though, over the past several years, the number of babies being born out of wedlock has been gradually decreasing, a remarkable trend has been the number of unmarried mothers keeping their child. As of 1977, upwards of 50% were in this category.

The challenge of being a single parent has its own set of problems and the Children's Aid Society attempts to give service to the unmarried mother which will be useful to her should she make the decision to raise her own child.

For the single mother who raises her own child, many economic and social problems must be faced. Learning infant care and nutrition; making day care arrangements if she works or enters a learning or training course; finding housing, acceptance, and friends for herself and her child, are problems which may require the help of many agencies. The Children's Aid Society tries to co-ordinate services to single parents in the community.

Many of these factors cannot be foreseen by the young mother who has never raised a child. The CAS worker tries to help her make a realistic decision about her child's future. Every attempt is made to discuss the plans with the father as well. Often he needs help to cope with his feelings about the mother and child.

It should be noted that in some instances the single parent may be the father. Such situations have similar, yet unique characteristics.

## STAFFING

Our present staff is made up of a supervisor, two caseworker positions, a student field worker placed by the Mohawk College Social Service Program, and one secretary.

Projected for the 1979 year, is the addition of a Teacher-Homemaker position which would primarily complement the social worker in developing approaches to families needing help with basic hoemaking skills. An additional casework position and a secretarial aide are also being considered for the Fall of 1979.

The aim of the Society is to have an all Native staff and we are essentially at that point now. New and replacement positions will be open to any Band Native, but preference is given to the Residents of the Six Nations and New Credit Reserves.

Emphasis is placed on a team-work approach to case situations not only for the purpose of integrated planning, but equally as important, because one staff member may be called upon to intervene or assist in a matter primarily handled by a co-worker.

Weekly staff meetings are held and a close liaison is maintained with our Reserve Council representatives.

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

It is our strong feeling the Children's Aid Society should be a part of the network of services that come in contact with children so that situations in which there is neglect or a need for support, input can be obtained quickly and appropriately.

These other services include schools, clinics, social agencies, law enforcement, and public departments such as welfare, health and recreation. Close linkages should also exist with local physicians, public health nurses, ministers and police, as well as the staff of community centres.

The Children's Aid Society looks for every opportunity to develop such connections or to interpret its functions to the community, whether through other agencies, professional or business groups, or citizens.

Presently, there is a very viable Community Services Committee whose primary purpose is to develop a well-balanced and coordinated set of services to the residents of the Reserves. The Children's Aid Society was very active in the formation of this group and continues to be so. The Committee meets regularly and is representative of the various services.

## TRENDS AND CONCERNS

The establishment of the Ohsweken office was, in the main, a vivid reflection of the desire of the Residents of the Reserves to assume responsibility for an aspect of their life that in some way affects each and every one. Over the years, as the services of the Children's Aid Society have become more responsive to Native input, it was both logical and practical that such a facility did become a reality. The Band Council Resolution of August, 1977, gave recognition to the fact that there was really no obstacle or counter-indication to the on-going development and refinement of services based on Native needs and aspirations.

Over the past year and a half, there have been clear indications that what the Ohsweken CAS has been able to offer is of value. Through our participation in the activities of the Community Services Committee, by word of mouth, and based on the returns from the questionnaire we distributed, it is evident we are seen as being needed and effective.

What does the future hold?

We want to maintain our present stance and we want to progress.

To do this we not only have to be clear as to what is meant by progress, but also, making certain as to how we are going about "progressing."

For such to occur, there are some prerequisites.

Generally.....

- continued support and input by our representatives from both Band Councils, Wilma General and Ann LaForme
- on-going evaluation and appraisal of the services being offered
- development of the necessary Native resources to carry out our mandate
- continued involvement by our staff and representatives in all aspects of the Community's helping network to establish service priorities

More specifically.....

- additional staff to enhance the community support systems such as; teacher-homemakers, an adoption worker, and specialized foster homes
- periodic articles in the Teka to publicize the nature of our work
- exchange of information and experiences, and a possible sharing of resources, with other Reserves offering similar services

An Indian leader and statesman, Sitting Bull, once said, "Let us put our minds together and see what kind of life we can make for our children."

To this end the Ohsweken Children's Aid Society is committed.

"Look not at things as they are  
and wonder why....Rather, dream  
of things that could be and say  
why not?"

- Robert Kennedy

APPENDICES



## Appendix II.

"DO YOU KNOW YOUR CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY?"

The Children's Aid Society is a complicated organization that many people have difficulty understanding. How is it run? How does the government control it? What are its services. What are our responsibilities as citizens to the Children's Aid Society?

The goal of the CAS is to contribute to the well-being of children, families, individuals and communities. This goal is a shared responsibility with all individuals and many organizations within our community.

Services: The Child Welfare Act requires that the CAS provide certain specific services on behalf of the community. These services may be described as:

- investigating allegations of neglect;
- the protection of children;
- the care of children who are not able to remain in their own homes;
- placing children for adoption;
- services to unmarried parents and their children;
- guidance, counselling and other services for the prevention of circumstances requiring the protection of children.

This law is the same throughout the province and, as you can see, is a rather broad statement of direction for Children's Aid Societies. What is more relevant is how this statute is applied, and this is controlled completely by the local community, the family court and the government. This is where things get complicated, but it does make sense after some analysis.



Funding: The government shapes the service by controlling the funds of the local CAS. The province pays 80% of our costs and the municipalities pay 20%. In return they must approve how we spend the money. The control of services and programs, is therefore, indirect but very extensive nonetheless.

The courts shape the service by defining the minimum standards of care for children in the community. It is the court that decides the issue of what is neglect and what is not, and it is the court that determines whether parents are to be deprived of the right to care for their child.

Policies: The community shapes the service by controlling the policies and operation of the local CAS and this is where you have a major responsibility. Each Society is operated by a Board of Directors. The Board is elected by the membership of the Society. To become a member, you must purchase a membership for a nominal sum. This entitled you to receive information throughout the year about the activities of the Society and to vote and/or run for election to the Board of Directors at the annual meeting.

The issue is, who is in the best position to assure that the policies and operation of the local CAS are responsive to the needs of the community? Is it a branch of the government at Queen's Park, or is it a representative group of citizens in the community served by the local CAS?

It is the belief of the local CAS that this structure of local memberships and direction by a local Board of Directors make CAS far more

responsive to the needs of the community served than the suggested alternatives. Of course, this will occur only if the membership is truly representative of the community. The well-being of children and families can be improved immeasurably through a cooperative effort by all citizens and the Children's Aid Society.

--D.A. Thompson

This presentation was compiled by Lance Sams with assistance from the staff of the Ohsweken Branch of the Children's Aid Society of Brant