

**A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR JUSTICE PROGRAMMING IN  
ELSIPOGTOG**

**THE ELSPOGTOG JUSTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

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**“We can keep toying with the system but the solution is staring right at us: restorative justice” (Elsipogtog front-line staff focus group)**

**“The way things are now, we are always the ‘visiting team’ in the mainstream system. We never have home ice, the restorative justice program being the exception. We need to do things our own way and on our turf. We are ready as a community to take on more turf” (Elsipogtog program manager’s focus group)**

## **THE BACKGROUND TO THIS DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN**

This draft strategic plan has emerged out of several years of exploring justice initiatives in Elsipogtog in the light of community needs, collective efficacy, perceptions and priorities. The details of this extensive examination are set out in the report that is appended to this brief strategic plan and the reader is encouraged to consult that document.

A strategic plan has to be rooted in a vision and a set of principles. As the biblical admonition asserts, without a vision we are lost. The **vision** advanced here is one that is congruent with the agenda recommended by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, namely that aboriginal societies, by dint of constitutional rights and cultural tradition, should be encouraged to develop justice systems in which they exercise substantial autonomy and where their cultural perspectives and preferences are meaningfully incorporated. Like other Canadians, native persons should expect fair and culturally sensitive treatment within the mainstream justice system, but unlike other Canadians, constitutionally they can legitimately “move outside the box” whether in an administrative or a policy sense. While the contours of the “outside the box” path are always impossible to fully specify or grasp since social circumstances and cultural styles are inherently dynamic and subject to evolution and occasionally dramatic change, such a vision sets the agenda for many First Nations people in justice matters today. The vision suggests a continuum where one end is basic “integration and fairness” within the mainstream justice system and the other end is a parallel First Nations justice system. Different First Nations may have different views on where they want to position themselves on this continuum regarding justice considerations now and in the future. What is feasible certainly will affect that positioning too, and feasibility is also subject to

change. The Elsipogtog Justice Advisory Committee (EJAC) has been examining issues of vision and feasibility for several years and in considerable depth as indicated in the accompanying report. EJAC holds that the above vision is common among band members and that the community is developing a significant capacity to advance and direct new justice initiatives, to move more along the continuum as it were. It accepts the challenge explicit in the introductory quotations (e.g., “We need to do things our way and on our turf”) and proposes a strategic plan in justice for the immediate future.

Another major component of a strategic plan is the identification of the **principles** or philosophy that are associated with the vision. There appear to be at least three central principles that the research has identified as reflecting the Elsipogtog justice perspective. First, there is the view, common to the First Nations’ approach, that emphasis should be placed as much as possible on prevention and on restorative justice. By restorative justice is meant the concern to encourage healing and reconciliation among offenders and victims and at the community level. A second major principle is that, as much as possible, justice programming and initiatives should be community-driven in administration and policy development. The concept, community, may be interpreted at either the band or the “tribal” levels depending upon a variety of concerns (e.g., feasibility, impartiality etc). The third principle that EJAC has identified is that justice initiatives launched by Elsipogtog should respond to the major issues and needs that exist. Justice ownership and direction should not be confined to minor criminality matters referred by mainstream justice officials.

The EJAC-directed research and evaluation, upon which this draft strategic plan is based, began several years ago (2002) with an evaluation of the Nogemag and Restorative Justice Circles projects. The basic conclusion drawn then was that while both projects were well managed and beneficial to the clients, community leaders, local service providers and the programs’ clients themselves typically wanted to see the community become more engaged in justice initiatives that moved the First Nation more along the continuum noted above. As a result, the EJAC sponsored more in-depth research into the feasibility and desirability of new justice initiatives. This research effort has taken almost two years and has explicitly followed the strategy of **root, assess and engage**. Root referred to the strategy of determining in a thorough, representative way what the community residents, service personnel and leadership identified as the major social and crime problems, their views on whether these were being addressed by the criminal justice system or informally in the community, their criticisms of and suggested priorities for changes in the justice system, their preferences and priorities regarding alternative justice initiatives, and the major obstacles they saw to putting in place their justices preferences. Assess referred to both assuring the high quality of the data gathered and analyzing the data thoroughly in order to appreciate as fully as possible their meaning and significance. Engage meant collecting, analyzing and reporting the research results in a manner that emphasized participation with and feedback to community residents and stakeholders. EJAC wanted this justice project to be as transparent as possible and to facilitate consensus generation and community mobilization.

