

Social Services & the Co-op Option for Indigenous Communities (Urban/Rural)

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&

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Headline —Child Welfare Industry *April 13, 2016,*
Winnipeg Free Press

- “Kids in care_‘a billion-dollar business’”
Cindy Blackstock, ED First Nations Child & Family
Caring Society of Canada
- “This system feeds children into other
institutionalizing industries such as justice,
health and social services”
Cora Morgan, Manitoba Child Advocate

Our Proposition

- We suggest that there is a fundamental and natural alignment of the ICA values & principles and social work ethics & best practices, with medicine wheel values and teachings.
- The co-operative structure has potential to address key issues of accessibility and sustainability
- Social Co-ops have the capacity to build bridges in notoriously “silo-styled” systems by way of their legal constructs and their focus on community ownership and collective governance.

A Child Who Loved Music

- In 2005 a 5-year old child died in an isolated Manitoba community
- Her aunties often spoke of her love of music
- In care for most of her life, she was returned to her mother
- Mother & child lived in a community 193 km north of Winnipeg
- CFS received tips about the child on 13 occasions
- 27 workers who dealt with her case lost track
- Her death was concealed for 9 months
- Commissioner Ted Hughes oversaw the 2 year Phoenix Sinclair Inquiry (2011 – 2014)

The Inquiry's Clearest Message

- *The responsibility to protect children cannot fall solely on the shoulders of the child welfare system. The evidence heard throughout this Inquiry leads to a clear conclusion: this is a responsibility that belongs to the entire community. The entire community is responsible for children, not just child and family services. (Commissioner Ted Hughes)*

Evidence of Need for New Structure: Expert Witnesses at the Inquiry

- *Neglect is due to factors out of the parents' control: poverty, poor housing, the parents own history (Santos)*
- *The Child Welfare System itself finds these conditions beyond its scope (Hughes)*
- *A new approach tackling the root causes that put children at risk ... means creating networks of government departments and programs and harnessing the wisdom, capacity and energy of communities (Hughes)*

More Expert Witnesses

- *Everybody has to know that we are responsible within our own families, within our own communities, to help one another and to know that we have a role, all of us to keep those sacred children protected. (Billie Schibler, Manitoba Kookum Council)*
- *People come to us but we don't have a lot of structural support to be able to provide the services that they really deserve (Leslie Spillet)*
- *The complexity of the system in the city is overwhelming for people (Gino Distasio)*

More Expert Witnesses

There are long-term benefits from working towards a community that is empowered to be able to make positive choices and develop programs or activities ... with the goal of providing community control and responsibility and authority for their children (Alexandra Wright, U of Manitoba)

More Expert Witnesses

- *You can have communities or families surrounded with supports and services; if they cannot feed their children, if they cannot find work, if they cannot find a means of income, you are setting them up for failure (Bernice Cyr)*
- *The number one condition for release for women exiting Corrections, even if they have children, is always to find work. (Bernice Cyr)*

Key Changes since 1990s: Manitoba CFS

- 1990s Work-for-Welfare
 - Downward pressure on wages
 - Those who don't adapt slip further into poverty
- 1999 Restructuring CFS into 4 authorities
 - General, First Nations North, First Nations South and Metis CFS
- 2002 Special rates for children in care frozen
- Child tax credits meant for the children clawed back to fund the system to keep them in care

Auditor General's Scathing Review of CFS in Manitoba (2006)

