

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

An Exploratory Analysis of the Collaborative Relationship between a  
Government Mandated Aboriginal Child Protection Agency and  
Five Contracted Aboriginal Human Service Agencies

by

Jane A. Rousseau

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

FACULTY OF SOCIAL WORK

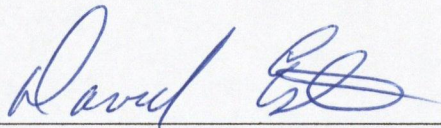
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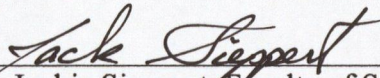
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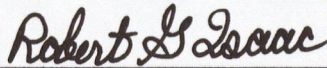
The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "An Exploratory Analysis of the Collaborative Relationship between a Government Mandated Aboriginal Child Protection Agency and Five Contracted Aboriginal Human Service Agencies" submitted by Jane Rousseau in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Social Work.



Supervisor, Dr. David Este, Faculty of Social Work

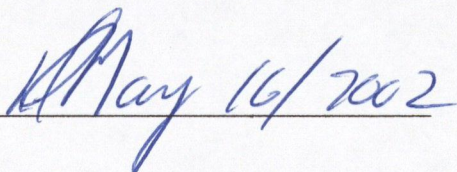


Dr. Jackie Sieppert, Faculty of Social Work



Professor Rob Isaac, Faculty of Management

Date



## **ABSTRACT**

An exploratory analysis was used to examine staff perceptions of the collaborative relationship between a government mandated Aboriginal child protection agency and contracted Aboriginal human service agencies. Perceptions of the current and ideal collaborative relationship were examined through a qualitative measurement instrument. The rationale for the study was the participant organizations' involvement in an emerging collaborative community based model.

Several significant staff perceptions regarding the collaborative relationship between the organizations emerged. These include issues of trust between agency and child protection workers, value orientation differences related to ethnic and work-site affiliation, high worker turnover, reluctance to address sensitive issues, inability to engage in process orientation due to work demands, and weakness in the area of communication and documentation.

Participant organizations were offered strategies to increase collaboration. Additionally, recommendations for social work practitioners, educators and for further research were suggested.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. David Este, for introducing me to concepts of power and control inherent in contract relationships and the implications they have for collaboration, which formed the basis for my inquiry in the thesis. I am also grateful for his role in supporting me through the process of completing this thesis. I would like to acknowledge the members of my committee – Dr. Jackie Sieppert, and Professor Rob Isaac, for their contributions. A very special thank you is extended to Ms. Iris Hillenbrand, not only for the support and encouragement she has provided me through this program, but for countless others who are similarly destined.

Special gratitude must be extended to all of the individuals of the Aboriginal organizations who took the time, that many have so little of, to participate in this study. I am forever grateful to Aboriginal friends, colleagues, and clients through the past decade that looked beyond our differences and shared with me experiences of a complex and often challenging journey. These people have been my inspiration.

Lastly, but perhaps most importantly, I gratefully thank my husband, Joe, for his incredible support, sacrifice, and love in helping me give life to two children and a thesis in as many years.



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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Research Topic**

In November 1993, Alberta Family and Social Services (now Alberta Children's Services) announced the appointment of a Commissioner of Services for Children with a mandate to design a more integrated and community-based child welfare model (Alberta Commissioner of Services for Children, 1994). Community consultation was undertaken prior to implementation of changes. Through community consultation, four major themes arose: integration of services, community-based services, improved services to Aboriginal people, and increased focus on early intervention. A plan to develop services based on these themes and to be delivered on a local level was pursued by Alberta Children's Services. A total of seventeen of these local authorities were developed in Alberta.

On April 1, 1998 a new local authority, Calgary Rocky View Child and Family Services (CRVCFS), took responsibility for providing mandated children's services including child protection to children and families in Calgary and surrounding area. Community co-ordinating counsels and community resource centres are also being implemented as part of the process of decentralizing children's services and providing services at a board administered local level. Restructuring of child welfare units to become more accessible by the community alongside agency personnel, that have and will continue to provide support services to children and families through Alberta Children's Services funding contracts, is also being implemented.

The concept of ‘multi-service teams’ is intended to eventually include an array of support services encompassing child protection, services to children with special needs, child care licensing, youth justice, and physical and mental health services for children and their families. The purpose of resource centres is to provide an accessible single entry point for children and families to government mandated and community support services. Inherent in this new model is the need for successful integration and collaboration of many different agencies and service providers.

### ***Aboriginal Child Protection Services within CRVCFS***

In 1987, Alberta Family and Social Services launched the first urban Aboriginal-specific child welfare unit in Alberta. This unit, located in Calgary, has grown to a sizeable district office since its inception and is now comprised of six units providing child protection services including screening and investigation, family support, family reunification, adolescent services, permanent guardianship services, foster care and adoption. While there is a commitment to improving services available to urban Aboriginal children and families through this office, it remained under the authority and legislation of the provincial government until that authority was transferred to the local authority (CRVCFS) in 1998.

A primary objective of the Calgary Rocky View Native Multi-Service Team (CRV-NMST) is to support the development of Aboriginal agencies to provide culturally-appropriate interventions and support services for Aboriginal children and families receiving mandated child protection services in Calgary. CRV-NMST currently possesses formal contracts with five Aboriginal agencies that provide a range of services from family support, youth support, residential youth services, foster care and adoption

support. These Aboriginal service providers along with CRV-NMST form the Native Multi-Service Team for the Calgary Rocky View area. An Aboriginal Resource Centre is operating in an independent location in the northeast section of the city at present. The location of CRV-NMST will remain the same - on the southwest corner of the downtown core. There is no indication whether these facilities will co-locate. While there will be many community resource centres and multi-service teams located in different geographical locations in Calgary, there will be only one Aboriginal community resource centre and multi-service team.

A quantitative/qualitative research method was used to examine CRV-NMST and contracted Aboriginal agency staff perceptions of their collaborative relationship. Perceptions of how the current relationship is viewed, along with perceptions of what staff view to be essential for more effective collaboration, were examined through the administration of a survey questionnaire (with primarily closed-ended and some open-ended questions) qualitatively designed through focus groups with staff from both groups.

### ***Significance of the Study***

Research in this area is important as the need for successful collaboration and integration among service providers is critical within the community-based model currently being implemented by Calgary Rocky View Child and Family Services. The quality of services which Aboriginal families and children receive in Calgary is dependent on the successful collaboration of the social workers and agencies that come together to provide these services. Further, there appears to be a lack of research in the area of urban Aboriginal organizations collaborating to provide social services.

Information resulting from the research may assist program managers and social workers to determine what aspects of the collaborative relationship are effective and where and how they may choose to re-focus attention and energy to improve collaboration and the resulting quality of service to Aboriginal clients.

The second chapter provides a review of literature outlining the history of Aboriginal child welfare in North America leading to the current situation where separate programming for Aboriginal children and families dominates the field. Literature regarding specialized Aboriginal models and approaches is reviewed to gain an understanding of how Aboriginal agencies offer a unique service that is distinct from mainstream agencies. This chapter also examines literature pertaining to the nature of contract relationships in the social service section and specifically, how power and dependency impact the relationship. Finally, a review of a range of literature regarding the nature of collaborative relationships between social service providers and agencies is provided in chapter two. Chapter three provides a detailed outline of the research design and methodology used to conduct this study. Chapter four presents the results of the study. The final chapter provides a discussion of the significant results of the study along with comments regarding implications the outcome of the study has on the social work profession, education and opportunities for future research.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

Four specific areas of literature that directly relate to the proposed research were examined. First, an examination of the history of child welfare services provided to Aboriginal families and communities in Alberta and North America reveals what factors resulted in the evolution of separate programming for Aboriginal children and families. The relative youth of Aboriginal agencies providing child welfare support services reflects a new landscape where these agencies are, in effect, pioneers determining, as they go along, how they may best meet the needs of Aboriginal families and children. The second area of literature examined is specialized models or approaches specific to meeting the unique needs of Aboriginal children, individuals, families and communities that have been proposed and/or implemented in the emerging Aboriginal social support sector. It appears the idea of ‘culturally competent’ services delivered by Aboriginal individuals is gaining more attention in the literature while the focus on the non-Aboriginal helper becoming “culturally sensitive” in approach is receiving less attention. Third, an examination of any aspect of the relationship between two agencies must include discussion about the organizational context in which their relationship exists. The unique nature of the contract relationship between CRV-NMST and the five Aboriginal agencies that are participating in this study possesses implications for issues of organizational power and dependency. These issues may strongly impact the collaborative relationship.

Finally, a range of literature pertaining to the nature of collaborative and co-operative relationships among social service providers forms the basis for the approach to this research study. The lack of literature in this area specific to culturally unique organizational groups indicates a need for further exploration of the dynamics involved in collaborative relationships between culturally diverse organizations.

### **Aboriginal Child Welfare**

What stands out in a review of Aboriginal child welfare literature is a critical lack of research studies. Much of the literature is prescriptive and anecdotal in nature - relying on issues arising at the time.

A range of literature between 1981 to 1985 overlaps in terms of the issues explored; the most vocally addressed being a glaring over-representation of Aboriginal children in care (Loucks, 1981; Hull, 1982; Johnston, 1983; Jolly, 1983; Bagley, 1985). The negative impact on Aboriginal families and communities resulting from high removal rates of Aboriginal children is explored in great detail. The effects of the residential school system, which are believed to have involved widespread physical, emotional, and sexual abuse of Aboriginal children, is linked to the poor preparation many Aboriginal adults have to parent their children. A cycle of disrupted parenting, coupled with socio-cultural problems resulting in violence and substance abuse, perpetuates a pattern of high removal of children from the community which, in turn, leads to the child losing the chance to learn traditional parenting roles. The literature during this period also focuses attention on the negative effects on Aboriginal children when placed in non-Aboriginal foster and adoptive homes.

Johnston (1983) gathered quantitative data from child protection agencies across Canada in an exploration of Aboriginal child welfare delivery. This study is still referred to in current literature as being one of the first studies in the area that dealt with the issues comprehensively (Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, 1996). Johnston used a questionnaire completed by provincial child welfare authorities across Canada to gather descriptive data about Aboriginal children involved with child welfare systems (1983). The national average of 'treaty Indian' children in substitute care was four and a half times that of non-Aboriginal children at the time. The statistics in regard to Aboriginal children in care in western Canada and the territories were higher due to the proportionately higher Aboriginal population in those areas.

Johnston (1983) also outlined the ongoing dispute between the federal and provincial governments in Canada regarding whose jurisdiction Aboriginal child welfare fell under. While the federal government acknowledged through agreements with some provinces that it was fiscally responsible for the services performed by the province, there were no agreements with other provinces. The funding arrangements under these agreements required the federal government to reimburse per diem foster care costs for Aboriginal children to provincial child welfare systems - no funding was provided for preventive or reunification services. Johnston argues that this arrangement encouraged the provincial child welfare systems only to intervene with Aboriginal children when situations reached crisis levels and apprehensions were made. The practice also discouraged the provision of counselling or support services in an attempt to return Aboriginal children to their communities.

Johnston (1983) coined the term “sixties scoop” in this study and partially attributed it to disagreement between the two levels of government over whose legal and fiscal responsibility it was to provide child welfare to Aboriginal people. High numbers of Aboriginal children were apprehended and permanently removed from their communities during the 1960s and to some extent the 1970s. Some communities lost more than half of their children during this period. In addition to the funding arrangements, Johnston asserts the high rate of apprehension was the result of continued assimilationist attitudes of mainstream child protection policies, agencies, and workers. Other issues included the legacy of social problems related to the effects of colonization: alcoholism, poverty, violence, low self-esteem, sexual abuse and loss of traditional roles.

Legislation regarding legal and fiscal responsibilities of the federal and provincial governments of Canada has not been altered or changed since Johnston’s study in 1983 (The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). In practice, the provincial governments have continued to provide mandated services – either directly or through agreements with First Nations groups who self-administer provincially mandated child welfare programs – and receive transfer payments for these services through the federal government.

Johnston (1983) outlines unique arrangements that were starting to develop in Canada and the United States in an attempt to resolve problems in Aboriginal child welfare. The United States Indian Child Welfare Act (1978) established a precedent in creating separate legislation and acknowledgement of the unique needs of Aboriginal children. The first child welfare agreements in Canada, including the Blackfoot Band Tripartite Agreement (1975), the Spallumcheen Band By-law (1980), and the Canada-



Manitoba-Indian Child Welfare Agreement, established a trend toward Aboriginal control of child welfare programs.

Johnston (1983) suggests that culturally inappropriate provincial child welfare delivery systems required attention be addressed in order to improve the situation of Aboriginal child welfare. Further recommendations from this study were:

- increased education and cross-cultural training of non-Aboriginal social workers;
- changes to legislation to include Aboriginal people and nations in process;
- increased Aboriginal involvement in the process and delivery of child welfare;
- establishment of effective child welfare agreements with First Nations;
- resolution of jurisdictional conflicts between federal and provincial governments;
- establishment of child welfare advisory committees on reserves; and,
- enhanced educational opportunities for Aboriginal social workers.

The federal government began entering agreements with several First Nations allowing them to provide preventive child welfare services while the province continued to do protection work in the 1970's (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1987; Wuerscher, 1979). Pressure by First Nations for increased control of child protection services was evidenced by a growing trend toward tripartite agreements in the 1980s transferring program delivery with provincial legislation attached to the First Nation involved.

In the United States, the Indian Child Welfare Act was passed in 1978 including specific legislation concerning First Nation children on and off reserves. This legislation empowers communities to replace state judicial systems with their own tribunals and

make decisions regarding the removal of children and placement in foster homes (Wuerscher, 1979; McMahon, 1995). As a result, these programs have the legislative independence and ability to make child protection decisions based on community values. While the legislative base is not problematic for carrying out child protection, American First Nations reported difficulties in securing stable funding for prevention and protection programs (Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, 1995).

The death of a seventeen-year old Metis foster child, Richard Cardinal, in 1983 drew attention to the Alberta child welfare system's failure to provide proper care for the emotional, physical, and spiritual well being of Aboriginal children. A case management review was performed by Ray Thomlison, the Dean of Social Work at the University of Calgary at that time (1984). Aside from outlining case work and legislative weaknesses within the child welfare system in Alberta, Thomlison recommended the establishment of an Aboriginal task force to further explore Aboriginal child welfare issues in Alberta. The Indian Association of Alberta facilitated the establishment of this task force.

As a result of Thomlison's (1984) review, the Alberta Child Welfare Act was amended in 1985 to include a special section regarding the "Indian Child". Placement priorities within the First Nation community were included, as well as compulsory notification and consultation with First Nations regarding the temporary or permanent guardianship of a First Nation child. Guidelines pertaining to non-status Aboriginal children were not included.

The Indian Association of Alberta released a report in response to the death of Richard Cardinal in 1989. The researchers used a qualitative traditional Aboriginal science methodology to collect and analyse data. The major recommendations from this

report were that Aboriginal people be given the opportunity to develop and provide their own child welfare primary and support services by using traditional family and community models. The report also stressed the importance of placing Aboriginal children within their communities. An Aboriginal child welfare educational centre was recommended to increase the involvement of Aboriginal people in the delivery of all child welfare services.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) studied Aboriginal child welfare through a review of the literature, statistical analyses, focus groups, and individual reporting. By 1992, the number of Aboriginal children in care was six times that of children representing the general population. The study noted that emphasis was placed on increased Aboriginal delivery of services through provincial legislation - between 1990-1991, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada funded 36 Aboriginal child and family agencies covering 212 bands. The report notes deficits in the majority of these arrangements due to funding constraints and limited policy support for developmental work in new Aboriginal child welfare programs and agencies.

Some further issues and concerns in relation to Aboriginal child welfare arising from the hearings of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) included:

- external sources of policy and legislation in Aboriginal child welfare programs are not working - the programs merely perpetuate the practices of mainstream provincial systems;
- there is inadequate follow-up and evaluation of Aboriginal child welfare programs;
- families/communities require community healing;
- inadequate resources for preventive child welfare programs, and;

- inadequate/inappropriate training of social work personnel.

Aboriginal children represent 9 percent of all children in Alberta but represent 50 percent of the children in care population in Alberta (Alberta Commissioner of Services for Children, 1994). Currently 29 of 45 First Nations in Alberta have entered child welfare agreements with provincial legislation attached. No program evaluations or published reports of the outcomes of these programs are available.

The themes and concepts in the literature indicate a movement both on and off reserve toward Aboriginal child welfare service delivery as a reaction to the failure of mainstream programs. Concerns about funding and legislative deficits were raised recently and most notably by the Royal Commission. There is very little descriptive literature on how Aboriginal programs should be developed or descriptions of existing programs.

### **Emerging Aboriginal Therapeutic and Family Support Models:**

At approximately the same time that studies and literature regarding abuses and inequality in the Aboriginal child welfare arena were emerging, the area of social services designed specifically for the unique needs of Aboriginal individuals and communities was also beginning to emerge. While initially providing a rationale for the need for different services, literature in the area has evolved to include highly detailed and specialized models and approaches for Aboriginal people, along with discussion regarding the individuals most qualified and capable of providing the services. John Red Horse contributed a great deal to the early literature concerning social policy change deemed necessary to develop service delivery that was compatible with Aboriginal individuals and communities.



A model specifically designed for human service delivery for Aboriginal individuals, families and communities is proposed by Red Horse, Lewis, Feit, and Decker (1978) using a social conservation model. Two imperatives identified include exploring traditional Aboriginal cultural attributes associated with family cohesiveness and individual mental health and modelling human service systems that promote this sense of family purpose within the cultural context. The authors contend that an Aboriginal person, regardless of their unique tribal characteristics, operates within an ecological perspective common to the cultural network of all Aboriginal people that entails the layers upon which s/he first relies and looks to when determining a response to immediate issues. These layers begin with self and extend outward to include family network; social network; spiritual leadership; tribal community and lastly, the mainstream social/health care system. The implication is that service provision within the Aboriginal community should focus more on strengthening and encouraging the cultural and structural integrity of these informal structures prior to effecting clinical approaches with Aboriginal people.

An early group work approach to enhancing self-concept and cultural identification for Aboriginal girls aged seven to eleven is described by Edwards, Edwards, Danes and Eddy (1978). The authors based their design for the group on several earlier studies that researched the disparity in self-concept of American Aboriginal children as compared to their mainstream counterparts. The authors not only describe the group approach taken but evaluated through quantitative methods whether there was change from the pre to post intervention.

Nine girls in the age range attended 14 sessions of two to three hours duration over a three-month period (Edwards, et al., 1978). Three of four of the group leaders were Aboriginal, although all leaders were experienced with both Aboriginal and group interventions. Group members were encouraged to participate in cultural activities designed to gradually immerse the girls more and more in activities that required increasing skill and cultural understanding. The activities included crafts, tribal dancing, shawl making, participation in round dances and pow wows, and all sessions encouraged the girls to talk about their concepts of identity within their cultural framework. The group was evaluated by the group leaders/researchers using the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale on a pre-test-post-test basis. The results indicate some positive differences between the pre-test and post-test scores indicating that the group experience could be "instrumental in positively affecting the feelings of self-esteem" in Aboriginal children (p. 318).

However, the authors acknowledge one limitation was that no control group was used. The authors conclude that girls involved in the group were highly motivated and eager to participate in the group activities. Further, the girls showed a high level of interest in gaining greater cultural understanding generally and more specifically, of their own tribes or communities. The authors recommend further use of group work with Aboriginal youth in promoting greater cultural understanding and enhanced self-esteem as a result.

Jenkins (1980) uses a field study looking at five different ethnic groups (including Aboriginal individuals in North Carolina and Arizona) in different parts of the United States in seeking to define what essentially makes an ethnic agency different from a

mainstream one. She interviewed the directors of 54 agencies (half public and half non-profit or private) that included day-care centres, foster/adoption agencies, residential centres and institutions, mental health agencies, parent/child in-home support agencies, youth services, and multipurpose integrated service centres. The common factor in these agencies was that they were serving minority clients. In two-thirds of the agencies, 95 percent of the staff were from the same ethnic group as the group targeted to be served. However, in the case of the African American and Aboriginal American agencies, caucasian directors were more common than in the other agencies.

A quantitative and qualitative analysis was performed through an interview schedule that included open and closed ended questions (Jenkins, 1980). The initial hypothesis in this study was that bureaucratization of services would occur when there was a move from self-help type ethnic groups/agencies toward formalised public agencies which would mean that the needs of the ethnic groups would not be adequately met. Jenkins speculates at the time that growth of the “ethnic agency” is viewed by many as a political response to minority rights movements. She does contend, however, that it could also be viewed as a way of addressing serious deficits in mainstream service delivery.

The major finding from Jenkins (1980) study stressed that ethnic agencies were successful in terms of what she describes as primary-group functions. The agencies stressed and supported the idea of informal supports, family self-reliance, maintaining cultural and language identity, accommodating cultural and traditional history in meeting the needs of the client, and increased recruitment and facilitation of ethnically similar foster and adoptive parents. Further, Jenkins found a primary benefit of the ethnic

agencies was the ability to help the ethnic client to mediate with the mainstream system to meet their individual and family needs.

After the passage of the 1978 Indian Child Welfare Act in the United States, changes in implementation and treatment procedures were seen as necessary to respect and reinforce the structural and cultural integrity of Aboriginal family systems (Red Horse, 1982). Red Horse argues that most Aboriginal families had survived, what he termed a “psychohistorical experience”, and what is more commonly now referred to as the process of colonization, quite well (p.17). For the families that did not fare so well and whose children were viewed at risk he outlined two risks. These include the risk of safety for the children and the risk of removal of large numbers of children and eventual cultural genocide.

Red Horse promotes a strategy for family therapy that involves an “age-integrated developmental day care service” (1982). A cultural network model whereby families of children at risk would come together for formalised therapeutic support while informal individuals from the community would be involved serving as cultural and social role models. The goal is to seek “replication of a cultural community designed to meet social and emotional needs of all age cohorts: children, youth, adults, and elders. Age-integration, therefore, reaffirms vital features of cultural and structural integrity of Indian extended kin systems” (p. 17). A major feature of this strategy is that as contact occurs on a daily basis, emerging family crisis, which often goes unnoticed when supports are available on a less frequent basis, can be more adequately identified and addressed.

Proposing a more appropriate orientation to Aboriginal family therapy, Red Horse (1982) discusses four principles the therapist should focus on. Spirituality, group identity,

articulation of family behaviours through visualising or picturing, and lastly recognizing and articulating the fractured condition of many Aboriginal families resulting from the effects of migration, bi-culturality, and family dispersion. Spiritual leaders are looked to as appropriate individuals to provide leadership and direction in seeking harmony in mind, body and spirit. In terms of recognising the group identity, Red Horse argues it is necessary for the helper or therapist to understand and respect the different family types and cultural aspirations of Aboriginal clients. There is an importance placed on understanding mutual interdependence in which the roles, obligations and sanctions of individuals are necessary for the healthy functioning of the group.

A benefit of this proposed model by Red Horse (1982) was compatibility amongst agency staff organizing around a model that paralleled an Aboriginal extended family system. This benefit was seen through the re-creation of the traditional family structure whereby “sanction processes are based upon inter-generational respect and balance in the family system” (p. 18). What was seen in the particular program observed was that families began to open up regarding crisis situations prior to the situations becoming unworkable. Another interesting aspect of the program was the use of a further clinical principle termed “joining” whereby a social support network is slowly built around the high risk family that involves both natural and “fictive” family members.

DuBray (1985) investigated value orientation differences between thirty six female Aboriginal American and thirty six female Anglo-American professional mental health workers between the ages of thirty and forty-five years using the Kluckhohn Value Schedule. This instrument was constructed to test value differences across cultural

groups. Four categories of value orientation, considered common to people of all cultures, were looked at: activity, relational, time and man/nature.

Significant differences were reported in the areas of time, relational, and man/nature, but not in activity orientation (DuBray, 1985). The mean score on the schedule for Aboriginal American social workers showed preferences for: being rather than doing in activity orientation; collateral rather than individualistic in relational orientation; having a present rather than future time orientation; and harmony rather than mastery with nature in the man/nature orientation. The Anglo-American social workers mean scores on the schedule indicated preferences for: being rather than doing in activity orientation; individualistic rather than collateral in relational orientation; an orientation equally split between present and future time, and an orientation equally divided between harmony and mastery in the man/nature orientation.

DuBray (1985) concludes from the results of the study, that increased efforts must be put in to improving social work education regarding the needs of Aboriginal Americans. Ethnic cultural content about differences in value orientation need to be reflected in the curricula of many different disciplines including nursing, psychiatry, psychology, social work, counseling and theology.

Cross (1986) provides a review of traditional child rearing practices within the Aboriginal community stressing the network of extended family functioning in this context. He argues that focusing on extended family substitute care rather than formalized foster care placements must be an integral part of providing appropriate child welfare services to Aboriginal people. While acknowledging that much work needs to go in to supporting these types of placements, including involving extended family in case

planning, he states the role of the Aboriginal child welfare worker is to act as the “watchful eye of the extended family” (p. 287). This role embeds the worker in the traditional role of a community functionary who would have supported and guided tribal members regarding their responsibilities in this extended family network.

Cross (1986) sees the Aboriginal child welfare or support worker more as a natural than formal helper as they can relate to clients from a cultural rather than professional capacity. He also supports the idea of including tribal elders within a model of child welfare service provision, whose role it becomes to link families with natural helpers in the community. Elders play an additional key role in providing understanding of traditional child rearing practices. In addition to providing resources to families, Cross sees natural helpers as key role models for the individuals they are helping.

Cross (1986) recommends integrating traditional ceremonies in to group methods to assist Aboriginal adults to begin to “explore their identity, values, and problems, using patterns of interaction that are native in orientation” (p.289). Talking circles and community ceremonies are adapted to meet the group needs of individuals. Cross calls for the development of parent training methods based on traditional values and practices. Finally, he speaks of the dual role and responsibility Aboriginal child welfare/social workers have in not only protecting Aboriginal children but helping to protect the integrity of traditional Aboriginal child-rearing practices.