As indicated in the attached report, the justice project called for a six-stage model of implementation. **First**, there were special, in-depth, face-to-face interviews with a score of key Elsipogtog justice and other social agency role players and political leaders. This research was intended to ensure that the mandate of the research exercise was appropriate and to vet the proposed research strategies with knowledgeable local persons. The **second step** was an extensive, one-on-one community survey of adults (dealing with all the matters referred to above in the discussion of roots). A community survey questionnaire was developed, vetted by the EJAC and personnel from other local agencies, and pre-tested to ensure its clarity and appropriateness. A random sample of 210 households was selected and two mature, well-educated, bilingual and enthusiastic Elsipogtog women were hired and trained to do face-to-face interview with one adult from each of the selected households. The **third step** involved focus groups with youths (those at risk and those still in senior high school), neighbours, and elders. Information packages were prepared for the focus groups from data secured through the community survey and these formed the basis for discussion. The focus groups were seen as an essential part of the effort to engage the community in the process of generating consensus and mobilizing for change. The **fourth step** involved a series of focus groups among front-line agency staff, managers of the service agencies, local and external justice officials, and other stakeholders. For these focus groups the information package was elaborated to include the results of the earlier round of focus group meetings. The **fifth step**, represented by this draft strategic plan, involved the preparation of a strategic plan for discussion by EJAC members. The **sixth** and final implementation step entailed presenting the EJAC-approved strategic plan to band council and/or a general community meeting.

The results from each of the completed steps are contained in the attached report. Perhaps it suffices here to note that this research has found that community members and agency personnel believe that crime and social disorder are widespread and cause extensive and unacceptable levels of victimization, fear and worry among residents. This position is especially pronounced among women but common in all social groupings. These views dovetail well with official statistics even while the latter are deemed to under-report the justice problems. Residents and knowledgeable service providers are sharply critical of the mainstream justice system from a variety of vantage points (e.g., ineffective, not reflecting community values); as well, they do not believe that there are in place any effective informal responses to these problems. They readily identify changes they would like to see in the mainstream justice system (e.g., duty counsel or court workers, more communication and awareness between court officials and community residents) and, as well, are cautiously in favour of new justice initiatives that deal with issues from a Mi'kmaw perspective (e.g., a wellness court, community or First Nation-based dispute resolution in certain civil and family conflicts). They value the existing community justice programs because they are community-based (e.g., restorative justice) and are strongly in favour of more such justice initiatives. At the same time they readily identify obstacles (both internal to Elsipogtog and external) in launching justice initiatives that would be more subject to community administration and policy development and in general have a pragmatic, incremental approach to change. Moving further along the continuum towards a Mi'kmaw-influenced justice system will require

much sensitivity, consensus building and community mobilization. It will have to be well-thought out and implemented with much community input and feedback.

The EJAC believes that the community capacity to realize new and, in some cases, alternative justice initiatives has increased appreciably in recent years as a result of the trends in post-secondary education attainment, the economic and symbolic implications of the Supreme Court of Canada's Marshall decision and so forth. There has been more governmental acknowledgement of Mi'kmaw rights and more buy-in. There is much that can and should be done. To that end the following draft strategic plan is offered, identifying, in tabular form, seven major goals that have emerged from the two-year research effort. It may be noted that some initiatives would entail collaboration with other New Brunswick First Nations and others would require the establishment of a tripartite forum justice committee as exists in Nova Scotia.

