

**Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
Corporate Services**

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**Interim Evaluation
of the National Child Benefit
for First Nations**

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The National Child Benefit (NCB), implemented in 1998, is a major social policy initiative under the Social Union Framework Agreement. Within this framework, the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, as well as First Nations agree to create a system of joint planning and programming to address the problem of children living in poverty. The NCB is the latest step in a long evolution of income security programming designed to support children and families.

Methodology

This interim evaluation followed the evaluation framework developed by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND)'s Departmental Audit and Evaluation Branch. It involved the collection of data from a number of sources, including a review of current literature dealing with child poverty and labour force attachment among First Nation people, a review of files and documents relating to the First Nations NCB (FN-NCB), site visits to eight First Nation communities, which included a dialogue circle in each community, 28 key informant interviews, and two case studies of communities that exemplify best practices in data collection and reporting. The researchers were accompanied by a First Nation consultant on all site visits.

Conclusions, Observations, Recommendations

The conclusions are based on a synthesis of all available information to provide a context for specific recommendations as warranted. In other instances, observations of emerging trends or issues that bear watching as the FN-NCB continues to evolve are presented. The discussion is organized according to each of the main evaluation issues.

Context and Relevance

Little doubt exists that the social and economic conditions for residents in most First Nation communities demand serious and substantial funding. The Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB) and NCB Supplement (NCBS) offer important cash benefits that supplement the incomes of all low-income families, on or off social assistance (SA).

Observation

The need to file an income tax return and apply for the CCTB represents a condition for participating in the CCTB and receiving the NCB. The Canada Customs and Revenue Agency income tax platform is now being used to deliver many income tested programs, and it is likely that this trend will continue.

Observation

Ensuring that all low-income residents in First Nation communities file a tax return and apply for the CCTB is important for two reasons. First, it ensures that low-income families receive the maximum cash benefits. Second, it increases the funding for NCB reinvestments available through the offset process.

Key informants unanimously see the core NCB goals as relevant. Certainly, everyone who was interviewed supported the first goal (to reduce and prevent the depth of child poverty). The second goal (to reduce unemployment rates in First Nation communities) received somewhat less support, with some respondents arguing that encouraging parents to work is a longer-term issue in dealing with child poverty.

Observation

While social and economic development are closely linked, they can appear to be at odds in First Nation communities. This research found that priorities of low-income families and line staff focus on providing direct and immediate assistance and services to children and families. The NCB addresses these; at the same time, key informants believe that the priority of Band leadership more often leans toward pursuing larger-scale economic development opportunities. The consequence is that these priorities can compete for attention and funds. If the offset process to generate reinvestment funds erodes further, finding the resources to continue to support NCB initiatives may be challenging.

Most saw the third goal (to reduce overlap and duplication) as more abstract and of interest to government. However, as First Nations create larger administrative structures and tap into a wider pool of revenue sources, ensuring cost-effectiveness through the reduction of overlap and duplication will assume greater importance.

Implementation

Some disagreement exists regarding the nature and extent of DIAND's involvement in the delivery of NCB-funded programs. Departmental personnel report that regional offices and First Nations "*work closely in designing, implementing, and tracking NCB initiatives.*" First Nation respondents tended to report that DIAND involvement is minimal in these areas. The reality appears to be somewhere in the middle, as DIAND focuses on communication of policy,

program guidelines, and reporting requirements. Ensuring that the roles and responsibilities of each of the stakeholders are clearly defined can lead to improvements in many areas, including program design and reporting.

Recommendation

1. The Director General of Social Policy and Programs, in consultation with Regional Director Generals, and First Nations, should develop a clear and mutual understanding of their specific roles and responsibilities in selecting, designing, implementing, and reporting on NCB reinvestment initiatives.

Other than tracking and reporting issues (addressed below), the challenges to implementation centre mostly on communication. Particularly in the early stages of the implementation of the NCB, in most regions, a lack of consultation between First Nations and DIAND, and an incomplete explanation of the FN-NCB, resulted in some programs being hastily assembled or not implemented at all. In addition to an existing lack of trust between First Nations and government, the offset process generating the NCB reinvestment component proved to be difficult to communicate to First Nations and community members, leading to more mistrust and resentment. This parallels the experience of other provincial and territorial jurisdictions.

An example of this miscommunication is found in the common belief that the NCB reinvestment scheme takes money from those who need it most. Fostering a better understanding of the NCB and its intent will assist not only in increasing community acceptance of reinvestment projects, but also in defining reinvestment priorities in First Nation communities. At the same time, leaving the NCBS with the family and not creating a separate reinvestment process has a certain logic. Certainly, as some provincial and territorial governments lower SA rates, it may make sense for First Nations to leave more money with the family. However, if the community has many low-income families not on SA, a reinvestment program can offer this group important benefits. The choices are complex.

Recommendation

2. The Director General of Social Policy and Programs, in consultation with Regional Directors General, should review their approach to consultation and communication with First Nations in order to ensure a clear and common understanding of the nature and intent of the NCB reinvestment component.

Part of this communication should be an open dialogue on the value of the offset in generating the reinvestment. While DIAND cannot deviate from provincial/territorial practice, such a dialogue can be valuable in refining the understanding within the First Nations leadership.

Consistency of Programs with NCB Objectives

First Nations perceived the reduction of child poverty goal as the most relevant, and most of the programs are completely consistent with that objective. Some of the programs which were examined are consistent with the labour force attachment objective, but this type of program is less common. The third objective is not given a great deal of attention by First Nations, since most of the programs are aimed specifically at the largest gaps between existing programs and services.

Some confusion persists over whether certain projects fall within the scope of eligibility for NCB reinvestments. For example, providing breakfast for a hungry child is clearly consistent with NCB objectives; it is less clear whether the same is true of teaching a child to play golf. However, if the community can draw links between sport and physical health, self-esteem, or school performance, the program would be more easily justified. Unfortunately, it is not apparent that First Nations have developed such a rationale for each of their reinvestments. Especially when programs existed prior to the NCB, the lack of such rationales can create the impression that the NCB reinvestment is simply another source of cash for social programming, not a unique venture designed to improve the well-being of children.

Recommendation

3. The regional Directors General from all regions should assist First Nations in developing clear objectives for their NCB reinvestment programs to ensure that they align with the main goals of the NCB.

Consistency has another potential meaning – consistency of delivery. The FN-NCB is not delivered in a consistent (equal) way across Canada as a result of two main factors. First, DIAND regions must follow the existing SA regulations in place in each province and territory, which affects how NCB reinvestment amounts are calculated. Second, each region has its own practices, and interacts with First Nations within a variety of funding arrangements. This affects how communities are required to plan and report upon their reinvestment initiatives.

Observation

The fact that NCB reinvestments respond to regional and local needs is a valuable feature of this initiative. The fact that variation exists in delivery and program content is a positive sign that the initiative is being applied as intended.

Perhaps more important is the fact that in the absence of more comprehensive reporting, this variation in delivery impedes the identification of which approaches or models are the most successful, and impedes the extraction of lessons that can be shared by First Nation communities across regions. This problem is compounded by the fact that in most cases, the regional evaluation frameworks do not contain what are supposed to be the minimum reporting components, such as amount of the reinvestment fund, how the initiative is managed,

reinvestment priorities, and how the region will ensure accountability and measure success. It is important to clearly document the differences among regions and ensure that Regional Reinvestment Frameworks are complete and current.

Recommendation

4. The Director General of Social Policy and Programs should ensure that the Regional Reinvestment Frameworks are updated regularly to reflect changes in regional policy.

Reporting

According to data reported by DIAND, one-third of First Nations are not meeting the minimum reporting requirement of an annual one-page report. This suggests that there are systemic obstacles to reporting that should be addressed. Evidence exists that reporting rates vary by region, but no specific data on regional variance currently exist. Key informants believe that the type and amount of data being *requested* is sufficient; the problem appears to lie in the fact that the data *actually being supplied* are insufficient.

Recommendation

5. The Director General of Social Policy and Programs should investigate the reasons for non-compliance with annual reporting requirements and follow up with First Nations that are not meeting them.

Observation

Annual reporting can appear to be a process whereby DIAND “checks up” on a First Nation. This watchfulness can be irritating. At the same time, the relatively low level of reporting, both in terms of numbers of reports and the depth of reports, means that First Nation managers could be missing opportunities to share experiences and best practices. Ultimately, an improved system and level of reporting will benefit all First Nations. However, this reporting should be horizontal among First Nation managers as well as vertical between First Nations and DIAND.

Recommendation

6. The Director General of Social Policy and Programs, in consultation with First Nations, should review the reporting template and make any revisions necessary to ensure that it is easy to use and produces results that contribute to both meeting departmental requirements for program evaluation and communication of best practices among First Nations management.

Program Outcomes

Clearly, short-term, concrete effects are evident among the children and families who have participated in activities funded by NCB reinvestments. Low-income families in general derive benefits from NCB-funded projects, and some anecdotal reports exist of broader community benefits stemming from NCB reinvestment projects. The evaluation has reported on creative approaches to projects that show the potential (if properly documented) to become examples of best practice. At this point, however, there is little reliable data regarding outcomes, impacts, best practices, or lessons learned from NCB reinvestment projects. It should be noted that identifying indicators and evaluating outcomes are among the most challenging areas of program evaluation. While it is logical to include these two components (outcomes and indicators) in a self-evaluation process, they undoubtedly create high expectations that have yet to be met. It would be to the advantage of both DIAND and First Nations to review these sections and agree on a more achievable approach to documenting project outcomes.

Recommendation

7. The Director General of Social Policy and Programs, in consultation with First Nations, should review the self-evaluation instrument in light of the experience with the first waves of self-evaluations and make any relevant revisions to produce the information necessary to support First Nations in program management and evaluation.

Program Effectiveness/Efficiency/Outcomes

A number of federal programs targeted to First Nations have similar general goals to the NCB reinvestments, but none use the same approach. In general, there appears to be little interaction among these separate programs. As noted in Section 3, exceptions are found among the regions that were visited where interaction and coordination exist among programs intended to address child poverty and attachment to the labour force. This is the essence of the third NCB goal; even though few respondents see this goal as particularly relevant, it was found that in some cases, programs reach a high level of coordination. These initiatives, if systematically identified and publicized, provide an important model for other First Nations.

Observation

NCB reinvestment initiatives that link to other programs with similar objectives should be studied and promoted both within and across regions as examples of effective delivery.

There is widespread agreement that the major strength of the FN-NCB is flexibility. First Nations are able to take ownership of their community needs and target particular local problems. First Nations personnel are especially favourable towards needs being defined at the community level. Such custom-tailored projects can provide concrete and compelling success stories that are popular with community leaders and politicians at every level. At the same time, the FN-NCB attempts to address the “welfare wall” and the need to remove disincentives to work. However, it seems that many First Nations are not taking full advantage of this flexibility. Many appear to

be simply putting the NCB funding toward pre-existing programs. It is apparent that numerous communities are simply duplicating a sample program found in the various NCB informational materials. Whether this is the result of a lack of time, information, or resources for identifying local priorities and designing reinvestment programs is not clear. This is not unique to First Nations; it can be argued that provinces and territories are tending to do the same thing with much of their reinvestment funding.

Measuring outcomes represents a critical challenge for the NCB reinvestment process, especially since reinvestments are often co-mingled with other program funding. Further, NCB reinvestments are often split among several programs, rendering attribution essentially impossible.

