



WEBEQUIE FIRST NATION ASSESSMENT REPORT

January 7-9, 2007

Mamow Sha-way-gi-kay-win

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North-South Partnership for Children in Remote
First Nations Communities

Webequie First Nation Assessment Report



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North-South Partnership for Children in
Remote First Nations Communities

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Design by: Adrienne Fox-Keesic, Liviu Georgescu & Jennifer Golden

The thoughts contained within this report are those of the Assessment Team (Annex 1) and may not be similarly shared by the funder, the Provincial Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health at CHEO.

Preface

Webequie First Nation has lived on the land within our traditional territory since time immemorial. The land was entrusted to us by the Creator and we have a sacred responsibility to care for the land and to live in harmony with all creatures. We have inherent rights to occupy our lands, to benefit from the resources of the land, to care for our children, and to sustain our community.

Webequie is our homeland. It has always been a traditional meeting and gathering place known throughout all of northwestern Ontario. It remains to this day one of the best hunting and fishing areas in the province. We continue to view our homeland as the source of economic, cultural and spiritual sustenance.

Since the Treaty signing in Fort Hope, at the turn of the century, we have had to negotiate our full inherent rights as a First Nation for over 100 years. It was in 2001 that Webequie received official reserve status. However the full cost and challenges relating to the hundred year negotiations continues to impact the community to this day.

Each year we celebrate Treaty Day, in recognition of the agreement that was made between two nations, an agreement to share land, resources and the benefits of those resources. In full trust of what was spoken to us, we have fulfilled our Treaty responsibilities. Our children continue to suffer because we live in severe poverty and are lacking the basic necessities provided to other Canadians because the immigrant visitors to our territory have not met their Treaty responsibilities and obligations. Celebrating Treaty Day has little to do with cash payments but is a reaffirmation of Aboriginal rights and the promises that were made.

In the past we were a Nation with strong traditions and values that sustained us, with unlimited access to resources that provided us with good health and strong families. We are still a strong, resilient people and are reclaiming our inherent rights, our sacred responsibility given to us by the Creator.

In the same sacred spirit of trust, hope and equality shown by our grandfathers and grandmothers at the time of the Treaty signing, we invite Canadians to support us in achieving a better life for our children.

Nothing in this Assessment Report shall be construed so as to abrogate or derogate from any Aboriginal or treaty rights of the Webequie First Nation or its members.

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Honouring

The assessment team gratefully acknowledges the support, wisdom and expertise of the Webequie First Nation people. It was a privilege to be invited to your community, our experience was educational and we thank you for sharing your experiences and knowledge with us.

We honour and acknowledge the participation of many community members, including the participation of Chief and Council, of children and youth, of Elders, of parents and of many other community experts.

We are grateful to the following organizations for their financial contributions to the assessment:

- The Provincial Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO)
- The Ontario Office of Child and Family Services Advocacy
- Tikinagan Child and Family Services
- Save the Children Canada
- Save the Children US
- Save the Children UK

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Chief Scott Jacob
Alana Kapell
Barbara Ammirati
Elsie MacDonald
Eno Chapman
Evelyn Spence
Linda Nothing Chaplin
Lorna Schwartzentruber
Mary Gardiner
Maurice Brubacher
Nick Finney
Peter Jacob
Ruth Hislop
Tim Brubacher

1. Introduction and objectives

1.1. Introduction to the assessment

The “North-South Partnership for Children in Remote First Nations Communities” initiative is a growing group of caring individuals and organizations who want to learn from and support the dreams and efforts of First Nations Chiefs, Elders, youth and community members. The partnership includes representation from northern communities, local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academia, foundations and others.

To ensure a coordinated and strategic approach, the partnership has established several working groups, including one to conduct community assessments by adapting international methodologies and using both First Nation and NGO resources.

For decades, international development organizations have worked together with communities to understand better the needs of particular communities and then to address these needs through joint programming, advocacy and fundraising. Various methodologies have been applied to circumstances such as floods, war affected countries, disaster affected areas, and famine.

In collaboration with First Nation communities and leaders, and chaired by Save the Children Canada, the Community Assessment Working Group has explored how to develop and adapt an assessment model, as used in international arenas, to provide a snap shot of issues affecting First Nation communities, to bring new awareness, to develop a response plan, to prepare advocacy instruments and ultimately to secure more resources in support of the assessed needs in the remote First Nations communities.

In September, 2006, representatives of the Partnership attended the Tikinagan Child and Family Services Annual Chiefs Assembly. During the Assembly, the concept of piloting the Community Assessment model was presented and communities were asked to consider their interest and possible involvement. As a result, two communities stepped forward:

Mishkeegogamang First Nation, and
Webequie First Nation

From January 8 – 13, 2007 assessments were conducted in both Mishkeegogamang and Webequie First Nations.

1.2 Assessment Objectives

The objectives of the community assessments, as stated prior to conducting the assessments were:

1. To complete an assessment, collecting preliminary information on areas which include:
 - Livelihoods (including economic development)
 - Infrastructure (food/water/sanitation/housing)
 - Community participation (including culture and traditions)
 - Education and recreation
 - Children and parents (including safety and security)
 - Physical and mental health
2. To explore international linkages and comparisons
3. To develop an awareness raising/advocacy strategy
4. To understand community strengths and challenges
5. To develop a feasible strategy for follow up and next steps, taking into account:
 - Funding,
 - Expertise and resources within the community, within the Partnership, within Save the Children, within the voluntary sector and
 - Short and long term objectives.

2. Methodology

Initial discussions with communities drew attention to the fact that certain similarities exist between the realities of remote First Nations communities and those found in–emergency/humanitarian crises (e.g., housing shortage, access to education, clean water).

However, while similarities may exist, the circumstances are unique in Canada’s remote north and the issues facing communities have been their reality for decades. The assessment working group, led by Save the Children, began to explore how a standard emergency assessment model or a rapid needs assessment model might be adapted to assist First Nation communities in meeting their goals and objectives and possibly bring a new perspective to the existing issues and needs.

For the purpose of the assessment, six key areas of focus were identified:

1. Livelihoods (including economic development)
2. Infrastructure (food/water/sanitation/housing)
3. Community participation (including culture and traditions)
4. Education/recreation
5. Children and parents (including child protection, safety and security)
6. Mental and physical health

External experts were identified for each area of focus (see annex 1) and, upon arriving in a community, they were paired up with community representatives/experts able to facilitate meetings with various community members on the realities impacting the community.

External team members worked in pairs (3 teams in total) and were supported by two team leaders. Each team prepared a set of technical questions, or questions for their area of focus, and were provided targets while in each community. Technical targets for each team member included:

1. Focus group discussions and one on one interviews
2. One case study (including pictures) from a child/community member.
3. Walk and talk: transect walk – random, brief sampling of people walking around the community and visual observations relating to the specific area of focus.



Teams were asked to conduct interviews with:

- Members of Chief and Council
- Children and adolescents
- Elders
- Parents and families
- Women's or mother's groups (if available)
- Technical experts (e.g., teachers, principal, nurses, police)

An evaluation of the approach used in the First Nation community assessments is currently underway and will be modified and documented for use in the future with other communities. In the end, the methodology incorporated both a rapid needs assessment approach and a community development approach, proving particularly appropriate as the issues, strengths, challenges and history are so well known to the community members and leadership alike.

3. Community background

Community Location and Access

Webequie is a traditional Ojibway First Nation in remote northwestern Ontario, in Nishnawbe Aski territory. The community is located on the northern peninsula of Eastwood Island on Winisk Lake. Winisk Lake is part of the scenic Winisk River system that flows into Hudson's Bay. The 34,279 hectare reserve community is located within the boundaries of the Winisk River Provincial Park. This territory includes vast amounts of lakes and rivers, and some of the best fishing and hunting areas of Ontario.

Webequie is located 540 kilometres north of Thunder Bay, and 450 kilometres north of the town of Sioux Lookout. Access is only possible by air or a seasonal winter road because there is no year-round road access. The nearest community with year-round road access is the town of Pickle Lake, 250 km to the southwest. There is also year-round road access to the town of Nakina, 320 km to the southeast. Charter air service to Webequie is available from both Pickle Lake and Nakina.

When the weather allows for the construction of winter roads over frozen lakes and muskeg, Webequie is connected to Pickle Lake and Sioux Lookout through the winter road system. Hauling of fuel, construction equipment and supplies and non-perishable goods is much more economical by winter road than by air.

Population

The population of Webequie First Nation is 690 people, of whom 50% are under 25 years of age and 66% are under 35 years of age.