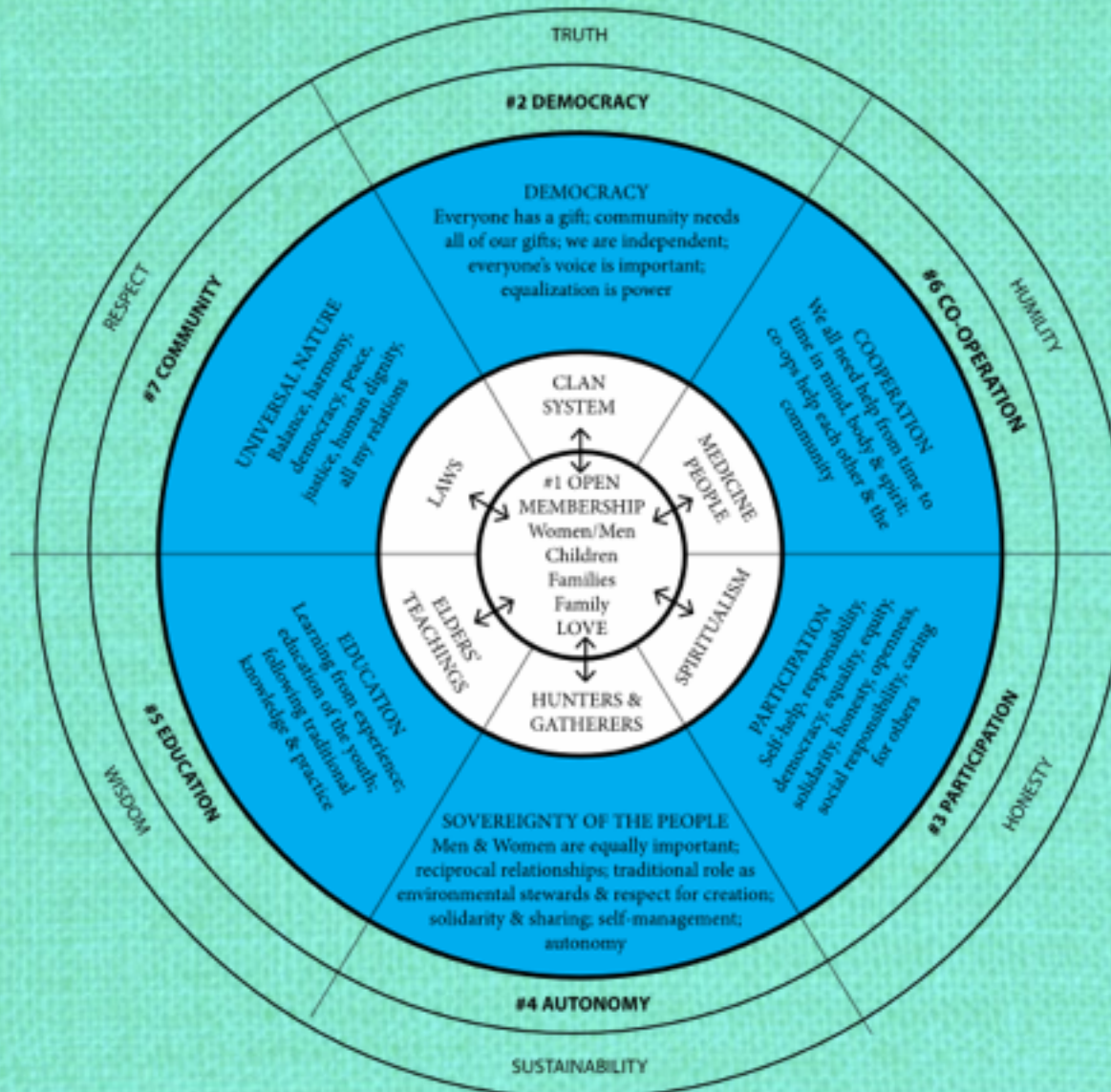
- accountability framework not fully in place
- funding model could not be fully explained
- insufficient monitoring over mandated agencies
- incomplete and inaccurate central information system
- management practices at mandated agencies required strengthening
- insufficient monitoring, no performance measurements & no quality assurance
- information system not accurate or complete
- children recorded incorrectly as in care or not in care
- child care management practices inconsistently applied
- in 47% of the child care files the pertinent mandated agency had not reviewed the child's maintenance needs in the last six months
- foster homes not consistently reviewed
- new CFS authorities concerned their ability constrained by lack of funds

Co-ops Amenable to Aboriginal Community Development (Hammond Ketilson & Macpherson 2001)

- Co-ops, driven by the needs of the membership, are inclusive & respectful
- Co-ops, based on democratic principles & reach consensus through a thinking and talking together.
- Co-ops deepen relationships over time through members' involvement
- Co-ops address historic dependency on government - based on member and community needs, the democratic structure and deepening of member participation
- Co-ops stress autonomy from politics & private enterprise, making room for people to develop own solutions & respecting Aboriginal collectivity.
- Co-op tradition emphasizes importance of co-operation among co-ops
- Co-ops have deep attachment to communities & show concern for culture.
- Co-ops develop gradually, recognizing the complexities of personal and community development.

SIMILAR IDEAS - DIFFERENT LANGUAGES

CO-OP AND TRADITIONAL VALUES AND PRINCIPLES



Morrisette,
Harris & Vint

7 Gifts of Grandfathers & 7 ICA Principles

Respect and Community: By respecting all forms of life the community finds balance, harmony and justice.

Truth and Democracy: Each individual has their truth to contribute to the community/co-op and in a democracy each has the opportunity to give voice to their truth.

Humility and Co-operation: Co-operation requires humility and the ability, by listening and learning from others, to find consensus.

Honesty and Participation: To participate fully, honesty is needed. This creates trust and solidarity.

Courage and Autonomy: To maintain autonomy, the community/co-op must have the courage to face dominant and oppressive systems.