Thematic and cluster evaluations offer a method for examining the outcomes from a specific type of intervention. A thematic evaluation groups similar programs across several First Nation communities to arrive at a conclusion about effectiveness for that type of intervention. A cluster evaluation examines all the programs related to an aspect of child well-being within a community (or set of closely aligned communities). By pooling the experience of several First Nations in a breakfast program, for example, and then reporting on the results, all First Nations would benefit. In essence, the concept of reporting should evolve to encompass more than financial accountability.

Recommendation

8. Because activities are jointly funded, attributing outcomes to specific funding is not possible. Therefore, rather than trying to determine the incremental impact of NCB reinvestments on children and their families, the Director General of Social Policy and Programs should, in partnership with other federal and provincial partners, determine which interventions work best. In this way, government and non-governmental organizations will be better able to determine where to allocate resources.

Recommendation

9. The Director General of Social Policy and Programs, in consultation with First Nations, should consider convening regular NCB conferences where First Nation participants could share their experiences with the NCB reinvestment process. First Nations should identify innovative approaches to meeting the needs of children in low-income families. Better reporting would better communicate results among Canada's First Nations.

Conclusion

The FN-NCB is an important program and is part of the most important initiative to support children ever mounted in Canada. In this report, the implementation of the FN-NCB was reviewed. In general, the program has been effectively implemented, and (based on key informant information) it has made a valuable contribution to the well-being of children in First Nation communities. The next phase of implementation presents a key challenge for DIAND and First Nations to create a reporting process that will identify outcomes and best practices. It was suggested that a process of thematic and cluster evaluations offers the best option for tracking the progress of the FN-NCB. Without this innovation in reporting, the final evaluation will have little to report on outcomes.

Section 1 - Introduction

The National Child Benefit (NCB), implemented in 1998, is a major social policy initiative under the Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA). Within this framework, the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, as well as First Nations agree to create a system of joint planning and programming to address the problem of children living in poverty. The NCB is the latest step in a long evolution of income security programming designed to support children and families.

Purpose of the Evaluation

The Interim Evaluation focuses on formative issues related to the implementation of the NCB reinvestment component in First Nation communities. It also examines satisfaction with programs among participants, and where possible, provides discussion of immediate outcomes. The evaluation process for the NCB for First Nations (FN-NCB) is structured to ensure a close link to the NCB Federal/Provincial/Territorial (F/P/T) evaluation. Both programs use comparable performance indicators and evaluation issues/questions, which are contained in an evaluation framework (Appendix A) developed by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development's (DIAND's) Departmental Audit and Evaluation Branch (DAEB). This interim evaluation follows the DAEB framework and addresses six main issues:

- *Context* answers questions about the existing demographic, social, economic, and political trends in First Nation communities, and examines the historical responses by governments and First Nations to poverty and work disincentives.
- *Relevance* examines how well the objectives of the NCB are aligned with the needs and priorities of First Nation communities.
- *Implementation* is the main focus of the evaluation. Within this issue, the evaluation will answer questions regarding the roles of the various personnel involved in NCB reinvestments, participation rates and perceptions of the clients, challenges to implementation, consistency of implementation, and data collection and reporting.
- *Program outcomes* will be addressed by the final evaluation; however, this evaluation provides some preliminary discussion of what is needed to measure outcomes.
- *Effectiveness/efficiency* concerns whether NCB reinvestment programs complement or overlap with similar programs. The evaluation also addresses perceived strengths and weaknesses of the initiative, best practices, and some lessons learned.

- *Program alternatives* will be addressed by the final evaluation. However, some discussion occurs regarding interventions that deal with poverty and work disincentives for First Nation communities.

Methodology

This evaluation involved the collection of data from a number of sources.

- Background and contextual information was gathered through a review of current literature dealing with child poverty and labour force attachment among First Nations people, and through a review of files and documents relating to the FN-NCB.
- Insight into the day-to-day operation of programs through site visits to First Nation communities was gained. The consultants were accompanied by a First Nation consultant on all site visits.
- Two case studies of communities that exemplify best practices in data collection and reporting were undertaken.
- Interviews with key informants such as government personnel, academic and other experts to obtain a broader range of perspectives on the implementation of FN-NCB were conducted.
- The specific methods employed for the data collection are described in Table 1.

Table 1 - Data Collection Methodology

Data Collection Source	Purpose	Data Collection Method
Literature review	To describe the broader context in which the FN-NCB is located. The review also describes alternatives to the NCB debated in the literature.	Literature was reviewed from a number of sources, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • government documents and web sites (DIAND, Health, Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), Stats Can); • academic literature dealing with children's policy and child benefit reform; • Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) documents and discussion papers.

Data Collection Source	Purpose	Data Collection Method
Document review	To gain background information from existing documentation supplied by DIAND.	<p>The following documents provided by DIAND were reviewed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sample of Annual Reports prepared by First Nations; • sample of First Nation self-evaluation reports; • NCB Progress Reports (1999 and 2000) • National Management Framework for the FN-NCB; • Regional Reinvestment Frameworks; • First Nations National Reporting Guide 2001-2002: Volumes I and II; • Internal memos, minutes, and other documents.
Site visits Dialogue circles	<p>To provide more detailed insight into the implementation and operation of NCB reinvestment projects.</p> <p>A dialogue circle was conducted at each site visit with participants of NCB reinvestment projects.</p>	<p>Prairie Research Associates (PRA) staff consulted with DIAND to select the sites. A First Nations consultant was part of the research team at each site visit. Two site visits were completed in each of four selected regions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British Columbia (St. Mary's Indian Band, Gwa'sala-Nakwaxda'xw First Nation); • Manitoba (Opaskwayak Cree Nation, Long Plain First Nation); • Ontario (Couchiching First Nation, Chippewas of Nawash First Nation); • Quebec (Wemotaci First Nation, Listuguj First Nation).
Case studies	To provide examples of best practices in First Nation communities on reporting activities and outcomes of NCB reinvestment projects.	<p>PRA conducted case studies at the following sites selected in consultation with DIAND:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sto:lo First Nation (BC); • Abitibiwinni First Nation (PQ).
Key informant interviews	To gain information from the regions; to include the perspectives of F/P/T government personnel and experts in the field.	<p>PRA conducted a series of interviews (in person or by telephone) with the following persons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DIAND headquarters personnel (n=6); • a representative of the Assembly of First Nations (n=1); • academics/experts in the field (n=2); • DIAND regional representatives (n=10); • representatives of other federal departments (n=4); • representatives of other provincial/territorial departments (n=5).

Outline of the Report

Section 2 provides an explanation and context for the NCB. Section 3 presents a synthesis of the research findings, addressing the issues and questions identified in the evaluation framework. Section 4 contains the conclusions and recommendations. The evaluation framework is appended.

Section 2 - Understanding the First Nations National Child Benefit

Reviewing the overall NCB initiative is useful to understand the FN-NCB. In 1998, the federal government and eleven provinces and territories agreed to address three core goals:¹

- to help prevent and reduce the depth of child poverty;
- to promote attachment to the workforce by ensuring that families are better off working; and
- to reduce overlap and duplication through closer harmonization of program objectives and benefits, and through simplified administration.

The NCB has two components: a federal component that runs through the tax system, and a provincial component that uses reinvestments financed by offsetting social assistance (SA).

Federal Component of the NCB rests on the Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB) Platform

The federal government combined the previous Child Tax Benefit and Working Income Supplement into a single program, the CCTB. To receive CCTB payments, the parent must file an income tax return and apply each year. This base benefit is paid monthly to about 80% of Canadian families on a sliding scale, to a maximum income level of \$76,680 for a two-child family. This program offers a cash payment to families based on the number of children under 18 and the family's income as recorded in their previous year's tax return. Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA) evaluates eligibility and processes the payments in monthly cheques.

In 1998, the NCB initiative combined the CCTB and new program, the National Child Benefit Supplement (NCBS). The NCBS represented a significant increase in government support to low-income families. Over the three-year period between 1998 and 2000, the yearly federal investment in NCB reached a level of \$1.7 billion. This amount was added to the existing \$5 billion provided annually through the CCTB. Therefore, the federal component of the NCB resembles a negative income tax program, with eligibility determined by the family's income and the presence of children under 18. As of July 2001, the NCBS pays an additional amount to families below a given income threshold of \$32,000.

¹Quebec did not sign the agreement, but agrees with the principles of the NCB and has created parallel programming to deliver services similar to other jurisdictions.

Provinces/Territories Participate in the NCB through a Process of Reinvestments and Investments

Provinces/territories offer a range of programs that meet one or more of the three core goals of the NCB. Many of these programs pre-date the NCB. A unique feature of the NCB is the way it allows provincial/territorial governments to fund programs for children and low income families.

A large fraction of families receiving the NCBS also receive provincial/territorial SA. Under the NCB agreement, provinces/territories are allowed to offset (reduce) the SA payments of families receiving SA families by an amount equal to the NCBS they receive. The net position of the family remains unchanged, but the province/territory can move part of their SA budgets to finance NCB initiatives. This is known as the *reinvestment* process, because SA funds are reinvested in programming for children and low income families. Some provinces also contribute funds out of their general revenues to programs that meet the goals of the NCB. These are known as NCB *investments*.

In some cases provinces/territories have created new programs entirely funded by the SA offset. In other cases, existing programs receive contributions from these offset funds.

Provinces/territories have used the SA offset under the NCB to support programming in the following areas:

Child tax benefit programs are cash benefits offered to low-income families with children based on income and number of children. These essentially supplement the cash benefits of the NCBS, and CCRA administers these programs through the income tax platform for all the provinces and territories.

- *Earned income supplements* are cash benefits paid to low-income families who have specified levels of earnings. These programs serve as an incentive to work, and rise to a plateau with increases in earnings, then fall to zero as the household becomes more fully employed. Except for one province (Saskatchewan), CCRA administers these programs through the income tax platform for provinces and territories that have elected this as a reinvestment.
- *Child/Daycare programs* typically involve funding to increase the number of childcare and daycare spaces, and to offer these programs in “off” hours and extend services to rural areas.
- *Supplementary health benefits* address the disincentive experienced by those who leave SA and must give up the medical and health benefits typically offered free or at a significantly reduced charge. These programs temporarily extend benefits for SA recipients who find work.

- *Early childhood and children at risk initiatives* consist of a range of programs including prenatal care and nutrition, breakfast and learning programs, youth recreation, and counselling.
- *Other programs* include training and labour market adjustment programs designed to support parents in seeking and maintaining employment. In fact, provinces/territories have wide latitude to define a reinvestment, provided it can reasonably be seen to meet the three goals of the NCB. Accordingly, the range of reinvestments is wide.

First Nations - National Child and Benefit

The First Nations - National Child and Benefit represents coordination and alignment of policies and programming designed to assist Aboriginal peoples with policy initiatives directed to Canadian families and children in general. While First Nations - National Child and Benefit Programs adhere to the basic goals and operational features of the National Child and Benefit, important divergences support the unique circumstances of Aboriginal people, First Nation communities, and the evolving funding relations with DIAND.