History

Like other Aboriginal people throughout Nishnawbe Aski territory, the people of Webequie First Nation have inhabited their traditional lands since time immemorial. They travelled throughout a large area on a cyclical basis to follow wild game and migration routes. They regarded the land as a gift from the Creator, and accepted that they had a sacred responsibility to care for the land and to live in harmony with all other creatures.

With the encroachment of European civilization, stationary residence became more prevalent throughout Ontario's north. Under the Treaties and the Indian Act, the people were forced onto small reserve tracts of land. Following the residential schools era, when the federal Indian Day Schools were developed, families had to stay in permanent residences so their children could attend the local school.

The people of Webequie originate from all over northwestern Ontario, and permanent residence in the community is officially recorded as far back as circa 1800. Oral history goes back to the early eighteenth century. Families of current residents range for many hundreds of miles, but most live within a 400 km area.



Because of its traditional origins, to this day Webequie has familial ties to most northwestern Ontario communities.

Around the turn of the century, Federal Government Treaty Commissioners arrived in the area to identify who the people were, and the location of their traditional area of residence. Although all Aboriginal people had, from the dawn of time, been free to reside and move where they wished across the vast territory, the function of the Commissioners was to define and restrict the locations where Aboriginals would reside. Treaty Commissioners encouraged the development of designated settlement areas close to the existing trading posts and missions.

Some Bands appear to have accepted the Commissioners' explanations that reserves were to be refuges from the white man, and they agreed to settle in extremely remote locations. However, the validity of Aboriginal consent to many early actions of the Government is a matter of debate.

The Commissioners made a devastating error, wrongly designating Webequie people as belonging to the community of Fort Hope, approximately 80 kilometres to the southeast of Webequie, and not their homeland. As a result, Webequie residents were documented as being Fort Hope Band members, even though they had occupied their homelands for hundreds of years. This designation remained in effect until 1985 when the Government recognized Webequie as a distinctive Band, and allocated it Band Registration number 240.

However, having a Band Registration number did not give Webequie reserve status, or the many associated benefits. Webequie was still only recognized as a settlement, a municipal entity. In 1994 Webequie received a Remission Order by Order-In-Council to provide GST and income tax exemptions as applicable to First Nations with reserve status. This showed that the Government was starting to recognize the inherent rights of the residents.

However, Webequie had to continue to negotiate for their full rights as a First Nation, and in 2001 Webequie received official reserve status by Order-In-Council. The negotiations for reserve status were tedious, difficult and costly to the community, both personally and financially. Webequie still feels the financial cost and implications. Funding for Webequie to pay for negotiating their inherent rights was not part of the process or the final settlement.

Once a year, Webequie celebrates Treaty Day with great festivities. On this day, every man, woman and child in Webequie receives the sum of \$4.00 from the Canadian Government, a payment that originates from the Treaties between the Government and Aboriginal First Nations. Although, monetarily, the annual payment is less than a pittance, Treaty Day is a time for great celebration because it reaffirms Aboriginal rights, and the promises made to the people many years ago.

Culture, Language and Spirituality

The people of Webequie are traditional Ojibway and the Native tongue is Oji-Cree. While most of the people speak English, this community has been successful in maintaining the traditional language among the children and youth. The community recognizes the importance of keeping the traditions alive, and they strive to maintain a balance between the old and the new.



4. Findings in each area

4.1 Common Themes

When the respondents were asked to explore the overall problems and issues in the community, the following were the most common concerns:

- Low income levels and high cost of living (esp. food/fuel)
- Lack of paid employment opportunities
- A desperate need for housing, including new construction, repairs and maintenance, and dealing with serious mould problems, and ownership issues
- The lack of physical resources for recreation, including the lack of facilities and other alternatives (e.g., arts and crafts)
- Need for children and youth programs, including sports and recreation, arts and crafts, and especially land-based programs to reunite the younger generation with their cultural heritage
- Addictions to gambling, drugs and alcohol, especially among young people
- Suicide and its impact on the wider community
- The effects of intergenerational abuse and trauma, including stress, depression, anxiety and unresolved grief.
- Health concerns, including diabetes, nutrition, respiratory illnesses, mental health

In most cases, the above issues impacted all areas of focus (i.e., family, children, health, and education.) Although not always explicitly stated, recommendations found throughout this report are aimed at addressing these common themes and problems.

4.2 Livelihoods

4.2.1 Information from secondary sources

Webequie First Nation has one of the highest costs of living in all of Ontario, a high rate of unemployment, and a resulting rate of poverty that would be unacceptable in any southern urban community.

A food pricing survey conducted through Tikinagan Child and Family Services in 2005 showed that a basket of groceries costing \$100 in Toronto cost \$224 in Webequie. The cost of gasoline and fuel is also typically more than double the cost found in southern communities. Thus, even the traditional subsistence pursuits of fishing and hunting can be prohibitively expensive for the residents of Webequie.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) has developed Environmental and Remoteness Indices that classify First Nations communities based on geographic location, climate conditions and distance to the nearest service. Webequie is classified as being in Zone 4-C-4, being located between

50° and 55° latitude and between 320 and 400 km by air to its nearest service centre. The Remoteness Index is 1.00 and the Environmental Index for this classification is 1.88. An average of the Remoteness and Environmental Indices provides a factor of 1.44. This means that a funding factor of 1.44 may be added to achieve equivalency with southern urban costs. This translates into an approximate cost of \$244 for \$100 worth of goods in a southern urban community.

Employment opportunities in Webequie are severely limited. Most available employment is in Band-operated services, such as maintaining the community infrastructure and providing health, education and social services. Professional positions such as teaching, nursing, and skilled trades are still filled largely by non-Native people from outside the community.

The 2005 “On Our Way” plan, prepared by Web-Equay Mamow-NoKii-Win (Webequie Women Working Together) identified the following issue(s) relating to livelihoods:

- Economic Development could be improved with co-ordination between the community and the Band to understand long-term strategies and work together as appropriate.
- Entrepreneurial training and workshops would help people understand the benefits of economic development and generate possible business ideas.

4.2.2 Needs and Issues Identified in the Assessment

Unemployment

Unemployment rates are very high. The only paid employment is through the Northern Store, selling food and general merchandise, community governance, social services, in the school and some seasonal employment in the summer in firefighting. Many people receive social assistance, and the system is felt to be unfair in some circumstances.

Property Rights and Housing System

Because Webequie incurred substantial legal costs to achieve reserve status, it had to obtain a loan from the Royal Bank of Canada to address the serious housing shortage. Currently, over 50% of the Band’s annual INAC funding is put towards the outstanding loan, and this loan is not expected to be paid off until 2016.

Cost of Living

The high costs make it difficult to afford essentials required to cover basic needs such as food, heating and good shelter. Of particular concern are the costs for food (imported from the south) and fuel.

Cost examples:

- 10kg of sugar in Thunder Bay = \$9.70, in Webequie = over \$30
- 5kg flour in Toronto = \$4.69, in Webequie = \$19.39
- 4L of milk in Thunder Bay = \$4; in Webequie = \$14

As a result, many children do not drink milk or eat other healthy and nutritious foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables.

Economic Opportunities

The fur market has been in decline for many years and commercial fishing is no longer a financially viable source of sustained income. Production costs are too high and the nearest year round road access point at Pickle Lake is 250 km away. Similarly, tourist camps are struggling to survive financially due to the high costs of transportation, fuel, building construction, maintenance and hydro power.

Traditional subsistence activities such as hunting and fishing are still practiced by many families, to the extent that it is financially feasible. However, when it costs over \$50.00 to fill a five-gallon container of gasoline for a half day of fishing or a hunting trip, this can be prohibitive.

4.2.3 Community Capacity

Within the community there is a high level of development knowledge and expertise (Development Coordinator, Chief and Council). Many plans and ideas exist which could aid the economic situation of the community; however, each of these projects requires additional resources. The Band's financial deficit is a factor that severely limits Webequie's ability to pursue any new entrepreneurial projects.

Within the community of Webequie there seems to be growing interest in exploring mining options and linkages. Currently 17 exploration companies are active within Webequie's traditional territory; however, there are no negotiations currently underway, and Webequie does not have financial resources available to enable them to enter into such negotiations.

The knowledge and expertise of community members in managing and staffing the local businesses (e.g., the Northern Store) will be useful if exploring further business plans or co-op options.

There are potential economic development opportunities for Webequie in the area of developing treatment foster care and/or group care and treatment programs in collaboration with Tikinagan Child and Family Services. Expertise and experience within the community in social services and youth programs are valuable assets.



