



Report to Senior Inter-ministry Steering (SIMS) Committee- March 2014

Highlights and Areas of Focused Attention

Building Partnerships to Reduce Crime - Community Mobilization Initiative

- ❖ The Nipawin Hub has held weekly meetings since September 2013 with more than 19 cases closed to date. The following lead agencies have dedicated human resources each week to respond to issues: Ministry of Justice, RCMP, Social Services, Kelsey Trail Health Region - Mental Health & Addictions and Nipawin Hospital, North East School Division
- ❖ The Northeast RIC continues to support the Nipawin Hub by facilitating communication and monitoring progress both regionally and through the Nipawin Integrated Services Committee
- ❖ The City of Melfort Protective Services Committee hosted a presentation by Matt Gray and Carol Fiedelleck, BPRC on January 14, 2014. Ministry of Justice, RIC members, City Councillors, local Melfort agencies were in attendance. The Melfort District Planning Committee met with representatives from the city committee to work at establishing a Hub in Melfort. An organizational meeting was held on February 25.

Early Years

- ❖ The NE RIC Parent Engagement Strategy report on 18 Parent Conversation Cafes in 7 communities involving 130 parents was presented to the Northeast RIC and the 0-3 Years Early Childhood Task Force on January 9, 2014. The project report provided parent perspectives on the strengths and gaps in community supports, program and services for parents and their young children in the communities of Cumberland House, Hudson Bay, James Smith, First Nation, Kinistin Saulteaux Nation, Melfort, Naicam, Nipawin, Porcupine Plain, Red Earth Cree Nation, Shoal Lake Cree Nation, Star City, Tisdale, Yellow Quill First Nation and Zenon Park.
- ❖ The RIC and the 0-3 Task Force is disseminating the Parent Engagement report to a variety of stakeholders including parents of the northeast with the goal of developing actions which will support parents to be the best parents.
- ❖ There were a number of issues or needs identified by the parents including: increasing affordable recreation opportunities for children and families, more child care and affordable child care, and improving access to services including health care and early learning programs. Parents also felt that there is a need to address poverty, addictions, employment, housing, transportation and racism. Parents felt that the early childhood services including Public Health nurses, early childhood intervention and pre kindergarten, Head Start and KidsFirst are important supports for healthy children. Community amenities, close relationships with friends and family and cultural ties were valued in raising their children. The entire document is available on line at www.northeastric.ca/publications.

Poverty Reduction Task Force

- ❖ Since April 2013, and in partnership with the Salvation Army, RIC member agencies have been participating in Poverty Reduction Task Force activities in Melfort, Tisdale and

Nipawin. Awareness building and community engagement “Poverty Buster” activities have been successful. In March we are mobilizing volunteers including the SaskTel Pioneers to assist with income tax form completion assistance. Poverty Awareness workshops are scheduled to take place March 20 and 21 to provide a guided experience in which participant touch the reality of people living in poverty.

- ❖ Issues such as housing, barriers to employment and education continue to be identified for people in the northeast including parents of young children. The RIC and its partners are seeking funding to sustain our efforts and build community capacity. Our community partners have asked the RIC to host a regional forum ‘think tank’ on the issue of poverty.

Challenges and opportunities in our region

- ❖ **Funding** – The lack of resources for RIC supported or led initiatives is a challenge. Resources are needed to move forward to enhance the early years agenda and to coordinate the poverty reduction efforts. Change within complex community systems requires sustained efforts. These efforts must be adequately resourced financially, coordinated with skills and time to really focus on the task. The well being of our vulnerable young children and those challenged by poverty is at stake.

Provincial Challenges and Opportunities

- ❖ In the executive summary of the Saskatchewan Child Welfare Review Panel Report(2010), chair Bob Pringle stated: “While the focus of the system is on protecting children from abuse by caregivers, most child welfare cases are the result of neglect stemming from poverty, substance abuse, mental health problems and inadequate housing. Our first response of our system actually disqualifies the vast majority of families from receiving any help. In spite of evidence about the value of positive supports, our response continues to be singular and unchanging.” As a province what are we doing to ensure all families with children have the basic necessities of life? What is the cost of poverty in terms of later interventions – child welfare, criminality, toxic stress on children leading to poor outcomes of health and educational achievement?
- ❖ If the Child and Family Agenda aim that “ children get a good start in life” is to be realized, our province needs systematic population measurement of early childhood. A question was posed at the January 9, 2014 meeting of the Northeast RIC and the 0-3 Years Early Childhood Task Force. Will the Early Development Instrument (EDI) continue to be regularly implemented as a population measurement of early childhood? The Northeast RIC is using the EDI as a baseline for our early years strategy. We will continue with local efforts to influence outcomes for our youngest citizens, responding to what our parents said is working and what could be better, however, we need the help of the province to measure progress of our efforts through regular monitoring by implementation of the EDI.

Respectfully submitted by:

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