The structure and organization of the FN-NCB emerges from the *National Management Framework for the NCB in First Nations - a Framework for Reinvestment (1998)*. This document enunciated key core principles for the First Nations - National Child and Benefit. The intent of this is to ensure that programs and services for children on reserve are comparable to those available to children in other parts of the country, while allowing First Nations the flexibility to address the particular needs of their communities. Each community follows the established guidelines for National Child and Benefit reinvestment programs applying to the province or territory in which it is located. These region-specific frameworks take into account provincial/territorial programming as well as the amount of reinvestment in that province/territory. First Nations' reinvestment programs vary according to specific community needs and amount of funding available. In provinces/territories where investments have been made in addition to reinvestment funding, equivalent federal funding is provided to First Nations so that they are able to offer a similar level of programming.

As mentioned above, provinces and territories fund their National Child and Benefit activity through offsets to SA. This offset (often and pejoratively termed a "clawback") caused some confusion as recipients complained that government gives with one hand and takes with the other. Other jurisdictions experienced little difficulty in the introduction of the offset. First Nations - National Child and Benefit uses a similar process of offsetting SA payments to finance reinvestments in First Nation communities. In this context, some First Nation communities reportedly experienced few problems with the offset process, while others needed to work harder to gain acceptance.

Provincial Social Assistance Programs Influence First Nations - National Child and Benefit

Another important principle that underlies FN-NCB also derives from DIAND policies on SA. Federal administrative policy requires that SA for First Nations must be equivalent to provincial and territorial practice. This applies to the levels of payment, the range of benefits offered, and general conditions of eligibility. Therefore, when the province/territory adjusts SA rates, DIAND and First Nations follow suit.

Through various funding arrangements [e.g., Comprehensive Funding Arrangement (CFA), Alternative Funding Agreement (AFA), Financial Transfer Agreements (FTA)] - some more flexible than others in terms of accountability and reporting requirements² - communities receive social development transfer payments from DIAND to cover (among other things) the cost of SA. SA may be administered directly by First Nation communities or by the social development unit within each DIAND regional office. The offset process for the NCB may occur at the band/council level or at the DIAND regional office level.

SA calculations for NCB reinvestments are done in two ways.

- For most regions (except Ontario and Quebec), CCRA makes the reinvestment calculation based on income tax information. The national NCB reinvestment is adjusted through the income tax system, and also includes federal increases in adjustments. In Quebec, this is done separately through its own tax system.
- In Ontario, SA administrators recover SA savings and make the adjustments based on actual figures from the previous year. In Ontario, all reinvestments are done by municipalities or First Nations through social administrators under the Ontario Works program.

In some provinces/territories, non-status Indians living on-reserve fall under the jurisdiction of the province. Any adjustments in SA for NCB become part of the jurisdiction's broader NCB reinvestment funding through programs open to all residents, not just those on SA.

Funding Arrangements Also Influence the Reinvestment Process

Broadly speaking, the offset process occurs either at the DIAND regional level or at the community level. In Saskatchewan, for example, the regional office calculates the NCBS based on their SA records of family size and income. It then reports to each community what amounts should be paid as SA and the total budget available for the reinvestments. In other jurisdictions, especially where communities have a Canada-First Nations Funding Agreement (CFNFA) that

²For example, block funding agreements define minimum standards for accountability and reporting. For core services such as social assistance, education, or health, First Nations are able to respond to community needs and in doing so may reallocate funds between programs.

supports multi-year funding, bands and tribal councils that administer the SA program calculate the offset, adjust the payments, and accumulate the NCB reinvestment fund. Through the reporting process, DIAND can track the NCB reinvestment funds regionally and nationally.

Two variations on this process are interesting. In British Columbia, DIAND and First Nation communities have agreed to a global allocation formula. This formula responds to the needs of communities with high numbers of children, while ensuring that smaller communities receive a minimum level of NCB reinvestment funds.

In New Brunswick, First Nation communities have adopted the practice of the province and do not offset SA. Reportedly, the rationale offered by First Nations leaders is that they believe the parents know best how to invest the NCBS for their children.³

FN-NCB Reinvestments Parallel Those of the Provinces/Territories

The FN-NCB reinvestments adhere to three general themes:

- following the goals of the NCB;
- acknowledging the practices of the provinces/territories where feasible; and
- most importantly, supporting the specific needs of First Nation communities.

Through the offset to DIAND SA in 1999-2000, approximately \$52 million was available for FN-NCB reinvestment.⁴ Projections for 2000-2001 were \$56 million. In 1999-2000, most First Nation reinvestment funds were directed to early child development and child nutrition programs (36% and 35% respectively of total reinvestment funds). No First Nation offers a child tax benefit or earned income supplement.

The FN-NCB reinvestment programming is community-based. Further, First Nation administrators often simply combine NCB reinvestment funds with funding from other sources including general Band revenue, other federal and provincial programs, and private sources. This raises a fundamental evaluation issue, in that attributing outcomes directly to NCB reinvestments is generally not possible. This situation is no different from much of the reinvestment activity undertaken by provinces and territories. In these cases, NCB reinvestment co-mingles with funding from other sources. Often the provincial contributions from general revenues, federal contributions from departments such as Health Canada, and even grants from private foundations greatly exceed the NCB reinvestment allocations to a program. The only sensible approach to evaluation is to examine cost-effectiveness of the program as a whole, and then infer whether incremental contributions to different programs have value, without regard to their source.

³Because New Brunswick does not offset SA, its NCB initiatives are all investments; it makes no reinvestments.

⁴DIAND. *First Nations National Child Benefit Progress Report* (Draft 12), 2000.

From the discussion above, three factors influence the FN-NCB reinvestment process:

- the funding arrangements between DIAND, and First Nations;
- the practices of a province/territory with respect to SA offsets and NCB reinvestments;
and
- the specific needs faced by the First Nations community.

In general, where a DIAND region administers the NCB reinvestment fund, about 75% is provided upfront and the remainder reimbursed after the community submits reports. In some jurisdictions (e.g., British Columbia), reporting is monthly or quarterly. DIAND managers indicated that the reporting process remains variable, with some First Nations offering detailed reports on the NCB reinvestment process, while others have yet to report anything. These information gaps limit this evaluation.

Table 2 (next page) summarizes the provincial/territorial and FN-NCB approaches to the NCB reinvestments.

Table 2: Summary of NCB for First Nations

	Atlantic				
	New Brunswick	Newfoundland and Labrador	Prince Edward Island	Nova Scotia	Quebec
Provincial policy on financing NCB reinvestments	The provincial government does not offset SA payments to clients by the amount equal to the NCBS.	In 1998-1999, the provincial government did not finance NCB reinvestments through an offset to SA. Since 2000, NF has offset SA payments by the amount equal to the NCBS.	The provincial government offsets SA payments to clients with children by an amount equal to the NCBS.	The provincial government offsets SA payments to clients with children by an amount equal to the NCBS.	Quebec agrees with the principles of the NCB, but has chosen to not take part in the development of the initiative. It has introduced a family allowance, which operates in much the same way as the CCTB.
Main provincial/territorial NCB reinvestments and investments*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child/Daycare Early childhood and children at risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child benefits/earned income supplement Child/Daycare Supplementary health Early childhood and children at risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child/Daycare Supplementary Health Benefits Early childhood and children at risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child benefits/earned income supplement Child/Daycare Early childhood and children at risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$5 per day Daycare Additional active and employability measures
DIAND policy on financing the NCB reinvestments	There are 15 First Nations within NB and the practice of the provincial government to not offset SA is followed. Bands accept the rationale that families (parents) are in the best position to determine how to invest NCB funds on behalf of their children.	NF has a single First Nation, Miawpukek. The FN supports SA clients to find work and stay employed, and therefore relatively few residents are fully dependent on SA. Council has not decided how to utilize their NCB reinvestments, which would be relatively small. Employment activities are initiatives considered to be consistent with the goals of the NCB.	There are two First Nations located within PEI, both with multi-year agreements. The exact method for how NCB reinvestments are managed is not available at this time.	There are 13 First Nations located within NS; 12 with a multi-year agreement and 1 under a single year funding agreement. For NCB reinvestment purposes, some First Nations are adjusting SA benefits, while others have elected to leave the NCBS with the family.	Support for children was removed from SA and placed within the new family allowance program. The family allowance and CCTB together allow SA payments to fall, producing the basis for funding the NCB reinvestments. Bands administer their own SA programs based on provincial policy.
Main reinvestments by First Nations	The NCBS remains with the parent as the reinvestment.	First Nations typically reinvest NCB funds in the family. Others combine reinvestment strategies that include a partial reinvestment in the family, with the remainder supporting childcare programs and recreation, seasonal clothing needs (school, winter, and spring) and employment strategies that remove barriers to employment. One hurdle to NCB implementation is the lack of manpower within the First Nation to administer the changes in SA, as additional administrative resources were not available at start-up. First Nations have not reported being able to fund additional cash benefits such as a child benefit or earned income supplement.			

* A *reinvestment* is an expenditure that meets the goals of the NCB and is financed by the offset to SA. An NCB *investment* is an expenditure undertaken by the province or territory that meets the goals of the NCB, but is not financed through a reduction to SA payments or rates.

Table 2 (con't.): Summary of NCB for First Nations

	Ontario	Manitoba	Saskatchewan	Alberta	British Columbia
Provincial policy on financing NCB reinvestments	The provincial government offsets SA payments to clients with children by an amount equal to the NCBS. Since SA is administered by municipalities, they manage some of the NCB reinvestment funds. Most of Ontario's reinvestment is directed to the childcare supplement for working families.	From 1998-1999 to 2000-2001, Manitoba did not finance NCB reinvestments through an offset to SA. Starting in April 2001, Manitoba is not offsetting the SA payments to families with children less than six years of age. This will be adjusted to include children less than 12 years of age in 2002 and children less than 18 years in 2003.	The provincial government offsets SA payments to clients with children by an amount equal to the NCBS, and uses the offset to finance its NCB reinvestments.	The provincial government offsets SA payments to clients with children by an amount equal to the NCBS, and uses the offset to finance its NCB reinvestments.	The provincial government offsets SA payments to clients with children by an amount equal to the NCBS, and uses the offset to finance its NCB reinvestments.
Main provincial/territorial NCB reinvestments and investments*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child benefit/earned income supplement • Other (municipal reinvestments through the Ontario Works program) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child/Daycare • Early childhood and children at risk • Other (workforce adjustment, building independence) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child benefits/earned income supplement • Supplementary health benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child/Daycare • Supplementary health benefits • Early childhood and children at risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child benefits/earned income supplement • Child/Daycare • Early childhood and children at risk • Other (social housing)
DIAND policy on financing the NCB reinvestments	First Nations (except one community) administer SA directly. Each community calculates the NCBS their SA clients receive, reduces the SA by an equivalent amount, and submits an annual application for NCB reinvestment funding to DIAND regional office based on actual savings of NCB. DIAND region uses secondary information on SA caseloads and number of children to develop a benchmark for the NCB to verify the applied levels of funding.	Individual Bands administer SA and use an offset to fund the reinvestments. It is unclear what the impact the provincial change to the offset process will have on funding the NCB reinvestments. First Nations submit proposals for funding from the reinvestment.	DIAND region reduces the total SA contribution by an amount equal to the NCBS. It then issues the funds for the reinvestments to bands based on an annual report.	For First Nations on annual funding agreements (i.e., not CFNFA). DIAND region uses a formula for estimating NCBS derived from SA data taken from six representative months out of each year. DIAND reduces the total SA contribution by an amount equal to the NCBS.	CFA/FTA clients with the NCB included in their block funding calculate the NCBS received by SA clients to arrive at the offset needed to finance reinvestments. CFA and CFA/FTA First Nations that do not have the NCB built into their block, report the amount of the NCBS received by clients. DIAND creates a regional budget of savings and allocates to First Nations once they meet criteria: submission of annual report and all statistical reports. The formula: 50% of budget allocated as base, 25% based on reserve population and 25% based on number of children under 18 years of age on reserve population.
Main reinvestments by First Nations	First Nations typically reinvest NCB funds into childcare, early childhood and children at risk strategies, and occasionally supplementary health services. None fund additional cash benefits such as a child benefit or earned income supplement.				