4.2.4 Recommendations¹

1. Consider opening a community-run alternative to the Northern Store
2. Lobby INAC to pay off the RBC housing loan, and/or develop a long-term repayment plan.
3. Explore opportunities to create or partner with other First Nations or First Nation corporations to form a co-operative, order-by-phone grocery store serving the fly-in-communities.
4. Expand/strengthen tourism.
5. Provide training for individuals in areas of mining, construction, skilled trades
6. Explore possibilities for creating a summer employment program that pays youth who are still in school. This would provide youth an immediate reason to stay in school and an income.
7. Explore the potential for modified mark ups to encourage the purchase of healthy goods; i.e., food that is not nutritious could be marked up at a higher rate than nutritious food in order to promote healthy eating while still maintaining the same level of profit.
8. Develop a group care and treatment facility and program. The community potentially has the capacity to provide residential care for children from this community and other communities served by Tikinagan. This could provide a source of employment and community pride.
9. Explore economic development opportunities that could be supported through-available equity funding. Money for many programs/projects is available from government sources if the Band can come up with a percentage (often 10-40%) of the total cost. This represents a chance to turn money from donors into substantial projects.
10. Explore support for restaurant/hotel expansion. Plans are currently in place for the expansion of the hotel and the creation of a restaurant in the hotel, although funding is still needed for the expansion of the hotel. This would allow the community to generate more income from miners and tourists who come into the community.
11. Start negotiations with mining companies for revenue sharing and employment opportunities. Funding for legal services will need to be secured.
12. Conduct feasibility studies to explore community farming options (e.g., soil testing) and commercial fishing potential (e.g., biologist to conduct a fish count).
13. Create opportunities to sell community produced crafts through exploring on-line e-commerce and international markets such as Ten Thousand Villages.

¹ Additional recommendations, which will also impact on economic development, can be found in other categories, including recommendations relating to housing and infrastructure (section 4.3).

4.3 Infrastructure (food, water, sanitation, shelter, housing)

4.3.1 Information from Secondary Sources

INAC has developed a Community Well-Being Index based on the United Nations Human Development Index. The Community Well-Being Index reflects educational attainment, average annual income, and life expectancy on a scale of 0 to 1. The average non-Native Ontario community scored 0.85 in 2001, with 96% of all Ontario communities scoring between 0.61 and 0.95. Webequie scored 0.52 on the Community Well-Being Index, being 39% below the Ontario average.

The “On Our Way” plan (2005), prepared by Web-Equay Mamow-NoKii-Win (Webequie Women Working Together) identified the following community issues:

- Infrastructure and housing are inadequate, including water, sewage and hydro-electric systems.

- Funding allocations are too low to provide for infrastructure upgrades and housing that is desperately needed, and there is no system to enforce quality.
- Indoor recreation facilities, a senior's home, and a child care facility are all needed. However, plans for an indoor arena and ice surface cannot proceed without the infrastructure upgrades.
- People need to be taught how to do maintenance on their own houses.
- An all weather road to the community would lower the cost of living.

4.3.2 Needs and Issues Identified in the Assessment

Food

There are two stores in the town, including one small coffee shop and one modern supermarket (Northern Store). A wide range of processed and fresh foods is available but the products are almost all imported and prices are very high, often as much as 3 times the prices paid in Toronto (see livelihoods section for more information). Local furs are sold through the supermarket on occasion but prices are low.

One issue that adults expressed strong concern about was how children eat:

“They want burgers and fries, they don’t eat fish like us. They want bought food from the store – this change of lifestyle is a problem.”

The Elders understand that children were healthier when they ate traditional foods like meat and fish.

Water and Sanitation

The sewage plant is currently being expanded to provide enhanced capacity. The old system recently reached capacity due to the growth of the town's population. When the plant is operational, it is expected to have a lifespan of 20 years (based on the anticipated population growth). The plant is a modern UV facility with distance support from the construction company in Thunder Bay

The recently completed water purification facility is operational and plans are in place for expansion. A new reservoir is planned but this is not transportable in the largest available cargo plane (Hercules) and must be transported on the winter road. This is an example of the community's dependence on winter roads. There is some resistance from older community members and more traditional families to using water from new purification plant (chlorinated and treated). The water direct from the lake is preferred (for its taste).

Shelter and Housing

Shelter in the town is insufficient. There are not enough houses and many are poorly maintained. Some buildings are visibly in disrepair and some are abandoned and condemned. There are two or

three families living in houses, with more than ten people in one house, and with children frequently sleeping on the floor.

Other public facilities in Webequie include the Simon Jacob Memorial Education Centre, the Band office and the nursing station. These facilities are functional and in good repair. However, the school needs a new and expanded library facility; facilities to accommodate the high school grades which are currently taught in portable classrooms; and facilities and equipment to provide carpentry and other basic trade programs.

Other Infrastructure Issues

The current Webequie community is situated on Eastwood Island, and there is little room for additional housing construction. A site across the lake has been chosen as a location for new housing; however, there is a serious issue regarding electricity for this new site. The community's current electrical power is produced by a diesel generator, which is running at full capacity. There is the potential to expand this facility to support additional housing construction on the opposite shore of the lake. However, community members are concerned that running cables through the lake would interfere with the lake's ecosystem and violate the people's traditional responsibility to care for the land.

4.3.3 Community Capacity

The Council has been very successful in securing funds and support for initiatives like the sewage plant expansion and the water purification facility. Some delay and shortcomings were noted but the general picture of what they have been able to achieve is very positive.

Existing community resources:

- 600-kilowatt diesel generator plant operated by Hydro One provides adequate electricity.

Webequie First Nation operates the following services:

- Water treatment plant
- Rotating biological sewage plant
- Solid and liquid waste disposal landfill site six 6 km south of the community
- Cable telecommunications network, including 20 TV channels and Internet access

Canada Post provides postal services five days per week.

Bell Canada provides digital telephone services.

Wawatay Communications provides radio service via satellite and the bi-weekly Native newspaper called Wawatay News.

There is a volunteer operated local radio station: CSPN Radio

4.3.4 Recommendations

14. Seek funding resources to build 40 new housing units and renovate and repair existing homes.
15. Seek resources to build a multi-purpose recreational facility, to include a youth centre/recreation center/arena. The facility should accommodate both the athletic and artistic pursuits of children and youth
16. Explore feasibility of constructing quality log houses, and explore new energy efficient options recognizing that trees are abundant in the north. It could provide year round employment (Gather trees in winter; build in other seasons)
17. Build a land-based (outdoor activities) treatment center/healing centre. The facility could be lodge style and support family treatment services, alcohol abuse counselling, solvent and drug use counselling, and other programs.
18. Seek funding to construct housing for Elders
19. Seek funding to construct a Health and Social Services Resource Centre. This is needed to support co-ordinated health and social programs and the Aboriginal Head Start program. Plans have been developed and approximately 50% of funding has already been secured.
20. Lobby the government for a re-routing of the winter road. The winter road's current route could be shortened for a one time cost of \$100 000. This project would save the Band approximately \$62 000 per year afterward.
21. Explore potential for a food bank for distribution of donations/extra goods supplied periodically from Council. This could include a traditional ice house to store extra food.

4.4 Education and recreation

4.4.1 Information from Secondary Sources

In 1994, the Chief and Council established Webequie First Nation Education Authority, consisting of a 7-member Board of Directors, with a mandate to take responsibility for education services under the direction of Chief and Council and to operate the Simon Jacob Memorial Education Centre.

The school is designed to promote a sense of pride in their heritage in students. It provides a culturally sensitive schedule that allows the students to participate in the spring and fall hunts and experience education outside of the classroom. Students are able to go out on the land to camp, hunt, or just be with family without missing time in the classroom.

Since its inception, the school has expanded its programs at the secondary level. Currently, courses are offered up to Grade 11. The retention rate for the students at this level has proven to be very successful to date and an increase in the number of grade 12 graduates is projected in the coming years. The expansion of the secondary programs allows students more time to become mature and responsible before needing to leave the reserve to further their education. Prior to 1995, students who wanted to attend high school had to go off reserve. Those who had never been off-reserve had to endure a culture shock and significant hardships in urban settings.

Working with the Lakehead Board of Education, through Contact North and Wahsa Distance Education (NNEC), a distance education program is provided for those who wish to complete their Grade 12 equivalency by taking needed subject areas to earn credits, at their own pace and time.

The “On Our Way” plan (2005), prepared by Web-Equay Mamow-NoKii-Win (Webequie Women Working Together) identified the following community issues:

- Education levels are low and working parents do not have access to daycare.
- A program of student tutors and mentors to help other students could be created at the community level.
- Furthermore, an effort needs to be made to develop a strategy to address reasons for low achievement and high drop out rates.
- Local and external efforts to lobby for access to a daycare facility and the Aboriginal Head Start program need to be made.