In an appendix to this report three specific prevention / rehabilitation initiatives are described. These are congruent with the strategic plan and have been discussed in the Elsipogtog Justice Advisory Committee; they are advanced here to illustrate how specific initiatives link up with the strategic plan. The three are (1) an offender reintegration project which has been recently funded for three years; (2) a proposal to focus directly on problems related to young adult males, and (3) some thought about policing that have emerged from the interviews, surveys and focus groups carried out in the past two years under the sponsorship of the EJA committee.

GOAL # 1 EXPANDING THE RJ PROGRAM (CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM)

OBJECTIVES	ACTION REQUIRED	LEAD PERSONS/ROLES	TIMING	OUTCOMES REQUIRED
<p>1. OBTAINING CROWN AND CORRECTION REFERRALS</p> <p>2. HAVING SENTENCING CIRCLES IN ELSIPOGFTOG</p> <p>3 ASSISTING IN RESPONDING TO THE UNDER 12</p>	<p>A. GETTING SUPPORT OF JUSTICE OFFICIALS.</p> <p>B. EXPANDING AND TRAINING STAFF/VOLUNTEERS.</p> <p>C. COLLABORATING WITH OTHER COMMUNITY AGENCIES</p> <p>D. BUILDING THE BASE FOR JUSTICE INITIATIVES, WITH THE COLLABORATION OF FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL GOVTS)</p>	<p>EJAC</p> <p>RJ COORDINATOR</p> <p>JUSTICE OFFICIALS AND EJAC'S GOVERNMENT CONTACT GROUP</p> <p>INTERAGENCY, ELSIPOGTOG</p> <p>CHIEF AND COUNCIL</p>	<p>FALL 2006 FOR #1</p> <p>APRIL 2007 FOR #2</p> <p>APRIL 2007 FOR #3</p>	<p>A NEW PROTOCOL.FOR RJ REFERRALS</p> <p>ANOTHER RJ STAFF POSITION IN 2007-08</p> <p>A 50% RJ ADMIN SUPPORT POSITION BY FISCAL 2007-08</p>

GOAL # 2 PROVIDING FOR A MORE MIGMAG-SENSITIVE COURT PROCESS  
(CRIMINAL AND FAMILY)

OBJECTIVES	ACTION REQUIRED	LEAD PERSONS	TIMING	OUTCOMES REQUIRED
OBTAINING AN ABORIGINAL DUTY COUNSEL AND/OR A COURT WORKER	ON-GOING EJAC ACTIVITY IN SECURING AN ABORIGINAL DUTY COUNSEL	EJAC AND JUSTICE COORDINATOR  NB DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE	FALL 2006 FOR DUTY COUNSEL AND FISCAL 2007-08 IF COURT WORKER INITIATIVE	FUNDING FOR COORDINATOR ROLE  MULTI-FN CASELOAD FOR DUTY COUNSEL AND/OR COURT WORKER
	NEGOTIATING WITH FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES RE NCWP	ABORIGINAL JUSTICE DIRECTORATE		
2. EXCHANGE AND AWARENESS (PARTNERSHIP DAYS) CRIMINAL AND FAMILY MATTERS	PARTNERSHIP DAY PLANNING FOR TWO SESSIONS  COSTING AND FUNDING	CRIMINAL AND FAMILY COURT OFFICIALS PLUS ECJS REPS  EJAC AND JUSTICE COORDINATOR	PARTNERSHIP DAY, WINTER 2006/2007	AGENDA SET AND SESSION REPORT DONE FOR PARTNERSHIP DAYS
3. INFORMT'N CENTRE, CRIMINAL AND CIVIL / FAMILY MATTERS	FINDING THE COMMUNITY LOCATION AND ARRANGING FOR ACCESS FOR PHAMPLETS VIDEOS, FORMS AND DIRECTIONS re LEGAL / FAMILY AID	EJAC AND JUSTICE COORDINATOR  PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL INFO AND SELF-HELP CENTERS	WINTER 2007 FOR CENTRE	A CENTRE OPENED AT CERTAIN TIMES DURING THE WEEK