A pilot project for providing a group counselling experience for Aboriginal girls who were sexually abused is presented by Ashby, Gilchrist, and Miramontez (1987). Group treatment methods were adapted from traditional Aboriginal practices. The initial

pilot group demonstrated high attendance rates and provided positive evaluations of this group treatment approach.

The girls aged 12 to 17 previously attended a non-Aboriginal treatment group and dropped out (Ashby et al., 1987). All voluntarily consented to attending the pilot group that was held over a two and a half month period and led by an Aboriginal female MSW and a non-Aboriginal graduate student. A lay Aboriginal woman started each group session with crafts for about the first hour. Each session included sharing a meal, watching a film or discussion regarding values or provision of information, a talking circle, and finally debriefing the session.

Participant evaluations on average indicated an approval rating of the treatment group of 9.8 out of 11. The participants ranked the talking circle as the most helpful and useful activity in the group sessions. All except one participant attended 80% or more of the sessions. Pre and post-test scores of self-esteem of the participants indicated that 78% of the participants showed post-treatment gains in this area.

The authors conclude that the pilot group treatment model places emphasis on traditional values of role modelling, group consensus, and social support as key components in the healing process. The group was viewed as a successful innovation in serving 'previously hard-to-reach' Aboriginal girls who were sexually abused.

Mainstream residential care facilities using conventional treatment approaches attempt to alter young person's behaviours and attitudes to dominant societal standards (Morrissette, 1991). Morrissette contends that these attempts are not only often unsuccessful with Aboriginal youth but can have extremely negative outcomes for them as the value base can create a "conflict of realities and ego-splitting" (p. 89). Several



differing cultural values are explored and the clinical implications for Aboriginal youth in residential care are outlined.

In terms of learning in Aboriginal culture, the individual's learning experience is an independent one that is not externally judged by others (Morrisette, 1991).

Mainstream culture considers it the responsibility of adults to train and instruct young people rather than to guide them. The emphasis on control and instruction in residential care means that rules are implemented regarding behaviour and a young person is rewarded for compliance. For the young Aboriginal person this is interpreted as disrespectful and a form of interference.

A holistic world-view embedded in the moment as encapsulated by Aboriginal culture is in direct contrast to the mainstream view of 'compartmentalization' of life (Morrisette, 1991). Problems and issues are separated and dealt with individually in a step by step (linear) process within residential care settings. The break down and 'compartmentalization' of life - behavioural contracts, level systems, scheduled routine, routinized education - in residential settings is directly in contrast with how an Aboriginal youth experiences life.

The importance of the extended family system and emphasis on the well being of the group for Aboriginal youth in residential care has been misunderstood or interpreted by mainstream professionals who value the nuclear family unit and place emphasis on the individual (Morrisette, 1991). The lack of direct or nuclear family contact is often interpreted as a lack of interest by the family. However, there may be less clearly biologically connected relatives who at the time are more involved - these individuals role should not be diminished just because they are not closely related.

Morrisette (1991) follows with an analysis of the Freudian concept of ego-splitting as a defensive process that Aboriginal youth may undergo when in a residential setting that is so foreign an environment that it creates a high degree of emotional turmoil - only compounding why they were placed to begin with. Although raised with Aboriginal values the youth entering a mainstream residential facility finds his/herself in a situation where the 'correct way' or mainstream values are espoused. The obvious dilemma for the youth is which value base is correct - and may often result in rejection of both.

The conclusion that Morrisette (1991) arrives at is that significant value differences that exist between Aboriginal and mainstream cultures have grave implications for residential care programming for Aboriginal youth. Given the negative impact of mainstream values on residential care programming, new approaches consistent with an Aboriginal value base need to be developed for use with Aboriginal youth in residential facilities.

An emerging model of Aboriginal social work practice is presented by Morrisette, McKenzie, and Morrisette (1993) including a description of its implementation within a Winnipeg-based Aboriginal family service agency Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre. The authors present a framework for practice based around four key areas; utilizing an Aboriginal world view; developing consciousness within the Aboriginal client about the effects of colonization; utilizing cultural knowledge and traditions to retain identity and collective consciousness; and lastly empowering Aboriginal clients.

These four key concepts are embedded in a cultural continuum that reflects the variation among Aboriginal people in terms of their identification with traditional Aboriginal culture (Morrissette et al., 1993). The continuum includes three meta-categories: non-traditional, neo-traditional, and traditional orientation. At the traditional end of the continuum they describe Aboriginal people who strongly adhere to teachings of the Elders and possess strong understanding of traditional ways. The neo-traditional category includes members of the community that blend a traditional orientation to their culture with practices reflective of the dominant society.

In the non-traditional orientation individuals are described as both well-adjusted and some as alienated individuals who have adopted a non-traditional lifestyle. Those people who have successfully adopted a non-traditional lifestyle are more likely to choose mainstream helping services if required. Despite their success in following this lifestyle these individuals can experience ambivalence occasionally as a result of internal conflicts between dominant and Aboriginal values. A large number of individuals in the non-traditional category are described by the authors as 'culturally alienated' individuals who are not coping well either within the mainstream or Aboriginal groups. These people often experience a constant state of crises due to internalized symptoms of colonization such as violence, substance abuse, depression, and a range of other self-destructive behaviours. A key component to the cultural continuum is that an individual's placement along the continuum is not static but fluid. At one point in time an individual's orientation may be more along the lines of non-traditional and at another may be better described as neo-traditional or traditional.

When engaging clients through the youth program in the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre service providers assess where the client is on the cultural continuum prior to planning and implementing services. The program is guided by a culturally based philosophy that situates it “both in and of the community”. Staff participate within the community in feasts, ceremonies and in a social and political context. Clients of the program are encouraged to become as active within the community as their orientation allows them to become. An intensive group training program that accepts referrals from social agencies as well as self-referrals incorporates traditional healing methods, the talking circle, and provides opportunities to learn about the effects of colonization on Aboriginal people, as well as provides information on services and resources in the community. A survival school was developed within the program as well as individual direct intervention for youth with formal and informal helpers.

The model for Aboriginal practice described by Morrisette et al. (1993) is described as culturally appropriate practice and is distinguished from culturally sensitive practice which focuses primarily on non-Aboriginal social workers attempting to sensitize themselves to the unique cultural characteristics of their Aboriginal clients. The key difference is that Aboriginal service providers, who are aware of their own position along the cultural continuum, provide guidance embedded within the historical reality of the effects of colonization to other individuals who may be struggling somewhere within the continuum. Program goals include empowering Aboriginal clients to become politically and socially aware and active as well as offering exposure to Aboriginal tradition. This reflects an Aboriginal orientation towards being with the client rather than

providing to the client what services the helper deems appropriate through cultural sensitization.

Consideration of family preservation programs for Aboriginal families involved with child welfare is presented by Mannes (1993). A number of programs are examined and the consequence of over-reliance on child placement is assessed. The author acknowledges that up until the time of writing that much focus in Aboriginal child welfare during the previous 15 years centred on culturally appropriate placements for Aboriginal children. The trend toward family preservation is noted as a progressive step for Aboriginal families involved with child protection services.

Mannes (1993) cites research studies that indicate the actual number of children placed in substitute care since the Indian Child Welfare Act was enacted in the United States in 1978 actually rose by approximately twenty five percent. He further noted that little attention was paid to placement prevention. Family preservation is seen as a response to the shortcomings of the system to this point. The Aboriginal family system is viewed as vital and focus is placed on a major shift in the support services as previously provided. The family preservation approach involves creating a service continuum where support services are provided depending on an assessment of the person-in-environment or systems perspective. The family preservation model is not only seen as a way of preventing children from entering substitute care but is also a strategy for reunification for families where children were removed.

Mannes cites a growing number of family preservation projects that began to receiving funding in the United States between 1987 to 1993 (Mannes, 1993). Previous to this most funding was earmarked for reactive not preventive services such as family

preservation programs. Based on his previous research Mannes outlines six areas that need to be considered if family preservation is to be successful. These include: community education to support family preservation; co-ordination among service agencies providing services; clarity regarding which types of families are to be served; secure long-term funding; well conceived program and service development goals, procedures and practices; and finally Aboriginal staff must be hired and provided the knowledge and expertise to provide effective services.

Historical trauma and grief experienced by Aboriginal people is viewed as a starting point to work with Aboriginal individuals and families as it is here that the root of current social and health problems lie (Weaver & White, 1997). Basic common values amongst Aboriginal people must also be the cornerstone of the development of services to address social and health issues. These authors further echo the work of Morrisette et al. (1993) in outlining the differences between mainstream family values that focus on the nuclear family versus Aboriginal orientation to the extended family and community. Similarly another key component these authors focus on is the level of connection Aboriginal individuals have to their culture (Weaver & White, 1997). Weaver and White speak of a linear continuum - described somewhat similarly to the cultural continuum described by Morrisette et al. (1993) - that ranges from "culture of origin to assimilation or acculturation" into dominant society (p. 73). This identification is identified as critical to providing culturally appropriate casework practice with Aboriginal individuals and families.

The results of a study of the knowledge, skills and values necessary to provide culturally competent services to Aboriginal Americans among sixty two Aboriginal social

workers and social work students are presented by Weaver (1999). The author identifies a gap in the literature regarding the provision of culturally competent social work and asserts the results of this study fill that gap.

A survey questionnaire was used to gather information from Aboriginal social workers and social work students regarding their beliefs about culturally competent services with Aboriginal clients (Weaver, 1999). The questions asked were: what knowledge, skills, and attitude or values “should a helping professional bring to working with Native American clients in a culturally competent manner?” (P. 219). Four areas of knowledge were identified as important by the respondents: diversity amongst different groups of Aboriginal people, the importance of history, cultural knowledge and contemporary realities of Aboriginal communities (Weaver, 1999). Identifying skills necessary for a helping professional working with Aboriginal people, the respondents identified general skills that include good communication and problem solving abilities. They also identified the need to possess containment skills such as exercising patience, tolerating silences, and listening - skills that require social workers to be less verbally active than they would be with clients from another culture. Another of these containment skills is openness to humour and accepting being the target of humour.

In the area of values the following themes emerged: helper wellness and self-awareness, humility and willingness to learn, respect, open-mindedness, non-judgmental attitude, and an orientation toward social justice (Weaver, 1999). The author concludes that the findings in her research supported much of the literature on culturally competent social work practice with Aboriginal people.

To summarize the progression of literature in the emerging area of Aboriginal models of practice with children and families it seems that the literature from the late seventies to the early eighties focussed on articulating the differing value base and approach to parenting and family life within Aboriginal culture. The focus in relation to Aboriginal child protection seemed to be considering placement and locus of control for provision of services within the Aboriginal community.

The late eighties and nineties seems to have opened the door to increased consideration of how to integrate cultural practices in to a less formalised model of practice that can replicate a supportive and functional cultural system of social support within the Aboriginal helping agency. These emerging models attempt to consider a number of different aspects of the challenges Aboriginal helpers face as they attempt to help facilitate growth and healing. Consideration of the individual's orientation to Aboriginal tradition and culture; providing understanding of historical processes such as colonization and its effects; empowering through partnering toward positive social change rather than using hierarchical modes of helping; modelling positive individual and community functioning by Aboriginal helpers and networks within agency settings, all seem to be a common theme in the literature in the nineties.

### **The Contract Relationship: Power and Dependency**

The social service environment in North America during the past thirty years increasingly moved toward a model whereby the public service sector depends on non-profit agencies to assist in carrying out public mandates. Indeed, this is the situation for the Aboriginal agencies in the study who receive funding on a yearly contract basis to provide mandated services to clients of CRV-NMST. Consideration of how this



arrangement affects the relationship between these agencies and CRV-NMST is a critical co-requisite to examining organizational members perceptions of the collaborative relationship. Literature in this area suggests the nature of the funding relationship may affect the power dynamic between the contract agencies and CRV-NMST (which both funds and collaborates with the agencies) resulting in an unequal partnership.

Resource dependency theory suggests the nature of the relationship between agencies and government bodies that provide their funding reinforces the power of the funding body as it controls the allocation, access and how resources are used (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). The agencies may have alternative access to resources but characteristically the body that contributes the majority of the funding for the agency can not be easily replaced. The agencies included in this study depend to varying degrees on CRV-NMST for funding for their agencies. Three rely entirely on CRV-NMST for their funding while the other two only rely on CRV-NMST to fund particular programs within their agency. These two agencies rely on funding for their other programs from another level of government. The loss of CRV-NMST funding would likely result in the agencies finding it difficult or even impossible to continue operating either the agency or the specific program being funded (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Adding to the power CRV-NMST (or Calgary Rocky View Child and Family Services) has over the funding process is the control it has over decisions regarding the total amount of funding available for all of the agencies and how to allocate it (Pfeffer & Salancik , 1978).

The assumption within Pfeffer and Salancik's resource dependency theory is that agencies become dependent on their funding source (1978). Government, as the main funding source, theoretically is accountable to the people and community, but the public

sector is representative of unelected bureaucracies that are subject to their own organizational agendas. If an agency chooses to replace public sector funding with another source, such as a corporation or foundation, they create a new funding relationship but the principles of resource dependency theory would still apply to this new relationship.

Half of all United States social service agencies surveyed in 1982 by Milofsky and Romo (1988) identified government sources as their primary funding source. Twenty years later with the continued shift away from publicly-administered social services these numbers may be expected to be even greater. The public sector, although no longer the direct provider of many services, as a funding source has significant influence over the types and volume of services that non-profit agencies provide. This, in turn, has implications for the relative autonomy of non-profit agencies that receive the majority of their funding from government sources.

An examination of how funding affects the power of non-profit agencies in the social service arena is presented in a research study Gronbjerg (1993) undertook with thirteen non-profit agencies in Chicago and the surrounding area. The resource dependency theory of organizational behaviour asserts that funding structures create the context within which non-profit decision making takes place. Gronbjerg found sources of funding for non-profit agencies vary in predictability and controllability (i.e., fees, donations, government grants, contracts) and therefore, different sources constitute different levels of uncertainty for the agency. Generally speaking, social service agencies are often not in the position for-profit businesses experience of providing a service for a customer who in turn pays for it. Rather, a non-profit agency often depends on both

getting access to clients and funding through its relationship with a funder. In this way non-profit agencies often develop a dependency and institutionalised relationship with their funder. With this being an obviously vulnerable experience for non-profit agencies, they often attempt to reduce their dependency or increase their control over their funding sources in an attempt to preserve their autonomy and create a more predictable environment.

In her study of non-profit organizations, Gronbjerg (1993) found government funding was a much more common source for non-profit agencies than it was for community development agencies. Further, non-profit agencies that depend disproportionately on one particular funding source must devote more time and energy to managing their relationship with that particular partner. High reliance on one single funding stream is likely to have fateful consequences for an organization, because it becomes dependent on a relatively narrow range of environmental factors or on idiosyncratic events associated with the stream. However, while that increases risks, it also greatly simplifies management tasks and allows the organization to specialize and fine-tune its management efforts. Spreading the risk by developing diverse funding sources increases management complexity because the recipient organization must master many different funding relationships (p. 56). Non-profit agencies that experience continuity in funding are able to fine tune their management approach but are limited in their ability to pursue new opportunities or to transfer what becomes highly specialized services to another funding source.

Critical changes in the child protection arena since the 1960s have brought about the growth of the non-profit sector in that area (Smith, 1989). Contracting services from

non-profit agencies is seen as an attractive concept to government as it implies greater service flexibility, program innovation and lower service cost. Many new agencies were created by the government sector through demand for community-based mandated services.

These new agencies, along with traditional agencies, jockey for control and attempt to protect their organizational autonomy - a difficult task when they depend on the larger government organization for funding (Smith, 1989). If the non-profit agency possesses a different mandate from the mandated services government 'hires' it to provide conflict can be inevitable. For example, the non-profit agency may seek to provide higher treatment standards and not wish to terminate services as directed in the contract. If they decide to do so, they may not be funded for this continued service. Further, government is often seen by non-profit agencies as referring clients that do not fit the agency mandate. Government, in turn, sees the agency as unwilling to change their mandate to suit the contract description.

Smith (1989) argues that there has been a further shift in the relationship between government and the non-profit sector since the 1980s. Government expectations for increased professionalization and accountability, coupled with a decline in funding, means heightened competition dominates a new environment in which government can be more selective about which agencies to fund. Rationing behaviour on the part of government is also a result of declining funds and rising service demands. As a result, there is increased emphasis on prioritizing services. In the child welfare realm, the result is a focus on providing reactive service rather than preventive service. With new government mandates that reflect this, the non-profit agencies that provide contract

service are compelled to accept the government mandate totally. These mandates include serving clients consistently with government priorities; for example, using short-term treatment delivered by professionals versus long-term treatment delivered by both professionals and non-professionals. In effect, Smith contends that government is moving their clients to top priority for services - based on the “most” needy as determined by level of risk to children. Effectively, it is argued, non-profit agencies must choose between government service priorities and losing their funding, which, for some, may mean the insolvency of the agency.

Why then do non-profit agencies engage in this type of relationship with government? Non-profit agencies, as outlined by Smith and Lipsky (1993), benefit in a number of areas from a contractual relationships with government funders:

- the reliance on one funder for the majority of the funds required to run an agency means less administrative and managerial attention to different needs of multiple funders;
- although slow and bureaucratic government funding is reasonably stable; the awarding of a contract to an agency confers formal recognition of that agency as a leader in the particular service area they provide;
- the relationship with the government agency also shields the nonprofit agency from blame if and when service delivery problems arise - the ultimate responsibility for the service falls back on the mandated government agency therefore accountability issues are minimized;
- the association with the funder also legitimates the nonprofit agencies access to the political arena where they can have some input in policy direction and decision making, and this participation in the political arena in turn increases the agencies visibility and legitimacy in the arena.

Purchase of service contracting is projected to be a long-term trend as a mode for social service delivery (Kettner & Martin, 1990). Contracting relationships not only

influence what, where, and who services are provided to and who they are provided by but how social problems are defined and dealt with. These authors suggest that contracting can alternately promote competitive or cooperative systems.

In the 'market model' competition is encouraged in an effort to increase outputs by driving down cost (Kettner & Martin, 1990). The benefit of this model is that it promotes experimentation with alternative service delivery models. However, decisions are primarily made on the basis of price. In the 'partnership model' two agencies join together in joint ventures designed to maximize outcomes through collaborative action. For this model to be successful there must be considerable focus placed on strengthening the relationship between the two agencies with particular attention paid to flexibility and compromise. Contracting decisions must be made primarily taking in to account the stability and improvement of the system. Most contracting systems possess elements of both of these models.

Using secondary data analysis in a national study of purchase of service contracting practices of fifty U.S. state social service agencies Kettner and Martin (1990) found a low degree of congruence on what model administrators were using compared to what they thought they were implementing. The authors hypothesized that the result may be a drift toward more competitive systems rather than cooperative systems. Therefore, they conclude the use of the partnership model needs to be approached in a purposive and meaningful manner on the part of the agencies involved if it is to be successful at all.

### **Collaborative Relationships between Social Service Agencies**

One definition of collaboration in the literature is "collaboration may be defined as a relational system in which two or more stakeholders pool together resources in order

to meet objectives that neither could meet individually” (Graham & Barter, 1999, p.7).

There are many definitions of collaboration but all seem to involve the development of a relationship between two stakeholders, the exchange or sharing of resources, and meeting objectives together that could not be met by either organization alone.

### ***Emergence of Collaboration***

In a review of literature on collaboration and co-ordination between welfare agencies, Alaszewski and Harrison (1988) note that while in theory there has been a theoretical commitment to collaboration, there appears to be significant problems involved in achieving successful collaborative working relationships. The majority of the literature in the area of collaboration addresses the need for collaboration followed by discussion of problems in coordination and collaboration.

Alaszewski and Harrison (1988) argue that comprehensive social welfare services provided since the end of World War II came under scrutiny in the 1960s and 1970s as the rising cost of service and poor quality of some services resulted in a debate over the nature of service delivery. Governments set as an objective the improvement of coordination and collaboration between publicly-funded agencies in an effort to reduce costs and improve service to social welfare recipients. Wildavsky pointed out in 1979 that coordination had become ‘one of the golden words of our time’.

### ***Rational and Pragmatic Approaches to Collaboration***

There is a considerable amount of debate in the literature concerning whether a rational or pragmatic approach to implementing collaborative relationships meets with more success (Alaszewski & Harrison, 1988). The perspective taken from the rational model of organizational behaviour is that new structure and communication across

agencies can be problematic and it is a policy-makers role to establish clear objectives for developing these and impose them on the agencies involved. This top down planning model implies that a few individuals plan and implement the necessary structure.

The concept of 'responsible charting' as a means of imposing top down structure on the collaborative relationship provides a good example of using rational means to manage collaborative relations (Gilmore, 1979). Gilmore maintains that a lack of clarity around decision making within collaborative relationships necessitates a strategy such as 'responsible charting' to negotiate clearer agreements. This structure is imposed on the individuals involved in decision making to decide who is responsible for making decisions in a specific area.

Proponents of the pragmatic/incremental model of organizational behaviour believe organization members are unable to make rational decisions in relation to collaboration across agencies as they do not have the time or resources to evaluate and select options that may result in achieving successful collaboration (Lindblom, 1979). Instead they start with existing activities and policy and make small changes in order to make successive limited comparisons. This, Lindblom argues, allows for change that is sensitive to the environment through a process of trial and error.

Merritt and Neugeboren (1990) note the current shift from government-delivered services to community-based services necessitates an incremental approach toward collaboration and coordination that identifies impediments in the existing system to make the shift to one where agencies can collaborate more effectively. Agency capacity toward coordination and collaboration is outlined in the area of fiscal capacity, the local government management capacity to support the new structure, and mechanisms for



collaborating (i.e., information and referral, case management and the single point of access). Problems in these areas must be identified in each instance where agencies attempt to collaborate and coordinate their activities.

Alaszewski and Harrison (1988) use a descriptive research design to compare three different collaborative ventures in Great Britain. They analyse the implementation style of collaboration in a case study of child welfare services, addiction services, and services for the mentally disabled. The styles used are rational, laissez-faire/incremental, and a third approach characterized by identifying the major impediments to developing new patterns of collaboration in service and devising responsive and creative solutions. This study is of particular note to the proposed research as it focuses on issues involved in collaborative efforts of child welfare agencies.

In the case of child welfare services, the death of a child in care in Britain in 1974 was attributed to poor coordination of services (Alaszewski & Harrison, 1988). Several judicial inquiries followed that identified the failure of agencies to coordinate their activities as a major factor in the failure to protect some children from abuse in the country. Specifically, a lack of role clarity for different agency workers and an overlap of services when more than one agency were involved were identified. Legal responsibility for protecting children rested with one agency but a whole range of agencies and professionals had contact with a particular child and family and may have relevant information to the care and protection of the child. Problems were seen to arise when these professionals did not share information and agree on courses of action. Responsibilities became blurred, vital information lost or overlooked, and decisions appeared to be avoided.

In response to these findings, a rationalist top-down approach was adopted prescribing a two-tier coordinating structure to improve coordination and collaboration across agencies involved in the provision of child welfare services (Alaszewski & Harrison, 1988). The Joint Child Abuse Committee (JCAC) comprising the top tier included managers from the major agencies involved in inter-agency forums to develop, monitor and review child abuse policies. This committee provided information yearly to the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) (the second tier) which reviewed the work done and set the plan for the next year.

A front line case conference strategy for coordination was imposed by JCAC as ‘an essential feature of interagency coordination’ which necessitated a formalized exchange of information between professionals regarding the child and family (Alaszewski & Harrison, 1988). Another mechanism imposed on coordination was the key worker strategy. The key worker was the mandated child welfare worker and this person was responsible for case management by maintaining regular contact with other agencies and coordinating the interagency work.

Despite this approach to coordination and collaboration, difficulties persisted in the system and resulted in yet another judicial inquiry in 1988 concerned with “the fundamental breakdown in communication with, and cooperation between, various disciplines which was impeding the proper approach to the care and protection of children” (Alaszewski & Harrison, 1988, p. 642). The inquiry emphasized the organizational aspects of the coordination problem as a lack of understanding by agencies of each others’ functions in relation to child protection; a lack of communication between

agencies; and differences of views at middle management level which eventually affect front line staff.

The recommendations of the committee were for more prescriptive rational structures such as a 'Specialist Assessment Team' to ensure more effective collaboration. Alaszewski and Harrison (1988) contend that this type of rational model of coordination that involves the imposition of structures for collaboration on agencies will have limited success as professionals continue to view problems in different ways and there are no incentives for collaboration.

The second case presented by Alaszewski and Harrison (1988) is that of the collaboration of addiction services in Great Britain. The style of organization is described by the authors as resembling that of a laissez-faire or incremental nature. Collaboration and coordination is achieved (or not achieved) through "processes of persuasion, negotiation, compromise, and bargaining...in other words, it relies on essentially political processes and enhanced partisan mutual adjustment rather than on the rationalist-centralist model of coordination through the exercise of bureaucratic authority" (p. 645). This style is viewed by the authors as haphazard and unpredictable in terms of what success the collaborative approach might achieve.

Alaszewski and Harrison (1988) present a third case that demonstrates an approach that identifies impediments to coordination and collaboration and addresses them with a specific response. In the case of services for people with mental disability in Great Britain, a major impediment identified was the problem of shifting resources between agencies when a person with a disability was leaving an institutional setting and moving to a community setting. Joint financing was identified as a mechanism for

making the shift. This approach is identified by the authors as being the most successful and having the most potential for success in relation to agencies overcoming problems in collaboration.