* A *reinvestment* is an expenditure that meets the goals of the NCB and financed by the offset to SA. An NCB *investment* is an expenditure undertaken by the province or territory that meets the goals of the NCB, but that is not financed through a reduction to SA payments or rates.

Table 2 (con't.): Summary of NCB for First Nations

	Yukon	Northwest Territories	Nunavut
Provincial policy on financing NCB reinvestments	The territorial government offsets SA payments to clients with children by an amount equal to the NCBS, and uses the offset to finance its NCB reinvestments.	The territorial government offsets SA payments to clients with children by an amount equal to the NCBS, and uses the offset to finance its NCB reinvestments.	The territorial government offsets SA payments to clients with children by an amount equal to the NCBS and uses the offset to finance its NCB reinvestments
Main provincial/territorial NCB reinvestments and investments*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child benefit and earned income supplement • Supplementary health benefits • Early childhood and children at risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child benefit and earned income supplement • Healthy Child Program (Early childhood and children at risk) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child benefit and earned income supplement • Healthy Child Program (Early childhood and children at risk)
DIAND policy on financing the NCB reinvestments	DIAND estimates the NCB eligibility each month based on intake in Whitehorse and Band reports. SA is adjusted and funds released for NCB reinvestments.	The territory administers SA on behalf of all residents and develops NCB reinvestments for all residents.	The territory administers SA on behalf of all residents and develops NCB reinvestments for all residents
Main reinvestments by First Nations	First Nations typically reinvest NCB funds into childcare, early childhood and children at risk strategies, and occasionally supplementary health services. None fund additional cash benefits such as a child benefit or earned income supplement.		
* A <i>reinvestment</i> is an expenditure that meets the goals of the NCB and is financed by the offset to SA. An NCB <i>investment</i> is an expenditure undertaken by the province or territory that meets the goals of the NCB, but is not financed through a reduction to SA payments or rates.			

Challenges facing the FN-NCB

A central feature of the NCB is that it continues to evolve. The FN-NCB has and will continue to respond to new challenges. Some of the more important challenges include the following:

- Until this year, only New Brunswick did not participate in the offset to SA. Their NCB initiatives are investments funded from the general operating budget of the province. In 2001, Manitoba started the process of reversing its offset process. By 2003, it also plans to cease offsetting SA, which will effectively convert its reinvestments into investments, funded from general revenues. First Nations and DIAND, both affected by these decisions, will need to develop a response. Programs funded in whole or in part by reinvestments may either cease, or will need to be funded from other sources.
- Eligibility for CCTB is established through the income tax system, which was not traditionally used by First Nation people but will probably grow in importance for delivery of income support programs. In general, SA administrators (for the general population and First Nations) remind their clients that they need to file a tax return and apply for the CCTB. However, those not receiving SA may be missing out on this form of income security. While this is an issue for the NCB, it may affect low-income First Nations families to a greater extent. This is an important administrative issue that lies beyond the scope of this evaluation.
- DIAND is extending broader jurisdictional autonomy to First Nations. This occurs through the varying provincial/territorial frameworks that exist, as well as through a range of differing funding arrangements. Identifying the best approaches remains difficult; however, the evolution in funding arrangements influences the logistics of the NCB reinvestment process.
- In the same way that DIAND administrative policy ties First Nations SA to provincial practices, the FN-NCB reinvestment component links to provincial/territorial practice. To this point, the portfolio of provincial/territorial reinvestments is sufficiently broad to allow any First Nation complete latitude in defining an appropriate reinvestment program. However, as provinces/territories refine their reinvestments, challenges may exist for First Nations to define programs appropriate to their needs. For now, no constraint exists, but it is worth recognising this potential.

Section 3 - Evaluation Findings

The following sections contain a synthesis of the information collected through the various research methods described in Section 1. Each of the main evaluation issues and questions will be addressed.

Context

The total Registered Indian (RI) population in 1999 was 659,890 persons belonging to 610 bands across Canada. Recent projections show that the RI population could increase at a rate of 2% per year over the 10-year period from 1998 to 2008, for a population of 798,000 in that year. Another important factor in the growth of the First Nation population is increasing life expectancy. Approximately 40% of the RI population are persons under the age of 20. These current statistics underline the importance of programs like the FN-NCB that provide assistance to children and families. It is likely that the workforce attachment component of the NCB will become even more important over the next decade. By 2008, the under-20 age group is expected to decline, while the 'working age' group is expected to increase.

Approximately 58% of RI's in Canada live on reserve; the greatest change in the composition of on-reserve population is in the non-registered population. In 1998, an estimated 2% of births to RIs on reserve, and 20% of births to RIs off reserve were ineligible for registration under the *Indian Act*. These numbers are projected to rise to 4% and 27% respectively by 2008. This is an important trend, since certain federal benefits and services are linked directly to RI status.

When key informants were asked about important social, economic, and political trends among First Nations in the last decade, the most common response was the growing movement toward self-government. They saw this trend as having two main (and related), effects: allowing First Nations more opportunity to "take ownership" of programs and services, and an increased demand for accountability from First Nation communities and their leaders. As First Nations take on more responsibility for the design and delivery of programs, community leaders and members will see program funds "more as our money rather than Indian Affairs money." Other common trends identified during the research included:

- demographic changes in First Nation communities;
- income security reform initiatives;
- limited employment opportunities on reserve;
- the need for sustainable economic development; and
- increased urbanization (especially among young people).

Respondents also noted that these trends are largely interrelated, and that no one trend can be addressed in isolation. Few predicted any significant changes in these trends in the future.

Respondents were most likely to identify programs such as Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve and Brighter Futures as historical responses; several suggested that the most common traditional

approach is “welfare”. All respondents contrasted this historical approach with what they saw as a fundamental shift in the relationship between First Nations and the various governments, exemplified by the principles of the *Gathering Strength* initiative. Increased intergovernmental cooperation resulting from *Gathering Strength* and SUFA were seen as key changes in the approach to attacking the inter-generational poverty cycle. There was a general belief that governments are now focussing more on the root causes of poverty and unemployment rather than treating the symptoms, as was done in the past.

Finally, one important element of the context in which the NCB operates is the varying political environments across the country. NCB reinvestments are at least partly dependent on the provincial/territorial SA regimes, particularly with respect to whether offsets are made to SA payments. In New Brunswick, for example, all increases in federal credits have gone directly to families with no adjustment in SA payments. The result is that there are no reinvestment funds available to First Nations in that province.

The situation in Manitoba is further example of the uncertainty created by having reinvestment funding determined by provincial policy. Since the inception of the NCB in 1998, First Nations in Manitoba have had access to reinvestment funds and have implemented a variety of programs for low-income families. Manitoba is phasing out the offset process, with the implication that First Nations will need to find alternate sources of revenue to maintain their current reinvestment activity.

While in this case the “reinvestment” remains with the family, the First Nations that were visited in Manitoba expressed considerable concern in this regard. It was stated that staff and community members had worked hard to implement their reinvestment programs, and that now “*the provincial government is throwing a monkey wrench in the whole process.*” NCB coordinators and social welfare workers told us that this situation has affected their planning for new projects: “*If we knew the funding was stable we could do some multi-year planning instead of only annually.*” Since they can no longer deduct the increases, they have “*a new program just sitting on the shelf.*” They further observed that families in the community have come to value the reinvestment programs, and if they are unable to locate alternative funding, it will be very difficult to see the programs disappear.

Relevance

All of the people consulted in communities indicated that the goals of the NCB are very relevant to First Nations. Most respondents believe that “*the first two*” (to reduce and prevent the depth of child poverty and unemployment rates in First Nation communities) and “*especially the first*” are the most relevant. Attempting to reduce the depth of child poverty was seen as a concrete, tangible goal that is especially important in light of the relative youth of the First Nations population.

Providing children with more food to eat and better clothes to wear were reported to be clear and measurable outcomes of NCB reinvestments.

Promoting attachment to the workforce was viewed as relevant, but with some qualification. While preparation for employment was seen as a laudable goal, it was pointed out that this goal “*assumes that a labour market exists.*” Evidence from the site visits confirms the perception that education and training will have little effect if they are not coupled with sustainable economic development in First Nations communities: “*we will have a highly skilled and qualified welfare roll.*”

The third main goal (reducing overlap and duplication) was thought to be important—that encouraging the use of common processes and maximizing efficiency are always desirable. However, key informants and people in the communities also believed that this was more of a “government-to-government” issue. Respondents told us that First Nations are more concerned with ensuring that their people have access to needed supports and programs, and that significant consideration of overlap and/or duplication would only come after that goal was achieved.

Respondents also had difficulty identifying the priorities of First Nation communities, and assessing to what extent the NCB has addressed these priorities. Other than attacking child poverty, it was noted that there is no single set of priorities among or even within First Nation communities. Several respondents noted that in many cases, community political leaders “are more concerned with economic development than social development,” and the result was that NCB and SA workers feel that their efforts do not receive the support and respect they deserve.

Program Implementation

Key informants described DIAND regions as playing a “lead” or “central” role in designing, implementing, and tracking NCB reinvestment activities. Regional representatives reported that they are involved in assisting communities with the NCB in the following ways:

- providing information and examples of allowable projects;
- establishing directives for designing and implementing projects;
- reviewing proposals and approving projects (First Nations with CFAs only);
- explaining reporting requirements and gathering reports; and
- meeting regularly with other regional representatives.

First Nation respondents reported that while DIAND provided guidelines and standards for reinvestment activities, their role in the programs themselves was minimal. These interviewees tended to see DIAND’s role more as one of support rather than leadership, and that responsibility for the selection, design, and implementation of NCB reinvestment activities was with First Nations staff and community members.

Despite some specific challenges noted by key informants, the implementation of the NCB program was viewed as being effective. There appears to be general agreement that DIAND is providing support and information to communities. Respondents specifically mentioned instructional letters, pamphlets, posters, and videos among the information sharing efforts. Feedback from the dialogue circles indicated that participants in the reinvestment programs were satisfied with the implementation of the programs. Programs were reported to be well publicized, accessible, and well run. Coordination of staff and volunteers in delivering the programs was thought to be particularly effective.

Government personnel most often identified the lack of comprehensive tracking and reporting, especially in the early stages, as the greatest challenge to implementation. Challenges noted by others included:

- an initial lack of consultation and communication between First Nations and DIAND;
- neither First Nations nor DIAND regional staff fully understood the initiative at the outset;
- lack of trust between First Nations and government;
- concern on the part of First Nations that the initiative, and therefore the reinvestment programs, would not “be there for the long term”;
- insufficient time following release of federal budget to consult on the design and implementation of programs;
- community political and governance issues (e.g., competition between economic development and social development efforts);
- perception held by some SA recipients and administrators that community programs were being funded by those least able to afford it; and
- insufficient funds available for smaller First Nations to develop worthwhile programs.