GOAL# 3 FACILITATING MORE MIGMAG OWNERSHIP IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM (CRIMINAL)

OBJECTIVES	ACTION REQUIRED	LEAD PERSONS	TIMING	OUTCOMES REQUIRED
1. CRIMINAL COURT SITTING ON RESERVE ONCE A WEEK	CONSULT WITH JUSTICE OFFICIALS SELECT AND PREPARE SITE COUNCIL DECISION	EJAC  JUDGE AND OTHER CJS  CHIEF AND COUNCIL	JANUARY 2007	COUNCIL RESOLUTION  SUPPORT OF THE JUDGE
2. PREPARE CASE FOR A WELLNESS COURT (A 'PROBLEM-SOLVING COURT') FOR FNS IN NB CENTERED IN ELSIPOGTOG	SECURE INFO FROM JUSTICE AND HEALTH CANADA  SECURE PROVINCIAL SUPPORT  GATHER DATA  CONSULT WITH LOCAL AGENCIES RE TREATMENT NEEDS  CONSULT WITH OTHER NB FN <sub>s</sub>  COSTING AND FUNDS SEEKING	EJAC  PROJECT LEADER  FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL HEALTH AND JUSTICE  TREATMENT TEAM	ENGAGE A PROJECT LEADER BY 2007  PROPOSAL PREPARED BY FALL 2007 FOR A STARTING DATE IN FALL 2008	1.PROJECT LEADER HIRED  2. GAINED SUPPORT OF LOCAL TREATMENT PEOPLE  3.PROVINCIAL JUSTICE SUPPORT  4.DETAILED PROPOSAL DEVELOPED  5.DESIGNATE THE JUDGE (FN JUDGE IF POSSIBLE)



GOAL# 4 WORKING TOWARD AN FN MODEL OF JUSTICE PROCESSING  
(CRIMINAL AREA)

OBJECTIVES	ACTION REQUIRED	LEAD PERSONS	TIMING	OUTCOMES REQUIRED
WELLNESS COURT FOR SERIOUS OFFENDERS WITH SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL ILLNESS	<p>SUCCESSFUL PROPOSAL</p> <p>LEARNING FROM DTC PROGRAMS ELSEWHERE AND FROM BIG COVE OFFENDER REINTEGRATION PROJECT</p> <p>COMMUNITY AND COUNCIL SUPPORT</p> <p>OTHER FN BUY-IN</p>	<p>PROJECT LEADER AND WELLNESS COURT TEAM</p> <p>DESIGNATED JUDGE (FN IF POSSIBLE)</p> <p>OTHER CJS OFFICIALS</p> <p>OFFENDER BUY-IN</p>	FALL 2008	<p>A MULTI-FN PROGRAM CENTERED IN ELSIPOGTOG</p> <p>HEALTH AND JUSTICE COLLABORATION AND PROBLEM-SOLVING</p> <p>'USUAL FEDERAL FUNDING FOR DTC' PLUS</p>
FN VICTIM SERVICES (VS)	<p>BUILD UPON CURRENT VS AT ELSIPOGTOG</p> <p>OTHER FNs BUY-IN</p>	<p>VS COOR'D'R</p> <p>EJAC LIAISON</p> <p>FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL</p>	FALL 2008	A MULTI-FN VS PROGRAM