### ***Processes of Collaboration***

In the 1980s, researchers appeared to show more interest in the actual process of inter-organizational interaction rather than the style of implementation (Alaszewski & Harrison, 1988). Wistow and Fuller (1983), in a national survey on collaboration, found authorities were committed to the principle of integrated services but in practice there was very little effective collaboration as characterized by joint planning of services or in terms of team work at the practitioner level.

The concept of power dependency in relationships is raised by Harrison and Tether (1987) who suggest that where organizations have differing structures and processes coordination becomes coercion as one organization dominates and changes the other. Issues of resource dependency and power of one organization over another have implications for how organizations will approach a collaborative relationship (as outlined in the previous section).

Smith and Cantley (1985) propose the idea that organizations are made up of individuals who may have goals and objectives - rather than the organization itself having these. Young (1977) discusses 'assumptive worlds' being the different abilities or power of participants in organizations to impose their views on others and achieve their objectives. McGuire (1988) also asserts that organizational participants enter collaborative relationships with their own world view, 'interpretive schema' that determines how they experience situations, practising theory, logic of action and social

paradigm. In the social service realm, he contends, ideology and social variables influence how individuals working together from different organizations interact. Both ideas have implications for where and who the researcher should direct attention to when studying collaboration.

Glennerster, Korman, and Marslen-Wilson (1983) tested Young's 'assumptive world' approach in examining collaboration activities in the British National Health Service with local social services. Officers in the health service and local government were interviewed and found to be operating within very different assumptive worlds. The NHS officers viewed planning as a technical exercise and relied heavily on national policy direction. Local government officers tended to see planning as competition between different departments for shrinking resources. Glennerster et al. (1983) argue that to understand the nature of collaboration the objectives and intentions of the individuals who are expected to collaborate must also be examined.

In a study of relations between organizations that were involved in collaborative relations over a thirteen year period, Gummer (1990) found several clear patterns emerge that may account for the ongoing collaboration. Individuals identified the development of trust with their counterparts as vital to the relationship. Developing 'relation-specific' expertise in the work that the two organizations share was also identified as vital to developing success in the relationship. Gummer also found that longer-standing collaborations were less vulnerable to threats to their existence. The likelihood of the relationships ending decreased after each successful year together.

Friend, Power and Yewlett (1974) found through their study that individuals may see their relationship with individuals in other organizations as important, if not more

important, than those within their own organization. These individuals are referred to as reticulists who use social networks to coordinate the activities of theirs and other organizations.

McKeganey and Hunter (1986) examined coordination of services for elderly people in an area of Scotland. A team composed of four doctors coordinated the activities of the NHS and local authority services workers by having each exchange patients within their services. This team had a 'reticulist' or networking role and acted as arbiter between the different services which enhanced mutual understanding and mutual work. They also noted the importance of the role of resources and power relations involved. The team established a relationship with the social work department within the local authority services. The authors maintain that this relationship was essential for the success of the team as they were given full support from the social work department.

### ***Models for Collaboration***

Inter-agency collaboration is described as "a mine field filled with unexpected problems, unexpressed differences of opinion, and unanticipated outcomes" by Wimpfheimer, Bloom and Kramer (1990, p. 90). Four pre-conditions for inter-agency collaboration are outlined as:

- Mutuality - Recognition of a common problem and acceptance of cooperation as a possible resolution;
- Timing - The problems or issues being addressed through the collaborative relationship must be high on the priority list of the agencies involved;
- Authority and Influence - The agency representatives involved in meetings on collaboration must have power to commit agency resources, and;

- Creativity - The individuals in the agencies involved must have the ability to remain open and flexible in adapting to the unconventional processes involved in collaborating.

Once these preconditions are met, actual meetings may begin and the following working principles must exist before effective solutions to the problems the agencies collaborate to deal with can be found (Wimpfheimer et al., 1990):

- Every agency involved in the relationship must see itself as a 'winner' in that they have gained something for their organization;
- An open communication system among partners means they are able to acknowledge their contribution to problems and accept responsibility for working out these problems;
- Acknowledgement that all partners share some common risk in their organizations if they are not able to resolve the issues they have come together to address, and;
- For effective collaboration, it must be recognized that there are limits beyond which agencies can not or will not go. It is best if these limits are communicated early in the development of the relationship so that any plan of action can take them into account.

Wimpfheimer et al. (1990) contend that the greater number of preconditions and conditions met, successful outcomes in inter-agency collaboration are more likely. Three case studies outlined in the paper in which all of the preconditions and conditions were met are the basis for this conclusion.

Following involvement with the New Jersey Department of Human Services in several inter-agency collaborative ventures, Beatrice (1990) wrote descriptively about the experience. While very positive about the benefits of inter-agency collaboration, the barriers to and strategies for success are outlined in this paper. Table 2.1 provides a summary of these barriers and strategies.

**Table 2.1:****Barriers and Strategies in Inter-Agency Collaborative Ventures (Beatrice, 1990)**

	<b>Barriers to Effective Collaboration</b>		<b>Strategies for Effective Collaboration</b>
1.	An agency becoming involved in an inter-agency relationship loses some of its independence and ability to maintain control over its domain.	1.	Agencies involved in collaboration need to identify and focus on common goals.
2.	Differing agency operating procedures. It is extremely difficult for agencies to amend practices that have been in place for a long period of time.	2.	Enthusiasm and close attention to the collaborative initiative will generate more positive partnerships.
3.	Conflicting priorities can also inhibit successful collaboration. Different agencies may value different programs and have difficulty agreeing on which is a priority.	3.	Developing personal relationships across agencies aids in the fostering of trust and understanding that is necessary to successfully collaborate.
4.	Agencies tend to focus on a task orientation when implementing collaboration and fail to pay careful attention to process issues such as communication and encouragement. Agencies are further seen to miss an opportunity to share their visions when they are too focused on task implementation.	4.	Agencies can view collaboration as a possibility for opening up opportunities for both agencies involved.
5.	Tendency of agencies to place blame on the other agency if the collaboration is faltering.	5.	New programs can act as catalysts for collaboration as they create a break from the past and can aid in breaking patterns and habits that are no longer functional in the new relationship.
6.	Agencies differ in their approach to policy implementation. This must be respected as the culture within each agency is somewhat different and one agency cannot expect another to simply adopt their approach.	6.	Collaboration among agencies requires coordination. Establishing contact and patterns of interactions helps individuals from different agencies to get to know each other.
7.	Different intake requirements, financial systems, management information systems, computer systems, and organizational language create complications in collaborating with one another.	7.	Coming together to meet common threats forges a bond in the relationship between agencies.
8.	Differences in 'bureaucratic culture' can also impede collaboration.	8.	It is very important to be responsive to smaller issues such as returning phone calls and sharing information.

***Dynamics of Roles and Relational Issues in Collaboration***

Clinicians providing contract services to child welfare clients set out their observations in a paper describing what they see as issues in collaborating with child



protection caseworkers (Molin & Herskowitz, 1986). Taking a family systems and social systems approach, they considered the dynamics of the relationships among the client, the caseworker, and the mental health clinician. They describe 'agency triangles' as a situation where a second agency may be used to diffuse or deflect stress and conflict between the first agency and a family. The triangle is viewed as a defence mechanism that interferes with appropriate problem solving.

Molin and Herskowitz (1986) hypothesize that caseworkers may use the clinician to diffuse and defend against the anxiety and stress of the child protection role. The authors set out the following four situations that they view as commonly occurring in their work with caseworkers:

1. Referrals may be covert attempts to have the clinician uncover incidents of abuse when the worker feels unable to.
2. Some referrals were viewed as the caseworkers need for validation of their own observations and opinions. If the validation was not provided the clinicians often felt their work with the client was not supported by the caseworker. In some cases the treatment was terminated by the caseworker.
3. Also outlined was a situation occurring where the caseworker drew the clinician into a decision-making role as they were not getting the support they needed from their supervisor to make decisions. This, in turn, is counterproductive to the clinicians therapeutic role with the family and further, the clinicians finds themselves responsible for issues and decisions outside their role and expertise.
4. In some instances the caseworkers were viewed to be transferring the client to the therapist to protect themselves from negative feelings associated with the client. The result often was seen to be that the caseworker would further avoid both the family and clinician to avoid the feeling thus evoked.

Some strategies for dealing with these issues are presented by Molin and Herskowitz (1986). They assert that these reactions by the caseworkers are normal and to be expected given the nature of the work that they are engaged in. Indeed they describe caseworkers

as often reacting to their authority role with families. ‘Over-parentified’ workers may step beyond their professional role while ‘under-parentified’ workers may fail to exercise appropriate responsibility for the child. In any case the caseworkers often feel like inadequate parents as they do not have enough time to spend with the families they are working with. This, the authors contend, leaves them feeling overwhelmed and inadequate. Taking the analysis one step further, it is asserted these caseworkers often replicate feelings of the child in the family in the organizational setting as they may feel misused, neglected or uncared for by management.

Molin and Herskowitz (1986) recommend that there needs to be more attention placed on workers in collaborative agencies. Workers need to show the same level of understanding and responsiveness to the needs of their counterparts as they are to the clients they work with. “Our experience has been that the ability to service families has been directly related to our ability to comprehend and interact with the larger social system which surrounds the family. Finally, development of the knowledge and skills to do so is a gradual process, the progress of which, like so much else, is dependent on the strength of the collaborative relationships formed between caseworkers and clinicians” (p. 210). This study provides valuable focus on the dynamics of interaction between front line workers in a collaborative relationship.

### ***Cultural Factors in Collaboration***

The relative effectiveness of service integration and collaborative relationship is contingent, among other factors, on the prevailing system of cultural and societal values (Maxwell, 1990). According to Maxwell, motivational factors, value expectancy, trust, status sensitivity, and conflict resolution are factors that are to some extent determined by

an individual's cultural and societal position. Previous studies that indicate variability in different cultural groups' tendency to trust or distrust people are cited as a strong factor in collaboration as attaining the degree of co-operation necessary depends on having a basic attitude of trust or faith (Williams, Whyte & Green, 1966; Williams, 1973).

Maxwell (1990) gives examples of how some cultural characteristics affect integration and collaboration. In Peru, a 'low trust culture' characterized by a reluctance toward delegation of authority and responsibility, rigid inspection and control procedures, and restricted flow of information, compounded by a strict adherence to classical bureaucracy is seen to promote non-cooperation.

Three processes invariably involved in service integration are cooperation, competition or conflict (Maxwell, 1990). The degree of variation that different cultures engage in their approach to conflict resolution is significant. Some cultures exhibit extreme avoidance and indirectness in dealing with issues of conflict and disagreement. From this stance, individuals either engage in "fight or flight" mentality. This can become seriously counter-productive in resolving conflict - and can catalyse a 'win-lose' situation where people resort to bringing in a higher authority to mediate.

Maxwell concludes that "a full understanding of the role played by cultural values as determinants of...inter-organization co-ordination, cannot be achieved without a more far-reaching assessment of the interplay between the selected values and the various dimensions of the integration/co-ordination process as indicated earlier" (1990, p. 183). Such research, it is asserted, could help to demonstrate how to improve mechanisms for enhancing service delivery in multi-cultural organizations.

A number of recent studies address cultural differences in conflict management and resolution style. Gabrielidis, Stephan, Ybarra, Pearson and Villareal (1997) surveyed college students in Mexico and the United States using a questionnaire to determine cultural differences in preferences for conflict resolution styles. Their findings showed that Mexican students, who come from a collectivistic culture, prefer conflict resolution styles that emphasize concern for the outcome of others, more than the students from the United States (an individualistic culture). Their findings further suggested that in the context of interpersonal conflict, avoidance may reflect concern for others, rather than a lack of concern for others.

Callister and Wall (1997) interviewed 43 Japanese students at the University of Missouri and 50 organizational members in Japan. The results of their analysis indicated that a cultural preference for harmony, use of intermediaries, and the need to maintain personal dignity, all impact mediation practices. A non-assertive mediation style focussing on gathering information, listening to others opinions, and sharing these is favored over relying on criticism, education and separating disputants.

The handling of disagreement and conflict by individuals from different cultures in organizations was explored by Smith, Dugan, Peterson and Leung (1998). Over three thousand managers and supervisors from a variety of organizations in twenty-three countries completed questionnaires regarding the handling of disagreement in their organizations. The results of this study indicated individuals from individualistic nations favored using their own experience and training in addressing conflict while individuals in collectivist nations favored formal rules and procedures in conflict resolution. This

contradicts previous studies that indicate a preference for harmony by individuals of collectivist societies.

### **Summary**

The literature reviewed provides some preliminary ideas about key concepts to be addressed in the proposed study. This provides a starting point from which to begin a developed understanding of how the different areas of literature become inter-related and relevant on a practice, policy, and organizational level to the specific collaborative relationship between CRV-NMST and the Aboriginal agencies involved.

The literature in the area of Aboriginal child welfare identifies a movement toward Aboriginal service delivery systems as a reaction to the failure of mainstream provincial programs. These findings form a basis and rationale for organizations such as CRV-NMST and the Aboriginal agencies to fill these identified needs. Emerging models in the area of Aboriginal social service provision provide some understanding of how the agencies involved in this study may be providing services differently than mainstream agencies have in the past attempted to provide services. It also provides some insight in to the challenges the Aboriginal agencies may meet when trying to implement what may be perceived as new or different methods in a traditionally mainstream sector.

Literature addressing the contract environment in which CRV-NMST and the Aboriginal agencies operate implies that an unequal partnership may exist with the Aboriginal agencies dependent upon the provincial funding arrangement through CRV-NMST for continued operation. As a result, agency autonomy regarding such important issues as mandate, value orientation, programming, etc. (all extremely sensitive when attempting to provide an innovative model of service delivery) may be compromised and

this may in turn affect the collaborative relationship in terms of vision or goal compatibility between the two organizations.

Literature in the area of collaboration provides a foundation for focus on the specific variables involved in the collaborative relationship. As most of the research and literature in the area of collaboration focuses on mainstream organizations it will be interesting to see what similarities and differences the Aboriginally-distinct organizations involved in this research will share with the results from these existing studies.

The next chapter provides a detailed outline of the research design and methodology used to conduct this study. Profiles of the participating organizations in the study are provided along with the description of how the researcher gained entry to these organizations.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

An exploratory cross-sectional survey design is used in this study. The design is both quantitative and qualitative in approach in that a two part measurement instrument was specifically designed through a qualitative process involving participant focus group feedback. Completion of the questionnaire by the research participants provides a measurement of their perceptions of the collaborative relationship between CRV-NMST and the contracted Aboriginal agencies. This measurement is then analysed to explore the importance of and relationship between the variables involved in collaboration within this specific setting. By nature it is an applied research design that may assist the specific agencies involved in identifying effective and ineffective aspects of their collaborative relationship and indicate a possible direction for change and improvement in the future relationship.

A description of and rationale for the above two-phase methodological process of first developing a measurement instrument specific to the participants involved in the study, and then secondly, collecting data through the administration of the measurement instrument is provided in this chapter. In the interest of providing a richer context for the study, a description of the agencies involved is provided, as well as the process involved in carrying out the research. The basis for proceeding with the methodology in this manner is supported by the literature.

Despite a substantial amount of literature regarding the history and evolution of service provision models in the Aboriginal child welfare sector, the nature of power and dependency within contract relationships and the nature of collaborative relationships among social service providers, there is little literature, other than the work of Maxwell (1990), that attempts to place the concept of collaboration within the context of differing ethnic or cultural orientations. The current literature fails to provide this as it is still restricted to a mainstream focus with little departure yet into such specialized areas of inquiry as cultural impact on collaborative relationships. This gap in the literature, combined with the expressed need for information from the agencies involved in the study, form the basis for the design used in this study. The research design is intended to be an academic endeavour as well as at the same time elicit information that reflects an applied research outcome that may be useful to the participating organizations. Other Aboriginal urban organizations may also find the research outcome useful in addressing organizational needs.

### **Gaining Entry to Calgary Rocky View Native Multi-Service Team (CRV-NMST)**

The researcher was employed with CRV-NMST for one and a half years from March 1996 to August 1997 as a front line child protection worker. The idea for this research project was proposed by the assistant manager of CRV-NMST during a subsequent MSW field placement the researcher did at CRV-NMST in the summer of 1998. During the placement, the researcher began the project by initiating a number of focus groups with workers from CRV-NMST and the contracted Aboriginal agencies focusing on issues of collaboration. These focus groups generated an array of data that



was systematically examined for themes and was then fed back to the participating agencies. However, the researchers' field placement ended at the time.

The assistant manager at CRV-NMST was approached and agreed to support continued research in the area of collaboration for the purpose of completing a thesis in the MSW program. In June 1999, a research proposal was submitted to Calgary Rocky View Child & Family Services so that formal consideration of the project could be made. The proposal was approved in the summer of 1999.

The researcher maintained close communication with the assistant (now manager) of CRV-NMST during all phases of the research and sought feedback that is integrated into the research.

### **Gaining Entry to Contracted Aboriginal Agencies**

The researcher possessed some prior experience with the directors of the contracted Aboriginal agencies as a result of previously working at CRV-NMST. During the field placement at CRV-NMST, the researcher communicated directly with all of these individuals regarding the purpose of the focus groups conducted with staff. Through this process (and the subsequent feedback of the information resulting from the focus groups), the agency directors became further familiar with the researcher and the proposed research.

In the summer of 1999, directors of the contracted Aboriginal agencies were sent a copy of the research proposal and were encouraged to review and provide feedback regarding the design and intent of the research. The writer spoke with all regarding their interest and feedback regarding the proposed research project. All five agency directors

indicated their interest in participating in the research project and gave permission for the researcher to proceed.

## **Organizational Profiles**

### ***Calgary Rocky View Native Multi-Service Team***

Calgary Rocky View Native Multi-Service Team (CRV-NMST) is a provincially mandated child protection agency providing service to Aboriginal children and families located in Calgary in accordance with Alberta provincial child protection legislation and guidelines. The agency is comprised of a staff of 37 child protection social workers who are of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal descent. There is one manager and six supervisors who provide direction to six specific program areas: investigations, two family support/reunification units, permanent guardianship services, adolescent specific services, foster care and adoptions. CRV-NMST is mandated to promote and provide culturally appropriate child protection services to the urban Aboriginal population in Calgary.

The child protection worker role at CRV-NMST is that of a case manager who is delegated the authority of a director under the provincial child protection legislation to make decisions regarding what action to take in protecting children viewed at risk and in need of protection by the province. The child protection worker is not expected or able, given their workload, to provide direct services to children and families on their caseloads. Rather, workers from fee-for-service and contracted agencies are approached to provide direct services such as in-home support, youth work, residential treatment/placement, etc. through a referral made by the child protection worker. The child protection worker is responsible to provide the appropriate information and outline

expectations of service delivery to the service provider. The child protection worker is also responsible to monitor the services provided and make changes as necessary to the case plan.

Another mandate of CRV-NMST is to contract agency services from Aboriginal service providers as much as possible. This reflects a commitment toward employing approaches and interventions that originate from an Aboriginal perspective and from qualified Aboriginal service providers where possible. CRV-NMST also has an Aboriginal coordinator who, as part of his responsibilities, arranges for staff and clients to meet with Aboriginal elders when requested.

As it is a provincially mandated program, all funding for CRV-NMST is obtained from the Calgary Rocky View Child & Family Services Authority which obtains their funding from Alberta Children's Services. The method of governance is characterized by a decentralized provincial bureaucracy whereby the manager of CRV-NMST reports to a senior manager, who reports to a chief executive officer, who reports to the local board of directors for Calgary Rocky View Child and Family Services, who are governed by provincial legislation and would ultimately report to the Minister of Children's Services in Alberta.

There is no attempt to conceal the identity of CRV-NMST in this research study as the Calgary Rocky View Child and Family Services Regional Authority agreed to being identified and associated with this research study.

### ***Contracted Aboriginal Agencies: Definition***

For the purpose of the study, the participating contracted Aboriginal agencies include five Aboriginal agencies that currently provide services to Aboriginal children

and families in Calgary through a contract with Calgary Rocky View Child and Family Services (more specifically, through referrals from CRV-NMST workers). All of these agencies have a commitment to hiring Aboriginal staff and providing services based on Aboriginal traditional and cultural models. Administration of these agencies is facilitated through an agency board of directors or proprietor(s) who identify themselves as Aboriginal. The number of staff within each agency ranges from approximately five to fifteen. Not all staff are necessarily of Aboriginal descent but would be hired based on knowledge and experience in working within a traditional model with Aboriginal people. The five agencies provide a range of different services from family support, youth support, residential youth placement, and adoption and foster parent support. The agencies are identified as Agency A, B, C, D, and E to ensure anonymity. A brief profile of each organization follows.

#### *Agency A*

Agency A is a non-profit organization that provides a number of services to Aboriginal children and families helping them to connect to and/or maintain a connection with their biological, cultural, spiritual and linguistic heritage. The programs offered by Agency A are:

1. Cross-Cultural Adoption Program: providing assistance to adoptive parents (non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal) and children dealing with cross-cultural issues.
2. In-Home Support Services for Foster Parents: in home guidance and support for foster parents (non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal) aimed at strengthening and preserving foster care placement. Through teaching adoptive/foster parents about Aboriginal cultures, it is believed they can assist the children to develop a healthy sense of identity and pride in themselves. This teaching may include history, traditions, beliefs, values, culture, language, dancing and spirituality involved in achieving a healthy holistic Aboriginal being.

3. Aboriginal Foster Care Providers: assist in recruiting foster parents and completing home studies and assessments.
4. Foster Parent Pre-Service Training: provide culturally appropriate training sessions for Aboriginal foster parents in conjunction with Calgary Rocky View Native Services.
5. Foster Allegation Support Team (FAST) Representation: provide support and guidance to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal caregivers when allegations are made. 24 hour crisis support line.
6. Youth Support: providing support to youth in care.
7. Foster Parent Support Meetings: providing ongoing support, information, and training to foster parents in conjunction with Calgary Rocky View Native Services.
8. Respite Care: arranging alternate caregivers for a specific period of time to support parent/family/caregivers.

A cultural approach based on the needs of the client is promoted in all programs. The staff often act in a role modelling/mentoring role to reflect a healthy orientation to Aboriginal heritage.

The agency receives all of its funding from Calgary Rocky View Child & Family Services. The agency is governed by a seven-member elected board of directors. The agency employs four full-time direct service providers. The agency also enjoys the guidance of two Aboriginal elders and other volunteers.

### ***Agency B***

Agency B is also a non-profit agency that provides a number of different programs to Aboriginal children, individuals and families in Calgary. While this agency provides a range of services, for the purpose of this study we are only concerned with one of the programs they offer through a contract arrangement with Calgary Rocky View Child and Family Services. It is important to understand that their relationship with CRV-

NMST is unique in that they receive only a portion of their funding from this source and only for this particular program. The agencies' other programs rely on funding from a range of different external sources.

The program developed to provide contract service to CRV-NMST is a medium intensity in home support program provided on a short or long term basis. The goal of the program is to assist families to address issues that place children at risk within the family unit and thereby avoid out of home placement for children or assist in reunification where children have been removed. Priority is placed on promoting independence for family members while utilizing a flexible model of program delivery geared toward meeting the unique needs of Aboriginal children and families involved with child welfare.. The framework for intervention is described as a traditional approach to family healing including in the team, where appropriate, customary service providers. Customary service providers are described as respected elders or medicine men that perform ceremonies and/or provide attention to specific spiritual and cultural needs on an individual basis to clients in the program.

Professional service providers within the program provide counselling (individual, family, group), access to community resources, mediation, advocacy, parenting skills, assistance in addressing cross cultural issues, as well as responding to a range of issues including family violence, addictions, parent child conflict, mental health, developmental delays, isolation from community, etc.

The funding for this program, as with the other agencies involved in this study, comes solely from CRV-NMST. Although as previously stated this is only one of several programs the agency provides. The agency accesses funding sources other than CRV-

NMST for its other programs. Agency B is governed by a voluntary board of directors. Within the specific program there are five full time service providers in addition to customary service providers.

### *Agency C*

Agency C is owned and operated by two Aboriginal individuals who seek direction from an advisory council comprised of several respected traditional Aboriginal persons and Aboriginal university students, as well as a non-Aboriginal university professor and the deputy chief of police. Agency C operates a home for six Aboriginal youth that are under the guardianship or custody of child welfare and require placement outside their homes. Agency C has a contract with Calgary Rocky View Child and Family Services – the majority, if not all, of their funding comes from this source. Three individuals are employed full-time and two individuals part-time.

The vision set out is to provide a home for happy, productive, successful and culturally well-adjusted Aboriginal Youth, who enjoy life to the fullest in a positive manner and who are generous, loving and contribute to their community. The agency provides a culturally appropriate, community based, six-bed group home program offering substitute care to Aboriginal children from twelve to eighteen years of age. A client-centred approach is taken utilizing some of the values as expressed by Aboriginal Elders including respect, caring, generosity, sharing, dignity, love, result-oriented, responsibility, cooperation, hope, acceptance, kindness, confidence, consideration, and purposefulness. All of the distinct cultures of Indian, Metis and Inuit people are respected and recognized.

The goals set out by the program are: (a) to provide a culturally appropriate, safe and secure home environment for the youth while helping them the transition to positive self-expectancy, self-confidence and self-reliance; (b) to provide an opportunity for the youth to pursue a self-development programs that respects their reality and culture, through the pursuit of personal pride; (c) to provide recreational, cultural, and educational programs that encourages and enhances development of the mind, body and spirit; (d) to provide an opportunity for youth to maintain or develop a positive relationship with their family and/or their home community; (e) to include youth in their own case planning, program planning and goal development; (f) to advocate for the youth in the home; and (g) to maintain a positive working relationship with all stakeholders.

#### *Agency D*

Agency D is a non-profit agency that operates throughout the province and provides a number of programs to Aboriginal children, individuals and families. While this agency provides a range of services, for the purpose of this study we are only concerned with two of the programs they offer through a contract arrangement with Calgary Rocky View Child and Family Services. The agency's other programs rely on funding from a range of different external sources. Within the two programs they offer; family support and youth work ,they employ four full-time workers. Agency D is governed by a voluntary board of directors, and has a provincial executive director who provides support to managers in the various offices they have in Alberta.

