

CONSIDERATIONS FOR CONSULTATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND NATIVE REPRESENTATIVES.

One of the fundamental problems which prevents effective consultation from occurring between Federal officials and Native leaders lies in the tendency of the officials to design a consultation process based largely on internal bureaucratic needs. This tendency ignores the unique features of Native culture, social institutions, and living conditions. The various Native associations agree that this deficiency must be remedied before useful programs or policies can be developed and delivered to disabled Native persons.

Delbert Riley, President of the National Indian Brotherhood, says the following about consultation: "You must understand that for over a hundred years, the Federal Government has developed programs in which Indian people have had very little say. The government still deals with Indians almost on a crisis basis. There never seems to be enough real planning and understanding. Over time, Indian leaders have been conditioned and even moulded to react strongly to government decisions since they are seldom involved meaningfully in the discussions leading to those decisions.

"Now the government thinks that it will reverse this situation by some magical decree from Ottawa. They call it consultation. It seems that the Indian people are supposed to fall into line and comply with pre-determined guidelines and conditions. But consultation is much more than rules and organizational structures. Consultation is first of all an attitude that is based upon trust and respect between individuals. For

Indians, it must occur within a forum which respects the social and political institutions as well as the reality of life on the reserves. When the Federal Government finally realizes that Indian people know the meaning of consultation and how to get things done, then we will have taken a significant step in achieving control over our own affairs."

Michael Amarook, as President of Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, made a similar case before Justice Emmett Hall's Commission on Health Services Review. Arguing for the fundamental principle of community responsibility, he stated:

"Give us control over our own lives, let us stop being forced to be dependent on decisions made by others whom we rarely see and who are strangers to us."

Louis Bruyere, President of the Native Council of Canada, notes:

"There is among us leadership and commitment, but little recognition from the government side. This must alter before significant changes can occur in the lifestyle of Native people. When it changes, then the Native people can tell government services how to best deal with the problems of the Handicapped and Disabled.

"We are not sure whether it is a question of dollars so much as a question of co-operation and collaboration with the people in designing and delivering programs. This has been too long

absent in the administration of government programs, whether federal or provincial... It is a sad fact that a once very proud people have become dependent on the non-Native population for all the wrong reasons."

In consideration of testimony received from Native leaders, and based upon its own investigations, the Special Committee recommends: in all matters related to the design, development and delivery of services to disabled Native people, that the Federal officials involved use the following guidelines in consulting with Native representatives:

- **Consultation Structure:** The process of consultation must take the form that is understandable and comfortable to those who will be affected by the resulting policies and programs, namely, the Native representatives and their communities. There are many textbook models for consultation which may be effective within Federal bureaucracies, but which are incomprehensible to Native representatives. On the other hand, the Native communities have developed their own effective structures for identifying problems and implementing solutions. Federal officials are advised to take advantage of the consultation process which is most likely to encourage the active and positive participation of the Native representatives—and which will meet with the understanding and approval of their communities.