**GOAL # 5: WORKING TOWARDS AN FN JUSTICE APPROACH (CIVIL AND FAMILY MATTERS)**

OBJECTIVES	ACTION REQUIRED	LEAD PERSONS	TIMING	OUTCOMES REQUIRED
DEALING WITH CERTAIN CIVIL AND FAMILY ISSUES	<p>IDENTIFY KEY ISSUES AND STAKE HOLDERS</p> <p>CONSULT WITH SMALL CLAIMS AND FAMILY DIVISION COURT OFFICIALS</p> <p>BUILD ON THE APIGSITOGAN MI'KMAW ADR PROJECT</p> <p>LIAISE WITH KEY LOCAL AGENCIES</p>	<p>PROJECT COOR'D (RJ COORDINATOR)</p> <p>APIGSITOGAN GROUP (ADR)</p> <p>INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP</p> <p>CIVIL AND FAMILY DIVISION JUSTICE OFFICIALS</p>	<p>BEGIN PROCESS IN WINTER 2006/2007</p> <p>START-UP IN 2007/2008</p>	<p>A PART-TIME COORD'ER ENGAGED</p> <p>PROPOSALS DEVELOPED</p> <p>FOCUS GROUPS FOLLOWED BY A GENERAL MEETING</p> <p>A PROTOCOL DEVELOPED FOR ADR UTILIZATION</p>
DEALING WITH INTRA-BAND DISPUTES OVER BAND POLICIES, ESPECIALLY IN AREAS OF FORESTRY, FISHING AND RESOURCE UTILIZATION	<p>IDENTIFY KEY ISSUES AND STAKE HOLDERS AS ABOVE</p> <p>FORM A WORKING GROUP WITH RESOURCES ' STAFF REPRESENTATIVES</p> <p>LIAISE WITH BAND COUNCIL</p>	<p>JUSTICE COOR'D AND EJAC LIAISON</p> <p>APIGSITOGAN GROUP (ADR)</p> <p>RESOURCES' SECURITY STAFF</p>	<p>BEGIN PROCESS ISSUES IN FALL 2006</p> <p>START-UP IN FISCAL 2007-2008</p>	<p>ACTION PLAN COSTED AND FUNDED</p> <p>PROTOCOL DEVELOPED FOR ADR</p>

GOAL# 6 WORKING TOWARDS AN FN JUSTICE APPROACH (SAFETY AND REINTEGRATION)

OBJECTIVES	ACTION REQUIRED	LEAD PERSONS	TIMING	OUTCOMES REQUIRED
OFFENDER REINTEGRATION PROJECT	<p>FUNDS SECURED FOR 2.5 YEARS</p> <p>PROGRAM AND PROTOCOLS TO BE DEVELOPED</p>	<p>EJAC</p> <p>PROJECT COOR'D</p> <p>SELECTION AND REHAB TEAMS</p> <p>FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL FUNDERS</p>	<p>STARTING FISCAL 2006- 2007</p>	<p>STAFF HIRED SPRING 2006</p> <p>SELECTION AND REHAB TEAMS IN PLACE</p> <p>PROGRAM ELABORATION AND EVALUATION</p>
TEMPORARY SHELTER FOR VICTIMS (e.g., TRANSITION HOUSE)	<p>IDENTIFYING THE ISSUES, SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM, AND KEY STAKEHOLDERS</p> <p>EXAMING THE POSSIBILITIES OF COLLABORATION WITH NEARBY FNs</p> <p>PREPARATION OF PROJECT PROPOSAL</p> <p>COSTING AND SEEKING FUNDS</p>	<p>EJAC</p> <p>JUSTICE COOR'D</p> <p>VIOLENCE COMMITTEE</p> <p>CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES</p> <p>FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL AGENCIES</p>	<p>STARTING IN FISCAL 2007-2008</p>	<p>WORKING PROPOSAL</p> <p>FOCUS GROUPS AND GENERAL MEETING</p>