The mission statement of Agency D is "to contribute to the holistic development of the Aboriginal individual, family and community by working in partnerships to provide culturally sensitive programs and services and by promoting the fair and



equitable treatment of Aboriginal people”. The two contracted programs provided to clients of CRV-NMST are in-home support and youth workers.

These programs were initiated in 1987 to offer a preventative program offering a range of culturally sensitive services to Aboriginal families to prevent the need for Child Welfare intervention. Interventions are aimed at strengthening and preserving families. Services are home-based and family centred. Some objectives stated are: to strengthen the family unit so as to prevent children being taken in to child welfare care; reuniting families where children have been removed; to promote the well being of children in their homes; to prevent, reduce or eliminate behaviours that place children at risk; and to help Aboriginal families and children to gain a sense of identity and self-esteem through positive aspects of their native heritage and culture.

#### *Agency E*

Agency E is a community based six-bed group home that is privately owned and operated by an Aboriginal individual. Aboriginal youth that are under the guardianship or custody of child welfare and require placement outside their homes are referred through CRV-NMST who have a yearly contract with the agency. The majority, if not all, of the agency’s funding comes from this source. Ten individuals are employed within the agency.

People of Aboriginal descent, with formal educational backgrounds in the social sciences, are employed within the agency as they have an understanding of the traditions of Aboriginal people and understand which professional approaches are most effective in helping them to regain “power, strength and health”. Services are offered that are culturally appropriate and respectful – with a commitment to promoting wellness, self-

reliance and independence in the Aboriginal community. A focus is placed on assisting people to “bridge the gap” between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. They believe that through traditional values and beliefs youth have a better chance of leading a more productive and healthy life.

The goals as stated by the agency are to provide a culturally appropriate, safe and secure home environment for Aboriginal youth. By working with other community agencies, the staff assist youth to make positive connections with their families, communities and culture and develop skills necessary to become independent. There are recreation, cultural and education components to the program. Introducing, promoting and maintaining Aboriginal heritage in the lives of the residents through language, song, dancing, drumming, ceremonies and the use of initiations is stressed. Advocacy, recruiting and training qualified professional who are committed to the youth, and ongoing evaluation of services are also emphasized.

### **Research Questions**

After reviewing the literature and assessing the participating agencies’ needs for information, the researcher proposed the following two questions: 1) What are organizational member’s perceptions of the current collaborative relationship between CRV-NMST and contracted Aboriginal agencies? 2) What areas in the collaborative relationship do organizational members believe need to be addressed to increase the effectiveness of the collaborative relationship between CRV-NMST and contracted Aboriginal agencies?

The first question is intended to generate data concerning current perceptions of how workers from the organizations view aspects of the collaborative relationship with

each other. The second question is intended to generate data indicating what workers consider to be important aspects of a successful collaborative relationship. By asking these two questions, the study may illicit information important to all of the participating agencies regarding how workers currently view the collaborative relationship and additionally, what they feel needs to be improved or focused on. Furthermore, given that many of the respondents are of Aboriginal descent, there may be important information regarding differences in what aspects are identified as important in a collaborative relationship from their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Due to the exploratory nature of the study and research questions, there is no specific hypothesis to be asserted.

### **Measurement Instrument Development**

For the purpose of this study, the term collaborative relationship is a concept comprised of a number of variables identified by participants in this study. There are many existing definitions of collaboration and the collaborative relationship available within the literature. However, because of the importance of using an applied research design, inherent in which is the uniqueness of the participants involved in the study, a decision was made to design a measurement instrument based on concepts and variables defined by the participants themselves. Initial focus groups, that were open to all potential participants in the study, were used to develop an understanding and definition of the variables (later to be used to develop the instrument) involved in the collaborative relationship across their agencies.

While an instrument that measures communication across agencies already exists, it was developed from theoretical constructs in prescriptive literature that do not necessarily reflect the variables involved in the collaborative relationship as expressed by

the participants in this study (Ferrara, 1996). Ferrara's 'Interagency Communication Measure (ICM)' is based on distinct categories measuring individual communication style and patterns of individual's communication across organizations. While some of the questions measure variables that closely resemble some of the variables expressed by participants in this study, it did not nearly capture all of them. The ICM is also not expressed in terms or words commonly used during the focus groups to express meaning. Therefore, designing an instrument specific to the population in this study was determined to be more appropriate.

The formulation of the research questions as well as the decision to design the instrument specific to the participants in the study was further influenced by the work of Salhani, Shea and Lewko (1994). After reviewing their findings, the decision was made that the questionnaire would be designed by including an 'ideal' measurement of participants' visions of collaboration in addition to their 'existing' perception of collaboration. Salhani, Shea and Lewko assert many existing problems in the area of collaboration are due to "incomplete, competing, or divergent visions of the end product on the part of program stakeholders", and further "vision measurement is a particularly useful tool... when the evaluation design calls for going beyond merely reporting results and is oriented toward assisting stakeholders to arrive at a mutually agreeable destination" (p. 5). In other words, two different measurements – existing and ideal – allow stakeholders to determine the current perception of the collaborative relationship as well as a desired state for the collaborative relationship.

### *Focus Groups: Defining the Variables*

During the period of May to August 1998, the researcher conducted ten focus groups with individuals from CRV-NMST and the five Aboriginal agencies using two open-ended questions to elicit their perceptions of the variables involved in a collaborative relationship. The following two questions were asked in each focus group:

- 1) Do you see any problems or issues in your working relationship with (CRVNMST/Agency) staff?
- 2) What do you think are some possible solutions to your concerns?

These questions were viewed as broad enough to elicit a wide range of feedback. In addition, the first question was deliberately worded to give permission to participants to comment on possible negative aspects of the relationship.

The same format was used for all of the ten focus groups (specific agency and CRV-NMST units comprised each of the ten groups). The researcher gathered with the participants in an informal group setting and recorded their feedback. The two questions were asked of each the groups. Probing, clarifying, and summarizing were used to gain additional feedback from the groups.

Data from these focus groups was used to elicit the variables that affect and define the collaborative relationship as perceived by the participants in the ten groups. The researcher used a qualitative approach to synthesize the raw data in to smaller units of meaning; then identified similarities and differences between them; and then looked at patterns and themes (Unrau & Coleman, in Grinnell, 1997). This was done by analyzing the data for similar units of meaning and then using a frequency count of how often the units were expressed to determine emerging patterns and themes concerning what

variables comprised the concept of a collaborative relationship for participants in the focus groups.

Following this process, the researcher concluded that individuals in the focus groups identified the following expressed variables as defining the concept of a collaborative relationship (not in any specific value related order);

**Table 3.1: Variables in a Collaborative Relationship**

- a) Quantity and quality of communication/information shared between different agency workers;
- b) Type and amount of contact between colleagues/workers;
- c) Awareness of other organizations' mandate & protocol by workers;
- d) Administrative compatibility (i.e.: paperwork, protocol) between organizations;
- e) Consistency of workers job performance within particular agency;
- f) Staffing impacts on availability of workers to work effectively with counterparts;
- g) Vision and goal similarity across agencies;
- h) Differences in cultural perspective/understanding and practice;
- i) Inter-personal/conflict resolution skills of workers within agencies;
- j) Accessibility of workers to clients and colleagues.

### ***Measurement Instrument Design***

These variables were the basis for the development of a measurement instrument containing a total of 87 statements respondents could agree or disagree with using a Likert scale to elicit a quantitative measurement (see Appendix A and Appendix B for the CRV-NMST and Agency versions of the instrument). The statements were grouped in two parts both containing five sections. The first part focused on existing practices in the specific areas of communication, collaboration, administrative and professional practice, cultural practice and relationship. The second part of the instrument focused on statements of solutions or strategies in the area of collaboration as elicited from the focus

groups in the same specific areas as part one. Where possible, participant's actual words and phrases were used in an attempt to capture as accurately as possible the concept or meaning in specific statements.

In addition, two measures of each statement were sought within the instrument. The Likert scale was used to create an ordinal measurement of the current response to statements within the instrument. Participants were then asked to choose five of the statements in each section they felt were most important and rank order them from one to five (with one being most important) – establishing a measure of what they view as the most important variables in each section. Additionally, a section seeking demographic information was included at the end of the instrument. Demographic information collected in this section were gender, role in the agency, length of time employed in the agency and human service settings, ethnic background, age, and educational background. To ensure that participants were not limited to a purely quantitative and previously determined schedule of questions, space was provided at the end of each section for additional comments.

### ***Pre-testing the Measurement Instrument***

Pre-testing a measurement instrument is a means to examine the internal validity of the instrument by testing the clarity of the questions it contains (Mindel, in Grinnell, 1997). The goal of pre-testing is to reduce or eliminate measurement error in the instruments content. The initial draft of the instrument was offered for review to all of the agency directors. Feedback was obtained from several regarding the content and layout and appropriate changes were subsequently made.

Following this refinement the instrument was pre-tested by workers working in a non-Aboriginal child welfare work site. Ten child protection workers were asked to complete the instrument – five completed the agency version and five completed the CRV-NMST version. The child protection workers were asked to pay attention to the layout or construction, any difficulties experienced in completing the questionnaire, length of time it took to complete, and how appropriate the scale and ranking seemed. Feedback obtained regarding the above criteria resulted in a number of changes including refinement in layout, the re-wording of some statements throughout the instrument to improve comprehension and to shorten the time required to complete it.

### **Research Participants**

The organizational members invited to participate in this study were the direct service providers, supervisors, and managers within CRV-NMST and the Aboriginal contract agencies. The potential population size was approximately sixty-five individuals.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The researcher attempted to gain the participation of all members of the participating organizations. The potential participants were informed of the purpose of the study and given the option to complete the measurement instrument primarily through structured meetings with the researcher present. A detailed consent form with a thorough description of the intent of the research along with any risks involved in participating was provided to potential participants along with a verbal description of the study and response to any questions raised (see Appendix C). In some circumstances, where these meetings were not possible, a package with complete instructions and a contact number



for the researcher were sent to potential participants at their work place and retrieved later (see Appendix D).

Participation was voluntary and participants were advised during the meeting that individual responses would not be recognizable as the reporting of results would be by way of demographic aggregate grouping (i.e., agency responses and CRV-NMST responses, or Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal responses, manager and front line worker responses, etc.). No identifying information was requested on the questionnaire and consent forms were collected separately from the questionnaires to ensure no connection was made between the two that could identify the participants involved.

Research was conducted at each agency site as the instrument was made available to individuals from the agencies. The researcher was available either in person or by telephone to clarify any questions participants possessed regarding the instrument. The researcher performed all aspects of the study for the sake of continuity with the assistance of a thesis supervisor to provide appropriate direction.

### **Data Analysis**

Data obtained from the measurement instrument was subjected to a number of different quantitative analyses. Analysis of the instrument was done prior to using statistical testing to determine how reliable responses to the instrument were. Descriptive statistics, chi squares, and independent t-tests were used to analyse the data.

Cronbach's alpha was selected to establish the reliability of the two part measurement instrument. This provided a measurement of the extent to which the survey questionnaire measured items consistently from one participant to the next.

Due to the exploratory nature of the research questions, data analysis proceeded with a descriptive approach to explore the data collected in relation to the instrument statements (Weinbach & Grinnell, 1995). Descriptive analysis included frequency counts, measures of central tendency, cross tabulation (chi squares), and independent t-tests. The participants responses to individual statements, cumulative section scores (reverse scored where appropriate) and rankings of the various statements concerning perceived and ideal collaboration within the instrument served as the dependent variables in the study. Demographic variables in the last section of the questionnaire – such as agency/CRV-NMST, ethnic status, gender, etc. – served as the independent variables within the study.

The open-ended questions provided at the end of each part of the instrument were insufficiently responded to to perform any type of content analysis qualitatively or quantitatively. Instead, where they appeared to illuminate information that was deemed to be statistically significant through the descriptive analysis, they were used in the Findings section of this report to further capture the essence of the data.

### **Limitations of the Study**

A limitation of using a measurement instrument is found in the principle of reactivity. Participants or respondents may be influenced by the items on an instrument and by the person who developed it (Grinnell, 1997). The researcher attempted to control for this by using direct feedback and language from the participants in developing the questionnaire. However, in rephrasing and trying to make comments fit the structure of the questionnaire some researcher bias may enter the instrument.

A major shortcoming in using a quantitative approach with this population is the extent to which it has been used inappropriately with members of the Aboriginal community in the past. Positivistic research deduces to one reality the experiences of many often missing the essence of individual, situational, and contextual experiences (Grinnell, 1997). For this reason an attempt to combine a qualitative component to the study has been made.

Finally, as the study represents applied research the results can only be generalized to the specific population in the study. The research is intended to be exploratory and descriptive in nature and as such is in no way conclusive but may form a foundation for further study in the area of Aboriginal social service organizations.

### **Ethical Approval for the Study**

The research proposal was submitted for an ethical review process to ensure conformity with ethical standards of the treatment of participants. Approval was given by the Social Work Ethics Review Committee (SWERC) to proceed with the research on August 16, 1999. Further, ongoing consultation with stakeholders in the agencies occurred throughout the project to ensure the research maintained an ethical and appropriate orientation.

### **Summary**

The methodology and procedures employed in this study were presented in this chapter. A brief description of the participating organizations and individuals, formulation of the research questions, the rationale and process for developing a measurement instrument, the procedure for collecting data, and finally the procedure for

analyzing the data were provided. The results of the study are presented in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESULTS**

#### **Introduction**

Following is an analysis of the data gathered through the measurement instrument as it relates to the research questions identified in the last chapter. Analysis of the reliability of the measurement instrument is presented first, followed by presentation of a demographic profile of the research participants. Relationships between demographic variables are also presented. The next section of the chapter presents descriptive statistics of the participants as a group. Inferential statistics are then used to demonstrate differences in responses from participants from CRV-NMST and the agencies as well as by other demographic differences.

#### **Reliability and Validity of the Measurement Instrument**

The two critical psychometric properties of a measurement instrument are its reliability and validity. Whether an instrument elicits consistent measurements from one respondent to the next determines its reliability (Weinbach & Grinnell, 1995). The validity of an instrument refers to whether the instrument is actually measuring what it is supposed to measure.

The reliability of the measurement instrument was determined by using Cronbach's coefficient alpha (Cronbach, 1970). The intercorrelation of statements is used to assess internal consistency within the instrument. A computed Cronbach's alpha of .74 was obtained for the measurement instrument. Further broken down the computed Cronbach's alpha for part one of the instrument was .58 while part two was .92.

Reliability coefficients of .70 or higher are viewed as acceptable for researcher designed measurement instruments (Sproull, 1995). While section one of the instrument is lower than this, given the exploratory nature of the research, it is considered to be within acceptable range of these standards and sufficient given the goal of the research.

No measurement of validity was performed on the instrument. However, given the applied nature of the project and the use of the population in developing the content and constructs of the instrument through focus group input there is an increased likelihood of validity.

## **Demographic Characteristics**

### ***Group Profile***

This section presents the demographic profile of the thirty-three individuals from contract agencies and CRV-NMST who completed the measurement instrument.

Information regarding gender, age, ethnicity, level of education, role within the organization, length of time with the organization, and length of time working in the human service sector make up the demographic profile of the participants.

Table 4.1 summarizes the demographic profile of the entire sample. As is often typical in the human service sector, a majority of individuals are female (72.7% versus 27.3% males). Regarding ethnic status for the research sample 63.6% identify themselves as Aboriginal while 36.4% report an ethnic status other than Aboriginal. Approximately 51% of respondents are 35 five years of age or under while 48.4% are over 35. Regarding education level, 42.4% of respondents have a bachelor or master degree in social work while 57.6% report another educational level such as a social work or early childhood diploma, a bachelor degree in another field (arts, psychology, etc.), or a high school

diploma. Approximately 79% of respondents identify themselves as front-line human service workers while 21.3% are supervisors or managers. Just over 60% have worked with their present organization for two years or less and 39.4% have worked with their present organization for more than two years; while 48.5% have worked in the human service sector for seven years or less and 51.5% for over seven years.

### ***CRV-NMST and Aboriginal Contract Agency Participant Profiles***

A comparison of demographic variables is provided in Table 4.2, as a key aspect of this research is not only to describe data collected through the questionnaire for the group as a whole, but to also examine similarities and differences between workers from contract agencies and CRV-NMST. The data for each demographic variable is organized separately for contract agency and CRV-NMST personnel. This will help to identify potential variables that may explain differences in perceptions between these groups. The data, as will be explained further below, was also condensed so that further inferential statistical testing could be performed.

Fourteen individuals from contract agencies and 19 individuals from CRV-NMST responded to the questionnaire. There is more female representation in the sample from CRV-NMST (78.9%) than from contract agencies (64.3%). Regarding ethnic status more agency respondents describe themselves as Aboriginal (78.6%) than those from CRV-NMST (52.6%). More CRV-NMST respondents (57.9%) were 35 or younger than respondents from the contract agencies (42.9%). The number of respondents from CRV-NMST (63.2%) with a bachelor or master degree in social work was considerably higher than that of respondents from the contract agencies (14.3%). Not surprisingly high numbers of respondents from both CRV-NMST (84.2%) and the contract agencies

**Table 4.1: Summary of Participant Demographics**

Demographic Variable	N	Total Sample	
		%	
<b>Gender</b>			
Female	24	72.7	
Male	9	27.3	
<b>Ethnic Status</b>			
Status Indian	11	33.3	
Metis Status	9	27.3	
Non-status Aboriginal	1	3.0	
Caucasian	9	27.3	
Other than Aboriginal or Caucasian	3	9.1	
<b>Age</b>			
25 years and under	2	6.1	
26 – 35 years	15	45.5	
36 – 45 years	8	24.2	
46 – 55 years	5	15.2	
Over 55 years	3	9.1	
<b>Education</b>			
High School Diploma	3	9.1	
College Diploma	9	27.3	
BSW	13	39.4	
Bachelor Degree (other than BSW)	7	21.2	
MSW	1	3.0	
<b>Role in the Organization</b>			
Child Welfare Worker	14	42.4	
Child Care Worker	2	6.1	
Youth Worker	4	12.1	
In-Home Support Worker	3	9.1	
Child Welfare Case Aide	3	9.1	
Supervisor	5	15.2	
Manager	2	6.1	
<b>Length of Employment in Present Organization</b>			
Two years or less	20	60.6	
More than two years	13	39.4	
<b>Length of Employment in Human Service Sector</b>			
Seven years or less	16	48.5	
More than seven years	17	51.5	



**Table 4.2: Comparison of Participants Characteristics by Contract Agency and CRV-NMST**

Demographic Variable	Contract Agency		CRV-NMST		Total	
	Sample N	%	Sample N	%	Sample N	%
Gender						
Female	9	64	15	79	24	73
Male	5	36	4	21	9	27
Ethnic Status						
Aboriginal	11	79	10	53	21	64
Non-Aboriginal	3	21	9	47	12	36
Age						
35 years or younger	6	43	11	58	17	52
36 years or older	8	57	8	42	16	48
Education						
BSW/MSW	2	14	12	63	14	42
Other	12	86	7	37	19	58
Position/Role						
Frontline	10	71	16	84	26	79
Manager/Supervisor	4	29	3	16	7	21
Length of Employment in Present Organization						
Two years or less	9	64	11	58	20	61
More than two years	5	36	8	42	13	39
Length of Employment in Human Service Sector						
Seven years or less	5	36	11	58	16	48
More than seven years	9	64	8	42	17	52

(71.4%) reported being front line workers. Also high numbers of respondents had been with their organizations (CRV-NMST 57.9% and contract agencies 64.3%) for two years or less. However when it comes to length of employment in the human service sector 64.3% of contract agency respondents reported being employed for more than seven years while 42.1% of CRV-NMST respondents reported the same.

### *Associations between Demographic Variables*

In an effort to examine whether there may be an association between any of the demographic variables, chi-square analysis was performed using all the demographic variables. Each variable was assigned two values to simplify the analysis and to examine any associations between demographic variables and responses to individual questions in the questionnaire (the later which will be described later in this chapter). Decisions regarding assignment of values for the variables were made either by what seemed an apparent or obvious value difference within a variable or by separating them into two values based on the median point creating an equal or roughly equal distance between the two values. For example the variable 'role within the agency' was assigned the two values of front-line worker and supervisor/manager as there is an obvious difference in responsibilities and professional focus between the two that may be reflected in responses to the questionnaire. Alternately the variable 'length of time in human services' was assigned two values of seven years or less and over seven years as the median value divided the two (sixteen respondents fell in to the seven years or less category and seventeen respondents fell in to the over seven year category).

The results of the chi-square analysis between the demographic variables are presented in Table 4.3. Significant results only are presented. The results of the chi square analysis indicate several associations between the demographic variables. First there appears to be an association between education and age. Respondents 35 and under are more likely to possess a bachelor or master degree in social work than those over 35 years. There is also an association between education and work site indicating that

respondents from CRV-NMST are more likely to possess a BSW/MSW than respondents from the contract agencies.

**Table 4.3: Chi Square Analysis of Demographic Variables**

Variable 1	Variable 2	X <sup>2</sup>	DF	Significance
Education	Age	3.860	1	.049
Education	Ethnic Status	7.882	1	.005
Ethnic Status	Age	12.171	1	.000
Ethnic Status	Agency Role	5.077	1	.024
Ethnic Status	Time in Human Services	5.308	1	.021
Agency Role	Time in Current Agency	7.984	1	.005
Agency Role	Time in Human Services	4.160	1	.041
Agency Role	Age	4.930	1	.026
Age	Time in Human Services	10.994	1	.001
Time in Agency	Time in Human Services	5.544	1	.019

All managers/supervisors reported their ethnic status to be Aboriginal and therefore there is a strong association between these two variables. Of 21 respondents that identified themselves as Aboriginal, 15 were over the age of 35 and alternately 11 of 12 respondents who identified themselves as non-Aboriginal were 35 or younger, resulting in a highly significant association between age and ethnicity within the group of respondents. Perhaps related to this is an association between ethnicity and length of time spent in human services. Aboriginal respondents were more likely to have spent more than 7 years in the human service sector than non-Aboriginal respondents.

Not surprisingly, respondents that are supervisors or managers are more likely to have spent more than 2 years with the agency they are currently employed with than are front line workers. Along the same lines supervisor/manager respondents are more likely to have spent in excess of 7 years in the area of human services than that of their front

line counterparts. Six of 7 supervisor/managers were older than 35 which explains the association between the age and agency role variables.

Discussion of the results that make up the above demographic profile of the group as a whole, profile of the group by work site, and then of the relationships that exist across the demographic variables is presented in the following chapter.

### **Descriptive Statistics for Grouped Response to Instrument**

Frequency distributions for each question within the measurement instrument were performed to determine how respondents as a group rated in their responses on the measurement instrument. This section is very important in terms of beginning to address the two research questions in this study. A reiteration of the research questions follows:

- 1) What are organizational member's perceptions of the current collaborative relationship between CRV-NMST and contracted Aboriginal agencies?
- 2) What areas in the collaborative relationship do organizational members believe need to be addressed to increase the effectiveness of the collaborative relationship between CRV-NMST and contracted Aboriginal agencies?

The Likert scale, used throughout the instrument, uses a continuum of one through five.

The highest level of agreement is associated with the number five - with the level of agreement with a statement decreasing accordingly downward to the number of one - which would indicate disagreement with the statement. The number three on the scale would indicate a neutral response neither indicating agreement or disagreement with the statement it is measuring. The first part of the instrument addresses the first question, or more specifically present perceptions of the collaborative relationship between the agencies, while the second part of the instrument seeks to address the second question. Additionally respondents were asked to select and rank the most important statements in

each section. This also addresses the second question in terms of identifying what are the most important aspects of the collaborative relationship for respondents. As stated above frequency distribution analysis was performed and discussion of notable results follows.

### ***Part One: Communication***

In Part One of the instrument that addresses communication patterns, there were a number of notable results (see Table 4.4). The statement that communication between workers at CRV-NMST and the contract agencies is effective only received agreement (4 or 5 on the scale) from 39.4% of all respondents as compared to 51.5% agreement that communication between workers within their own agency was effective. Throughout this section, with the exception of only two statements, less than 50% of respondents agreed with statements regarding success in their own and their counterparts ability to provide required information and documentation to perform their professional responsibilities. Neutral responses (3 on the Likert scale), with the exception of two, were in the 27-45% range as well – therefore disagreement with the statements is not necessarily indicated. The statements that were exceptions to this trend were clarity regarding referrals and the statement reported above regarding communication within the agency.

### ***Part One: Collaboration***

The next section regarding the effectiveness of collaboration also had notable results (see Table 4.4). Again consistently throughout the statements indicating success in collaboration with the counterpart agency and or workers, there was less than a 50% agreement rate regarding success in collaborative activities. Again, neutral responses to statements are also consistently high (30%-40%). Two thirds of respondents agreed with the statement that workers have a negative view of their counterpart agency which results

in decreased effectiveness in working together. There was also a low level of agreement with the statement that workers from the agencies and CRV-NMST are aware of the counterpart agencies mandates, policy, practice, and services provided. .

