

## Developing Community

Think of community. Think of people working together to meet their needs, giving and receiving respect, each contributing according to their abilities. Such communities would be self-sufficient. Such communities would have fewer mental health problems because everyone would have the opportunity to contribute both to their own well-being and the well-being of all. Traditional communities, aboriginal and non-aboriginal, were something like that.

The opposite of community is bureaucracy. People can become dependent on the government and experts to meet their needs. People begin to look to the government to solve their problems instead of relying on themselves and their community. Welfare isn't the only force to destroy community. Racism, lateral violence, religion and politics may also play a role as people compete with each other for limited resources. When we are fighting, we cannot be working together to improve our lives. Community development is a movement aimed at re-building independent, cooperative, self-sufficient, nurturing and empowered communities.

Without community development social work can become co-dependency. The client receives welfare, counselling or other services and the social worker receives the status and income associated with the job. Since the job of the client is to be dependent on the system, he can become quite irresponsible in the management of his affairs. We call this "learned helplessness." Community development is a movement aimed at rediscovering the creative power that exists within each of us.

Community development is part of the vision statement of the Kikinahk Friendship Center (La Ronge, Saskatchewan). What is the Kikinahk community? Indian and Metis Friendship Centers have a focus on aboriginal issues but anyone who lives within the La Ronge / Air Ronge area who supports their vision and principles may become a member. This allows for a broad definition of community.

Kikinahk provides services such as the Headstart Program, Pre-natal counselling, diabetes awareness, HIV/AIDS prevention, and recreational programs for youth, but without an active membership base. With community development, the clients become members and are part of the community that owns the services provided. Thus, the clients are not dependent on a bureaucracy, but are welcome to play an equal role in planning and meeting community needs. With our community development initiative, people who receive our services will be part owners of the service placing them in a different position than those that receive similar services from government.

The owners of Kikinahk made up of you, the community, may use our center to meet and assess what our community needs, and plan how we may go about meeting those needs. Sometimes that may involve working with municipal governments. Sometimes this may involve accessing provincial and federal programs. Sometimes we may decide we are just going to do things ourselves. Goals and planning are community driven, not bureaucracy driven.

Kikinahk is planning a conference for October 14 and 15th of this year with the theme of building strong and supportive communities. We hope that community members will attend and

identify both community strengths and needs to be met. With your participation and direction we can build communities that reflect the values to which we all aspire.

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