Youth identified the need for technical trades courses to be provided so that they could learn the basics of skilled trades in order to be able to obtain jobs within the community.

4.4.2 Needs and Issues Identified in the Assessment

Special Education

There is difficulty accessing resources to get special education assessments done. There are currently approximately 19 cases awaiting approval/funding from the Education Authority. The process for acquiring needed resources is complex. Once resources are secured for an assessment, the assessment will recommend resources to meet the needs of the student. At this point the school needs to apply for the funds again. They must identify the need to access the funding which creates a cycle of frustration. Also, the lack of training for the tutor escorts means they may be unable to identify specific needs and to identify the appropriate resources, the escorts need to understand the challenges the students are facing.

As a result, children often lose a whole school year while the school (special education resource teachers) tries to access the funding. As a result, students are either held back for a grade or advanced into the next grade before they are ready. Students often become frustrated with the process, this leads to an escalation of problematic behaviour and increased difficulty in diagnosing and addressing special needs.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada reviews the Webequie First Nation education system every five years. Where these issues have been raised, little has been done to remedy the situation.

Bullying

Bullying is an ongoing issue in the school. Many youth in the community refer to bullying as “torture.” Bullying is a major issue for children in Webequie who are from other First Nations communities. When the teachers and principal are aware of it, they do their best to address it. However, some of the bullying is reported to occur off school premises and cannot be addressed by school staff. This issue can be further complicated by conflicts between the parents of the children

involved. Some children stay inside for recess as they are scared to go out and some avoid going to school altogether.

The school has posters up to raise awareness about bullying; however these point towards outside resources such as the national anti-bullying program. The education director, school staff, and community members recognized the issue and wanted to resolve it.

“I was tortured [bullied] from grade 2 through 8 for no particular reason, our family had nothing. The only stick by my side was my brother.” (Her brother completed suicide two years ago.) “I want [my daughter] to be smart ...I don’t want her to get tortured. People get bugged around here if they’re not good at something and there are no options.”

Youth

Grade Level Gap

The average academic performance of Webequie children is 3-4 years behind the Ontario average for the same age level. This results in a serious problem for students when going out of the community to high school. If students are able to go out to a Native high school, including Pelican Falls in Sioux Lookout or Dennis Franklin Cromarty School in Thunder Bay, then this grade level gap is less noticeable as other students are coming from a similar First Nation context. In any event, it continues to pose major issues for students in completing grade 12 graduation requirements and especially for any considering post-secondary education.

It is a big decision for youth to leave the community to go to high school. Many find the struggle too difficult and choose not to continue their education. The option of distance education is also challenging and many students are not following this route.

Language

Language retention is an integral part of the current school program, and the learning centre at the school has played an important part in recognising ESL issues.

The Aboriginal Head Start program in Webequie provides both psychosocial activities and ESL transition for children less than five years of age. This program is effective because it provides organized activities and developmentally appropriate activities for preschool children. It is designed to help children retain their first language as well as prepare them for ESL at school.

However, the Head Start program in Webequie has far too many students in relation to the space and staffing resources available. The forty-three students are rotated within the available time slots, resulting in each student receiving less than half the required access.

Community Involvement

The community expressed interest and support for finding solutions to the bullying problem (expressed by parents and youth).

4.4.3 Community Capacity

The Education Director has a good understanding of the issues identified by the community and children.

The Aboriginal Head Start Program already exists and has proven effective. Efforts to increase access for children should be feasible. Additional community expertise and Elders could also be used to expand the program.

Currently Webequie is faring better than other communities in ensuring that children are learning their language. However, the community understands that there is a risk that the language could still be lost. More needs to be done to understand how success has been achieved thus far and the potential threats need to be identified and dealt with strategically.

With some support there is excellent capacity among the students to affect change in their school. Existing Community Resource Workers, school personnel and other individuals are also key resources.



4.4.4 Recommendations

22. Consider strategies to retain the language. It is necessary to identify potential threats to the community's success in this area. It is also important to continue emphasizing the importance of retaining language.
23. Provide supports for young people who do not speak the local dialect. There is a need to recognize that some children are not originally from Webequie and may not speak the language.
24. Provide suicide awareness outreach in schools: outreach to children will normalize open dialogue and reach a broader base of children with critical information.
25. Expand school instruction to include Grade 12. There was strong interest in seeing youth stay in the community to complete their Grade 12.
26. Expand the Aboriginal Head Start program.
27. Develop and expand land-based education programs. Many children are very interested in going fishing or hunting and this should be an integral, regular part of the school program. Developing traditional craft skills should also be explored.
28. Explore ways to address the current special education needs as soon as possible, including a speech therapist, psychometrist, and occupational therapist. In the longer term, the system of applying for funding support needs to be revisited to ensure children are receiving good quality services in a prompt and effective manner.

4.5 Community Participation

4.5.1 Information from Secondary Sources

The “On Our Way” plan (2005), prepared by Web-Equay Mamow-NoKii-Win (Webequie Women Working Together) identified the following community issues:

- Foundation Building: recognizing the need to increase internal community support programs for helping parents with new babies
- Addressing spiritual splits between the Christian (Anglican) church and traditional spirituality
- The need to increase external support and funding for community healing and health programs, especially for the Healthy Babies Program

4.5.2 Needs and Issues Identified in the Assessment

Recreation and Social Spaces for Young People

There is a need for an indoor arena for sports and gathering places for youth and community members. Places to come together are especially important in the winter months. The Band Hall is generally very well used. However, it is not accessible to youth as a place to hang out, since there is a charge to use the Hall and when not in use it is locked. Given the housing situation and the overcrowding there are no warm places to hang out. This feedback came through strongly in consultations with young people, in focus group discussions and during interviews. The need for youth programming was also frequently voiced by a diverse range of adults.



Retaining Traditional Culture

Land-based programs were identified as very important for children and youth. The programs allow them to learn about their traditional ways of life including hunting, fishing, trapping and outdoor cooking. However, it is very difficult for individual parents and families to take their children on the land without some form of assistance, due to prohibitive costs of boats, skidoos and gas.

Strong concerns were expressed regarding the need to preserve the culture among children and youth. Cultural traditions include tanning moose hide, making moccasins, woodcarving, making snowshoes, recalling legends and storytelling. There are only a small number of people who are still able to do these things. More people need to learn and children must be taught.

The people consulted feel a diminished sense of pride in their culture. This is almost certainly due to historical and ongoing oppression, including the residential schools experience. As a result, the richness of the local culture and local resources is gradually being forgotten. The several generations who attended the residential schools were told that their culture was bad, foolish and wrong. They were forbidden to speak their Aboriginal language and they lost their attachment with their parents, extended families and Elders.

Traditional Spiritual Practices

Adults, Elders and youth described how the traditional practices such as the sweat lodges, drumming, traditional dancing and other ceremonies are being brought back to the community. Many community members are embracing the traditional practices while others are choosing to stay strong in their Christian faith. Everybody said that an underlying tension exists in the community along faith lines and that little is happening to develop understanding and to strengthen relationships between both sides.

Preserving Traditional Language

Elders, educators, youth and adults have expressed how the culture is embodied in the Oji-Cree language. Webequie has done well in teaching the children Oji-Cree and for the most part children are bilingual. However, concerns have been expressed that the children are less fluent in Oji-Cree than they used to be and that the community may be starting to lose the language.

Inclusion of Outsiders

Non-Webequie people living in the community expressed concerns that they are not as well accepted as they would like and find it hard to be involved in decision making in the community.

4.5.3 Community Capacity

The physical facilities are minimal. The Band Hall is a useful building used for community gatherings, meetings, events and dances. However, it is not open for public use because the Band needs to recoup costs. This restricts its use to activities that can pay. The school has several recreational programs. There is an outdoor rink and baseball diamond and the church also serves as a meeting place for Sunday services.

An arena and youth centre have been seen as community priorities for the past ten years. However, progress has not been made on these projects due to the lack of financial resources and infrastructure challenges relating to power generation.

On the other hand, the community's capacity to organise events, gatherings and forums is very well developed. The Chief and Council give good and consistent leadership. In the school, the teachers, support staff and youth councillor have a strong capacity to organize and they have a strong passion for the children and youth they serve. Community



members have expressed interest in managing recreation programs. With additional physical resources, the community could make some significant changes. The skills are also present to develop traditional skills and teach traditional practices but the costs of gas and equipment often hold back community efforts. However, some parents expressed a desire to explore sharing costs among themselves for land-based activities. With minimal coordination, additional activities could be planned.