Wisdom and Education: From the wisdom of elders & through formal & informal education, community/co-op becomes a space of continuous learning

Argument for Social Services Through Social Co-operative

- Building relationships of reciprocity
- Providing strong community voice for children
- Integrating community knowledge
- Improving communication/transparency
- Addressing Indigenous Peoples' need for control and independence
- Redistributing funding toward sustainability
- Emphasizing a “Signs of Safety” approach
- Defining an/the Economy of Safety

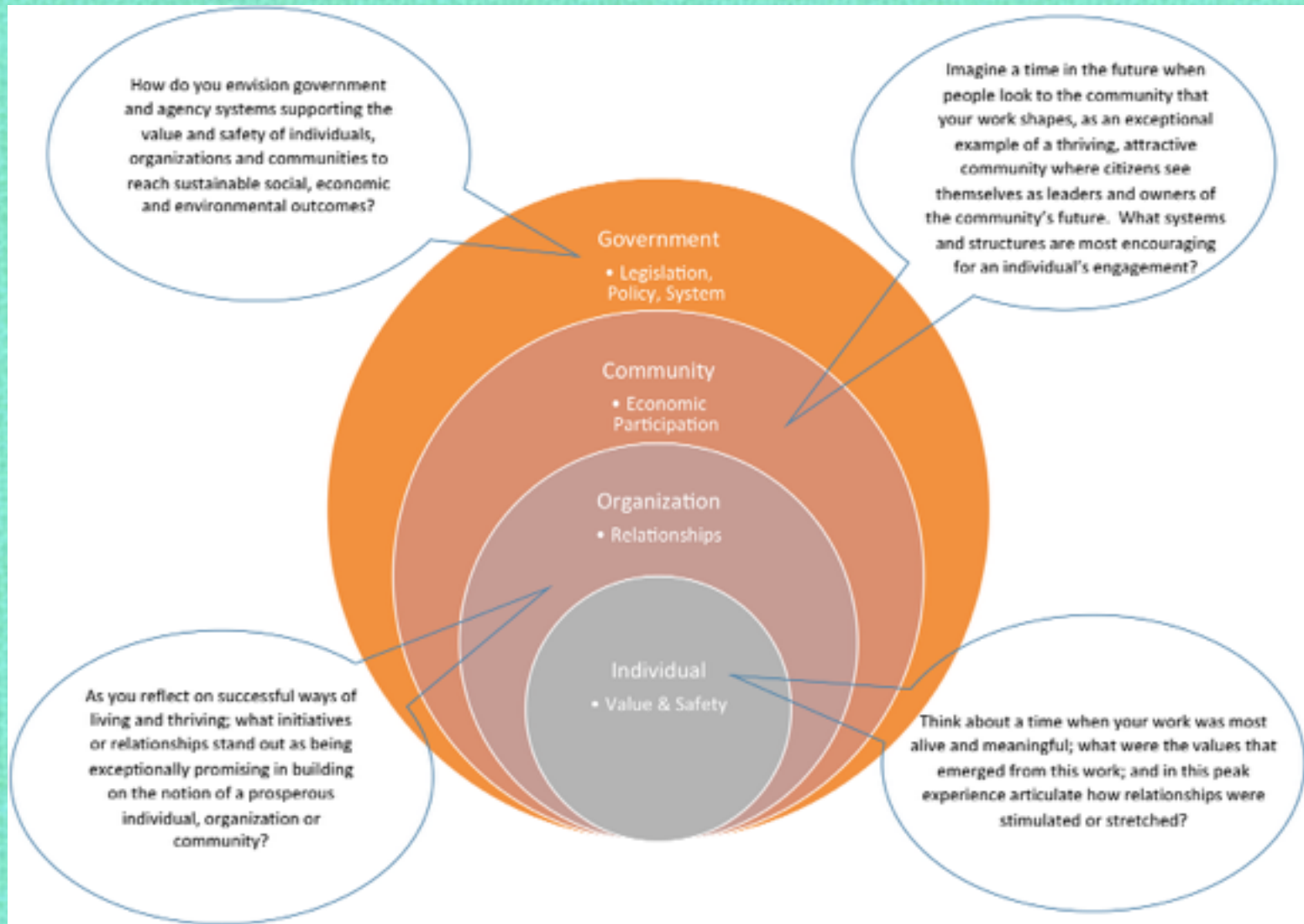
Little Stars PLAYhouse

Inspired by Phoenix Sinclair 681 Selkirk



The PLAYhouse was conceived by Stay & Play Kookums because Play is important. These care-givers are designing a Grannies Going Local Co-op to support their work

Further Research through Appreciative Learning Circles



Your comments, suggestion?

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