**Table 4.4: Frequency Distributions – Part One Statements on Communication and Collaboration**

Statement	Disagree				←Scale→				Agree	
	1		2		3		4		5	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Part One – Communication</b>										
Communication between workers at CRV-NMST and Aboriginal agency workers is effective.	0	0.0	5	15.2	15	45.5	12	36.4	1	3.0
Communication between workers within our agency is effective.	0	0.0	3	9.1	13	39.4	10	30.3	7	21.2
It is clear when CRV-NMST referrals are made whether they are for contracted service or fee for service.	1	3.3	5	16.7	6	20.0	12	40.0	6	20.0
Child welfare workers are too busy with other tasks to connect with agency workers.	1	3.1	6	18.8	10	31.3	8	25.0	7	21.9
Agency workers are too busy with other tasks to connect with child welfare workers.	8	25.8	6	19.4	12	38.7	4	12.9	1	3.2
<b>Part One – Collaboration</b>	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Some counterpart workers have a negative view of the agency I work for which results in decreased effectiveness in working together with families.	2	6.1	4	13.3	4	13.3	14	46.7	6	20.0
Child welfare workers are aware of contract agency mandates and the specific services they provide.	2	6.1	9	27.3	13	39.4	7	21.2	2	6.1
Agency workers are aware of child welfare mandates, policy and practice guidelines.	5	16.1	10	32.3	12	38.7	3	9.7	1	3.2
Documentation required from counterpart is received when and as required.	7	21.2	16	48.5	5	15.2	3	9.1	2	6.1

### ***Part One: Social Work/Administrative Practice***

Social work and administrative practice as performed in conjunction by workers from CRV-NMST and the contract agencies is addressed in section three of the

instrument (See Table 4.5). Over 80% of respondents agreed that child welfare caseloads are too high for workers to provide adequate service to their clients. Almost 75% of respondents agreed that high worker turnover interferes with developing therapeutic relationships with children and families. Over 80% of respondents agreed that agency workers can become triangulated between child welfare workers and clients/families. In an area of near consensus over 90% of respondents agree that child welfare workers tend to use the services of contract agencies that they are familiar with and find easiest to engage with.

Two important statements regarding value base, a concept extremely important when individuals are working in the context of helping individuals and families within a distinct and unique cultural and ethnic setting, were included in this section. Thirty-three percent of respondents agree that agency and child welfare workers share a similar value base regarding their approach to working with children and families. Almost 55% agree that workers from different Aboriginal contract agencies share a similar value base regarding their approach to working with children and families.

### ***Part One: Cultural Practice***

Section four of part one of the instrument addresses cultural practice among front line workers in the contract agency and CRV-NMST settings (see Table 4.6). There was a higher level of agreement (30% higher) that agency workers were aware and sensitive to Aboriginal culture/perspective than with the statement that child welfare workers are similarly aware and sensitive. Respondents agreed more with the statements that agency workers consult with individuals in the Aboriginal community and promote Aboriginal interventions than they agreed with the same statements regarding child welfare workers.

**Table 4.5: Frequency Distributions – Part One Statements on Social Work/Administrative Practice**

Statement Part One SW/Admin. Practice	Disagree				←Scale→				Agree	
	1		2		3		4		5	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Agency workers and child welfare workers share a similar value base regarding their approach	3	9.1	6	15.2	14	42.4	9	27.3	2	6.1
Agency workers from different Aboriginal agencies share a similar value base regarding their approach.	1	3.2	1	3.2	12	38.7	16	51.6	1	3.2
Child welfare caseloads are too high to provide adequate services to families/clients.	2	6.1	3	9.1	1	3.0	10	30.3	17	51.5
High counterpart turnover interferes with children and families developing therapeutic relationships.	1	3.2	1	3.2	6	19.4	11	35.5	12	38.7
Agency workers can become involved in conflict (triangulated) between child welfare workers and clients/families.	2	6.1	1	3.0	3	9.1	18	54.5	9	27.3
Child welfare workers tend to use the services of contract agencies they are familiar with and find easiest to engage.	0	0.0	1	3.1	2	6.3	10	31.3	19	59.4
Human service training is required for Aboriginal agency staff who work with Aboriginal children and families.	2	3.3	0	0.0	4	13.3	14	46.7	11	36.7
Child welfare workers tend to stop using the services of an agency if perceived difficulties are not resolved.	2	3.2	0	0.0	4	12.1	11	33.3	15	48.4
Child welfare worker referrals to agencies are influenced by other child welfare workers' experiences with these agencies.	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	13.8	15	51.7	10	34.5

A notable result in this section was that 58.1% of respondents disagreed with the statement that cross-cultural issues between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff from both settings are dealt with openly. Almost 55% of respondents agreed that cultural differences are related to different value bases on how to most effectively work with Aboriginal children and families.



**Table 4.6: Frequency Distributions – Part One Statements on Cultural Practice and Relationship**

Statement <b>Part One Cultural Practice</b>	Disagree				←Scale→				Agree	
	1		2		3		4		5	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Child welfare workers are aware and sensitive to Aboriginal cultural/perspective.	3	9.1	6	15.2	14	42.4	9	27.3	2	6.1
Agency workers are aware and sensitive to Aboriginal culture/perspective.	1	3.2	1	3.2	12	38.7	16	51.6	1	3.2
Child welfare workers consult with the Aboriginal community about the needs of the families they work with.	2	6.1	3	9.1	1	3.0	10	30.3	17	51.5
Agency workers consult with the Aboriginal community about the needs of the families they work with.	1	3.2	1	3.2	6	19.4	11	35.5	12	38.7
Child welfare workers promote the use of Aboriginal interventions with families/clients they work with.	2	6.1	1	3.0	3	9.1	18	54.5	9	27.3
Agency workers promote the use of Aboriginal interventions with families/clients they work with.	0	0.0	1	3.1	2	6.3	10	31.3	19	59.4
Cross-cultural issues between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff from both settings are dealt with openly.	2	3.3	0	0.0	4	13.3	14	46.7	11	36.7
Cultural differences are related to different value bases concerning how to most effectively work with Aboriginal children and families.	2	3.2	0	0.0	4	12.1	11	33.3	15	48.4
<b>Part One – Relationships</b>	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I have a positive working relationship with my counterpart workers.	1	3.3	1	3.3	4	13.3	14	46.7	10	33.3
High child welfare worker turnover contributes to a lack of trust between agency and child welfare workers.	2	3.4	7	24.1	7	24.1	8	27.6	6	20.7
High agency worker turnover contributes to a lack of trust between agency and child welfare workers.	3	10.3	6	20.7	8	27.6	9	31.0	3	10.3
When there is conflict in the relationship between workers, the situation can become personalized and seem un-resolvable.	3	10.3	2	6.9	10	34.5	6	20.7	8	27.6

### ***Part One: Relationship***

In the section regarding relationship in Part One of the instrument, 80% of respondents agreed that they have a positive working relationship with their counterpart workers (see Table 4.6). However, 48.3% of respondents agreed that when there is conflict in the relationship between workers that the situation can become personalized and seem un-resolvable. Almost half of the respondents (48.6%) agreed that high child welfare worker turnover contributes to a lack of trust between agency and child welfare workers while 41.3% agreed that high turnover of agency workers likewise contributes to a lack of trust between workers.

### ***Part One - Top Ranked Statements***

Regarding the section on communication the highest percentage of respondents (40.9%) chose the statement regarding communication between workers at CRV-NMST and the contract agencies as being the most important in this section. This was followed by child welfare workers providing current and relevant information in referral information by 18.2% of respondents.

In the section on collaboration, 25% of respondents chose the statement regarding case conferencing occurring often enough as most important. This was followed by thirteen (13.3%) of respondents choosing the statement regarding counterpart workers having a negative view of the respondents' agency resulting in decreased effectiveness in working together with families. Additionally, another thirteen (13.3%) of respondents ranked the statement regarding child welfare workers being aware of contract agency mandates and services as most important.

The statement ranked as most important in the section on social work/administrative practice section related to child welfare caseloads being too high for workers to provide adequate services to families/clients (31.8%). This was followed by 13.6% who chose the statement that child welfare and agency workers share a similar value base regarding their approach to working with children and families.

In regard to cultural practice 50% percent of the respondents ranked the statement that child welfare workers are aware and sensitive to Aboriginal culture/perspective as the most important. This was followed by 22.7% of respondents who ranked cross-cultural issues between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff from both settings being dealt with openly the most important statement in this section.

In the relationship section of Part One, there was no one statement that stood out as more highly ranked than any other.

### ***Part Two: Communication Strategies***

Part Two of the measurement instrument, along with the ranking of all statements in both parts of the instrument, is designed to address the second research question regarding the respondents' perceptions of what are important aspects of the collaborative relationship between CRV-NMST and the contract Aboriginal agencies. All of the statements in Part Two of the instrument provide suggestions or strategies for improving the relationship in the areas addressed in part one of the instrument. Therefore, it is to be expected that the rate of agreement will be high in Part Two due to the positive nature of the statements.

Regarding communication strategies the statement with the highest level of agreement (84.4%) was that agency in-home support workers should have cell phones to

report high-risk situation immediately (see Table 4.7). This was closely followed by the suggestion that a process be in place to ensure the immediate sharing of critical incidents or high-risk situations (81.3% agreed with both).

**Table 4.7: Frequency Distributions – Part Two Statements on Communication and Collaboration Strategies**

Statement	Disagree				←Scale→				Agree	
	1		2		3		4		5	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Part Two – Communication Strategies</b>										
A procedural process should be in place to ensure immediate sharing of critical incidents and/or high risk situation.	1	3.1	1	3.1	4	12.5	11	34.4	15	46.9
It would be useful if child welfare workers advised agency workers of all resources involved and encouraged agency workers to be in contact.	1	3.1	2	6.3	4	12.5	8	25.0	17	53.1
Child welfare workers should advise agency staff when a request for information is for court purposes.	1	3.1	0	0.0	5	15.6	8	25.0	18	56.3
Agency in-home workers should have cell phones to immediately report high risk situations.	1	3.1	1	3.1	3	9.4	9	28.1	18	56.3
<b>Part Two – Collaboration Strategies</b>	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
It would be useful if Aboriginal agencies and CRV-NMST had regular meetings to discuss and resolve issues relating to working together	1	3.6	0	0.0	1	3.6	7	25.0	19	67.9
These meetings would involve front-line workers as well as supervisors/Managers.	1	3.4	1	3.4	0	0.0	6	20.7	21	72.4
These meetings would also focus on defining what Aboriginal services will look like within CRV-NMST.	0	0.0	1	3.3	4	13.3	10	33.3	15	50.0
A process needs to be outlined for addressing problems that arise to ensure issues are dealt with in a timely manner.	0	0.0	3	9.7	1	3.2	9	29.0	18	58.1

### ***Part Two: Collaboration Strategies***

Over 90% of respondents agreed with the strategy that CRV-NMST and the contract agencies meet regularly to discuss and resolve issues related to working together to serve Aboriginal families in Calgary (see Table 4.7). Within the sub category of statements associated with this suggestion, 93.1% agreed that these meetings should involve front line workers as well as supervisors and management. Eighty-three percent agreed the meetings should focus on defining what Aboriginal services will look like within Calgary Rocky View Child and Family Services.

### ***Part Two: Social Work/Administrative Practice Strategies***

Almost 94 respondents agreed with the suggestion more child welfare workers are needed to decrease caseloads and increase time spent on each case (see Table 4.8). This was closely followed by the statement that it is important that in-home support workers from different agencies have different skills (90.7%).

### ***Part Two: Cultural Strategies***

The fourth section in part two of the instrument offers two strategies to approach cultural issues in the partnership between the agencies and CRV-NMST (see Table 4.8). Both statements were highly agreed with and ranked very closely in terms of importance. The suggestion of having cross-cultural training done jointly with child welfare and agency workers to discuss differences in values and approach was agreed with by 93.9% of the respondents. Cross-cultural training done jointly with child welfare and agency workers to discuss differences in values and approach was ranked as the most important statement by 52.2%.

**Table 4.8: Frequency Distributions – Part Two Statements on Administrative, Cultural, and Relationship Strategies**

Statement	Disagree				←Scale→				Agree	
	1		2		3		4		5	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Part Two SW/Admin. Strategies</b>										
More child welfare workers are needed to decrease caseloads and increase time spent on each case.	1	3.0	0	0.0	1	3.0	8	24.2	23	69.7
It would help agency workers to be provided with information and training outlining the role of child welfare	0	0.0	1	3.1	4	12.5	11	34.4	16	50.0
Initial meetings/pre-placement visits between child welfare and agency staff are useful.	1	3.0	0	0.0	5	15.2	6	18.2	21	63.6
It is important that in-home support workers from different agencies have different skills.	2	6.1	1	3.1	0	0.0	14	43.8	15	46.9
<b>Part Two – Cultural Practice Strategies</b>	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Cross-cultural training should be done jointly with child welfare and agency staff to encourage open discussion about differences in values, approach, etc.	1	3.0	0	0.0	1	3.0	7	21.2	24	72.7
Cross-cultural training should be mandatory for all agency and CRV-NMST staff..	1	3.0	0	0.0	2	6.1	6	18.2	24	72.7
<b>Part Two – Relationship Strategies</b>	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Workers should try to resolve case issues with each other prior to taking the matter to their supervisor..	1	3.0	0	0.0	2	6.1	8	24.2	22	66.7
Retreats for child welfare and agency staff that focus on team building and cultural awareness would help to build more positive relationships.	1	3.0	0	0.0	4	12.1	5	15.2	23	69.7

### ***Part Two: Relationship Strategies***

In the final section of part two of the measurement instrument, three relationship building strategies are presented (see Table 4.8). The most highly agreed with statement was that workers should try to resolve case issues with each other prior to involving a supervisor or managers (90.9% agreed). Almost 85 (84.9%) of respondents

agreed that retreats for CRV-NMST and agency staff that focus on team building and cultural awareness would help to build more positive relationships.

### ***Part Two – Top Ranked Statements***

The top ranked communication strategy as selected by 30.4% of respondents was that a procedural process ensuring immediate sharing of information involving critical incidents and/or high-risk situations involving clients/families be implemented. Over one third (36.4%) respondents ranked first the strategy for Aboriginal agencies and CRV-NMST to be involved in regular meetings to discuss and resolve issues relating to working together to serve Aboriginal families in Calgary. This was followed by 18.2% who chose the strategy of conducting joint staff meetings with agency and CRV-NMST workers to discuss worker roles, agency mandates and other collaborative issues that arise.

In the section regarding strategies for social work/administrative practice the top ranked statement mirrors the most highly agreed statement that more child welfare workers are needed to decrease case loads and increase time spent on each case (27.3%). Eighteen percent ranked first the strategy for agency workers to be provided information and training outlining the role of child welfare and how to work effectively with the system.

The top ranked cultural strategy was for cross-cultural training to be done jointly with child welfare and agency workers to discuss differences in values and approach (52.2%). In the following section on relationship strategies two statements were ranked first by 38% of respondents - these concerned retreats to focus on teambuilding and workers taking more initiative in promoting relationships with their counterparts.

### ***Group Scores by Section in Part One and Two of the Instrument***

A look at the mean score in each section for the entire group of respondents further illuminates some of the above information (see Table 4.9). Each statement in each section was given a value between one and five (as already set out on the Likert scale) and statements were reversed scored where they were presented as a negative. In doing so, each section has a maximum value that can be reached by each respondent. The highest mean scores for Part One of the Instrument were in the communication and cultural practice sections. The lowest scores were in the sections pertaining to collaboration, social work/administrative practice and relationship.

**Table 4.9: Mean Group Scores by Section in Part One and Part Two of Instrument**

Section	Mean	Standard Deviation
Part One:		
Communication	3.50	0.4102
Collaboration	3.08	0.4591
Social Work/Administrative practice	3.08	0.3001
Cultural practice	3.47	0.5294
Relationship	3.09	0.6166
Part Two:		
Communication strategies	4.13	0.9046
Collaboration strategies	3.66	0.4809
Social work/Administrative practice strategies	4.13	0.4967
Cultural practice strategies	4.59	0.8334
Relationship strategies	4.44	0.7806



Part Two of the instrument looks at strategies for the same sections as Part One. The highest mean scores were in the areas of cultural practice and relationship strategies. The lowest scores were in the areas of collaboration, communication and social work/administrative practice strategies.

### **Inferential Statistics**

#### ***Demographic Variables Associated with Statement Scores***

Chi-square analysis was performed on each of the 87 statements within the measurement instrument with the demographic variables. This analysis was run on all variables as the study is exploratory in nature and seeking to find associations in such a broad manner is thus justified. The most important result of all of the demographic variables is how the contract Aboriginal agency respondents and CRV-NMST respondents ranked statements. These results will be followed by the significant results for all of the other demographic variables.

Table 4.10 outlines the significant results of the chi-square analysis between the variables of work site and each individual statement in the measurement instrument as well as the top ranked statement in each section. There was a significant association between the variables work site and the statement that agency workers provide detailed and relevant information in client reports submitted to child welfare workers ( $p < .01$ ). Agency respondents had a higher level of agreement with this statement than CRV-NMST respondents. Agency respondents also had a higher level of agreement than CRV-NMST respondents with the statement that agency workers keep child welfare workers informed of important changes in client functioning or progress ( $p < .01$ ). Another statistically significant result from these tests was that CRV-NMST respondents had a

higher level of agreement with the statement that agency workers are aware of child welfare mandates, policy and practice guidelines than did agency respondents ( $p < .01$ )

**Table 4.10 Chi Square Analysis between Work-Site and Instrument Statements**

Variable 1 – Statement	Variable 2	$\chi^2$	DF	Significance
Agency workers provide detailed and relevant information in client reports submitted to child welfare workers.	Work-site	22.531	4	.000
Agency workers keep child welfare workers informed of important changes in client functioning or progress.	Work-site	21.520	4	.000
When more than one agency is involved with a family, they sometimes end up performing the same function.	Work-site	7.934	3	.047
Agency workers are aware of child welfare mandates, policy and practice guidelines.	Work-site	16.352	4	.003
Child welfare workers tend to stop using the services of a particular contract agency if perceived difficulties are not effectively resolved.	Work-site	9.943	3	.019
Child welfare workers are aware and sensitive to Aboriginal culture/perspective.	Work-site	8.641	4	.034
Agency workers consult with individuals in the Aboriginal community about the cultural needs of the families/clients they work with.	Work-site	12.557	4	.014
High agency worker turnover contributes to a lack of trust between agency and child welfare workers.	Work-site	9.650	4	.047
Highest Ranked Statement – Part 2, Section 2 It would be useful if Aboriginal agencies and CRV-NMST were involved in regular meetings to discuss and resolve issues relating to working together to service Aboriginal families.	Work-site	13.037	6	.042

CRV-NMST respondents demonstrated a higher level of agreement with the statement that high agency worker turnover contributes to a lack of trust between agency and child welfare workers ( $p < .05$ ) than did the agency respondents. The statement that child welfare workers are aware and sensitive to Aboriginal culture/perspective had a higher level of agreement from CRV-NMST respondents than from agency respondents ( $p < .05$ ). Agency respondents had a higher level of agreement with the statement that agency workers consult with individuals in the Aboriginal community about the cultural needs of the families/clients they work with than did CRV-NMST respondents ( $p < .05$ ). CRV-NMST respondents had a higher level of agreement with the statement that child welfare workers tend to stop using the services of a particular contract agency if perceived difficulties in the service or working relationship are not effectively resolved ( $p < .05$ ). There was also a higher level of agreement among CRV-NMST respondents with the statement that when more than one agency is involved with a family they sometimes end up performing the same function ( $p < .05$ ). There was only one significant result for the top ranked statement by respondents in each section with the variable of work site. This was in Part Two/Section Two (collaboration strategies) of the instrument ( $p < .05$ ). Six of 9 agency respondents chose the strategy of regular meetings between the two work sites to discuss and resolve issues relating to working together to serve Aboriginal families in Calgary. Only 2 of 13 CRV-NMST respondents chose this statement.

Table 4.11 represents the chi-square analysis between all other demographic variables and the individual statements in the measurement instrument. Significant results between the variable of education and four statements within the instrument were found.

Respondents with education other than a BSW/MSW showed a higher level of agreement with the statement that agency workers provide detailed and relevant information in client reports ( $p < .01$ ). They also showed a higher level of agreement with the statement that agency workers keep child welfare workers informed of important changes in client functioning or progress ( $p < .01$ ). It may be useful to recall that there is a significant relationship between respondents with education other than BSW/MSW and contract agency respondents. Respondents with a BSW/MSW demonstrated a higher level of agreement with the statement that communication between agency and CRV-NMST is effective ( $p < .05$ ). Respondents with a BSW/MSW also demonstrated a higher level of agreement with the statement that inconsistency in counterpart workers performance reflects badly on their agency ( $p < .05$ ).

A significant result was found between the variables of age and the statement that workers should try to resolve case issues with each other prior to taking the matter to their supervisor/manager ( $p < .05$ ). Respondents 35 years old and younger had a higher level of agreement with this statement than did those over 35 years. Respondents 35 years and younger also showed a higher level of agreement with the statement that information provided on referral/intake forms is specific and clear ( $p < .05$ ). Those 35 years and younger also had a higher level of agreement with the statement that when more than one agency is involved with a family they sometimes end up performing the same function ( $p < .05$ ). There was also a significant result between those 35 and younger having a higher level of agreement with the statement that referral requests from child welfare workers are consistent with the selected agency's mandate and services they provide ( $p < .05$ ). It may be useful to recall when examining the results concerned with age that there was a

significant relationship between the variables of age and work-site in that respondents 35 years and younger tended to be members of CRV-NMST.

**Table 4.11: Chi Square Analysis between Demographic Variables and Instrument Statements**

Variable 1 – Statement	Variable 2	X <sup>2</sup>	DF	Significance
Communication between CRV-NMST and Aboriginal agency workers is effective.	Education	8.436	3	.038
Child welfare workers provide current and relevant information in Information Consolidations and Service Plans	Role	12.770	4	.012
Information provided on Referral and evaluation forms is specific and clear.	Age	8.743	3	.033
Information provided on Referral and evaluation forms is specific and clear.	Ethnicity	11.604	3	.009
Agency workers provide detailed and relevant information in client reports submitted to child child welfare workers.	Education	14.829	4	.005
Agency workers keep child welfare workers informed of important changes in client functioning.	Education	16.310	4	.003
Case conferences occur often enough to Aboriginal culture/perspective.	Time in Human Services	12.674	4	.013
When more than one agency is involved with a family they sometimes end up performing the same function.	Age	7.915	3	.048
Referral requests from child welfare workers are consistent with the agency's mandate and services they provide.	Age	13.032	4	.011
Counterpart workers return phone calls within a reasonable time frame.	Time in Human Services	10.218	4	.013
There is enough contact between child welfare and agency workers to effectively do our jobs.	Time in Agency	12.382	4	.015
Inconsistency in Aboriginal agency worker performance reflects badly on CRV-NMST.	Education	10.802	4	.029
Child welfare workers promote the use of Aboriginal interventions with families/clients they work with.	Ethnicity	9.644	4	.047

**Table 4.11 - Chi Square Analysis between Demographic Variables and Instrument Statements  
(continued)**

Variable 1 – Statement	Variable 2	X <sup>2</sup>	DF	Significance
Cultural differences are related to different Value bases concerning how to most effectively work with Aboriginal children and families.	Ethnicity	13.986	4	.007
High child welfare worker turnover contributes to a lack of trust between agency and child welfare workers.	Time in Agency	12.466	4	.014
Workers should try to resolve case issues with each other prior to involving their supervisor/manager.	Age	7.886	3	.048
Ranked Statements:				
Part 1/Section 4: Child welfare workers are aware and sensitive to Aboriginal culture/perspective/cultural differences are related to different value bases regarding how to most effectively work with Aboriginal children and families.	Role	5.989	4	.003
Part 1/Section 5: High child welfare worker turnover contributes to a lack of trust between agency and child welfare workers.	Ethnicity	12.783	4	.012
Part 2/Section 2: It would be useful if Aboriginal agencies and CRV-NMST were involved in regular meetings to discuss and resolve issues relating to working together to serve Aboriginal families.	Ethnicity	12.757	6	.047
Part 2/Section 4: Cross-cultural training should be done jointly with child welfare and agency staff to encourage open discussion about differences in values, approach, etc.	Role	4.074	1	.044

Significant results in regard to ethnicity were found with three of the statements in the instrument as well as two top ranked statements in two different parts of the instrument. Non-Aboriginal respondents also had a higher level of agreement than Aboriginal respondents with the statement that information on referral and intake forms is specific and clear ( $p < .01$ ). Again it may be useful to recall that a significant relationship exists between respondents 35 years and younger and non-Aboriginal and CRV-NMST respondents. Aboriginal respondents demonstrated a significantly higher level of agreement with the statement that cultural differences are related to different values bases concerning how to most effectively work with Aboriginal children and families ( $p < .01$ ). Non-Aboriginal respondents had a higher level of agreement than Aboriginal respondents with the statement that child welfare workers promote the use of Aboriginal interventions with families/clients they work with ( $p < .05$ ). In ranking the statements in the relationship section of the first part of the measurement instrument there was a significant result in terms of Aboriginal respondents more often choosing the statement that high child welfare worker turnover contributes to a lack of trust between agency and child welfare workers ( $p < .05$ ). In the collaboration strategy section of the instrument, Aboriginal respondents tended to choose the strategy to have regular meetings between the contract agencies and CRV-NMST to discuss and resolve issues relating to working together to serve Aboriginal families in Calgary ( $p < .05$ ).

There were two significant results from this analysis involving the variable of length of time that respondents have spent employed in the human service sector and the statements in the measurement instrument. Those respondents who have worked in the sector for more than 7 years showed a higher level of agreement than those who have

been employed for less than 7 years with the statement that case conferences that include the family/client, child welfare workers and agency worker occur often enough ( $p < .05$ ). Respondents who have worked for more than 7 years also demonstrated a higher level of agreement with the statement that counterpart workers return phone calls within a reasonable time frame ( $p < .05$ ).

There were also a number of significant results based on the demographic variable of role within the agency and statements in the measurement instrument. Respondents who identified themselves as supervisors or managers showed a higher level of disagreement with the statement child welfare workers provide current and relevant information in Information Consolidations and Service Plans than did front line respondents ( $p < .05$ ). In the cultural practice section of part one of the measurement instrument, front line respondents tended to rank the statement that child welfare workers are aware and sensitive to Aboriginal culture/perspective as most important ( $p < .01$ ); while managers ranked the statement that cultural differences are related to different value bases concerning how to most effectively work with Aboriginal children and families as most important. In the cultural strategy section of the instrument manager respondents all chose the strategy of doing cross-cultural training jointly with child welfare and agency staff ( $p < .05$ ).