The Band Council organises fundraising events such as bingo to raise money for community programs and events, although some people voiced concerns that gambling is a problem. Given the poverty and lack of resources there is very little chance of generating sufficient funds for new social programs and recreational programs and activities from within the community. A related problem is that this community's fundraising efforts redistribute wealth rather than creating new wealth in the community.

4.5.4 Recommendations

29. **Promote traditional culture: find ways to continue to embrace the traditional culture, to instil a greater sense of pride in the community and to highlight the local natural resources in area. In order to do this we should promote land-based programs.**
30. **Develop a youth council/advisory council: Youth would like a way/mechanism to have their voice heard and to raise their issues and concerns. Empower youth to strengthen the leadership they can provide in the community. By role modeling and establishing a contributing role for youth leaders, other youth will also increase their ability to participate in community life in a positive way.**
31. **Lobby for government funding and voluntary sector funding for equipment, training facilities and supplies for Elders to take children out onto the land**
32. **Develop more social functions, community meetings, and other opportunities for community members to share knowledge, including community based activities, language, extended family communication, and information evenings.**
33. **Promote open dialog with children and youth to identify additional programs to adequately address the children's interests/needs (e.g., there may be interest in a homework club).**
34. **Identify opportunities for Nation to Nation mentoring, so that successful First Nations program models can be replicated.**

4.6 Children and Parents – Protection, Welfare and Safety

4.6.1 Information from Secondary Sources

Tikinagan Child and Family Services is the only agency based outside of Webequie that provides community-based services for children and families. Tikinagan is a Native Children's Aid Society that operates under a First Nations mandate from the Chiefs of the 30 First Nation communities it serves. Tikinagan also functions under a provincial mandate and funding is provided by the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

Tikinagan has established a unique Native model of child welfare services, called Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin, meaning “Everyone working together to raise our children.” While meeting provincial standards, this model also includes the provision of community-based services, local staff and foster parents, protocols with the First Nation Chiefs and Councils, consultation with Elders, and working together with local Child and Family Services Committees.

Tikinagan maintains a Branch Office in the basement of the Webequie Band Office. This office includes a Supervisor and a team of workers, serving Webequie, Nibinamik and Neskantaga First Nations. Tikinagan has 42 ongoing family service cases in Webequie and there are 19 children in care from the community.

Tikinagan has recently initiated the Mamow Oshki Pimagihowin prevention program in eight pilot communities, with Webequie being one of these. Mamow Oshki Pimagihowin, meaning “Everyone working together to create new life skills,” is designed to enable communities to develop their own family support programs, parenting education, child and youth activities and other programs in response to identified community needs and priorities.

The “On Our Way” plan (2005), prepared by Web-Equay Mamow-NoKii-Win (Webequie Women Working Together) identified the following social issues:

- Policing
- Problems with youth
- Family violence
- Children at risk

The report recommended that the Band set up by-laws for a curfew, gun control, and dog control, that a crime stoppers system be set up, that youth are consulted to discuss problems and solutions, and that awareness of programs that are already in existence be increased. The report advised that support, guidance, training, and funding for setting up new programs should come from outside the community.

4.6.2 Needs and Issues Identified in the Assessment

Support for Parents (Early Years)

The early years have been well documented as the most critical time in a child’s intellectual and emotional development, setting the base of competence and coping skills for the later stages of life. With approximately 20 births a year in Webequie, the minimal programming in Webequie is not sufficient to be meeting the needs of children 0-5 and their parents. Research-based training and planning for staff and community resource people are needed (i.e., what kinds of programs are most beneficial in the long term, training geared to informal services vs. professional training). Developing parenting capacity is everyone’s responsibility and could be integrated into existing programs as well as create new ones.

There was also a need expressed for a daycare facility in the community for working parents. Knowing their children are in a quality childcare environment, would greatly ease the stress of working parents. The benefits of keeping children safe, in a stimulating and developmentally appropriate environment, will contribute to the long-term success of these children.

“We need to create a learning centre, with partnerships from the parents. Our children need a proper, healthy and safe learning environment.”

Care for Children and Youth

Parents are overburdened dealing with issues such as community and family trauma, grief, and coping with extreme poverty and personal issues. These issues affect the capacity of parents to guide, direct and set boundaries for their children. As a result of recent suicides within the community, parents fear disciplining their children, worried that they will lose them and push them to hurt themselves. Community members were also clear that, as a result of residential schools, there is a general lack of parenting skills and knowledge. One hundred people from several generations of Webequie members attended residential schools.

Parents described being overwhelmed by the parenting role. Youth and children expressed boredom and a strong peer influence that often was negative due to the prevalence of drugs and solvent abuse in the community. Computer use is high among youth, and this can alienate them from community and family life.

Children indicated they were happy when spending time as a family, and enjoyed land-based programs. Many community members expressed the need for recreation programming for youth.

Safety Issues

There is high concern relating to the rates of bullying amongst youth. One community member explained that children are witnessing “role modeling” of violent behaviour among older community members. The person said that it is important for community members to better understand the impacts of this on children. It is not uncommon for young people to witness community members physically fighting, including incidents of family violence.

“Children’s security and safety is the community’s responsibility – they need a stronger safety and security interest.”

The lack of adequate housing in the community also contributes to the stress placed upon the family. Young couples often live with parents, siblings or multiple families as they try to form their own family. The use of drugs and alcohol in cramped quarters of the homes also exacerbates the exposure children have to drugs and alcohol.

“I was born in this community. There were 10 houses at that time. Now I worry about my grandchildren being safe if they go out at night. I love my grand kids more than my own children. I don’t want to see anything happen to them.”

4.6.3 Community Capacity

The Nishnawbe Aski Police Service has two officers stationed in the community. There is a community crises coordinator. There is an Aboriginal Head Start program with designated space in the community although the program is currently not meeting the full needs of the community. Tikinagan staff and workers provide support to families and the community. The Healthy Babies/Healthy Children program also has a worker in the community.

Our discussions with community members, in particular youth, highlighted the critical role that Elders and parents play in providing support and learning. It was felt that grandmothers and grandfathers are key in developing parenting skills and that there are other trained people within the community that can provide expertise.

4.6.4 Recommendations

35. Develop a range of programs for school-aged children and youth. There is a need to bring children and youth together for positive recreation, role modeling and support. There is also a need for leadership training for community youth workers.
36. Teach basic life skills, with programs geared to youth and young adults who are becoming parents at an early age. The programs would include language, culture and land-based initiatives. The number of teen parents is high, with many young people without necessary basic life skills.
37. Expand the Aboriginal Head Start Program with the goal of developing a formal daycare centre in the community.
38. Develop Early Years Program for Parents (geared to supporting children ages 0-6). Build up community partnerships through training so that programs don't disappear if a position is not filled.
39. Build upon the Healthy Babies/Healthy Children program in order to schedule visits to new parents immediately following childbirths and do follow-up with new babies and parents.
40. Integrate parenting workshops into current programs, such as Aboriginal Head Start, women's groups, men's groups, Tikinagan Mamow Oshki Pimagihowin programs, mental health programs, Community Health programs.
41. Develop a co-ordinated team of community resource workers and programs that would provide support for each other, break isolation of workers, and create joint solutions for inter-related issues.
42. Provide more early childhood education toys and equipment.
43. Provide more basic needs such as emergency food, clothing, and diapers.

4.7 Mental and Physical Health

4.7.1 Information from Secondary Sources

The Medical Services Branch of INAC provides a modern Nursing Station, with three full-time nurses, a Community Health Representative (CHR), and two full-time counsellors. Aboriginal staff serve as interpreters and assistants. The nurses and nurse practitioners have 24-hour consultation access to doctors in Sioux Lookout. Air ambulance services are provided in emergency situations to transport patients to hospitals in Sioux Lookout, Thunder Bay or Winnipeg. A doctor visits the community twice a month and all appointments are fully booked well in advance.

The “On Our Way” plan (2005), prepared by Web-Equay Mamow-NoKii-Win (Webequie Women Working Together) identified the following community issues:

- Limited space in the health clinic, lack of trained staff, and communication when patients return to the community.
- Internally, the community should improve their communication systems, document cases for further funding, and promote tele-health system.
- Externally, there is need for funding support, training support, communication with First Nations Inuit Health Branch, and a vehicle.

To deal with suicide, mental health, and addictions issues, the community should work on monitoring high risk youth, training resource workers, developing a list of priority training/workshop needs for frontline workers, and setting up an AA program. External help can come in the form of funding, aid with setting up a community healing project and a comprehensive addiction strategy.