First Nation staff and dialogue circle participants reported that several of these challenges were temporary. In particular, it was noted that once the NCB reinvestment initiative was better understood by First Nations staff and community members, support for programs increased.

First Nation staff and community members reported no overlap in the spectrum of activities carried out under the NCB. In fact, the consensus was that NCB reinvestments are filling substantial gaps in programs and services to families and children in First Nation communities. It was reported that programs were selected and designed for the express purpose of meeting needs that were not being addressed through any other means. Respondents told us that the gaps between existing programs were so numerous that creating overlap would be nearly impossible.

As noted above, the child poverty and workforce attachment goals were widely viewed as being the most relevant. This perception was mirrored in the observation that reducing child poverty received the most emphasis in programming, followed by promotion of workforce attachment. It was also noted, however, that Income Security Reform (ISR) initiatives might serve to increase the emphasis on harmonization of program goals and benefits.

Few interviewees gave an opinion on whether the NCB initiative is delivered in a consistent way across the country. However, consistency is not a feature of NCB, given the different SA regimes across the provinces and the flexibility given to First Nations to address the needs of their communities.

Each community is supposed to follow established guidelines for NCB reinvestment programs applying to the province or territory where it is located, but there is considerable latitude in defining NCB reinvestments. However, if consistency is interpreted in the context of reporting, there should be more standardization.

Our review of the Regional Reinvestment Frameworks found that they are loosely based on the national framework, and include some information on regional variance in delivery of the NCB. It is evident that the regions follow the basic goals of the NCB reinvestment program and the general guidelines that apply to funding arrangements used by the department. In most cases, however, little information exists regarding how the provincial/territorial SA and income security regime directly affects FN-NCB program delivery in the region.

The majority of First Nations (funded under CFNFA, AFA, or FTAs) are only required to provide annual reports on their NCB reinvestments. Only those First Nations operating under CFAs are required to submit monthly reports. Current compliance rates were estimated to be approximately 65%, which a key informant described as “a relatively good rate.” Respondents believe it is important to continue encouraging communities to report by explaining how documented progress can strengthen programs. While some data are required simply to fulfill basic audit requirements, key informants emphasized the value of these data both inside and outside the community for:

- briefing Chiefs and Councils on NCB reinvestments;
- assisting in ongoing management of NCB activities;
- assisting other First Nations in planning and setting priorities;
- promoting programs to community members;
- providing feedback to politicians and government officials at all levels; and
- publicizing “good news stories” about successful programs.

Key informants believed that the amount and type of data currently being requested would be sufficient for purposes noted above.

The review of a sample of annual reports from First Nations found that the current one-page reporting format is effective for collecting some basic statistics on NCB reinvestment program activities and participants. However, if the annual reports are to be used to collect information

on program outcomes and impacts, the current format is clearly not sufficient. Similarly, the self-evaluation reports that were reviewed do not contain the information necessary to support program management and evaluation.

Two case studies were undertaken in an attempt to document some of the more successful processes and information gathering strategies used by First Nations to design, implement, track, and evaluate activities funded by the NCB reinvestment component. The main findings of the case studies are summarized in the boxes below.

Case Study #1: Early planning supports comprehensive reporting

This case study demonstrated the importance of careful planning at the outset of an initiative in preparing for future tracking and reporting. This community solicits the involvement of both the Band Council and parents at a community meeting to discuss and select priorities to be addressed by NCB initiatives. A survey of all families that are potential beneficiaries is used to gather demographic information, to measure level of interest in proposed initiatives, and to allow families the opportunity to pre-register for proposed initiatives. The NCB coordinator and other community partners use this information to inform the implementation process.

Prior to implementation, the following questions are considered:

- is the proposed initiative consistent with the goals of the NCB?
- does the initiative reflect the needs of the target clientele and the community as a whole?
- is there confidence that the initiative can be successfully implemented?
- what is the appropriate level of resources to invest in the initiative?
- who are the key partners to be involved in the initiative?

Following the implementation of the initiative, the coordinator gathers statistics on actual participation that are used for (among other things) assessment of the proportion of potential clients who participate in the initiatives. Toward the end of a project cycle, a survey is distributed to all families who benefitted from any of the initiatives. Parents are asked to report on their level of participation in the program(s), their overall level of satisfaction, and whether the program met their expectations.

The careful planning and information gathering carried out in this community before, during, and after the project cycle has become the foundation for comprehensive reporting of reinvestment activities and outcomes to both the Band Council and DIAND.

Case Study #2: Information management is essential to good reporting

In this community, key informants outlined the benefits of using information management technology to track and report on community programs. This community has implemented a custom-designed Microsoft Access database to track all Employment Services and Social Development clients. The database maintains detailed information on client demographics, family dynamics, education, and work history, as well as number, names, and ages of children. While the database was not created specifically for tracking NCB programs, it is used to manage information related to receipt of the NCBS, level of use of the NCB-funded Crisis Intervention Counsellor, and client feedback on programs and services.

The database is capable of generating a variety of detailed and sophisticated reports as circumstances require. Although it was reported to be a challenge to learn and implement, it greatly facilitates information management and client tracking, as well as administrative decision-making on resource allocation and service delivery.

In addition to the standard one-page annual report on NCB reinvestment activities, this community is able to submit a quarterly staff activity report to DIAND. While this extra information is not strictly required, the community sees value in having additional information about their NCB activities.

Program Outcomes

Key informants noted that while they expect to see measurable effects in the future, it is too early to identify general outcomes attributable to the NCB. However, they were able to identify the obvious, concrete changes stemming from the food and clothing programs being funded through reinvestments. Respondents consulted during the site visits (First Nation staff and dialogue circle participants) were able to identify a number of immediate outcomes from NCB reinvestment programs. Briefly, the most commonly reported outcomes involved children, and resulted from breakfast/lunch, clothing, and recreation programs. Outcomes include:

- prevention of malnutrition among children;
- children are appropriately clothed for school and for cold weather;
- children are more physically fit;
- children are engaged in healthier activities; and
- children exhibit increased confidence and self-esteem.

Key informants were most likely to report that the main beneficiaries of NCB reinvestments were children and their families. DIAND's 1999-2000 Progress Report shows that some 24,556 families with 54,516 children benefited from NCB reinvestment initiatives. However, some respondents expressed concern that for example, some children might be excluded from a nutritional program simply because they do not belong to a low-income family or a family receiving SA.

Program Effectiveness/Efficiency

The ISR initiative was the program most commonly cited by key informants as having goals similar to the NCB. Key informants noted that ISR will identify barriers to employment and attempt to address barriers with more of a “one-window” approach in order to avoid overlap and duplication. Various other programs and initiatives were also mentioned, including:

- HRDC employment and training funding;
- Health Canada support for new and expecting mothers;
- First Minister’s Early Childhood Development Agreement;
- Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve;
- Brighter Futures; and
- Aboriginal Healing Foundation funding.

All key informants noted the importance of close links and cooperative relationships among various initiatives sharing similar objectives. A good example of this was observed at one of our site visits. One community couples some NCB reinvestment funds with existing education and training funding to expand services available to students and trainees. In addition to funding for tuition, books, supplies, and childcare, NCB funds are used to “top up” the education and training subsidy. Employers are asked to add a further enhancement to wages, bringing up the level of income and providing an attractive alternative to SA. Administrators emphasized the importance of receiving a paycheque rather than a welfare cheque to the self-esteem of individuals. However, because of limited employment, many of these individuals are not able to find permanent employment once the subsidy has ended. These individuals are then eligible for employment insurance.

Nearly all of the key informants identified “flexibility” as an important strength of the NCB initiative. They told us that First Nations are able to express their creativity in tailoring programs to the specific needs of the community and in finding innovative ways to tie NCB funds into larger projects. This was believed to lead to a sense of “ownership” by the First Nation, because the program is conceived and designed from within. Several key informants noted that this aspect of the NCB therefore provides a capacity building component that will have effects beyond this initiative.

Flexibility was also cited as an asset by most NCB program coordinators and Chiefs in the communities visited. The flexibility to respond to community needs with an array of programs helps Band Councils meet their needs in a number of related areas. For example, many communities use the reinvestment programs to provide breakfast programs in schools. As another example, children in remote communities have few opportunities to participate in recreational activities believed to address their social development and to raise their self-esteem so that they will remain in school. Once communities respond to certain needs, it is difficult at a later date to reallocate money to other needs, or to programming that might better fulfill all of the goals of the NCB (e.g., encouraging attachment to the labour market).

Another commonly cited strength is that the NCB, especially in combination with ISR, reforms how income support is provided to families. This approach is seen to be more equitable to families in the workforce, and for those trying to make the transition from SA to employment. Specific statements included the following:

- *ISR and NCB are providing competition to SA;*
- *..broken down the welfare wall; there is no longer a disincentive for families with children;*
- *structural reform is being pursued; we have relied too long on welfare; and*
- *supports children's needs without interfering with parents' labour market attachments.*

While most of the comments regarding the strengths of the initiative were similar to those noted above, key informants identified other strengths as well:

- NCB underlines the importance of families, children, and healthy living;
- high-level political commitment to the NCB;
- cooperative among levels of government;
- First Nations don't have to compete with each other for discretionary funds; and
- helps all low-income families, not just those receiving SA.

Key informants also identified what they believed to be weaknesses of the NCB. A number of those consulted believed the main features of the NCB are "*not well communicated.*" This perception included the idea that the model could have been explained better, both to the First Nations and to the personnel involved in administering it. It also included the belief that politicians and the public could have been better informed of the successes of the initiative, particularly with respect to how it attempts to remove barriers to work.

Other commonly identified weaknesses related to the fact that parts of the NCB initiative are linked, even indirectly, to SA. NCB reinvestment programming is dependent on each provincial/territorial regime. If a province chooses to no longer offset SA, DIAND (which follows provincial/territorial SA regulations) will have to do the same. The implication is that in some regions, First Nations will no longer have the choice of whether or not to continue funding community reinvestment projects. In these cases, Band administrators may have to respond by either allocating other incremental funding from their own funds, or cutting the projects.

It was stated that this situation reduces the stability of the program, and leads to the perception by First Nations that it will be taken away at any time. As noted above, discontinuing a popular and necessary program may be very difficult to justify to the people it serves. This, in turn, discourages long-term planning of community reinvestment projects. Key informants also noted that frequent changes to SA rules and the fact that funds are allocated differently across regions

hampers both planning and sharing information among provinces, territories, and regions: *“because federal - provincial/territorial agreements on funding are different in each province or territory, a lot of First Nations are confused about how it works for them.”*

Some respondents also believe that the income tax system is an inappropriate mechanism for delivering the CCTB to First Nations people, given their unique legal status with respect to taxation in Canada. There was also a perception that many First Nations people are missing out on credits, because they are not aware that they have to file an income tax return to receive them.

At the same time, some respondents said that SA administrators typically ensure their clients file a return and apply for the CCTB. Also, it was stated that failure to file a tax return is relatively uncommon, even among First Nations. Nonetheless, it is probably true that the level of non-compliance may be higher among rural populations, suggesting that this issue needs to be monitored.