### **Demographic Variables Associated with Grouped Section Scores**

In a further effort to elicit any notable differences in how respondents responded to the measurement instrument in terms of their unique demographic characteristics, T-Test analysis of each section of the instrument was performed. Each statement was given a value between one and five (as already set out on the Likert scale) and statements were



reversed scored where the statement was presented as negative. In doing so, each section has a maximum value that can be reached by each respondent. Comparison based on the scores was performed with all demographic variables. Significant results only are reported in Table 4.12.

**Table 4.12: Results of T-Test Analysis of Group Section Scores and Demographic Variables**

Part/Section	Variable	$\bar{X}$	SD	N	T	Sig.
1.1 Communication	Agency	38.83	4.79	6	1.82	<.10
	CRV-NMST	35.29	3.65	14		
1.2 Collaboration	Agency	30.00	5.40	10	1.94	<.05
	CRV-NMST	26.17	4.19	18		
1.3 SW/Admin.	Agency	63.20	4.21	5	1.97	<.10
	CRV-NMST	57.29	6.21	7		
1.4 Cult. Practice	<= 7 yrs Human Service	32.50	4.72	12	1.92	<.10
	> 7 yrs Human Services	28.73	5.30	15		
1.5 Relationship	<= 35 yrs old	16.07	2.87	15	2.03	<.10
	> 35 yrs old	13.70	2.83	10		
2.1 Communication	<= 35 yrs old	26.62	4.01	16	2.07	<.05
	> 35 yrs old	22.18	6.29	11		
2.5 Relationship	Aboriginal	12.57	2.64	21	-2.70	<.05
	Non-Aboriginal	14.33	1.07	12		
2.5 Relationship	<= 35 yrs old	14.18	1.07	17	2.60	<.05
	> 35 yrs old	12.19	2.88	16		

The demographic variable of work site had three significant results in the T Test analysis. Agency respondents scored significantly higher than CRV-NMST respondents in the first three sections of Part One of the instrument concerning communication, collaboration and social work/administrative practice. This means the contract agency

respondents had a more positive view of communication, collaboration and social work/administrative practice between themselves and their CRV-NMST counterparts than did the CRV-NMST respondents.

Respondents who have been employed for less than seven years scored significantly higher in the section on cultural practice in Part One - and therefore had a more positive view than those who have been employed for more than seven years in the cultural practice section of part one of the instrument ( $p < .10$ ). Respondents 35 years old or younger consistently scored higher in three sections of the instrument: the relationship section of Part One, and the communication and relationship strategy sections of Part Two.

Non-Aboriginal respondents scored significantly higher in the relationship strategy section of Part Two of the instrument than did Aboriginal respondents ( $p < .05$ ). This indicates that non-Aboriginal respondents have a more positive view of the usefulness of the strategies suggested in that section or felt more of a need for these strategies.

The final chapter presents a discussion of the results in relation to the research questions posed in the study.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to examine organizational member's perceptions of the current collaborative relationship between CRV-NMST and the Aboriginal contract agencies as well as what is necessary to improve it. In identifying these perceptions it is anticipated the organizations that participated in the study will have useful information in addressing current difficulties in collaboration and identify strategies to improve the relationship.

In this chapter, the results of the study are placed in a context for discussion offering a profile of organizational member's perceptions of the collaborative relationship. Limitations of the research are first explored followed by discussion of emerging themes in the data analysis, providing some explanation of how they relate to literature in the area. The chapter concludes with an examination of the implication of these themes for social work practice and education, the study's contribution to the literature, and recommendations for future research.

#### **Limitations of the Study**

Interpretation of this research should be carefully considered with methodological limitations in mind. There are a number of internal and external threats to its validity and these limitations will be described as the researcher has identified them.

### *Measurement Instrument*

The measurement instrument was designed by the researcher using focus groups with the sample population to identify general and specific areas of collaboration within the relationship between CRV-NMST and the contract Aboriginal agencies. While this approach was chosen over using an existing measurement instrument to increase internal validity, inherent in a newly designed instrument is the need for fine-tuning. While the Cronbach alpha scores suggest an overall acceptable reliability for this exploratory research, there were some sections, particularly in Part One of the instrument, that had weak scores when considered on their own. This strongly suggests that if the instrument were to be used again refinement of particular sections in the first Part be undertaken.

A further issue with the instrument is the time participants required to complete it. The average amount of time for individuals to complete the tool was approximately 45 minutes. As a result, it is suspected that some chose not to complete the instrument and that many chose not to respond to the open ended questions following each section. Further, requesting the participants to choose the five most important statements and rank them from one to five in each section also was time consuming and, as it turned out, not necessary because only the top ranked statement in each section was considered during data analysis. The instrument may be further fine-tuned and shortened to make it more desirable for participants to complete.

Another issue that arises with the instrument is the potential for participants to show a social desirability response bias. Because of the self-report aspect of the instrument, participants are naturally inclined to answer in a way that presents themselves or their organization in a positive light. However, they would have no inclination to

present their counterpart in the same positive light. Therefore, a number of statistically significant results are not particularly meaningful as they fall into this category. In the chi square analysis between demographic groups and statements, both CRV-NMST and contract agency workers viewed themselves and their immediate colleagues more favorably in some areas regarding the quality and effectiveness of their own work. These statements were not included in the discussion as they appear to be impacted by a social desirability response bias and any attempt to determine whether they are accurate is beyond the scope and not relevant to the goals of the current study.

### *Sample*

The research sample was taken from the population in a way that attempted to encourage all members to complete the measurement instrument. The instrument was completed by most participants during meetings where the researcher first provided a detailed explanation of the subject and purpose of the research. However, an argument exists that those who chose to participate may have a strong positive or negative motivation for participating, while those who chose not to participate are either more ambivalent or sensitive regarding the research subject area. In fact, there was one group of respondents who chose not to participate and provided the researcher, through their supervisor, a number of reasons. Some of these individuals expressed concern that the research results would be used by the participating organizations in a way that might negatively impact them. Other individuals stated that they were too busy to complete the instrument and/or felt that Aboriginal individuals and organizations need to be careful about what research they choose to participate in.

Given that nearly half of all potential participants completed the instrument, there is a good argument that they are representative of the whole group. However, the above concern still remains. An argument exists that if participants did have motivations for participating these could have been to provide a negative or positive orientation to the research subject and therefore the results would show a balance of both.

This discussion of limitations is intended to caution research consumers about making conclusions and generalizations that may not be supported by the results.

### **The Collaborative Relationship**

Two research questions were proposed to explore organizational members views of the collaborative relationship between CRV-NMST and contracted Aboriginal agencies: 1) What are organizational member's perceptions of the current collaborative relationship between CRV-NMST and contracted Aboriginal agencies? 2) What areas in the collaborative relationship do organizational members believe need to be addressed to increase the effectiveness of the collaborative relationship between CRV-NMST and contracted Aboriginal agencies? The descriptive and inferential statistics used for analyzing the group, organizational and demographic responses to individual statements and whole sections within the instrument will be discussed in relation to both questions.

### ***Overall Response of the Group to the Instrument***

The results for all respondents to Part One of the measurement instrument indicate mean group scores of less than four (or first reporting level of agreement regarding a positively framed statement within the section). The five sections in Part One intend to measure how organizational members currently view the collaborative relationship. While overall these scores do not indicate a strong positive response to the current

collaborative relationship between CRV-NMST and the Aboriginal contract agencies neither do they indicate a strong negative response by organizational members to the current relationship.

The results of the group t tests that examined the relationship between demographic variables and the grouped section scores indicate that contract agency respondents had higher mean group scores in the first three sections of part one - communication, collaboration, and social work/administrative practice - than respondents from CRV-NMST. This indicates that these respondents have a more positive view of the collaborative relationship than their CRV-NMST counterparts do.

The results for the group response to Part Two of the measurement instrument indicate mean group scores over four (or first reporting level of agreement regarding a positively framed statement within the section) for four of five strategy sections. The sections that gained the highest mean group score were cultural practice and relationship (4.59% and 4.44% respectively). These scores indicate a higher agreement by the respondents that cultural and relationship strategies are most important in addressing the collaborative relationship between CRV-NMST and the Aboriginal contract agencies.

### ***Statements Associated with Group and Demographic Characteristics***

Specific statements within the instrument indicate a strong group or specific demographic group response regarding the nature of the current collaborative relationship and further areas the organizations involved in this study may want to focus more attention on to improve the collaborative relationship. Two specific areas of the collaborative relationship: trust levels and value orientation differences of organizational

members within CRV-NMST and the contract Aboriginal agencies are addressed first as they are evaluated as the most meaningful results in the study.

### ***Trust in the Relationship***

The group response to the statement that some counterpart workers have a negative view of the participant's agency, which results in decreased effectiveness in working together with families/clients, gained agreement from almost 67% of participants. The high rate of agreement with a negatively framed statement indicates sensitivity in this area. Further, when the chi square analysis was run on this statement there was no significant difference in responses between CRV-NMST and agency worker participants. This becomes meaningful in relation to the research question when put in the context of the literature regarding Aboriginal child welfare, the rise of Aboriginal social service agencies, collaboration, and resource dependency theory. In fact a compelling argument may exist that the overall response to this statement is critical to an understanding of the relationship between CRV-NMST and the contract Aboriginal agencies.

Literature in the area of Aboriginal child welfare outlines an historical situation where Aboriginal individuals and communities were the object of abuse (intended or unintended) by child protection authorities in Canada (Loucks, 1981; Hull, 1982; Johnston, 1983; Jolly, 1983; Bagley, 1985). In fact, the situation created the impetus for the development of Aboriginal support services in the area of child protection. This may have created a situation where the Aboriginal individuals who best understand the abuses – perhaps both on a professional and personal level - are now in the uncomfortable position of working collaboratively with a child protection authority.



Agency worker's understanding of abuses in the child protection system, and the realization of the ongoing effects upon their communities, may affect their ability to trust their child welfare counterparts (even though the authority is mandated to provide sensitive services and is staffed by more than 50% Aboriginal workers). In the CRV-NMST or child welfare setting there may be a perception of agency workers not being able to trust child protection workers or the system. This could be misunderstood as an unwillingness to work collaboratively. The child welfare workers may feel they are attempting to practice in a more culturally sensitive environment but are viewed negatively because of their role or possibly ethnic status. The circularity of this situation may result in an inherent adversarial relationship or a tendency to view counterpart workers and agencies with suspicion and distrust. Perhaps more detrimental than this is the possibility organizational members assume racism or counter-racism is responsible for their counterparts perceived negativity toward their agency or role in the agency.

The ability to develop trust between individuals from different agencies is critical to the success of the collaborative relationship (Gummer, 1990; Maxwell, 1990). Maxwell (1990) expresses this in the context of the unique characteristics or experiences of cultural groups. Given the effects of colonization on Aboriginal individuals and communities in Canada, issues of low trust in relation to government authorities are understandable. Further issues of trust and agency autonomy enter the situation when the nature of the contract relationship puts the Aboriginal contract agencies in a position of resource dependency with CRV-NMST (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Gronbjerg, 1993; Smith, 1989). With no other potential funding sources than the government-mandated child welfare authority, a situation develops where this source is the 'only game in town'.

The contract Aboriginal agencies, as the literature asserts, attempt to maintain control of their mandate, policies, and service provision while meeting the expectations of the funder (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Gronbjerg, 1993). By meeting these expectations the agencies are likely forced to compromise their mandate, policy and practice guidelines to varying extents.

The grouped response to two other statements of the instrument could contribute to possible issues of low trust in the collaborative relationship between CRV-NMST and the contract Aboriginal agencies. There was a low level of agreement with statements that workers are aware of their counterpart agency's mandates, policy, practice and services provided (33.4% agree that CRV-NMST workers are aware while only 12.9% agree that agency workers are aware). These statements were ranked as second most important in the collaboration section where they were found. In terms of the short answer responses on the instrument, the following comments were made:

“Lack of knowledge of child welfare or agency mandates causes inconsistency in services. Negative perspectives toward child welfare by agencies causes conflict with clients at times”;

“Awareness regarding [CRV-NMST]”;

“Increase awareness regarding [CRV-NMST] child welfare”.

Misunderstanding of mandates, policy, services and practice in a collaborative relationship where issues of low trust and negativity may prevail could exacerbate difficulties in the collaborative relationship.

The implication of the low level of agreement that CRV-NMST workers are aware of the mandate, policy, practice, and services provided by contract Aboriginal agencies is a serious concern in that they are providing the referrals for service. If they

are unaware of these, how are CRV-NMST workers effectively referring clients for appropriate support services? If a child welfare worker makes a referral for service that the agency does not provide, and as a result does not receive it, the worker may become frustrated and feel the agency let them down. It may appear to the worker that the agency is not doing what they are being asked to do when the agency does not provide the type of intervention the worker requires for the client. In this situation again an environment of low trust and negativity may be reinforced.

Likewise, if agency workers are unaware or unclear of the mandate, policy and practice of their child welfare counterparts this could add to feelings of distrust or negativity when one considers the power inherent in the position of a child protection worker. Actions taken by child protection workers may be poorly understood and/or appear arbitrary. If the agency worker continues to misunderstand the reasons behind a child protection worker's action this may reinforce the belief that abuses continue to occur in the realm of Aboriginal child protection. Additionally, if the agency worker is not clear what actions a child protection worker can and can not take to protect children they cannot effectively advocate for Aboriginal children and families in the event that an action is taken that is not warranted. The statement that agency workers can become involved in conflict (triangulated) between child welfare workers and clients/families received agreement from over 81% of all participants. This seems to reinforce the idea that situations arise where misunderstanding of counterpart roles, decisions, and responsibilities cause a break in the alignment or collaborative relationship between agency and child welfare workers.

Over 48% of respondents agreed that when there is conflict in the relationship between child welfare workers and agency staff the situation can become personalized and seem un-resolvable (ranked as second most important in the section). This statement seems to support the possibility of a low trust relationship between CRV-NMST and the contract Aboriginal agencies. It also indicates there may be a level of misunderstanding of the origin of the low trust situation. If individuals are making incorrect assumptions about the origin it may become very difficult to move beyond these feelings if they are not being openly addressed. Therefore, situations may become personalized and appear un-resolvable. It should be clarified that there was a high rate of agreement with the statement that there is a positive working relationship between counterpart workers. So the statement concerning conflict being present in the relationship should be carefully interpreted. The statement is asking participants about how the situation is dealt with when there is conflict in the relationship. It is not measuring the amount of conflict in the relationship.

Almost 50% of participants agreed with the statement that high child welfare worker turnover contributes to a lack of trust between agency and child welfare workers. Over 40% agreed that high agency worker turnover contributes to a lack of trust between workers. The demographic profile indicates that 64% of agency participants and 58% of child welfare participants have been employed with their present organization for two years or less. If the rate of worker turnover is this high it would certainly have implications for trust in relationships between workers. Few would disagree that the workers enter an extremely challenging and stressful environment when working either in the agency or child protection role. The apparent learning curve with their positions and

adaptation to the stressful roles likely draw most of their energy and focus for the first year or two in their new positions. The more complex and subtle dimensions of the relationship between counterpart workers is not likely to gain as much focus during this time of intense learning and role adaptation. It is not difficult to see how this situation may set up a dynamic of low investment in relationships with new workers.

In the chi square analysis there was an association between workers who have been with their organizations for more than two years and agreement with the statement that high child welfare worker turnover contributes to a lack of trust between agency and child welfare workers. The workers who have been with their organizations for longer periods of time may feel less inclination to invest in the relationship with their counterpart workers when they have experienced a high rate of turnover. This may encourage workers to keep their relationships on a more superficial level. There would appear to be little incentive to take risks in overcoming misunderstandings with a counterpart when the feeling is that they may not be around for long.

Chi square analysis also indicated a significant association between the ethnic status of Aboriginal and agreement with the statement that high child welfare worker turnover contributes to a lack of trust. This result supports some of the earlier comments in this section. With an acute understanding of past abuses in the child protection system, Aboriginal workers likely approach their relationships with child protection workers with a level of wariness and suspicion. It takes time to build trust in relationships and high worker turnover indicates workers do not stay long enough to accomplish this.

A number of short answer responses regarding trust also seem to indicate that respondents feel that trust in the relationship is an important issue for collaboration. Some of these were:

“Mistrust between aboriginal and non-aboriginal workers causes tensions that sometimes get in the way of partnership”;

“Cultural bias contributes to feeling a lack of trust”;

“Some [workers] personalize issues with [other workers], It becomes too negative at times”;

“Assumptions are often made by both agency and child welfare staff about cultural differences between aboriginal and non-aboriginal staff. These assumptions are not based on any communication and causes difficulty in communication”.

Given the low level of short answer response on the measurement instrument, there are a considerable amount of comments in the area of trust, conflict resolution, and negativity due to a lack of openness. Another indication that these aspects of the collaborative relationship are important to the organizational members involved in the study.

It becomes evident that issues in the area of trust in the collaborative relationship may be unfolding on both an individual and organizational level and the two may serve to reinforce negativity in the situation. This situation presents a unique, challenging, and extremely important issue in the collaborative relationship for members of the contract Aboriginal agencies and CRV-NMST.

### ***Value Orientation Differences Impacting the Relationship***

Several statements within the instrument concerning value orientation and awareness proved to be significant in both the descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. Two themes in the area emerge; value orientation differences based both on

organizational affiliation and ethnic status. Both themes are supported in the literature and an attempt to build on these concepts' follows. These two themes also appear to be related to some degree as the ethnic status of CRV-NMST members is more evenly split (53% Aboriginal and 47% non-Aboriginal) than the ethnic status of members of the contract agencies (79% Aboriginal and 21% non-Aboriginal).

Fifty-four percent of all respondents agreed with the statement cultural differences are related to different value bases concerning how to most effectively work with Aboriginal children and families. In the chi square analysis, an association was found between both Aboriginal respondents and managers/supervisors (who all identify themselves as Aboriginal) and agreement with the above statement. The non-Aboriginal respondents had a lower level of agreement with the statement. This indicates that Aboriginal workers feel there are differences in cultural value bases that affect how workers in the organizations approach their work with Aboriginal children and families while non-Aboriginal workers are less aware of value differences that may cause this.

While little literature exists regarding the specific area of value orientation differences between human service workers from different cultures one study does identify some clear differences between Aboriginal and Anglo-American workers. DuBray (1985) concludes in a study of value orientation differences between Aboriginal and Anglo-American female mental health workers a significant difference exists in three of four areas of value orientation between the two groups. Aboriginal mental health workers showed a tendency toward a collateral relational orientation, a present time orientation and harmony with many/nature orientation while the non-Aboriginal workers showed tendencies toward an individualistic orientation, an orientation split between

present and future time, and an orientation split between harmony with and mastery in the man/nature area.

These four areas of value orientation impact how human service workers approach a helping relationship with clients. While a non-Aboriginal helper working with Aboriginal children, families, and colleagues may not be able or expected to change their values, it is extremely important that they are aware of how their value orientation impacts their approach. Being vigilantly aware of the possibility that they are imposing dominant or mainstream values allows the non-Aboriginal worker to adjust their approach when working with Aboriginal children and families. Therefore, assisting non-Aboriginal workers to increase awareness of their differing value base and encouraging a more introspective approach when working with Aboriginal children and families appears important.

A study conducted by Weaver (1999) surveyed Aboriginal social workers and social work students regarding their beliefs about culturally competent services for Aboriginal clients. One section of the survey focused on the values the participants felt were important to have when approaching Aboriginal clients. Several themes in the area of values emerged: helper wellness and self-awareness, humility and willingness to learn, respect, open-mindedness, non-judgmental attitude, and an orientation toward social justice. While this study focused on Aboriginal helpers it could also serve as a guideline for non-Aboriginal helpers that work with Aboriginal people.

Cross-cultural value orientation also impacts the collaborative relationship between workers from different organizations. Maxwell (1990) discusses how prevailing systems of group cultural and societal values affect collaborative relationships between



organizational members. Maxwell also asserts that an individual's cultural and societal position determines value expectancy, motivation, approach to conflict resolution, status sensitivity, as well as trust – which was addressed in the previous section. Without careful attention to the subtleties of how these differences affect collaboration there is potential for the relationship to become problematic.

Response to the statement that cross-cultural issues between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff are being dealt with openly indicates 58% of all respondents disagree while only 22% agree. Several short answer responses also address this issue:

“Staff are frequently fearful of attempting to resolve conflict due to lack of knowledge of the others lifestyle, lack of time and fear of stepping on others' toes”;

“This is always a highly touchy subject and many people do not believe it is okay to voice concerns that are cross-cultural without being seen as a trouble maker”.

These results appear to support Maxwell's above assertions (1990). When any issue in a relationship is dealt with on a covert level the potential for misunderstanding increases greatly. Reluctance to address issues openly contributes to compounding misunderstandings that may reach levels where individuals feel they are not able or are not motivated to resolve them. Further complicating the matter is that different cultural approaches (non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal) to conflict resolution may reinforce the feeling that issues are too difficult to resolve.

An example of different cultural styles of approaching issues in the relationship is found in the results of the top ranked statement in the collaborative strategy section of the instrument. There was a larger amount of variation in responses in this section than any other in Part Two of the instrument. Chi square analysis found an association between the

top ranked statement in this section with Aboriginal ethnic status. Seven of 12 Aboriginal respondents chose the statement that it would be useful if Aboriginal agencies and CRV-NMST were involved in regular meetings to discuss and resolve issues relating to working together to serve Aboriginal families in Calgary. By comparison only one non-Aboriginal respondent chose this statement. The statement that gained the highest concentration of non-Aboriginal ranking was one suggesting a process be outlined for addressing problems that arise in collaboration to ensure issues are dealt with in a timely manner.

Aboriginal respondents indicate a preference for an approach that is ongoing, consultative and process-oriented while non-Aboriginal respondents indicate a preference for statements that favor development of standardized procedural approaches. These preferences illustrate the Aboriginal value of process orientation that focuses on consultation and consensus as compared to the non-Aboriginal value that favors a rational approach to a linear, time-oriented, task orientation. This supports the concept that differing cultural values can contribute to incompatible approaches to resolving conflict (Gabrielidis et al., 1997; Callister & Wall, 1997). More specifically, Gabrielidis et al. (1997) suggest that individuals from a collectivistic society (Aboriginal) prefer conflict resolution styles that emphasize concern for others more than do individuals from individualistic societies (Anglo-American). Their findings further suggest that in the context of interpersonal conflict, avoidance may reflect concern for others, rather than a lack of concern for others.

Other results of the data analysis may possibly indicate an association between value orientation, ethnicity and organizational affiliation. The chi square analysis also

found a significant association between contract Aboriginal agency respondents more often ranking first the statement that it would be useful if Aboriginal agencies and CRV-NMST were involved in regular meetings to discuss and resolve issues relating to working together to serve Aboriginal families in Calgary. Six of 9 agency respondents chose this statement as the most important while only 2 of 13 CRV-NMST respondents chose it. This result indicates that most Aboriginal respondents that chose the statement were also contract Aboriginal agency respondents. This may indicate Aboriginal respondents from the contract Aboriginal agencies favor a more traditionally Aboriginal approach to addressing the collaborative relationship between CRV-NMST and the agencies.

Differences in value orientation are further articulated through consideration of other significant results. Twenty percent more of all respondents agreed with the statement that agency workers from different agencies share a similar value base than agreed with the statement that child welfare workers and contract agency workers share a similar value base regarding their approach to working with children and families (the statement was ranked as second most important in the section). Almost 35% more of all respondents agreed with the statement that agency workers are aware and sensitive to Aboriginal culture/perspective than agreed with the statement that child welfare workers are aware and sensitive to Aboriginal culture/perspective (ranked as most important statement in the section). Similar results were observed in relation to statements comparing child welfare worker's and agency worker's level of consultation with individual in the Aboriginal community and promoting the use of Aboriginal interventions. In both instances the group response indicated they believed agency

workers consulted more with Aboriginal individuals and promoted the use of Aboriginal interventions more than child welfare workers.

Two explanations may account for the perception of differences in terms of value orientation, awareness, and sensitivity of Aboriginal culture/perspective between contract agency and child welfare workers and both will be addressed. As mentioned previously, a larger percentage of agency respondents are Aboriginal than CRV-NMST respondents. Therefore there is an argument for ethnicity being a factor in the perception of differences in value orientation and cultural awareness and sensitivity between CRV-NMST and agency workers. There is another possible explanation that individuals share similar values with the organizations they work for.

Organizational members enter collaborative relationships with their own world view which determines how they experience situations, how they practice, how they interpret others' actions, and the social paradigm they relate to (McGuire, 1988). This 'interpretive schema', McGuire contends, results in individuals from different organizations with differing ideologies and social variables, which in turn influences how they work together. The compatibility of these variables has implications for how well the members from different organizations will work collaboratively together. When McGuire's 'interpretive schema' is considered in relation to the historical formation of the organizations within this study it becomes clear that there are some clear differences in terms of social paradigm and ideology. The child protection system in the western world was developed in reaction to a growing awareness in the 19th and early 20th century of the poor treatment and abuse of many children (Crosson Tower, 1989). The premise of ownership of children by parents was rejected in favor of parents having

responsibilities to their children that the state was responsible to ensure were upheld. A strong social control orientation therefore forms the historical basis of the development of child protection services. The child protection system has, of course, evolved to include concepts of prevention and provision of support to avoid extreme measures of social control such as permanent removal of children. However, it has remained focused on individual children and families and is rarely involved in processes of social action that attempt to address issues of structural, economic, ethnic, gender, and other social inequities that exist in society.