4.7.2 Needs and Issues Identified in the Assessment

Mental Health Concerns

Stress and Anxiety

As a result of existing housing conditions, many mental health issues are exacerbated. Stress, anxiety, depression and a general sense of malaise are seen as a result of overcrowding, lack of privacy and no foreseeable solution.

Local mental health professionals are experiencing and handling trauma cases without critical incidence debriefing. Large and complex caseloads often go beyond their comfort level of expertise. External resources exist but are limited.

“It scares me when cases are referred back to me, we don’t have the resources or the space.... We go from trauma to trauma using band-aids.”

Unresolved Grief

Suicide

Almost 90% of the families have been directly affected by suicide. Without an adequate support system, many parents are attempting to cope with their own mental health issues surrounding the trauma of losing their children and loved ones to suicide. This is directly affecting their parenting. In a community where silence around personal suffering has been the norm, the silence around suicide is heightening individual levels of fear and anxiety. Parents are afraid to discipline their children because they anticipate that youth will hurt themselves. This lack of guidance and appropriate setting of boundaries results in youth feeling confused and neglected and with low self esteem.

Further, some parents verbally abuse their children and children therefore have low self-esteem, difficulties at school and challenges developing mentally and physically. Youth are also confused,

without boundaries and are not comfortable reaching out for explanations that might allay their own questions and fears. Thus the cycle of suicide risk continues.

Historical Trauma

Historical trauma has been described as the collective emotional and psychological injury both over the life span and across generations, resulting from a cataclysmic history of genocide¹. The effects: unsettled trauma, increase of alcohol abuse, child abuse and domestic violence. The majority of adults in Webequie attended residential schools. Many respondents discussed experiences of abuse and trauma and the lasting affects on the lives of the community members; lack of parenting skills, abandonment of traditional language and culture, domestic violence, and alcoholism.

“My grandmother told me how the men were different before they went to the schools. Men and women worked as partners. It was different after they came back; they looked at women in a different way, with less respect.”

Children and Youth Leaving the Community

There is a deep sense of loss over children leaving the community. Youth have to leave if they want to complete high school; as a result, children are left without a proper support network and many do not make it through to completion. Without a safe house in the community and without enough foster homes, children and youth are sometimes taken out of the community when Tikinagan steps in. Removing children from their community further exacerbates the sense of loss and community grief.

Alcoholism

In the community, alcoholism is a major concern and cross generational. Concentrated treatment is only available off reserve and difficult to get into and there is no follow up treatment upon return.

Existing Services

While community services do exist (see community capacity below) there were key issues identified during the assessment. Many services are not user friendly in that they offer little privacy and anonymity and everyone knows when someone is accessing mental health services. Existing workers are overwhelmed and are not necessarily obtaining the supports they need to ensure they themselves do not “burnout.” Workers are often in “crisis mode” and unable to deal with long term rehabilitation and needed psychosocial supports for people having experienced trauma. Existing resources are at maximum capacity and unable to meet the full needs of the community.

“...problems are cured with a “bandage” but real healing rarely takes place – the bandage keeps falling off..”

¹ Quoted from Dr Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart co-founder and Director of the Takini Network in Rapid City, South Dakota

Physical Health Concerns

There is a high rate of diabetes (over 100 cases) within the community. This is potentially related to diet, stress and lack of exercise. Arthritis, heart attacks and strokes are also common health concerns. The mould in some housing results in rashes, and increased occurrence of colds and asthma, with younger children being most susceptible. The majority of women do not choose to breast feed, raising concerns for infant health. Rates of teenage pregnancy are increasing and the need for additional sexual health education was noted. (The community saw its youngest teenage pregnancy this past Christmas.)

4.7.3 Community Capacity

The community has been developing a holistic model that involves all community members, including Elders and youth, to look at prevention.

Traditional methods of healing exist within the community. The traditional ways were gone for a time but they are now coming back to Webequie. The traditional ways use the medicine wheel, teachings about the holistic relationship between emotion, mental, physical and spiritual being and the four elements of life. Traditional methods are practiced through the sweat lodge, ceremonies, pow-wows and vision quests.

Mental health workers and experts within the community include the NADAP Worker (a resource for alcohol addictions), church and Christian programs, NODIN children's mental health program, one mental health professional, four resource workers, three nurses and a visiting doctor.



4.7.4 Recommendations

44. Develop a land-based family treatment program. Family treatment must have the healing components derived from the land that allow entire families to experience their traditional ways.
45. Develop a children's residential group care and treatment facility and program (also mentioned under "infrastructure")
46. Provide suicide awareness outreach in schools. Using the existing venue to reach out to children will normalize open dialogue and reach a broader base of children with critical information
47. Develop classroom based psychosocial programming for school-aged children, in order to build children's self esteem, foster resilience and help children to regain a sense of normalcy
48. Develop a community resource coordinator and case manager position. A single point of intake will ensure that services are provided in a holistic and effective manner
49. Develop a "Break the Silence" open dialogue within the community about suicide. The silence around suicides has raised individual's levels of fear and anxiety in community affecting how parents are parenting.
50. Provide immediate critical incidence debriefing and ongoing regular debriefing and "Care for the Caregiver" support for all counsellors, resource workers and leadership in community. Debriefing and emotional support for caregivers will help to develop their own coping mechanisms and ensure their mental health in order that they can assist in healing the community.
51. Develop a mental health internship program with 6-week rotations to supporting care for the caregiver and community counselling. Increase bench strength and build capacity by bringing in consistent flow of professionals to support the community. Ongoing relationships would allow for monitoring and evaluation, raising awareness and advocacy.
52. Develop a comprehensive alcohol-and-drug education program. The use of drugs and alcohol is debilitating, affecting the health of children, the health of adults, parenting ability, positive social relations and employment.
53. Develop community healing, grieving and reconciliation workshop programs, including case management for the whole family to relieve stress and anxiety of suppressed feelings and emotions to allow the community to move forward in a healthy manner.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

5.1 Summary of Findings

The assessment set out to understand what makes an impact on the community and to identify why problems exist, what is positive, what is lacking and what should happen next.

Apparent in many of our discussions with community members was their desire to regain control of their communities. We quickly understood that the solutions exist within the communities themselves, and that what is needed are additional supports and resources. They no longer want to see prescriptive solutions or solutions assigned by outsiders, but rather they wish to shape the future of their communities themselves and to work in partnership with interested parties to bring in the needed resources.

There was a great openness and desire to partner with groups and organizations in the south, recognizing that to secure needed resources, the engagement of southern stakeholders will be essential. A key challenge moving forward will be to ensure that efforts remain as a true “partnership” and that communities and their leadership remain as truly equal participants and that old practices of assigning solutions or exploitation are not repeated. For this to work, an atmosphere of clear and transparent communication and planning needs to be realized.

The negative impact of past and present traumas that First Nations communities have experienced cannot be over emphasized and the complexity of the ill effects can not be easily explained. The community has experienced great loss and suffering and at times community members seemed overwhelmed and unable to believe that a better future for them and their children might be possible. Despite ongoing efforts and recent successes, the challenges and reoccurring crises often overshadow any positive development within the community.

As an assessment team, we felt it was our responsibility to reflect back not only the challenges community members identified but to also highlight where current capacity exists and to acknowledge and celebrate successes. Some community members expressed that this “outside” perspective was helpful and that, at times, while living in a day-to-day reality, it is difficult to see how existing or recent efforts are having a positive impact.

5.2 Summary of Suggested Ideas and Recommendations

A few recommendations are applicable to many of the issues or problems Webequie First Nation is facing. If implemented, they can be expected to provide wide ranging benefits to the community.

1. Sharing information and experiences (successes and challenges) between different First Nation communities throughout Nishnawbe-Aski Nation, Ontario and Canada. For example: the successes of one community in retaining their traditional language with youth, should be shared with a community which is struggling; lessons learned by one community relating to the development of a youth centre can be beneficial to another community developing plans and attempting to secure resources.

2. Training and capacity building for existing workers, including dialogue with people outside the community for problem solving and “thinking outside the box.” Human resource leadership training support for various operational areas including Chief & Council, mental health workers, women’s circle, education workers, youth council, capacity building in micro finance, economic development co-ordinator and others.
3. Advocacy Planning: a sound and strategic advocacy plan should be considered and will assist in addressing such issues as: the disparity between funding for First Nations and other sectors from voluntary and government agencies; strategies for establishing relationships with the corporate sector/corporate social responsibility programs; defining how/who/when to lobby government and identifying additional resources and partnerships both nationally and internationally, including linkages with international processes and resources such as NGO reporting to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and other UN processes.
4. Communication and relationship building within the community: It was apparent that healthy communication within the community will be key for healing, coping and growth. Considerations should be made to increased efforts to build relationships between men and women; youth and Elders; community and Council; and also with people outside the community to better understand what resources exist and how existing community efforts can be further supported and enhanced.