GOAL# 7: ESTABLISHING THE BROADER CONTEXT FOR A FN JUSTICE APPROACH

OBJECTIVES	ACTION REQUIRED	LEAD PERSONS	TIMING	OUTCOMES REQUIRED
COLLABORATING WITH OTHER FNs TO DEVELOP A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR MAJOR JUSTICE INITIATIVES	DISCUSSIONS WITH OTHER FNS' JUSTICE PEOPLE.  SPECIFIC PROPOSALS SUCH AS WELLNESS COURT DEVELOPED.  DRAWING ON FN EXPERIENCE ELSEWHERE ESPECIALLY NOVA SCOTIA	EJAC COMMITTEE  JUSTICE COORD'ER AND FN WORKING GROUP  COUNCIL LIAISON  MAWI AND UNION LIAISON	BEGIN PROCESS IN 2007	COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION FUNDING AND JUSTICE COORD'R HIRED  DISCUSSION PAPERS PREPARED  FN WORKING GROUP FORMED  SYMPOSIUM IN MONCTON FALL 2007  AGENDA FOR AN ACTION PLAN
ESTABLISHING A TRIPARTITE FORUM COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE IN NEW BRUNSWICK	WORKING GROUPS FORMED AT FN AND AT FN/FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL LEVELS	EJAC COMMITTEE LIAISING WITH FN WORKING GROUP  FN LIAISON GRP AND BAND COUNCIL LIAISON GROUP  GOV'T REPS	BEGIN THE PROCESS IN 2007  TRIPARTITE FORUM IN PLACE IN 2008	DEVELOPMENT OF AN ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL  A MANDATE SET FORTH  REGULAR MEETINGS SCHEDULED

## APPENDIX TO STRATEGIC PLAN

### (A) POLICING IN ELSIPOGTOG

Neither the stakeholder interviews nor the community survey, conducted in the course of this project, directly sought information (i.e., assessments, preferences and priorities with respect to policing tasks) concerning the policing service in the community. There were, however, many such comments made by respondents, and in the focus groups the number one matter discussed turned out to be the policing service. Elsipogtog adults and youth were critical of the police service on the grounds of poor presence or visibility, too little community engagement, and insufficient effectiveness in responding to crime and social disorder, especially in dealing with the community's drug dealing and drug abuse. In general, there was a widespread view that the police service has shortfalls in terms of what the interviewees considered 'community-based policing', basically conceived as collaborative problem solving and a "policing for people" style. It was evident that the police service bore the brunt of widespread criticism of the criminal justice system, especially unpopular and perhaps misunderstood, bail rules, sentencing practices and the emphasis on individual rights over collective rights. It seems apparent that there needs to be more communication and exchange of views and issues between police and community, perhaps along the lines of the "partnership days" advanced in the strategic plan. Community policing may require more police resources. Certainly a comparison of the RCMP complement at Elsipogtog with that in other First Nations such as Indian Brook and Eskasoni indicates that a larger complement of officers would be appropriate given the reserve population, the high level of offenses, and the large number of 'arrests' under the Mental Health Act (responding to these latter incidents consume considerable time at the scene, at the hospital and in orchestrating local agency support). In addition, political issues whether intra-band conflict or broader disputes concerning access to resources and rights/claims can consume considerable police resources. It would be very appropriate for the RCMP to work with the community on the development of a community policing plan, something which is now commonplace in other RCMP jurisdictions and is required by official RCMP policy. Elsewhere in Canada, the RCMP in advancing on its stated priority for policing in aboriginal communities, has developed a number of initiatives such as cadets, auxiliary officers and regular engagement of elders. There are many quite feasible ways to improve the community assessments of the police service. It is the view of EJAC that action should be taken on a number of these possibilities during this calendar year, subsequent to discussion between the Community Consultative Committee and RCMP leaders in the area.

In sum, the following specific suggestions emerge from the EJAC research:

1. More police resources are necessary and justifiable for Elsipogtog. Successful models for securing such resources are available.

2. There has to be more effective partnership between the RCMP and the community. In achieving this change, initiatives such as “partnership days”, auxiliary police or cadet programs, and “two-way learning programs should be considered.
3. A formal community policing plan should be developed by the RCMP in collaboration with the Community Consultative Committee and other parties identified by the latter (e.g., interagency groupings). The community plan should be formally reviewed every two years.
4. Specific police initiatives such as a crime prevention / school liaison officer, and an elder contact program should be formally put in place.
5. The high demand for conventional policing services and for police engagement in community problem-solving clearly underscore that police-community collaboration, the challenge of community-based policing, is considerable in Elsipogtog.