Alternatively, literature reviewed in chapter two indicates a clear social justice orientation on the part of Aboriginal individuals and agencies that have developed social support services for Aboriginal children and families involved with the child protection system (Loucks, 1981; Hull, 1982; Johnston, 1983; Jolly, 1983; Bagley, 1985). These services were developed in reaction to abuse – arguably an extreme social control stance – by the mainstream child protection system. Therefore, a social justice orientation toward advocating and seeking fairness for Aboriginal individuals is pursued based on traditional cultural values. The ideological paradigms within which CRV-NMST and the Aboriginal contract agencies operate appear somewhat at odds with each other.

Blending themes in the areas of ethnic and organizational value differences may provide a better explanation for the perceived value differences between the organizations within this study. The concept of the cultural continuum as presented by Morrisette et al. (1993) is raised again as there is often a tendency to believe that individuals from specific cultural groups share identical value orientations. It is very important to acknowledge that Aboriginal individuals, like any other ethnic grouping of

people, are not homogenous. They come from different geographical, regional and tribal communities, as well as different social, economic and familial backgrounds that contribute to each individual's unique makeup. The cultural continuum reflects variation among Aboriginal people in relation to their identification with traditional Aboriginal culture. It seems to follow from this that their traditional value orientation -or set of values outlined to be uniquely Aboriginal - may similarly be impacted by where they locate them self within the continuum. This allows for variation among value orientation within the ethnic grouping of Aboriginal people.

Following from the discussion above of the different paradigm associations of the two different organizations involved in this study - and the results of the chi square analysis that indicated 7 of 9 Aboriginal respondents who favor a more traditional approach to conflict resolution were from contract agencies - there may be an association between Aboriginal individuals who have a more traditionally based orientation with contract Aboriginal agencies as these organizations reflect more of a social justice and traditionally based orientation. Further, just as Morrisette et al. (1993) argue that Aboriginal individuals who find themselves more non-traditionally based on the cultural continuum may seek more mainstream helping services they may also seek to be employed by more mainstream helping services, or in this case CRV-NMST.

Further to this discussion one other significant finding may be related to the value differences of individuals associated with their organizational affiliation. Over 90% of respondents agreed with the statement that child welfare workers tend to use the services of contract agencies they are familiar with and find easiest to engage. It is conceivable that the five contract agencies involved also show variation in their position on the

cultural continuum given their unique vision, mandate, and approach to service provision. In consideration that individuals engage more easily with other individuals that share similar values and beliefs a situation may exist where CRV-NMST workers seek the services of individuals from contract Aboriginal agencies that share values that are more mainstream and less traditionally Aboriginal in their orientation.

Several themes emerge from this discussion of value differences related to ethnic and organizational affiliation. Cultural or ethnic value orientation differences appear to be understood more by Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal respondents in the study. This has implications for how self-aware non-Aboriginal workers are to how their value base may differ from the people they are working with.

Another theme that emerges is how value orientation differences affect how organizational members approach collaborative relationships differently. Differences in terms of expectations, motivation, level of trust and conflict resolution approaches impact the success of collaboration when cross-cultural organizations are involved (Maxwell, 1990). A theme of value differences based on organizational membership also exists.

### ***Communication***

In the first section of the instrument there are two key statements that stand out in the results. The statement that communication between workers across agencies is effective gained 39% of agreement from participants while the statement that communication between workers within agencies is effective gained 51.5% agreement. One may have expected to see a wider margin between these with communication within the agency perceived as much more effective.

This may indicate issues in communication are not specific to workers from different agencies but exist within the agencies as well. For agencies to communicate in an intra-agency situation it is important that they first have strong inter-agency communication as a basis to start from. The clearer the communication within the agencies that are collaborating the clearer and more consistent the communication is that is shared between them. In terms of what respondents felt was the most important statement regarding communication almost 41% ranked communication between workers at CRV-NMST and the agencies as most important.

While short answer responses within the instrument were not used extensively, a clear theme did emerge in some responses that assessing communication and collaboration of their counterparts is difficult as workers show varying degrees of effectiveness. Some of these responses were:

“It is difficult to generalize all the workers. Some respond quickly as others are slow to the task”;

“Some child welfare workers do an excellent job with and in coordination with other agency workers. Some child welfare workers do not perform good work”;

“Effectiveness of communication between agency workers and child welfare workers is dependent on the workers... all have varying degrees of using and providing information to each other”;

“Receiving documentation on time is dependent on agency and agency worker”;

“Issues are more easily resolved dependent on individual [involved]”.

It is always important to realize that there will be a great deal of variation among any group of individuals in their own personal effectiveness in performing their role. These responses indicate an unwillingness to make generalizations regarding their counterparts as they are aware of variation.



The responses to other comparison type statements provide more information. The statement that child welfare workers are too busy to connect with agency workers gained the agreement of 47% of participants while the statement that agency workers are too busy to connect with child welfare workers gained only 15% agreement. This highlights an important difference in the roles of the child welfare workers and the agency support workers. Caseloads for child welfare workers are probably quite a bit higher as the expectation is that as case managers they assess risk and coordinate services for clients while the agency workers provide direct service to those same clients and therefore likely spend more direct time with them. These differences in roles appear to have implications for how available the workers are to communicate with each other. A better understanding of workers to their counterpart roles could decrease negative implications involved in one worker being more “available”.

### ***Social Work/Administrative Practice***

Caseload sizes for child welfare workers at CRV-NMST are identified by 81% percent of the respondents as being too high for child welfare workers to provide adequate services to children and families. The highest number of respondents (31%) also ranked this statement as most important in the section. A number of short answer statements addressed this issue as well:

“Workload is an issue”;

“Child welfare workloads make it difficult for them to be understanding to our (Aboriginal) unique needs”;

“Workload often hampers amount of time available to learn about both Aboriginal agency staff and their practices.”;

“They need to hire more [child welfare] workers”.

If a situation exists where child welfare workers are overwhelmed by their workload and feel they are unable to provide adequate services, this may impact their ability or availability to engage in successful collaborative relationships. Literature in the area of collaboration indicates the need for a process orientation toward open communication, relationship development, encouragement, establishing patterns of interactions, and learning about the organizational environment of the other agency (Beatrice, 1990; Wimpfheimer et al., 1990).

Process orientation requires the commitment of energy and time. If child welfare workers are too busy to meet the basic requirements of their position it is unlikely that they will focus on anything other than task completion by themselves and their counterparts. This issue may also be tied in to the value differences of the organizations involved in the study as addressed in the section on value differences.

### ***Documentation***

In terms of more administrative details the statement that documentation required from counterpart workers is received when required received disagreement from almost 70% of participants. One short answer statement expressed the concern “important information and updated progress reports are a problem as communication between agencies [and CRV-NMST] needs drastic changes”. In terms of collaboration, documentation is critical to communicate regarding issues that may not be verbally discussed or are required for purposes such as initiating service with clients, court representation, or reviewing progress with clients. This is an additional irritant to the collaborative process. Different or weakly outlined expectations regarding documentation

are often the issue and unless clearly defined can become very frustrating to the workers involved (Smith & Lipsky, 1993; Beatrice, 1990). Streamlining practices between agencies is critical to a successful collaboration.

There was higher agreement with one statement concerning documentation than any other. The statement that it is clear when referrals are for a contract service or a fee for service arrangement gained the agreement of almost 55% of participants. A possible reason for this is that administrative processes are used that make this clear. Different paper work is required for the two different arrangements and as long as the worker completes the appropriate form then the situation is clear. This could be an example of where simple, mutually understood, administrative processes can ensure communication remains clear between agencies (Smith & Lipsky, 1993; Gummer, 1990; Beatrice, 1990).

### **Implications of the Study and Research Recommendations**

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of how organizational members in Aboriginal contract agencies and a government mandated child welfare agency perceive their collaborative relationship. The findings suggest there are implications for the participant organizations, the social work profession and education, literature, and future research.

#### ***Implications for the Participant Organizations***

Overall the results of the study appear to indicate a relatively neutral (not overly negative or positive) participant perception of the current collaborative relationship between the contract Aboriginal agencies and CRV-NMST. Higher scores in Part Two of the instrument are to be expected as they are strategy focused but also indicate that organizational members would like to see improvements in the collaborative relationship.

Important information that emerges from the study involves patterns of significant responses indicating a number of areas that require attention should the organizations involved seek to improve the collaborative relationship. The study participants indicated a preference for strategies in the areas of cultural practice and their relationship with their counterpart workers. This result seems to fit well with the themes that emerged in the area of the current collaborative relationship requiring attention. The emerging themes are identified as:

- A low-trust environment between CRV-NMST and agency workers.
- High worker turnover exacerbating a low-trust environment.
- Lack of awareness of counterpart roles.
- Lack of awareness of ethnic and organizational value differences.
- Lack of openness or reluctance in addressing issues.
- Ineffective communication between workers within agencies as well as across agencies.
- The inability of some workers to engage in a process orientation to the collaborative relationship due to workload demands.
- Weakness in the area of providing written documentation to counterpart workers.

Strategies to address these issues in the collaborative relationship need to be developed by the organizations involved. Upon consideration of the themes in the study a number of pre-conditions to the development of strategies are proposed:

- Strategies require a focus on process orientation, which is critical to successful collaboration.
- Strategies need to be developed that create an environment that provides safety and support for organizational members to explore issues that have not previously been dealt with openly.

- Acknowledgement of issues as being valid among organizational members may assist in engaging individuals in a process they may have been reluctant to be involved in before.
- Avoiding superficial explanations that reinforce previous misunderstandings and encouraging discussion that considers alternative explanations. This involves exploration of issues on a level that avoids assumption of racial bias or prejudice.

Issues may be best addressed in both an educative and consultative manner. Joint training may offer an opportunity to explore issue areas from not only a knowledge-based approach but may encourage participants to begin to speak more openly about feelings associated with the issues. Once organizational members have gained a greater awareness of some of the underlying causes associated with collaborative issues, regular meetings may provide opportunity for further discussion and resolution of issues. The meetings may be designed to ensure both task-related and process-related issues to be addressed

Strategies for staff retention and increasing the number of child welfare workers may not be one that organizational members can adopt without larger system support. Staff retention may be related to an increase in the number of workers; if the child welfare position becomes more manageable for existing staff they may be less likely to leave their position.

Some strategies will be easier to adopt than others. In an environment where task orientation is more prevalent these types of strategies will be easier achieved. The bigger challenge may lie in attempting to adopt process strategies when the individuals involved lack the time and energy required to participate.

Some possible resources for the organizations in implementing a framework to adopt strategies for change exist in the literature. Urwin and Haynes (1998) propose a

model of collaboration that uses focus groups in multidisciplinary training. Focus groups are based on processes of relationship building, planning, implementing, and visioning. The authors assert the focus group provides a forum that is objective and non-defensive. Another model for family-centred interagency collaboration is proposed by Walter and Petr (2000). They outline how the principles of family-centred practice translate in to attitudes, behaviors and policies on all levels between organizations.

### ***Implications for Social Work***

The results of the study have several implications for the social work profession. Findings in the area of trust in the collaborative relationship and value differences among ethnic and organizational members indicate the importance of promoting and challenging self-awareness in present and future social work practitioners. As one respondent expressed there are ‘differences in knowledge, view of child welfare, skills, abilities, worldview, prejudice, experience of native culture, [and] spirituality’.

The strategies outlined in the previous section may be relevant to social work practitioners in similar Aboriginal agency settings who may be experiencing difficulties in collaboration. In times characterized by shrinking budgets and increased demands it is easy to overlook process orientation in favor of task implementation. Task implementation, however, is often flawed when process issues are ignored. It appears these issues cannot be ignored if a long-term focus on successful collaboration is the goal.

What becomes important from an educational standpoint is that future social workers be given a greater opportunity to explore and understand differences in cultural experience and it’s impact on their worldview – both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal

students. For Aboriginal students the need to explore their experiences with and feelings of trust toward the 'system' seems important. While feelings may not be easily resolved, awareness can assist individuals in understanding their interaction with those they view as authorities having historical and personal meaning to them due to their ethnic affiliation. These skills are also important in terms of their awareness of how their ability to impact systems effectively can be modeled to the Aboriginal people they work with.

As a result of the effect of colonization on Aboriginal individuals, families and communities, a significant number of clients social workers are involved with are Aboriginal. Education regarding the historical experience of colonization and the resulting social impacts on Aboriginal people needs to be a mandatory part of undergraduate education for all social work students. Currently in most universities courses specifically focused on social work with Aboriginal people are optional. This needs to change when one considers that it is extremely unlikely that social workers will not have contact with large numbers of Aboriginal people once they are in practice. The process of examining the Aboriginal experience from an 'un-colonized' vantage point is critical for non-Aboriginal individuals to gain an understanding of the unique experiences and challenges each Aboriginal person – whether they are a client or colleague – faces.

A final observation is that at the undergraduate level very little time is spent exploring collaboration - considering professional relationships and the subsequent impact on clients when these relationships are not effective. Increased educational focus on the quality and effectiveness of these relationships is indicated by this study.

### *Contribution to Social Work Literature*

The results of this study contribute to two areas of social work literature. Findings relating to trust in the relationship specifically relate to the effect of colonization on collaboration between Aboriginal support workers and child welfare workers. The other area of literature that may be impacted is value orientation differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal social workers. Further, findings related to value orientation differences being dependent on organizational affiliation also contribute to literature regarding collaboration.

Overall, this exploratory study contributes to the area of cross-cultural collaboration. It is the first study to examine the relationship between a government-mandated organization and contracted Aboriginal support agencies. The dynamics as outlined in the previous paragraph, as well as the overall findings of the study, present a picture of how the specific organizations involved are managing the collaborative aspect of a unique and complex relationship.

The results indicating an impact on trust in the relationship between Aboriginal agency and child welfare workers relate to the work of Maxwell (1990) who identifies an impact when members of a 'low trust culture' are involved in collaborative relationships. The findings that a low trust environment exists within the relationship of the respondents in the study are related to literature from an Aboriginal historical perspective regarding cultural factors in collaboration. The possibility is asserted that Aboriginal human service workers required to collaborate with child protection workers face a unique challenge in attempting to address feelings of mistrust for their counterparts due to their experience of colonization and possible bias regarding the child welfare system. It appears this may be



an area for consideration in the literature pertaining to cross-cultural and more specifically, collaboration between Aboriginal support workers and child protection workers.

Value orientation also emerges as an important theme in the results of this study. Previous work in the area of different value orientations of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal social workers is supported by the finding in this study that participants felt that value differences regarding how to effectively work with Aboriginal clients are related to ethnic affiliation (DuBray, 1985). What uniquely emerges from this study is the relationship between an awareness of value differences by Aboriginal respondents but not non-Aboriginal respondents. Another theme that emerges when results are combined with literature in the area of cultural factors in collaboration is support for Maxwell's assertion that the group cultural values of individuals affect the level of trust and approach to conflict resolution that they bring to the collaborative relationship (Maxwell, 1990).

Building on results in this area of value orientation, further linkages were made with the work of McGuire (1988) who asserts that individuals employed with organizations may possess 'interpretive schema' related to the organization. After analysis of the origins of both the child protection system and Aboriginal support agencies an argument was put forward that the former operates from a relative social control perspective while the latter has a social justice perspective. Resulting collaborative difficulties may be due to the differences in approach one would expect the different organizations to promote.

### ***Recommendations for Future Research***

There are a number of possibilities for future research given the results of this study. The findings of the study are of an exploratory nature and much more work in the area is required to generalize the findings to contracted Aboriginal agencies and government mandated child welfare organizations. Therefore the first recommendation is for similar studies with larger groups in different geographic settings to determine if the themes that emerged in this study are prevalent with this potentially larger population.

However, there are a number of opportunities to build on the findings of this research with the same participants of this study. In fact this type of research could be very helpful to organizational members in better understanding the collaborative relationship and in efforts to build a stronger relationship. In the area of low trust in the collaborative relationship between the Aboriginal workers and child welfare workers in this study there may be a good opportunity to take a more in-depth look at the issues associated with low trust. A qualitative study focused specifically on the trust relationship may elicit a richer understanding of the issues that are impacting the relationship.

Value orientation differences and awareness is another area where a qualitative study may be indicated. A more in-depth understanding of the specific issues and variables of value orientation and how they relate to ethnicity, role, and organizational affiliation of the participants of this study would elicit a better understanding in this area. Of considerable interest in this area would be preferences for approaches to conflict resolution based on ethnic or cultural affiliation.

Another interesting consideration may be whether individuals choose to be employed by organizations that share their value orientation or if they are influenced to

develop an orientation similar to the one of the organization. Use of the cultural continuum in this type of study could add another dimension and broaden understanding of value orientation beyond the ethnic grouping and place it in the context of the unique experiences of Aboriginal individuals within the cultural category.

### **Summary**

An exploratory research design was used to examine CRV-NMST and contracted Aboriginal agency staff perceptions of their collaborative relationship. Perceptions of how the current relationship is viewed, along with perceptions of what staff view to be essential for more effective collaboration, were examined through the administration of a qualitatively designed measurement instrument. The rationale for the study was based on the participant organizations' involvement with an emerging community based model approach to service delivery with emphasis on increased collaboration.

While overall results indicate a relatively neutral perception (not overly negative or positive) of the current relationship between CRV-NMST and the contract agencies, the organizational members do indicate a number of areas that may require attention. The areas where difficulties may be occurring in the relationship are trust, value orientation, awareness of counterpart agency role, high worker turnover, reluctance in addressing issues, inability to engage in a process orientation due to work demands, and weakness in the area of communication and documentation.

Several strategies the participant organizations involved may pursue were proposed. As well suggestions regarding increasing education and awareness for future and current social work practitioners were recommended. Given the results of this study further research in the above areas is indicated.

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APPENDIX A

Measurement Instrument – CRV-NMST

***THE COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIP  
BETWEEN  
CALGARY ROCKY VIEW NATIVE SERVICES DISTRICT OFFICE  
AND  
ABORIGINAL CHILD WELFARE AGENCIES***

***CRVNSDO QUESTIONNAIRE***

### Part One: Section One - Communication

Please respond to the following statements regarding your perceptions of how communication occurs between workers from Aboriginal agencies and child welfare workers from the Native Services District Office. Using the scale to the right of each item, circle the number that best indicates your agreement with the given statement. When you have responded to all of the statements in the following section please stop and consider all of the statements. Put the numbers 1 through 5 next to the statements or issues you believe deserve the most focus in order to increase communication. The number 1 would reflect the most important following through to 5 with the next important statements or issues needing to be examined.

Statement	Disagree - Agree
Communication between workers at Native Services District Office (NSDO) and Aboriginal contract agency workers is effective.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Communication between workers within NSDO is effective.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Child welfare workers advise agency workers of other agencies they have requested to work with the same client.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Child welfare workers provide current and relevant information in Information Consolidations and Service Plans.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Information provided on Referral and Evaluation/Intake forms is specific and clear.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Agency workers provide detailed and relevant information in client reports submitted to child welfare workers.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Agency workers keep child welfare workers informed of important changes in client functioning or progress.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
It is clear when NSDO referrals are made whether they are for contracted service or fee for service.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Child welfare workers are clear when a request for information is for court purposes.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a

Statement	Disagree - Agree
Child welfare workers are too busy with other tasks to connect with agency workers.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Agency workers are too busy with other tasks to connect with child welfare workers.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Please assign the numbers 1 through 5 next to the statements or issues above that you believe deserve the most focus in order to increase or improve communication between agency and NSDO workers.	
Please add any other comments you may have regarding communication between child welfare workers from the Native Services District Office and workers from Aboriginal contract agencies. (Please use last page of questionnaire if you require additional room)	
<p align="center"><b>Part One: Section Two - Collaboration</b></p> <p>Please respond to the following statements regarding your perceptions about how collaboration occurs between child welfare workers from the Native Services District Office and Aboriginal agency workers. Please provide responses in the same manner as the previous section.</p>	
Statement	Disagree - Agree
Case conferences that include the family/client, child welfare workers, and agency workers occur often enough.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a

Statement	Disagree - Agree
When more than one agency is involved with a family they sometimes end up performing the same function.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Child welfare workers are aware of contract agency mandates and the specific services they provide.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Referral requests from child welfare workers are consistent with the selected agency's mandate and services they provide.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Agency workers are aware of child welfare mandates, policy and practice guidelines.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Documentation (supervised visit/progress reports, etc.) required from agency workers is received when and as required.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Aboriginal agency workers return phone calls within a reasonable time frame.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
There is enough contact between child welfare and agency workers to effectively do our jobs.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Inconsistency in Aboriginal agency worker performance reflects badly on NSDO.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Some Aboriginal agency workers have a negative view of child welfare which results in decreased effectiveness in working together with families/clients.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Please assign the numbers 1 through 5 next to the statements or issues above that you believe deserve the most focus in order to increase or improve collaboration between agency and NSDO workers.	

Please add any other comments you may have regarding collaboration between workers from Aboriginal contract agencies and child welfare workers from the Native Services District Office. (Please use last page of questionnaire if you require additional room)

**Part One: Section Three - Social Work/Administration Practice**

Please respond to the following statements regarding your perceptions of social work and administrative practice between Aboriginal agency workers and child welfare workers from the Native Services District Office. Please provide responses in the same manner as the previous section.

Statement	Disagree - Agree
Agency workers and child welfare workers share a similar value base regarding their approach to working with children and families.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Agency workers from different Aboriginal contract agencies share a similar value base regarding their approach to working with children and families.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
There is consistency in approach to working with children and families from one worker to the next in a particular contract agency.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Some Aboriginal contract agencies provide more consistent and reliable services for children and families than others.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Contract agency workers' expectations of me seem to be consistent from one worker to the next.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a

Statement	Disagree - Agree
Child welfare caseloads are too high for workers to provide adequate services to families/clients.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
High contract agency worker/file turnover is interfering with children and families developing therapeutic relationships necessary to work on identified issues.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Agree upon progress reports are received within a reasonable time after an agency has been requested to provide service.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Agency workers follow through on commitments made to children and families.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Children in care/families are able to contact agency workers when required.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Contract agencies are reimbursed in a timely manner when the agency pays expenses on behalf of a child.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Child welfare workers tend to stop using the services of a particular contract agency if perceived difficulties in the service or working relationship are not effectively resolved.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Agency workers can become involved in conflict (triangulated) between child welfare workers and clients/families.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Child welfare workers contact the appropriate person in the agency when making referrals.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Aboriginal agency workers use appropriate procedures and safe equipment when transporting children and families in vehicles.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Human service training is required for Aboriginal agency staff who work with Aboriginal children and families involved in the child welfare system.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a

Statement	Disagree - Agree
Agency staff who are also foster parents should not advocate their agency services be provided for children in their care.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Child welfare workers tend to use the services of contract agencies that they are familiar with and find easiest to engage.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Client confidentiality is respected by Aboriginal contract agency workers.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Aboriginal agency workers deviate from providing requested services without consulting NSDO child welfare workers.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Child welfare worker opinions and referrals for contract agency services are influenced by what they hear from other NSDO workers about their experiences with these agencies.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Please assign the numbers 1 through 5 next to the statements or issues above that you believe deserve the most focus in order to improve social work practice and administration between agency and NSDO workers	
Please add any other comments you may have regarding social work and administrative practice between workers from Aboriginal contract agencies and child welfare workers from NSDO. (Please use last page of questionnaire if you require additional room)	

### Part One: Section Four - Cultural Practice

Please respond to the following statements regarding your perceptions of the cultural practice between Aboriginal agency workers and child welfare workers from the Native Services District Office. Please provide responses in the same manner as the previous section.

Statement	Disagree - Agree
Child welfare workers are aware and sensitive to Aboriginal culture/perspective.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Agency workers are aware and sensitive to Aboriginal culture/perspective.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Child welfare workers consult with individuals in the Aboriginal community about the cultural needs of the families/clients they work with.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Agency workers consult with individuals in the Aboriginal community about the cultural needs of the families/clients they work with.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Child welfare workers promote the use of Aboriginal interventions with families/clients they work with.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Agency workers use Aboriginal interventions with families/clients they work with.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Cross-cultural issues between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff from both the agency and NSDO setting are dealt with openly.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Cultural differences contribute to feeling a lack of trust between child welfare workers and agency staff.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Cultural differences are related to different value bases concerning how to most effectively work with Aboriginal children and families.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a



Please assign the numbers 1 through 5 next to the statements or issues above that you believe deserve the most focus in order to improve cultural practice of agency and NSDO workers	
<p>Please add any other comments you may have regarding your perceptions of the cultural practice between contract agency workers and child welfare workers from the Native Services District Office. (Please use last page of questionnaire if you require additional room)</p>	
<p align="center"><b>Part One: Section Five - Relationship</b></p> <p>Please respond to the following statements regarding your perceptions of the relationship between contract agency workers and child welfare workers from the Native Services District Office. Please provide responses in the same manner as the previous section.</p>	
Statement	Disagree - Agree
I have a positive working relationship with Aboriginal agency workers.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
High child welfare worker turnover contributes to a lack of trust between agency and child welfare workers.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Agency workers attempt to resolve case issues with NSDO worker prior to passing concerns on to a supervisor.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
High agency worker turnover contributes to a lack of trust between agency and child welfare workers.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a

Statement	Disagree - Agree
<p>When there is conflict in the relationship between child welfare workers and agency staff the situation can become personalized and seem unresolvable.</p> <p>Please assign the numbers 1 through 5 next to the statements or issues above that you believe deserve the most focus in order to improve the relationship between agency and NSDO workers</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 n/a</p>
<p>Please add any other comments you may have regarding your perceptions of the relationship between contract agency workers and child welfare workers from the Native Services District Office. (Please use last page of questionnaire if you require additional room)</p>	
<p><b>Part Two: Section One - Communication Strategies</b></p> <p>Please respond to the following statements regarding how communication can be improved to strengthen the partnership between Aboriginal agencies and Native Services District Office. Please provide responses in the same manner as the previous section.</p>	
Statement	Disagree - Agree
<p>It would be useful if child welfare workers advised agency workers of all resources involved with a client/family and encouraged agency workers to contact each other.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 n/a</p>

Statement	Disagree - Agree
Child welfare workers should advise agency staff when a request for information is specifically for court purposes.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Administrative changes need to occur so that workers have more time to communicate.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
A procedural process should be put in place to ensure immediate sharing of information concerning critical incidents and/or high risk situations involving clients/families.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Administrative changes that encourage communication (such as exchanging phone lists, improving protocols around recording telephone messages) should be implemented.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Agency in-home support workers should have cell phones to immediately contact child welfare workers or emergency workers (police, ambulance, etc.) to report high risk situations they encounter on routine visits.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Please assign the numbers 1 through 5 next to the statements or issues above that you believe deserve the most focus in order to improve communication between agency and NSDO workers	
Please add any other suggestions you may have to improve communication between contract agency workers and child welfare workers from the Native Services District Office. (Please use last page of questionnaire if you require additional room)	

### Part Two: Section Two - Collaboration Strategies

Please respond to the following statements regarding how collaboration can be improved to strengthen the partnership between contract agencies and Native Services District Office. Please provide responses in the same manner as the previous section.