5.3 Summary of Recommendations

No individual community, organization or government working alone will be able to deliver on all the recommendations contained within this report. It is essential that all stakeholders, including governments, the voluntary sector, the private sector, First Nations communities, the media, families, Elders, children and youth all work towards ensuring that the rights and well-being of Aboriginal people in Canada are realized.

Each stakeholder has unique and sometimes overlapping responsibilities:

1. **Civil society and the voluntary sector:** Although support has been increasing in recent years there is still a great deal of unrealized potential and support that can and should be mobilized within the voluntary sector. We call upon all voluntary organizations, including international development agencies, to explore how their services and resources can better support the work of First Nations communities, taking into account the needs for advocacy, capacity building and training, securing resources and identifying new partnerships and expertise.
2. **Governments:** Federal and Provincial governments must all become more accountable to these communities and to work with the communities to realize their hopes and dreams for their children and to rectify past and present injustices. Governments must play a key role to ensure barriers are removed and communities have the needed resources to continue reclaiming their lives.
3. **First Nation Communities:** Understanding the untapped resources that exist within the communities, as well as nationally and internationally, and the ability to utilise these resources to their fullest potential will be of great use. Working together and learning from other First Nations communities will also assist in learning from past successes and failures and help the growth and healing of your communities.

4. **Private Sector:** Business, banking and mining companies have a unique responsibility and contribution to make to First Nations communities. With guidance from First Nations leadership, the private sector can assist with real growth, training and development, particularly with regards to livelihoods, housing and economic development. Corporate social responsibility ethics and principles must be realised and practiced in partnership with First Nations communities.
5. **Parents and Families:** A child's best start to life lies in the hands of their parents and families. Being responsible for their children's well-being, parents must be supported in every way to ensure success. Recognition and support must also be given to the unique support and wisdom available from extended family members and Elders. A true sense of community and shared responsibility for the care and nurturing of children needs to be encouraged.
6. **Children and Youth:** The perspectives of children and youth are unique and the well-being of a community can only be fully understood if their views and ideas are heard and part of any planning process. Children and youth must be supported and provided with the tools and resources required to change and influence their lives and the communities in which they live.
7. **Religious/Spiritual Leaders and Elders:** Children, youth and adults require these teachings and their wisdom to rebuild, to live healthy lives and to overcome past and present trauma.
8. **Academics:** To assist with research and to learn from and document past experiences. Each community will be unique but understanding successful practices and applying them to existing and future initiatives can only serve to support successful development.
9. **Media:** A key resource for ensuring that the realities and truths of First Nations people are heard and understood by the rest of Canada.
10. **Community Professionals:** Professionals in the community all play a role in prevention, protection and education within the community and providing key services and resources to all community members. As often the first called upon resources in an emergency or crisis, their skills and well-being are key to a community's growth, survival and success. As such, they must be supported and provided every needed resource (including training where needed) as a priority. Community professionals include the Chief and Council, teachers, principals, police officers, health care providers, child welfare workers, early childhood educators, social workers, child and youth care workers, youth leaders and others who work with children.

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Annex 1: Assessment Team Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference

Mishkeegogamang and Webequie First Nations Assessment

Team Composition

Overall Coordination:	Nick Finney Alana Kapell
External Resource Team:	Barbara Ammirati [focus: mental/physical health] Maurice Brubacher [Media contact; focus: community participation] Ruth Hislop [focus: education and recreation] Tim Brubacher [recorder; focus: livelihoods] Lorna Schwartzentruber [focus: children and parents] Linda Nothing Chaplin [logistics, focus: food/shelter/water]
Community Liaisons	For Webequie; Elsie MacDonald and Linda Nothing Chaplin For Mishkeegogamang; Chief Connie Gray McKay and Linda Nothing Chaplin
Community Experts	

Brief bios of the team members are available in annex 2.

Assessment Objectives

1. To complete an assessment, collecting preliminary information on areas which include:
 - Livelihoods
 - Food/water/sanitation
 - Security and safety
 - Community participation
 - Children and parents
 - Mental and physical health
 - Education/recreation
2. To explore international linkages and comparisons
3. To develop an awareness raising/advocacy strategy
4. To understand community strengths and challenges
5. To develop a strategy for follow up/next steps, taking into account feasibility in regards to; funding, expertise and resources within the community, within the partnership, Save the Children, the voluntary sector and short and long term objectives.

Organizational chart

	External team	Areas of focus	Community experts	Community liaisons
Coordination Nick Finney Alana Kapell	Tim Brubacher	Livelihoods	Webequie expert	Webequie Elsie MacDonald Linda Nothing Chaplin
	Linda Nothing Chaplin	Food/shelter/water	Webequie expert	
Facilitator Eno Chapman	Maurice Brubacher	Community participation	Webequie expert	
	Lorna Schwartzenruber	Children and parents	Webequie expert	
Logistics Kevin Berube (remote) Linda Nothing Chaplin (onsite)	Barbara Ammirati	Mental and physical health	Webequie expert	
	Ruth Hislop	Education	Webequie expert	
Media coord. Maurice Brubacher Alana Kapell	Nick Finney		Webequie expert	
	Alana Kapell		Webequie expert	

Annex 2: Team Bios

Alana Kapell

In April of 2007, Alana became the Coordinator for the North-South Partnership for Children, Mamow Sha-way-gi-kay-win. Formerly a Program Officer at Save the Children Canada (7 years) she co-lead the Community Assessment team and was responsible for managing the Canadian Program, overseeing existing projects, strategic planning and program development. Prior to working at Save the Children Canada, Alana worked extensively with marginalized youth at a youth employment centre in Toronto. Alana has also gained valuable life and work experience overseas, working in India on issues related to child labour, in the Philippines working at an orphanage and traveling throughout Central America.

Barbara Ammirati

Protection Program Manager, Save the Children US Hurricane Katrina Emergency Response Team. Barbara joined Save the Children US in September 2005 to assist in the agency's first domestic disaster response and as Psychosocial Program Manager, oversee the modification, expansion and delivery of CBI, an international psychosocial intervention in a domestic environment.

As Acting Deputy Team Leader from June through September 2006, Barbara spearheaded the development of an agency partnership project with the US Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) aimed at creating safe and protective environments for children displaced by the storm. The project was born out of a rapid assessment of FEMA transitional housing communities published by Save US in the spring of 2006. From October through December 2006 Barbara served as Protection Program Manager creating a replicable model for the expansion of the partnership project while establishing relationships to build local capacity and ensure long term sustainability for the project in the community. Barbara is currently working on a LSMA in Human Rights and Humanitarianism at Columbia University's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.

Lorna Schwartzentruber

Program Director for Onward Willow Better Beginnings, Better Futures in Guelph, On. Has worked for the last five years over-seeing primary prevention programs in a high needs community in Guelph. Programs focus on early childhood education, family wellness, community development and school-aged/youth programming. I have worked in various First Nations contexts since 1983, both on National issues as well as at the local level.

Maurice Brubacher, MSW, RSW:

Master of Social Work in Community Development, Wilfrid Laurier University (1979). 30 years experience in child welfare, including 17 years as Executive Director of Family and Children's Services of Guelph and Wellington County. (1971-2006)

Provided community leadership to the development of an integrated service system in Guelph and Wellington County. Served as Acting Director of Tikinagan Child and Family Services in 1999 under secondment from F&CS in Guelph, and continued to serve in a consulting capacity since then (10-12 weeks per year) (1999-2006) Together with the People of Tikinagan, author of *Coming Home: The Story of Tikinagan Child and Family Services*. (2006) Founding member of the North-South Partnership for Children in Remote First Nation Communities (2006)

Nick Finney

Emergencies Deployment Adviser, Emergencies Section, Save the Children UK

Nick has worked with the emergencies section for 18 months in a job focused on deploying and managing emergencies teams for “rapid onset” emergencies and natural disasters. This involves time in London and in emergency operations round the world. One of Nick's big areas of focus is managing training programmes for new emergencies staff worldwide. He's been with Save the Children for over five years. Before joining the emergencies section his work was focused on working with staff in the field in our emergency and development programmes in Africa on a variety of capacity building projects. Nick is a qualified geologist and environmental scientist.

Ruth Hislop

Ruth has been with the Advocacy Office for approx. 4.5 years -- responsibility to ensure that children's voice is heard, authorized to protect the rights and interests of children and families receiving services in the province of Ontario, conducting individual case work as well as systemic work - with particular responsibility to work to ensure that First Nations children and youth have access to equitable service delivery across the province. During this time, she has had the opportunity to visit several First Nations communities in northern Ontario and is familiar with the mental health, youth justice and child welfare services across the province.