## **(B) THE ELSIPOGTOG RE-INTEGRATION PROJECT**

### **THE CHALLENGE**

Elsipogtog First Nation is the largest First Nation in New Brunswick. It is a community on the move in that there have been impressive economic developments in recent years (e.g., fisheries, forestry), continued significant growth in the human capital of its residents (e.g., involvement in higher education, training programs), and over the past decade a basic infrastructure for health and related treatment programming has been put in place. On the Justice side, several programs have complemented initiatives in probation services and RCMP policing, such as the Elsipogtog restorative justice and victim assistance projects. In addition, the community has created coordinating committees such as the Elsipogtog Justice Advisory Committee and the Violence and Abuse Committee to focus community efforts and foster inter-agency problem solving in these areas.

Unfortunately, there are many serious underlying problems. There is still much unemployment and welfare-dependency. Most salient for this project there is still a very high level of crime and substance abuse. While neighbouring communities have seen their crime rates decline over the past several years, those of Elsipogtog have remained high. Of particular concern the offenses have been more likely than in neighbouring communities to involve inter-personal violence. There also appears to be a strong pattern of repeat offending among the young adults who account for the large majority of the crime. These facts, plus the extremely large number of persons arrested under the Mental Health Act, again most common among young adults, point to major problems in interpersonal relations and also in the re-integration of offenders into their families, positive social networks and the community at large.

The Elsipogtog First Nation has explored possible initiatives in the recent past with respect to half-way houses and community-based, parole supervision, and, while these initiatives did not get implemented, they indicate the concern and interest that the community has had in dealing with the above problems, It is particularly heartening then to be able to now focus on the integration of offenders with respect to their families and positive community roles and networks.

### **THE PROJECT**

The proposed project would focus on re-integration issues and treatment for offenders before and after their release from incarceration and/or probation; in the case of youth, group home referrals would also be considered. A variety of salient interventions would be considered aimed at the objectives of facilitating the development of positive offender/family/community networks and involving a range of strategies from counseling and tradition-based healing circles to employment and mentoring possibilities. Potential cases would be screened for selection by an assessment team composed of project staff and Justice and Health personnel. A program team would then be established which would develop a program suited to the specific circumstances and particularities of the

case. This program team would be composed of Justice and Counseling service providers and would engage the collaboration of special experts (e.g., family group conferencing) as required. The participation of the offender and others (family members, victims, other community members) would of course be completely voluntary and an agreement would be signed to that effect between the project and the offender. It is envisaged that a relatively modest number of cases (i.e., a minimum of six) would be selected at least in the first year of the proposed project. A project coordinator would be engaged to oversee the work of case managers who would take front-line responsibility for linking case participants to the program's counseling, healing circles and so forth. Counseling and other features of the re-integration program (exit circles in institutions, healing circles, family group counseling, employment counseling) would be provided by seconded current Elsipogtog service providers with special outside expert assistance as required. The approach in all cases would be **a team model** wherein the project coordinator and the case manager would regularly meet to examine progress and obstacles with the team of Elsipogtog-based service providers (both Justice and Counseling staff) specifically established for the particularities of the case as determined by an assessment team.

## **ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES**

It is anticipated that the project will result in much better reintegration of offenders into the Elsipogtog community, and especially with respect to their families and supportive social networks. That reintegration would be expected to manifest itself also in the offenders' taking on positive life style changes with respect to employment, dealing with substance abuse and perhaps mentoring others at risk. Apart from the more individually-focused outcomes, it is anticipated that the project will facilitate capacity building at the community level, contribute to the training of local service providers, and, through new partnerships and networking, facilitate sustainability of best practices.