Statement	Disagree - Agree
It would be useful if Aboriginal agencies and NSDO were involved in regular meetings to discuss and resolve issues relating to working together to serve Aboriginal families in Calgary.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
<b>Answer the following three questions <u>only if you agreed</u> with the above question:</b>	
- These meetings would involve front line workers as well as supervisors/management.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
- These meetings would be informal and take place in a traditional Aboriginal setting.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
- These meetings would also be focussed on defining what aboriginal services will look like within Calgary Rocky View Child & Family Services.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Meetings/case conferences need to have a more positive focus.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Agency staff should feel free to come in to NSDO to review files as this also gives them a chance to connect with NSDO workers.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
A process needs to be outlined for addressing problems that arise in collaboration to ensure issues are dealt with in a timely manner.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
It would be useful to conduct some joint staff meetings with agency and NSDO workers to discuss worker roles, agency and NSDO mandates, and other collaborative issues that arise.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a

Statement	Disagree - Agree
There needs to be more joint training for child welfare and agency workers.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
I would like to see NSDO workers take more initiative in contacting agency workers.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
I would like to see agency workers take more initiative in contacting NSDO workers.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Workers need more support from their counterparts (either agency or NSDO workers) when having to confront stubborn or chronic issues with clients/families.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Please assign the numbers 1 through 5 next to the statements or issues above that you believe deserve the most focus in order to improve collaboration between agency and NSDO workers	

Please add any other suggestions you may have to improve collaboration between contract agency workers and child welfare workers from the Native Services District Office. (Please use last page of questionnaire if you require additional room)

**Part Two: Section Three - Social Work/Admin Practice Strategies**

Please respond to the following statements regarding how social work and administrative practices can be improved to strengthen the partnership between contract agencies and Native Services District Office. Please provide responses in the same manner as the previous section.

Statement	Disagree - Agree
There should be only one child welfare contract manager to work with all Aboriginal agencies.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Initial meetings/pre-placement visits (when referral is made) between child welfare and agency/residential staff are useful.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
More regularly scheduled case conferences would contribute to more effective work being done with children and families.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
It would help agency workers to be provided information and training outlining the role of child welfare and how to work effectively with the system.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
A copy of the Information Consolidation, Face Sheet, and Service Plan provided at the time of referral is essential.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
The Referral and Evaluation form should be replaced with a new referral form that includes information more specific to the service being requested.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
More child welfare workers are needed to decrease case loads and increase time spent on each case.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
It is important that in-home support workers from different contract agencies have different skills. This allows child welfare workers to make referrals based on the type of support a client or family requires (ie: worker to provide instrumental assistance such as setting up appointments on one end of continuum to a worker that provides intensive teaching of parenting skills or behaviour management).	1 2 3 4 5 n/a

Statement	Disagree - Agree
There needs to be increased compliance with standards of safety around transporting children or families (ie: tether bolts, vehicle maintenance, insurance, etc.).	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
It is managements' responsibility in both child welfare and the agency setting to implement changes to encourage inter-agency team building.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
It is child welfare and agency workers' responsibility to implement changes to encourage inter-agency team building.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Please assign the numbers 1 through 5 next to the statements or issues above that you believe deserve the most focus in order to improve the social work practice/administration between agency and NSDO workers	

Please add any other suggestions you may have to improve social work/administrative practice between contract agency workers and child welfare workers from the Native Services District Office. (Please use last page of questionnaire if you require additional room).

### Part Two: Section Four - Cultural Strategies

Please respond to the following statements regarding how cultural issues can be more effectively approached to strengthen the partnership between contract agencies and Native Services District Office. Please provide responses in the same manner as the previous section.

Statement	Disagree - Agree
Cross-cultural training/workshops should be mandatory for agency and NSDO staff to increase awareness of Aboriginal culture/ tradition and issues of working in a diverse workplace.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Cross-cultural training should be done jointly with child welfare and agency staff to encourage open discussion about differences in values, approach, etc.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Please assign the numbers 1 and 2 to the statements or issues above that you believe deserve the most focus in order to improve the relationship between agency and NSDO workers	
<p>Please add any other suggestions you may have regarding how cultural issues can be more effectively approached to strengthen cultural practice between contract agency workers and child welfare workers from the Native Services District Office. (Please use last page of questionnaire if you require additional room)</p>	



**Part Two: Section Five - Relationship Strategies - Agency Questionnaire**

Please respond to the following statements regarding how relationship dynamics can be more effectively approached to strengthen the partnership between contract agencies and Native Services District Office. Please provide responses in the same manner as the previous section.

Statement	Disagree - Agree
Retreats for child welfare and agency staff that focus on team building and cultural awareness would help to build more positive relationships.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Workers should try to resolve case issues with each other prior to taking the matter to their supervisor/manager.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Workers need to take more initiative in promoting open, productive, and positive relationships with their counterparts in either the agency or child welfare setting.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Please assign the numbers 1 through 3 next to the statements or issues above that you believe deserve the most focus in order to improve the relationship between agency and NSDO workers	

Please add any other suggestions you may have regarding how professional relationships can be improved to strengthen the partnership between contract agency workers and child welfare workers from the Native Services District Office. (Please use last page of questionnaire if you require additional room)

### Background Information

1. Are you Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your role in this agency?
 

_____ child care worker	_____ youth worker
_____ in-home support worker	_____ supervisor
_____ manager	_____ therapist
_____ other (please indicate) _____	
3. How long have you worked in your current position? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How long have you worked with this agency? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How long have you worked in the human service sector? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is your ethnic background?
 

_____ Status Indian	_____ Metis status
_____ Non-status Aboriginal	_____ Caucasian
_____ Other	
4. What is your age?
 

_____ under 25
_____ 26-35
_____ 36-45
_____ 46-55
_____ over 55
5. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
 

_____ did not complete high school	
_____ high school diploma	
_____ Diploma	in _____ Social Work
_____ Bachelors degree	_____ Psychology
_____ Masters degree	_____ Social Sciences
_____ Ph.D	_____ Other (indicate) _____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire!

APPENDIX B

Measurement Instrument – Agency

***THE COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIP  
BETWEEN  
CALGARY ROCKY VIEW NATIVE SERVICES DISTRICT OFFICE  
AND  
ABORIGINAL CHILD WELFARE AGENCIES***

***AGENCY QUESTIONNAIRE***

### Part One: Section One - Communication

Please respond to the following statements regarding your perceptions of how communication occurs between workers from Aboriginal agencies and child welfare workers from the Native Services District Office. Using the scale to the right of each item, circle the number that best indicates your agreement with the given statement. When you have responded to all of the statements in the following section please stop and consider all of the statements. Put the numbers 1 through 5 next to the statements or issues you believe deserve the most focus in order to increase communication. The number 1 would reflect the most important following through to 5 with the next important statements or issues needing to be examined.

Statement	Disagree - Agree
Communication between agency workers and workers at Native Services District Office (NSDO) is effective.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Communication between workers within our agency is effective.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Child welfare workers advise agency workers of other agencies they have requested to work with the same client.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Child welfare workers provide current and relevant information in Information Consolidations and Service Plans.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Information provided on Referral and Evaluation/Intake forms is specific and clear.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Agency workers provide detailed and relevant information in client reports submitted to child welfare workers.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Agency workers keep child welfare workers informed of important changes in client functioning or progress.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
It is clear when NSDO referrals are made whether they are for contracted service or fee for service.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Child welfare workers are clear when a request for information is for court purposes.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a

Statement	Disagree - Agree
Child welfare workers are too busy with other tasks to connect with agency workers.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Agency workers are too busy with other tasks to connect with child welfare workers.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Please assign the numbers 1 through 5 next to the statements or issues above that you believe deserve the most focus in order to increase or improve communication between agency and NSDO workers.	
Please add any other comments you may have regarding communication between workers from Aboriginal contract agencies and child welfare workers from the Native Services District Office. (Please use last page of questionnaire if you require additional room)	
<p align="center"><b>Part One: Section Two - Collaboration</b></p> <p>Please respond to the following statements regarding your perceptions about how collaboration occurs between Aboriginal agency workers and child welfare workers from the Native Services District Office. Please provide responses in the same manner as the previous section.</p>	
Statement	Disagree - Agree
Case conferences that include the family/client, child welfare workers, and agency workers occur often enough.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a

Statement	Disagree - Agree
When more than one agency is involved with a family they sometimes end up performing the same function.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Child welfare workers are aware of contract agency mandates and the specific services they provide.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Referral requests from child welfare workers are consistent with the selected agency's mandate and services they provide.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Agency workers are aware of child welfare mandates, policy and practice guidelines.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Documentation (info-consolidation, service plan, etc.) required from child welfare workers is received when and as required.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Child welfare workers return phone calls within a reasonable time frame.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
There is enough contact between child welfare and agency workers to effectively do our jobs.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Inconsistency in child welfare worker performance reflects badly on our agency.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Some NSDO child welfare workers have a negative view of the agency I work for which results in decreased effectiveness in working together with families/clients.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Please assign the numbers 1 through 5 next to the statements or issues above that you believe deserve the most focus in order to increase or improve collaboration between agency and NSDO workers.	

Please add any other comments you may have regarding collaboration between workers from Aboriginal contract agencies and child welfare workers from the Native Services District Office. (Please use last page of questionnaire if you require additional room)

**Part One: Section Three - Social Work/Administration Practice**

Please respond to the following statements regarding your perceptions of social work and administrative practice between Aboriginal agency workers and child welfare workers from the Native Services District Office. Please provide responses in the same manner as the previous section.

Statement	Disagree - Agree
Agency workers and child welfare workers share a similar value base regarding their approach to working with children and families.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Agency workers from different Aboriginal contract agencies share a similar value base regarding their approach to working with children and families.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
There is consistency in case planning from one child welfare worker to the next.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Some NSDO child welfare workers provide more consistent and reliable services for children and families than others.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Child welfare workers' expectations of me seem to be consistent from one worker to the next.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a

Statement	Disagree - Agree
Child welfare caseloads are too high for workers to provide adequate services to families/clients.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
High child welfare worker/file turnover is interfering with children and families developing therapeutic relationships necessary to work on identified issues.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
A Referral and Evaluation form is received within a reasonable time after service is requested by a child welfare worker.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Child welfare workers follow through on commitments made to children and families.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Children in care/families are able to contact child welfare workers when required.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Contract agencies are reimbursed in a timely manner when the agency pays expenses on behalf of a child.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Child welfare workers tend to stop using the services of a particular contract agency if perceived difficulties in the service or working relationship are not effectively resolved.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Agency workers can become involved in conflict (triangulated) between child welfare workers and clients/families.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Child welfare workers contact the appropriate person in the agency when making referrals.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Child welfare workers use appropriate procedures and safe equipment when transporting children and families in vehicles.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Human service training is required for aboriginal agency staff who work with aboriginal children and families involved in the child welfare system.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a



Statement	Disagree - Agree
Agency staff who are also foster parents should not advocate their agency services be provided for children in their care.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Child welfare workers tend to use the services of contract agencies that they are familiar with and find easiest to engage.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Client confidentiality is respected by child welfare workers.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Child welfare workers deviate from the original case plan without explanation or consultation with agency workers.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Child welfare worker opinions and referrals for contract agency services are influenced by what they hear from other NSDO workers about their experiences with these agencies.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Please assign the numbers 1 through 5 next to the statements or issues above that you believe deserve the most focus in order to improve social work practice and administration between agency and NSDO workers	
Please add any other comments you may have regarding social work and administrative practice between workers from Aboriginal contract agencies and child welfare workers from NSDO. (Please use last page of questionnaire if you require additional room)	

### Part One: Section Four - Cultural Practice

Please respond to the following statements regarding your perceptions of the cultural practice between Aboriginal agency workers and child welfare workers from the Native Services District Office. Please provide responses in the same manner as the previous section.

Statement	Disagree - Agree
Child welfare workers are aware and sensitive to aboriginal culture/perspective.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Agency workers are aware and sensitive to aboriginal culture/perspective.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Child welfare workers consult with individuals in the aboriginal community about the cultural needs of the families/clients they work with.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Agency workers consult with individuals in the Aboriginal community about the cultural needs of the families/clients they work with.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Child welfare workers promote the use of Aboriginal interventions with families/clients they work with.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Agency workers use Aboriginal interventions with families/clients they work with.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Cross-cultural issues between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff from both the agency and NSDO setting are dealt with openly.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Cultural differences contribute to feeling a lack of trust between child welfare workers and agency staff.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Cultural differences are related to different value bases concerning how to most effectively work with Aboriginal children and families.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a

Please assign the numbers 1 through 5 next to the statements or issues above that you believe deserve the most focus in order to improve cultural practice of agency and NSDO workers	
Please add any other comments you may have regarding your perceptions of the cultural practice between contract agency workers and child welfare workers from the Native Services District Office. (Please use last page of questionnaire if you require additional room)	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Part One: Section Five - Relationship</b></p> <p>Please respond to the following statements regarding your perceptions of the relationship between contract agency workers and child welfare workers from the Native Services District Office. Please provide responses in the same manner as the previous section.</p>	
Statement	Disagree - Agree
I have a positive working relationship with child welfare workers at NSDO.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
High child welfare worker turnover contributes to a lack of trust between agency and child welfare workers.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Child welfare workers attempt to resolve case issues with agency worker prior to passing concerns on to a supervisor.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
High agency worker turnover contributes to a lack of trust between agency and child welfare workers.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a

Statement	Disagree - Agree
<p>When there is conflict in the relationship between child welfare workers and agency staff the situation can become personalized and seem unresolvable.</p> <p>Please assign the numbers 1 through 5 next to the statements or issues above that you believe deserve the most focus in order to improve the relationship between agency and NSDO workers</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 n/a</p>
<p>Please add any other comments you may have regarding your perceptions of the relationship between contract agency workers and child welfare workers from the Native Services District Office. (Please use last page of questionnaire if you require additional room)</p>	
<p align="center"><b>Part Two: Section One - Communication Strategies</b></p> <p>Please respond to the following statements regarding how communication can be improved to strengthen the partnership between Aboriginal agencies and Native Services District Office. Please provide responses in the same manner as the previous section.</p>	
Statement	Disagree - Agree
<p>It would be useful if child welfare workers advised agency workers of all resources involved with a client/family and encouraged agency workers to contact each other.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 n/a</p>

Statement	Disagree - Agree
Child welfare workers should advise agency staff when a request for information is specifically for court purposes.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Administrative changes need to occur so that workers have more time to communicate.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
A procedural process should be put in place to ensure immediate sharing of information concerning critical incidents and/or high risk situations involving clients/families.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Administrative changes that encourage communication (such as exchanging phone lists, improving protocols around recording telephone messages) should be implemented.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Agency in-home support workers should have cell phones to immediately contact child welfare workers or emergency workers (police, ambulance, etc.) to report high risk situations they encounter on routine visits.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Please assign the numbers 1 through 5 next to the statements or issues above that you believe deserve the most focus in order to improve communication between agency and NSDO workers	
Please add any other suggestions you may have to improve communication between contract agency workers and child welfare workers from the Native Services District Office. (Please use last page of questionnaire if you require additional room)	

### Part Two: Section Two - Collaboration Strategies

Please respond to the following statements regarding how collaboration can be improved to strengthen the partnership between contract agencies and Native Services District Office. Please provide responses in the same manner as the previous section.

Statement	Disagree - Agree
It would be useful if Aboriginal agencies and NSDO were involved in regular meetings to discuss and resolve issues relating to working together to serve Aboriginal families in Calgary.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
<b>Answer the following three questions <u>only if you agreed</u> with the above question:</b>	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
- These meetings would involve front line workers as well as supervisors/management.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
- These meetings would be informal and take place in a traditional Aboriginal setting.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
- These meetings would also be focussed on defining what aboriginal services will look like within Calgary Rocky View Child & Family Services.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Meetings/case conferences need to have a more positive focus.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Agency staff should feel free to come in to NSDO to review files as this also gives them a chance to connect with NSDO workers.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
A process needs to be outlined for addressing problems that arise in collaboration to ensure issues are dealt with in a timely manner.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
It would be useful to conduct some joint staff meetings with agency and NSDO workers to discuss worker roles, agency and NSDO mandates, and other collaborative issues that arise.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a

Statement	Disagree - Agree
There needs to be more joint training for child welfare and agency workers.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
I would like to see NSDO workers take more initiative in contacting agency workers.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
I would like to see agency workers take more initiative in contacting NSDO workers.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Workers need more support from their counterparts (either agency or NSDO workers) when having to confront stubborn or chronic issues with clients/families.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Please assign the numbers 1 through 5 next to the statements or issues above that you believe deserve the most focus in order to improve collaboration between agency and NSDO workers.	
Please add any other suggestions you may have to improve collaboration between contract agency workers and child welfare workers from the Native Services District Office. (Please use last page of questionnaire if you require additional room)	

**Part Two: Section Three - Social Work/Admin Practice Strategies**

Please respond to the following statements regarding how social work and administrative practices can be improved to strengthen the partnership between contract agencies and Native Services District Office. Please provide responses in the same manner as the previous section.

Statement	Disagree - Agree
There should be only one child welfare contract manager to work with all Aboriginal agencies.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Initial meetings/pre-placement visits (when referral is made) between child welfare and agency/residential staff are useful.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
More regularly scheduled case conferences would contribute to more effective work being done with children and families.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
It would help agency workers to be provided information and training outlining the role of child welfare and how to work effectively with the system.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
A copy of the Information Consolidation, Face Sheet, and Service Plan provided at the time of referral is essential.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
The Referral and Evaluation form should be replaced with a new referral form that includes information more specific to the service being requested.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
More child welfare workers are needed to decrease case loads and increase time spent on each case.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
It is important that in-home support workers from different contract agencies have different skills. This allows child welfare workers to make referrals based on the type of support a client or family requires (ie: worker to provide instrumental assistance such as setting up appointments on one end of continuum to a worker that provides intensive teaching of parenting skills or behaviour management).	1 2 3 4 5 n/a



Statement	Disagree - Agree
There needs to be increased compliance with standards of safety around transporting children or families (ie: tether bolts, vehicle maintenance, insurance, etc.).	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
It is managements' responsibility in both child welfare and the agency setting to implement changes to encourage inter-agency team building.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
It is child welfare and agency workers' responsibility to implement changes to encourage inter-agency team building.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Please assign the numbers 1 through 5 next to the statements or issues above that you believe deserve the most focus in order to improve the social work practice/administration between agency and NSDO workers	

Please add any other suggestions you may have to improve social work/administrative practice between contract agency workers and child welfare workers from the Native Services District Office. (Please use last page of questionnaire if you require additional room).

### Part Two: Section Four - Cultural Strategies

Please respond to the following statements regarding how cultural issues can be more effectively approached to strengthen the partnership between contract agencies and Native Services District Office. Please provide responses in the same manner as the previous section.

Statement	Disagree - Agree
Cross-cultural training/workshops should be mandatory for agency and NSDO staff to increase awareness of Aboriginal culture/ tradition and issues of working in a diverse workplace.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Cross-cultural training should be done jointly with child welfare and agency staff to encourage open discussion about differences in values, approach, etc.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Please assign the numbers 1 and 2 to the statements or issues above that you believe deserve the most focus in order to improve the relationship between agency and NSDO workers	
<p>Please add any other suggestions you may have regarding how cultural issues can be more effectively approached to strengthen cultural practice between contract agency workers and child welfare workers from the Native Services District Office. (Please use last page of questionnaire if you require additional room)</p>	

**Part Two: Section Five - Relationship Strategies - Agency Questionnaire**

Please respond to the following statements regarding how relationship dynamics can be more effectively approached to strengthen the partnership between contract agencies and Native Services District Office. Please provide responses in the same manner as the previous section.

Statement	Disagree - Agree
Retreats for child welfare and agency staff that focus on team building and cultural awareness would help to build more positive relationships.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Workers should try to resolve case issues with each other prior to taking the matter to their supervisor/manager.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Workers need to take more initiative in promoting open, productive, and positive relationships with their counterparts in either the agency or child welfare setting.	1 2 3 4 5 n/a
Please assign the numbers 1 through 3 next to the statements or issues above that you believe deserve the most focus in order to improve the relationship between agency and NSDO workers	

Please add any other suggestions you may have regarding how professional relationships can be improved to strengthen the partnership between contract agency workers and child welfare workers from the Native Services District Office. (Please use last page of questionnaire if you require additional room)

### Background Information

1. Are you Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your role in this agency?
 

_____ child care worker	_____ youth worker
_____ in-home support worker	_____ supervisor
_____ manager	_____ therapist
_____ other (please indicate) _____	
3. How long have you worked in your current position? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How long have you worked with this agency? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How long have you worked in the human service sector? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is your ethnic background?
 

_____ Status Indian	_____ Metis status
_____ Non-status aboriginal	_____ Caucasian
_____ Other	
4. What is your age?
 

_____ under 25
_____ 26-35
_____ 36-45
_____ 46-55
_____ over 55
5. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
 

_____ did not complete high school	
_____ high school diploma	
_____ Diploma	_____ in Social Work
_____ Bachelors degree	_____ Psychology
_____ Masters degree	_____ Social Sciences
_____ Ph.D	_____ Other (indicate) _____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire!

## APPENDIX C

## Consent Form

## CONSENT FORM

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**Research Project Title:** "The Collaborative Relationship between Calgary Rocky View Native Services District Office and Aboriginal Child Welfare Agencies"

**Investigator:** Jane Rousseau, BSW (MSW Student)

**Funding Agency:** None

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, please ask. Please take time to read this form carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

1. **Purpose and Usefulness:** The purpose of this study is to develop an initial understanding of:  
1) Calgary Rocky View Native Services District Office (NSDO) and contracted Aboriginal child welfare agencies staff perceptions of the collaborative relationship between these organizations; and,  
2) The same staff's perceptions of what are important aspects of an effective collaborative relationship between NSDO and contracted Aboriginal child welfare agencies.

Information resulting from the research may assist in determining what aspects of the collaborative relationship are effective and where attention may be focused for the purpose of improving collaboration and the resulting quality of service for Aboriginal clients.

2. **Participants, Procedures and Your Participation:** I am requesting your participation in the study. You will be asked to complete one questionnaire. A series of multiple choice questions and several open-ended questions will be given in order to examine your perceptions of the current collaborative relationship between Native Services District Office and contracted Aboriginal agencies and what you view to be necessary for increased or more effective collaboration.
3. **Research Design:** The questionnaire has been developed from a series of meetings held in the summer of 1998 where staff from the involved agencies provided feedback about their perceptions of the collaborative relationship between agencies. Quantitative statistics and qualitative methods will be used to elicit shared perceptions regarding the collaborative relationship and how these may relate to other perceptions or characteristics of participants.
4. **Risks/Costs/Benefits:** This research does not pose risks to anyone who will be participating in the research. The only costs to you is the time that it will take to complete the questionnaire (about one half hour). There will be no monetary compensation. The benefits of participating are: the questionnaire may help you identify your current perceptions of working collaboratively and help you to identify strategies you may wish to use in the future.

5. **Your Choice:** You are free to decide whether or not you wish to participate in this study. There will be no other benefit (than that outlined above) to individuals who decide to participate in the questionnaire.
6. **Confidentiality:** When completing the questionnaire, you will not be asked to include your name or any other information that may identify you. Your completed questionnaire and information stored on computer will be secured in the private offices of the researcher. Because there is no identifying information on the questionnaire, no one will be able to connect which answers are provided by which participants.
7. **Further Information:** Your participation will be completed within one day, and you are encouraged to ask for any additional information at any time before, during or after completing the questionnaire. I do not plan to contact research participants for follow-up or to provide additional information.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project, and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigator, sponsor, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. If you have further questions concerning matters related to this research, please contact:

Jane Rousseau, Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary at (403-208-0057).

If you have any questions concerning participation in this research, you may also contact my supervisor, Professor David Este at (403-220-7309), or the office of the Vice-President (Research) and ask for Karen McDermid at (403-220-3381).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Investigator/Witness(optional)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

- A copy of this form has been given to you for your records and reference.
- If you would like to have a copy of the findings of this research, please provide your mailing

address: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX D

## Instrument Instruction Sheet

**Completing the Questionnaire:**

If you have any questions about the purpose of or how to complete the questionnaire please call me (Jane Rousseau 297-6004/208-0057) and I would be happy to answer them.

I realize that you are extremely busy in your job so really do appreciate it if you can find the time to fill out the questionnaire.

The only part of the questionnaire that seems a bit confusing or is not obvious is that I am asking people to choose five statements in each section that they feel are most important to that section. You can choose them or indicate your choice by just putting the number 1 (for most important) 2, 3, 4, 5 in the column next to the statement.

I have also provided you an envelope that you can seal your completed questionnaire and consent form in and I can collect from the agency in a few weeks time. If you have any questions at all give me a call.

Thank you for taking the time to fill out the questionnaire.