In addition to her current position, she has experience counseling children and youth by telephone at the Kids Help Phone - a national, confidential phone line for children and youth. She has background experience working in the shelter system - woman abuse and impact on children - systemic barriers and challenges – as well as Community development work both internationally and locally.

Tim Brubacher

Obtained a BA in Canadian Studies and Political Science from Wilfrid Laurier University in 2004. Currently working on an MA in Native and Canadian Studies at Trent University, his thesis is investigating the role of non-Indigenous people in Indigenous justice work and ending the cycle of paternalism. Has helped with the Friends of Tikinagan's annual clothing and hockey equipment drive since its inception. He is a member of the North-South Partnership and attended the initial planning session at Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation in 2006.

Annex 3: Team Responsibilities

Terms of Reference:

Coordinators

Mishkeegogamang and Webequie First Nations Assessment

Coordinator: Nicholas Finney

Duration: January 6 – 13, 2007

Background: Please see, “Terms of Reference Mishkeegogamang and Webequie First Nations Assessment” for general background information.

Child Protection: All team members must agree to and sign Save the Children Canada’s Code of Conduct (Annex 4)

Responsibility:

The Coordinator, Nicholas Finney, will participate fully in the assessment as part of the External Assessment Team and contribute to the overall program development that will result from the assessment. Specifically;

- Provide training and necessary preparation to members of the external team.
- Lead the development of questions and data collection methods under each of the areas of focus.
- Provide insight re. desired community contacts and interviewees
- Facilitate and lead team meetings, including pre meeting and debriefs.
- Ensure team is “on point” and that messaging is coordinated and consistent.
- Provide international perspective and expertise; contribute to key messages, willingness to speak to the media.
- Contribute to overall recommendations and structuring of final report.
- Assist in exploring future linkages and support from Save the Children UK and other international sources.

Coordinator: Alana Kapell

Duration: December 2006 - February 2007

Background: Please see, “Terms of Reference Mishkeegogamang and Webequie First Nations Assessment” for general background information.

Child Protection: All team members must agree to and sign Save the Children Canada’s Code of Conduct (Annex 4)

Responsibility:

The Coordinator, Alana Kapell, will participate fully in the assessment as part of the External Assessment Team and contribute to the overall program development that will result from the assessment. Specifically;

- Coordinate team composition and individual roles and responsibilities
- Assist with logistical coordination
- Provide support and information to assist community level preparation.
- Assist with the facilitation during team meetings, including pre meeting and debriefs.
- Ensure team is “on point” and that messaging is coordinated and consistent.
- Contribute to key messages, willingness to speak to the media.
- Contribute to overall recommendations and structuring of final report.
- Assist in exploring future linkages and support from other Save the Children offices and other international sources.

Terms of Reference:

External Resource Team

Mishkeegogamang and Webequie First Nations Assessment

External Resource Team:

Barbara Ammirati [focus: mental/physical health]
Maurice Brubacher [Media contact; focus: community participation]
Ruth Hislop [focus: education and recreation]
Tim Brubacher [recorder; focus: livelihoods]
Lorna Schwartzenruber [focus: children and parents]
Linda Nothing Chaplin [focus: food/shelter/water]

Duration: January 6 – 13, 2007

Background: Please see, “Terms of Reference Mishkeegogamang and Webequie First Nations Assessment” for general background information.

Child Protection: All team members must agree to and sign Save the Children Canada’s Code of Conduct (Annex 4)

Responsibility:

All members of the External Resource Team will participate fully in the assessment and contribute to the overall program development that will result from the assessment. Specifically;

- Assist in the development of questions and data collection methods under each of the areas of focus.
- Gather data under their identified area of focus in partnership with a community representative/expert.
- Participate in team meetings and debriefings
- Keep accurate and thorough records of data and interviews.
- Uphold, support and communicate agreed to messaging. (while speaking to community members and other about the project)
- Contribute to key messages
- Contribute to overall recommendations and structuring of final report.
- Assist in exploring linkages and support from “partners” and other sources.

Individual Roles and responsibilities:

Logistics: Kevin Berube and Linda Nothing Chaplin; **Media Relations:** Maurice Brubacher and Alana Kapell; **Youth engagement:** Ruth Hislop

Terms of Reference:

Community Liaisons

Mishkeegogamang and Webequie First Nations Assessment

Community Liaisons:

For Webequie;

Elsie MacDonald

Linda Nothing Chaplin

For Mishkeegogamang;

Chief Connie Gray McKay

Linda Nothing Chaplin

Duration: January 6 – 13, 2007

Background: Please see, “Terms of Reference Mishkeegogamang and Webequie First Nations Assessment” for general background information.

Child Protection: All team members must agree to and sign Save the Children Canada’s Code of Conduct (Annex 4)

Responsibility:

The Community Liaisons will participate fully in the assessment and contribute to the overall program development that will result from the assessment. Specifically;

- Identify community experts for each of the areas of focus
- Make needed arrangements to interview various community members and visit different community sites and locations
- Provide logistical assistance, including necessary arrangements for meeting venue, food, transportation and translation
- Assist in the development of questions and data collection methods under each of the areas of focus.
- Participate in team meeting and debriefings – with particular focus on facilitating and informing the plenary agenda in each community
- Contribute to key messages
- Contribute to overall recommendations and structuring of final report.

Terms of Reference:

Community Experts

Mishkeegogamang and Webequie First Nations Assessment

Community Experts:

For Webequie;

To be determined (by Community Liaisons)

For Mishkeegogamang;

To be determined (by Community Liaisons)

Duration:

Webequie: January 7 - 10;

Mishkeegogamang: January 10 - 13

Background: Please see, “Terms of Reference Mishkeegogamang and Webequie First Nations Assessment” for general background information.

Child Protection: All team members must agree to and sign Save the Children Canada’s Code of Conduct (Annex 4)

Responsibility:

The Community Experts will participate fully in the assessment and contribute to the overall program development that will result from the assessment. Specifically;

- Work with a member of the External Resources Team to gather and collect community information for each of the areas of focus
- Provide individual expertise and insight on an area of focus.
- Work together with members of the External Resources Team to interview community members and visit community sites
- Provide planning and coordination support prior to community visit to set up interviews and community members to speak with.
- Assist in the development of questions and data collection methods under each of the areas of focus.
- Participate in all community based meetings - with particular focus on facilitating and informing the plenary agenda in each community
- Contribute to key messages
- Contribute to overall recommendations and structuring of final report.

Annex 4: Code of Conduct

CODE OF CONDUCT

All Save the Children Canada staff (including contract and volunteer) must sign up to and abide by this Code of Conduct.

Staff and others must never:

- hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children
- develop physical/sexual relationships with children
- develop relationships with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive
- act in ways that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse.
- use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive
- behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative
- have a child/children with whom they are working to stay overnight at their home unsupervised
- sleep in the same room or bed as a child with whom they are working
- do things for children of a personal nature that they can do for themselves
- condone, or participate in, behaviour of children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive
- act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse
- discriminate against, show differential treatment, or favour particular children to the exclusion of others.

This is not an exhaustive or exclusive list. The principle is that staff and others should avoid actions or behaviour which may constitute poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour.

It is important for all staff and others in contact with children to:

- be aware of situations which may present risks and manage these
- plan and organise the work and the workplace so as to minimise risks
- as far as possible, be visible in working with children
- ensure that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues or concerns to be raised and discussed
- ensure that a sense of accountability exists between staff so that poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour does not go unchallenged
- talk to children about their contact with staff or others and encourage them to raise any concerns
- empower children - discuss with them their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem.

In general it is inappropriate to:

- spend excessive time alone with children away from others
- take children to your home, especially where they will be alone with you.

Principles on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse¹:

- Sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian workers² constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of employment;
- Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence;
- Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour is prohibited. This includes exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries.
- Sexual relationships between humanitarian workers and beneficiaries are strongly discouraged since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics. Such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of humanitarian aid work.
- Where a humanitarian worker develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation by a fellow worker, whether in the same agency or not, s/he must report such concerns via established agency reporting mechanisms.
- Humanitarian workers are obliged to create and maintain an environment which prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and promotes the implementation of their code of conduct. Managers at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems which maintain this environment.

¹ extracted from "Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Force on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Humanitarian Crises"- obligatory for members to incorporate these into their codes of conduct

² In this context, the term "humanitarian worker" applies to all staff, volunteers, and other representatives including consultants, researchers, board members and trustees.