The identification of lessons learned from NCB reinvestment activities is an issue to be addressed in the final evaluation. However, key informants consulted during the site visits identified some obstacles and issues that are likely to be reflected in any lessons learned that emerge in the future. Some of the main findings include the following:

- First Nations and DIAND regional offices must have a common understanding of what projects are acceptable under NCB guidelines;
- numerous initiatives with relatively small budgets pose problems for consistent tracking and reporting;
- successful initiatives require a great deal of involvement on the part of the NCB coordinator; and
- it is important to be very clear about goals and to clearly define the nature of the services to be provided.

Identification of best practices (successful projects, factors related to success) was to have been largely based on self-evaluation data. To this point, the self-evaluation reports contain little specific data that can contribute to answering this evaluation question. They do, however, provide general information on their projects.

However, some innovative approaches were observed during site visits. One project negotiated with a local grocery store to purchase food at cost for their breakfast program. They also give recognition to a local restaurant that donates hot meals for children. Some of the larger communities have greater access to businesses that may be willing to offer such benefits.

In British Columbia, a working group has been created to implement the FN-NCB, and is proving to be very effective. The Social Development Working Group, consisting of 11 First Nation representatives and one DIAND representative, was created to implement the NCB. The Working Group designed a framework document to guide the implementation process, and continues to provide recommendations to DIAND.

Program Alternatives

None of the key informants identified specific interventions that deal with poverty and work disincentives that are particularly effective for First Nation communities. However, it was noted that enough effective programs are currently in place; what is required is a reexamination of how these programs are funded.

It is worth noting again that the New Brunswick approach leaves the NCBS with the individual family unit. Manitoba is moving in this direction; in other jurisdictions, notably Ontario and Alberta, SA rates are being reduced as part of welfare reform. Accordingly, the cash benefit associated with SA payments is falling. With inflation, one might generally conclude that the real value of SA payments for First Nations families is declining. Therefore, pressure to retreat from the offset may grow as families seek to retain more cash.

However, in the First Nations context, to the extent that families do not participate in the CCTB because they do not file a tax return, the elimination of the offset and the subsequent elimination of NCB reinvestment programs could be burdensome. One rationale of the NCB is to broaden support to all low-income families, not just those on SA.

Section 4 - Conclusions and Recommendations

This section presents the core insights that have emerged from the analysis of the findings presented in Section 3. The conclusions are based on a synthesis of all available information, to provide a context for specific recommendations as warranted. In other instances, observations of emerging trends or issues that bear watching as the FN-NCB continues to evolve have are presented.

Context and Relevance

Little doubt exists that the social and economic conditions for residents in most First Nation communities demand serious and substantial funding. The CCTB and NCBS offer important cash benefits that supplement the incomes of all low-income families, on or off SA.

Observation

The need to file an income tax return and apply for the CCTB represents a condition for participating in the CCTB and to receive the NCBS. The CCRA income tax platform is now being used to deliver many income tested programs, and it is likely that this trend will continue.

Observation

Ensuring that all low-income residents in First Nation communities file a tax return and apply for the CCTB is important for two reasons. First, it ensures that low-income families receive the maximum cash benefits. Second, it increases the funding for NCB reinvestments available through the offset process.

Key informants unanimously see the core NCB goals as relevant. Certainly, everyone who was interviewed supported the first goal (to reduce and prevent the depth of child poverty). The second goal received somewhat less support, with some respondents arguing that encouraging parents to work is a longer term issue in dealing with child poverty.

Observation

While social and economic development are closely linked, they can appear to be at odds in First Nation communities. This research found that priorities of low-income families and line staff focus on providing direct and immediate assistance and services to children and families. The NCB addresses these; at the same time, key informants believe that the priority of Band leadership more often leans toward pursuing larger scale economic development opportunities. The consequence is that these priorities can compete for attention and funds. If the offset process to generate reinvestment funds erodes further, finding the resources to continue to support NCB initiatives may be challenging.

Most saw the third goal (to reduce overlap and duplication) as more abstract and of interest to government. However, as First Nations create larger administrative structures and tap into a wider pool of revenue sources, ensuring cost-effectiveness through the reduction of overlap and duplication will assume greater importance.

Implementation

Some disagreement exists regarding the nature and extent of DIAND's involvement in the delivery of NCB-funded programs. Departmental personnel report that regional offices and First Nations "*work closely in designing, implementing, and tracking NCB initiatives.*" First Nation respondents tended to report that DIAND involvement is minimal in these areas. The reality appears to be somewhere in the middle, as DIAND focuses on communication of policy, program guidelines, and reporting requirements. Ensuring that the roles and responsibilities of each of the stakeholders are clearly defined can lead to improvements in many areas, including program design and reporting.

Recommendation

1. The Director General of Social Policy and Programs, in consultation with regional Director Generals, and First Nations, should develop a clear and mutual understanding of their specific roles and responsibilities in selecting, designing, implementing, and reporting on NCB reinvestment initiatives.

Other than tracking and reporting issues (addressed below), the challenges to implementation centre mostly on communication. Particularly in the early stages of the implementation of the NCB, in most regions, a lack of consultation between First Nations and DIAND and an incomplete explanation of the NCB to First Nations, resulted in some programs being hastily assembled or not implemented at all. In addition to an existing lack of trust between First Nations and government, the offset process generating the NCB reinvestment component proved to be difficult to communicate to First Nations and community members, leading to more mistrust and resentment. This parallels the experience of other provincial and territorial jurisdictions.

An example of this miscommunication is found in the common belief that the NCB reinvestment scheme takes money from those who need it most. Fostering a better understanding of the NCB and its intent will assist not only in increasing community acceptance of reinvestment projects, but also in defining reinvestment priorities in First Nation communities. At the same time, leaving the NCBS with the family and not creating a separate reinvestment process has a certain logic. Certainly, as some provincial and territorial governments lower SA rates, it may make sense for First Nations to leave more money with the family. However, if the community has many low-income families not on SA, a reinvestment program can offer this group important benefits. The choices are complex.

Recommendation

2. The Director General of Social Policy and Programs, in consultation with Regional Directors General, should review their approach to consultation and communication with First Nations in order to ensure a clear and common understanding of the nature and intent of the NCB reinvestment component.

Part of this communication should be an open dialogue of the value of the offset in generating the reinvestment. While DIAND cannot deviate from provincial/territorial practice, such a dialogue can be valuable in refining the understanding within the First Nations leadership.

Consistency of Programs with NCB Objectives

First Nations perceived the reduction of child poverty goal as the most relevant, and most of the programs are completely consistent with that objective. Some of the programs which were examined are consistent with the labour force attachment objective, but this type of program is less common. The third objective is not given a great deal of attention by First Nations, since most of the programs are aimed specifically at the largest gaps between existing programs and services.

Some confusion persists over whether certain projects fall within the scope of eligibility for NCB reinvestments. For example, providing breakfast for a hungry child is clearly consistent with NCB objectives; it is less clear whether the same is true of teaching a child to play golf. However, if the community can draw links between sport and physical health, self-esteem, or school performance, the program would be more easily justified. Unfortunately, it is not apparent that First Nations have developed such a rationale for each of their reinvestments. Especially when programs existed prior to the NCB, the lack of such rationales can create the impression that the NCB reinvestment is simply another source of cash for social programming, and not a unique venture designed to improve the well-being of children.

Recommendation

3. The Regional Directors General from all regions should assist First Nations in developing clear objectives for their NCB reinvestment programs to ensure that they align with the main goals of the NCB.

Consistency has another potential meaning - consistency of delivery. The FN-NCB is not delivered in a consistent (equal) way across Canada as a result of two main factors. First, DIAND regions must follow the existing SA regulations in place in each province and territory, which affects how NCB reinvestment amounts are calculated. Second, each region has its own practices, and interacts with First Nations within a variety of funding arrangements. This affects how communities are required to plan and report upon their reinvestment initiatives.

Observation

The fact that NCB reinvestments respond to regional and local needs is a valuable feature of this initiative. The fact that variation exists in delivery and program content is a positive sign that the initiative is being applied as intended.

Perhaps more important is the fact that in the absence of more comprehensive reporting, this variation in delivery impedes the identification of which approaches or models are the most successful, or the extraction of lessons that can be shared by First Nation communities across regions. This problem is compounded by the fact that in most cases, the regional evaluation frameworks do not contain what are supposed to be the minimum reporting components, such as amount of the reinvestment fund, how the initiative is managed, reinvestment priorities, and how the region will ensure accountability and measure success. It is important to clearly document the differences among regions and ensure that Regional Reinvestment Frameworks are complete and current.

Recommendation

4. The Director General of Social Policy and Programs should ensure that the Regional Reinvestment Frameworks are updated regularly to reflect changes in regional policy.

Reporting

According to data reported by DIAND, one-third of First Nations are not meeting the minimum reporting requirement of an annual one-page report. This suggests that there are systemic obstacles to reporting that should be addressed. Evidence exists that reporting rates vary by region, but no specific data on regional variance currently exist. Key informants believe that the type and amount of data being *requested* is sufficient; the problem appears to lie in the fact that the data *actually being supplied* are insufficient.

Recommendation

5. The Director General of Social Policy and Programs should investigate the reasons for non-compliance with annual reporting requirements and follow up with First Nations that are not meeting them.

Observation

Annual reporting can appear to be a process whereby DIAND “checks up” on a First Nation. This watchfulness can be irritating. At the same time, the relatively low level of reporting, both in terms of numbers of reports and the depth of reports, means that First Nation managers could be missing opportunities to share experiences and best practices. Ultimately, an improved system and level of reporting will benefit all First Nations. However, this reporting should be horizontal among First Nation managers as well as vertical between First Nations and DIAND.

Recommendation

6. The Director General of Social Policy and Programs, in consultation with First Nations, should review the reporting template and make any revisions necessary to ensure that it is easy to use and produces results that contribute to both meeting departmental requirements for program evaluation and communication of best practices among First Nations management.

Program Outcomes

Clearly, short-term, concrete effects are evident among the children and families who have participated in activities funded by NCB reinvestments. Low-income families in general derive benefits from NCB-funded projects, and some anecdotal reports exist of broader community benefits stemming from NCB reinvestment projects. The evaluation has reported on creative approaches to projects that show the potential (if properly documented) to become examples of best practice. At this point, however, there is little reliable data regarding outcomes, impacts, best practices, or lessons learned from NCB reinvestment projects. It should be noted that identifying indicators and evaluating outcomes are among the most challenging areas of program evaluation. While it is logical to include these two components (outcomes and indicators) in a self-evaluation process, they undoubtedly create high expectations that have yet to be met. It would be to the advantage of both the department and First Nations to review these sections and agree on a more achievable approach to documenting project outcomes.

Recommendation

7. The Director General of Social Policy and Programs, in consultation with First Nations, should review the self-evaluation instrument in light of the experience with the first waves of self-evaluations and make any relevant revisions to produce the information necessary to support First Nations in program management and evaluation.

Program Effectiveness/Efficiency/Outcomes

A number of federal programs targeted to First Nations have similar general goals to the NCB reinvestments, but none use the same approach. In general, there appears to be little interaction among these separate programs. As noted in Section 3, exceptions are found among the regions that were visited where interaction and coordination exist among programs intended to address child poverty and attachment to the labour force. This is the essence of the third NCB goal; even though few respondents see this goal as particularly relevant, it was found that in some cases programs reach a high level of coordination. These initiatives, if systematically identified and publicized, provide an important model for other First Nations.