## **A FORMATIVE EVALUATION**

The evaluation for the project would be a formative evaluation, that is one where the evaluation is an integrated part of the project and thus able to impact on the project as it advances. The main tasks of the evaluation would be (1) to document and describe/analyze what is done; that is, how the project has been implemented; (2) to assess its impact for offenders and other participants; (3) to examine the initiative from the multiple perspectives involved, namely project staff, Justice and Treatment personnel, offenders and families; (4) to consider the lessons learned, the community capacity developed and the generalizability of the project's initiatives. It is expected that the evaluator would participate in all major project tasks including team meetings.



## **(C) THE YOUNG ADULT MALE CENTRE**

Extensive research carried out under the coordinative leadership of the Elsipogtog Justice Advisory Committee (EJAC) has indicated that this First Nation has one of the highest levels of crime and social disorder among First Nations in Canada. The social problems transcend conventional criminal offenses even though the local RCMP detachment has also indicated that criminal offenses and files per officer are the highest for any RCMP detachment in Canada. The community too has an exceptionally high level of attempted self-harm which is captured statistically by the RCMP in its records for arrests under the Mental Health Act (this level annually is more than 40 times that found in the population of the comparatively sized neighbouring area). Unfortunately, unlike the neighbouring areas, the rates of crime and of social malaise have not appreciably declined over the first five years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century's first decade.

Exploring beneath these blatant statistics one finds that most of the crime is committed by young adult males (i.e., 18 to 30 years of age), not youth and not females. Moreover, these same young male adults are most likely to be arrested under the Mental Health Act, indicating that they are both victimizing others and turning on themselves. A recent survey we have conducted in Elsipogtog among adults (a representative random sample of 210 households, making up 30% of all households), as well as focus groups subsequently carried out to assess further the implications of the survey findings, indicate that the large majority of residents believe that the community's crime is at a crisis point and that they, themselves, exhibit much fear and worry for the safety and well-being of themselves and their loved ones. The grouping exhibiting the greatest fear and worry, as well as the highest level of victimization, is the young adult females. They demand solutions to the crime and social problems yet are very skeptical about the conventional responses of the justice system and consider community factors as factionalism and strong family loyalty to constitute major obstacles to community-based initiatives and alternatives.

It is clear that something has to be done to change the behaviour and thinking of the young adult males. Many seem to be caught up in substance abuse and without regular employment. Ill-educated and poor models of parenting, they command little respect in the community's – and in their own – eyes. In the parlance of contemporary social work, they have “zero status” in Elsipogtog. Our proposal is directed at this grouping and is designed to directly confront their issues and alter their life styles. The core of the proposal is to bring the young adult males into a milieu where they can develop better self-images and access readily the counseling and upgrading that they need, in a supportive context. Such programming has been effective among young adult males in the ghettos of some large American cities such as Boston and we believe it can be successful in Elsipogtog, drawing upon the strong family supports and an extensive service capacity.

It is proposed that a recently constructed but currently unoccupied (and available) work-out center in Elsipogtog be turned into a center for young adult males willing to abide by specific rules of conduct in the facility and wanting to put their lives in order. It

would not be a residence – and, indeed, most recent therapy and rehabilitation literature emphasize that the most effective way to alter life styles is through some kind of “out-patient” approach. The center would be staffed with a coordinator and a health trainer consultant. A committee of community specialists would determine eligibility and an individualized program would be developed with the participants. The program coordinator would network closely with the community’s service providers (health, education, employment, alcohol and drugs) and the health consultant would be a fitness provider with a vision, as for example in the classic YMCA approach (i.e., fitness to develop self-respect and spearhead other behavioural change).

Access to the center, at least initially, would be limited to young men. Those wanting to access the facilities would have to indicate some commitment to a life style without substance abuse and a willingness to accept counseling and other services should these be required to achieve what the community would regard as an acceptable status for a young man. The building itself would be provided rent-free to the project in testimony of the community leaders’ recognition of the value of such an initiative. The project costs would include personnel (a coordinator, health fitness consultant, and maintenance worker), training for personnel, payment for some special treatment or counseling above and beyond existing community services, equipment costs, and regular, independent evaluation and feedback to the sponsoring body, the Elsipogtog Justice Advisory Committee.