Observation

NCB reinvestment initiatives that link to other programs with similar objectives should be studied and promoted both within and across regions as examples of effective delivery.

There is widespread agreement that the major strength of the FN-NCB is flexibility. First Nations are able to take ownership of their community needs, and target particular local problems. First Nations personnel are especially favourable towards needs being defined at the community level. Such custom-tailored projects can provide concrete and compelling success stories that are popular with community leaders and politicians at every level. At the same time, the FN-NCB attempts to address the “welfare wall” and the need to remove disincentives to work. However, it seems that many First Nations are not taking full advantage of this flexibility. Many appear to be simply putting the NCB funding toward pre-existing programs. It is apparent that numerous communities are simply duplicating a sample program found in the various NCB informational materials. Whether this is the result of a lack of time, information, or resources for identifying local priorities and designing reinvestment programs is not clear. This is not unique to First Nations; it can be argued that provinces and territories are tending to do the same thing with much of their reinvestment funding.

Measuring outcomes represents a critical challenge for the NCB reinvestment process, especially since reinvestments are often co-mingled with other program funding. Further, NCB reinvestments are often split among several programs, rendering attribution essentially impossible.

Thematic and cluster evaluations offer a method for examining the outcomes from a specific type of intervention. A thematic evaluation groups similar programs across several First Nation communities to arrive at a conclusion about effectiveness for that type of intervention. A cluster evaluation examines all the programs related to an aspect of child well-being within a community (or set of closely aligned communities). By pooling the experience of several First Nations in a breakfast program, for example, and then reporting on the results, all First Nations would benefit. In essence, the concept of reporting should evolve to encompass more than financial accountability.⁵

Recommendation

8. Because activities are jointly funded, attributing outcomes to specific funding is not possible. Therefore, rather than trying to determine the incremental impact of NCB reinvestments on children and their families, the Director General of Social Policy and Programs should, in partnership with other federal and provincial partners, determine which interventions work best. In this way, government and non-governmental organizations will be better able to determine where to allocate resources.

⁵Thematic evaluations are an important component of the main evaluation of the National Child Benefit.

Recommendation

9. The Director General of Social Policy and Programs, in consultation with First Nations, should consider convening regular NCB conferences where First Nation participants could share their experiences with the NCB reinvestment process. First Nations should identify innovative approaches to meeting the needs of children in low-income families. Better reporting would better communicate results among Canada's First Nations.

Conclusion

The FN-NCB is an important program and is part of the most important initiative to support children ever mounted in Canada. In this report, the implementation of the FN-NCB was reviewed. In general, the program has been effectively implemented, and (based on key informant information) it has made a valuable contribution to the well-being of children in First Nation communities. The next phase of implementation presents a key challenge for DIAND and First Nations to create a reporting process that will identify outcomes and best practices. It was suggested that a process of thematic and cluster evaluations offers the best option for tracking the progress of the FN-NCB. Without this innovation in reporting, the final evaluation will have little to report on outcomes.

Appendix 1 - Evaluation Framework

Evaluation Issues/Questions	Indicators	Data Sources	Evaluation
Context for the National Child Benefit for First Nations (FN-NCB)			
1. What is the demographic composition of First Nations in Canada?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographic distribution of First Nations population, including number of children and number of families • Population of non-status Indians on reserve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistical review 	Interim
2. What social, economic and political trends have characterized First Nations over the last decade? What are the trends for the future?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment rates • Economic development • Political climate • Population trends • Life expectancy • Secondary school completion • Infant mortality rate • Teenage pregnancy rate • Youth suicide rate • Perception of respondents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistical review • Secondary research • Interviews • Dialogue circles 	Interim
3. What historical responses have Federal/ Provincial/Territorial (F/P/T) Governments and First Nations communities used to deal with poverty and work disincentives, especially as they relate to First Nations children and families?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical overview of policy and programs • Perception of respondents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary research • Interviews • Dialogue circles 	Interim
Relevance			
4. To what extent are the program objectives of the NCB relevant to First Nations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child poverty rates • Unemployment rates • Employment opportunities/barriers • Perception of respondents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistical review • Interviews • Dialogue circles 	Interim and Final

Evaluation Issues/Questions	Indicators	Data Sources	Evaluation
Context for the National Child Benefit for First Nations (FN-NCB)			
5. What are the priorities for social and economic development of First Nations communities? To what extent has the NCB addressed these priorities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of First Nations priorities • Degree to which NCB objectives meet First Nations priorities • Perception of respondents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departmental First Nation reporting data • Secondary research • Self-evaluations • Interviews • Dialogue circles 	Interim and Final
Program Implementation			
6. What are the roles and responsibilities of First Nations and the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) (headquarters and regions) for NCB activities including design, implementation, and evaluation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles of First Nations/DIAND • Level of participation of First Nations communities in design, implementation, and evaluation • Perception of respondents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • File review • Interviews • Dialogue circles 	Interim and Final
7. How effective has the implementation of the program been?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of information sharing/support provided by DIAND • Adequate skills and resources of program administrators (DIAND/First Nations) • Perception of respondents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Dialogue circles 	Interim and Final
8. What implementation challenges were encountered with each of the program activities (child benefit supplement, reinvestment programs) and how were they resolved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified challenges to program activities • Identified resolutions to challenges • Perception of respondents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Self-evaluations • Dialogue circles 	Interim and Final

Evaluation Issues/Questions	Indicators	Data Sources	Evaluation
Context for the National Child Benefit for First Nations (FN-NCB)			
9. What is the reaction of program participants to the design and delivery of NCB component programs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements to program design and delivery • Perception of respondents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Self evaluations • Dialogue circles 	Interim and Final
10. Does overlap and/or gaps exist in the spectrum of activities and outputs provided to achieve the objectives of the FN-NCB?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overlap/gaps in logic model • Degree to which all program activities are being utilized • Perception of respondents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departmental First Nations reporting data • Self-evaluations • Interviews • Dialogue circles 	Interim and Final
11. To what extent are the objectives of the individual reinvestment projects consistent with the overall objectives of the NCB?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree to which reinvestment programs meet objectives of NCB • Perception of respondents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departmental First Nations reporting data • Self-evaluations • Interviews • Dialogue circles 	Interim and Final
12. What is the take-up rate (percentage of eligible applicants served) of the NCB Programs? What factors influence those rates?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of participation in program (members within communities and communities within the regions) • Relevance of program • Awareness of program • Headquarters/regional/First Nations eligibility requirements • Perception of respondents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departmental First Nations reporting data • Interviews • Self-evaluations • Dialogue circles 	Final

Evaluation Issues/Questions	Indicators	Data Sources	Evaluation
Context for the National Child Benefit for First Nations (FN-NCB)			
13. Is the NCB Program being delivered in a consistent way across Canada?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistency/inconsistency delivering NCB funding • Analysis of the Regional Reinvestment Frameworks • Perception of respondents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departmental First Nations reporting data • File review • Interviews • Dialogue circles 	Interim and Final
14. What kind of reporting data is being collected? Is this information sufficient?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of First Nations and regions reporting • Type of data generated • Completeness of management information • Clarity and reasonableness of reporting requirements • Perception of respondents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departmental First Nations reporting data • Interviews 	Interim and Final
Program Outcomes			
15. What have been the short, medium, long-term outcomes of the program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing performance measurement and long-term outcomes • Perception of respondents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departmental First Nations reporting data • Statistical review • Self-evaluations • Dialogue circles 	Final

Evaluation Issues/Questions	Indicators	Data Sources	Evaluation
Context for the National Child Benefit for First Nations (FN-NCB)			
16. What other influences (other government department's programs; the economic and political climate) have influenced the intended outcomes of the FN-NCB Program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of dynamic model • Types of funding arrangements (Financial Transfer Agreement/Alternative Funding Arrangement; Comprehensive Funding Arrangement/Master Funding Agreement) • Perception of respondents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary research • Interviews • Dialogue circles 	Final
17. To what extent have the NCB activities contributed to the achievement of the objectives of the NCB?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attribution of outcomes to the NCB • Perception of respondents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departmental First Nations reporting data • Interviews • Dialogue Circles 	Final
18. To what extent have different types of families/First Nations communities benefited/not benefited from the NCB Programs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program reach • Non-participant rate • Members/communities not participating in program • Perception of respondents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departmental First Nations reporting data • Interviews • Self-evaluations • Dialogue circles 	Final (with some preliminary comment in the Interim)
19. What unintended consequences (positive and negative) have occurred as a result of the NCB?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified positive consequences • Identified negative consequences • Perception of respondents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departmental First Nations reporting data • Interviews • Self-evaluations • Dialogue circles 	Final

Evaluation Issues/Questions	Indicators	Data Sources	Evaluation
Context for the National Child Benefit for First Nations (FN-NCB)			
Program Effectiveness/Efficiency			
20. How effective and efficient has the program been at achieving its objectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources devoted to each program • Cost of programs • Delivery model and mechanism used • Perception of respondents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departmental First Nations reporting data • Interviews • Dialogue circles 	Final
21. To what extent do the programs work with other programs with similar objectives? What is the nature of that interaction? Is there overlap in services offered?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of NCB funding that is added to non-NCB Programs • Extent of programming with similar objectives within communities • Extent of coordination among programs • Perception of respondents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departmental First Nations reporting data • Secondary research • Interviews • Dialogue circles 	Interim and Final
22. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the NCB Program and its activities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified strengths • Identified weaknesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Dialogue circles 	Interim and Final
23. What lessons have been learned from the NCB?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of lesson learned (what worked well, what didn't work well) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Self-evaluations • Dialogue circles 	Final
24. What best practices can be shared with other communities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify successful projects • Identify factors of success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-evaluations 	Interim and Final

Evaluation Issues/Questions	Indicators	Data Sources	Evaluation
Context for the National Child Benefit for First Nations (FN-NCB)			
Program Alternatives			
25. What are some alternative approaches to reduce child poverty and promote labour market participation for First Nations communities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of alternative approaches used by other governments/First Nations • Explore program integration methods (i.e., community-wide programming) • Perception of respondents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary research • Interviews • Dialogue circles 	Final
26. Are there interventions that deal with poverty and work disincentives that are particularly effective for First Nations communities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of effective interventions that First Nations found useful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary research • Interviews • Dialogue circles 	Interim and Final
27. How, if at all, can the program be delivered in a more cost effective manner?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to increase cost effectiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Dialogue groups • Self-evaluations 	Final

**Appendix 2 -
Acronyms appearing
in this report**

Appendix 2 - Acronyms appearing in this report

Acronym	Name
AFA	Alternative Funding Arrangement
CCRA	Canada Customs and Revenue Agency
CCTB	Canada Child Tax Benefit
CFA	Comprehensive Funding Arrangement
CFNFA	Canada-First Nations Funding Agreement
CMHC	Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
DAEB	Departmental Audit and Evaluation Branch
DIAND	Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development
FN-NCB	First Nations National Child Benefit
F/P/T	Federal/Provincial/Territorial
FTA	Financial Transfer Agreement
HRDC	Human Resources Development Canada
INAC	Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
ISR	Income Security Reform
MFA	Master Funding Agreement
NCA	National Children's Agenda
NCB	National Child Benefit
NCBS	National Child Benefit Supplement
PRA	Prairie Research Associates
RCAP	Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples
RI	Registered Indian
SA	Social Assistance
SAR	Social Assistance Recipient
SUFA	Social Union Framework Agreement
WIS	Working Income Supplement

Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference

Interim Evaluation of the National Child Benefit for First Nations Program

Background: The National Child Benefit (NCB) is a joint initiative of federal, provincial and territorial governments to support families with children living on low-income. In July 1998, the federal government committed \$850 million for the NCB supplement which is paid as part of the Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB). In July 1999 the Government of Canada provided an additional \$450 million as part of the second phase of the initiative and another \$425 million followed in July 2000.

Under this initiative, most provinces, territories and First Nations are reducing social assistance payments for children to correspond with the increase to the CCTB. These off-sets to social assistance budgets are being used to develop complementary programs and services for families and their children living on low-income.

First Nations administer social assistance on reserve through the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) and are responsible for developing and administering the reinvestment component of the initiative into community-based programs. As a result of the unique circumstances of First Nation communities and the scope of reinvestment programs, the NCB for First Nations is administered separately from the federal/provincial/territorial (F/P/T) program. Funding allocated for reinvestment initiatives for First Nations are estimated at \$30.3 M 1998-1999; \$51.56 M 1999-2000; and \$56.99M 2000-2001.

An evaluation framework for the NCB for First Nations was developed by DAEB which establishes a framework with which the NCB for First Nations is monitored and evaluated.

Need: Treasury Board and the Auditor General requires that DIAND complete an interim evaluation of the NCB for First Nations program. The results will provide information to DIAND and First Nations communities as well as feed into the broader federal/provincial/territorial evaluation.

Scope: The interim evaluation will assess how well the NCB reinvestment initiative has been implemented in First Nations communities, satisfaction with the program among participants and, to the greatest extent possible, the short-term impacts.

Issues: The interim evaluation will address the following issues:

- To what extent are the program objectives of the NCB relevant to First Nations?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of First Nations and DIAND for NCB activities including design, implementation and evaluation?
- How effective and efficient has the implementation of the program been?
- What is the reaction of program participants to the design and delivery of NCB component programs?
- What have been the short-term outcomes of the program?
- What unintended consequences (positive and negative) have occurred as a result of the NCB?
- How effective and efficient has the program been at achieving its objectives?
- What are alternative approaches to reduce child poverty and promote labour market participation for First Nations communities?

Approach: Information for the evaluation will be obtained from a file review, secondary research, statistical review, interviews, dialogue circles and performance measures which are based upon administrative data and self-evaluations. The interim evaluation will be conducted by an external consultant with the assistance of First Nations members who will conduct interviews and facilitate dialogue circles at the community level.

Resources: The evaluation will be conducted primarily by consultants and First Nations members under the direction of a Senior Evaluation Manager from the Departmental Audit and Evaluation Branch (DAEB) in close consultation with the NCB for First Nations Evaluation Working Group (which include representatives from the Assembly of First Nations, First Nations, DIAND headquarters and regions).

Cost: It is estimated that the interim evaluation will cost \$80,000. The costs will be shared between DAEB and Socio-Economic Policy and Programs Sector (SEPP).

Timeframe: The interim evaluation is to be completed by March 31, 2001.

Approved:

Chantal Bernier
Assistant Deputy Minister
Socio-Economic Policy and Programs Sector
September 8, 2000

Action Plan

PROJECT TITLE / TITRE DU PROJET : Interim Evaluation of the National Child Benefit for First Nations

REGION OR SECTOR / RÉGION OU SECTEUR : Socio-Economic Policy and Programs Sector

(1) RECOMMENDATIONS / RECOMMANDATIONS	(2) REPORT / RAPPORT PAGE NO.	(3) ACTION PLAN / PLAN D'ACTION	(4) RESPONSIBLE MANAGER / GESTIONNAIRE RESPONSABLE (TITLE / TITRE)	(5) PLANNED IMPLEMENTATION DATE / DATE PRÉVUE DE MISE EN OEUVRE
<p>1. Director General of Social Policy and Programs, in consultation with Regional Directors General, and First Nations should develop a clear and mutual understanding of their specific roles and responsibilities in selecting, designing, implementing, and reporting on National Child Benefit reinvestment initiatives.</p>	<p>26</p>	<p>Update regional frameworks to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • roles and responsibilities of Headquarters, regions and First Nations; • contact name and number of staff at INAC for support; • regional methods for First Nations to access reinvestment dollars • reporting requirements; and • provincial/territorial National Child Benefit context. <p>See # 4 (Regional Reinvestment Framework).</p>	<p>Director General with input from Regional Directors General as appropriate</p>	<p>July 31, 2002</p>

PROJECT TITLE / TITRE DU PROJET : Interim Evaluation of the National Child Benefit for First Nations

REGION OR SECTOR / RÉGION OU SECTEUR : Socio-Economic Policy and Programs Sector

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<p>2. Director General of Social Policy and Programs, in consultation with Regional Directors General, should review their approach to consultation and communication with First Nations in order to ensure a clear and common understanding of the nature and intent of the National Child Benefit reinvestment component.</p> <p>Part of this communication should be open dialogue of the value of the offset in generating the reinvestment. While INAC cannot deviate from provincial/territorial practice, such a dialogue can be valuable in refining the understanding within the First Nations leadership.</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>Distribute success stories, progress report and video to First Nations communities.</p> <p>Package in a way to tie into G.O.L.</p> <p>Communication materials to target Social Development Administrators and Funding Services Officer.</p> <p>Communications, training and education around National Child Benefit to target the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nation - leadership, social development administrators, other band-related programs. • INAC - Program Officers, field/funding service officers. <p>Develop communication strategy in conjunction with First Nations.</p>	<p>Director General of Social Policy and Programs</p>	<p>Sept. 30, 2002</p>

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<u>Recommendation 2 - continued</u>		Development of an interactive National Child Benefit website to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communication plans; • good news stories; • frameworks; • links - to other related programs; • contact lists; and • video. 		

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<p>3. Regional Directors General of all regions should assist First Nations in developing clear objectives for their National Child Benefit Reinvestment Programs, to ensure that they align with the main goals of the National Child Benefit.</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>Develop reinvestment framework in conjunction with First Nations.</p> <p>Communicate objectives of the program, as well as understanding their restrictions, i.e. disconnects within common process.</p> <p>Need to support on-going training for First Nations.</p> <p>Clarify with each region the restrictions and the interpretation of reinvestment framework(s).</p> <p>Need to develop objectives for National Child Benefit in light of Social Policy Renewal.</p> <p>Verify use of capital purchases expenses, since the maximum allowable is \$10,000, with National Child Benefit funds and assess in light of Authority Review.</p>	<p>Regional Directors General of all regions</p>	<p>Dec. 31, 2002</p>

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4. Director General of Social Policy and Programs should ensure that the Regional Reinvestment Frameworks are updated regularly to reflect changes in regional policy.	28	Require that Regional Reinvestment Frameworks be updated on an annual basis. See #1 (Roles and Responsibilities).	Director General of Social Policy and Programs with input from Regional Directors General as appropriate	Dec 31, 2002

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5. Director General of Social Policy and Programs should investigate the reasons for non-compliance with annual reporting requirements, and follow up with First Nations that are not meeting them.	28	<p>Child and Family Services Agency to have roundtables.</p> <p>Consult with Corporate Services when appropriate.</p> <p>Seek final resolution on reporting issues from Transfer Payment at Headquarters.</p> <p>Address, with transfer payment, final written resolution of all First Nations.</p> <p>First Nation administration to streamline reporting/linking into Early Childhood Development process.</p> <p>Educate/inform First Nations on benefits of reporting.</p> <p>Increase linkages with SPRG on overlapping issues to ensure positive outcome.</p>	Director General of Social Policy and Programs with input from Regional Directors General as appropriate	January 31, 2003 with an exception for points three and four in the third column - this will be implemented once the block funded communities will be renewing their agreements

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6. Director General of Social Policy and Programs, in consultation with First Nations, should review the reporting template and make any revisions necessary to ensure that it is easy to use and produces results that contribute to both meeting departmental requirements for program evaluation and communication of best practices among First Nation management.	29	<p>Explore linkages with ECD reporting process.</p> <p>Review reporting template and consult with Corporate Services.</p> <p>Explore possible linkages with other federal governments-children's program reporting requirements to decrease reporting burden.</p> <p>Link with other community programs to incorporate with First Nation community plans (Big Picture).</p>	Director General of Social Policy and Programs	Dec. 31, 2002

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<p>7. Director General of Social Policy and Programs, in consultation with First Nations, should review the self-evaluation instrument in light of the experience with the first waves of self-evaluations, and make any relevant revisions to produce the information necessary to support First Nations in program management and evaluation.</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>Review and simplify self-evaluation guide.</p> <p>In partnership with First Nations, develop a list of indicators that can measure the impact of the National Child Benefit First Nations Reinvestment program.</p> <p>First Nation facilitators for Self-evaluation workshop.</p> <p>Provide opportunity for First Nations community to provide <u>feedback</u> on self-evaluation process and guide lessons for improvements.</p> <p>In light of success stories of Self-evaluation process, explore possible expansion of Self-evaluation to other programs and departments (First Nations using own success criteria to evaluate programs implemented in communities).</p>	<p>Director General of Social Policy and Programs</p>	<p>October 31, 2002</p>

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<u>Recommendation 7 - continued</u>		Consult with Corporate Services to verify RMAF to see if we can use any indicators for National Child Benefit - Cross program success measures, given the common population group (Social Assistance and National Child Benefit).		

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<p>8. Because activities are jointly funded, attributing outcomes to specific funding is not possible. Therefore, rather than trying to determine the incremental impact of National Child Benefit reinvestments on children and their families, the Director General of Social Policy and Programs should, in partnership with other federal and provincial partners, determine which interventions works best. In this way, government and non-governmental organizations will be better able to determine where to allocate resources.</p>	<p>30</p>	<p>Reinforce Social Policy Renewal / Result-based Management and Accountability Framework.</p> <p>Reinforce interdepartmental linkages.</p> <p>Include partnership with First Nations in action plan.</p> <p>Link with ECD process and other programs.</p> <p>Utilize self-evaluation workshops to develop an increased amount of effective success indicators.</p>	<p>Director General of Social Policy and Programs</p>	<p>Dec. 31, 2002</p>

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<p>9. Director General of Social Policy and Programs, in consultation with First Nations, should consider convening regular National Child Benefit conferences where First Nation participants could share their experiences with the National Child Benefit reinvestment process. First Nations should identify innovative approaches to meeting the needs of children in low-income families. Better reporting would better communicate results among Canada's First Nations.</p>	<p>31</p>	<p>Invite First Nations from other regions provinces/HRDC/HC/INAC/First Nations/stakeholders.</p> <p>Networking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link agenda into children's broader issues policy development; • Information sharing. <p>Include: reporting, self-evaluation, success indicators, etc.</p> <p>Obtain commitment from Headquarters/Regional Senior Level Management to this priority, which includes ensuring appropriate funding and staffing levels.</p> <p>Develop innovative approaches.</p>	<p>Director General of Social Policy and Programs</p>	<p>Commencing Sept. 30, 2002</p>

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<u>Recommendation 9 - continued</u>		<p>Success stories.</p> <p>Replace Self-Evaluation Workshop with regional National Child Benefit conferences.</p> <p>Increase National Child Benefit communication scope.</p>		