

S U M M A R Y D E S C R I P T I O N

TASK FORCE ON DELIVERY OF LEGAL SERVICES TO NATIVE PEOPLE OF B.C.

History of the Task Force

Members of the Attorney-General's Department have been meeting with representatives of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, the B.C. Association of Non-Status Indians, and the Native Courtworkers and Counselling Association of B.C. for the past few months. The result of a number of meetings has been the creation of a proposal for a Task Force on Delivery of Legal Services to the Native People of B.C. The ideas in this proposal have primarily come from these representatives. The proposal was submitted to the Justice Development Commission operating under the Attorney-General's Department. The Justice Development Commission has approved the proposal and has funded the Task Force. The proposal has also been approved by the Boards of Directors of the B.C. Association of Non-Status Indians, the Native Courtworkers and Counselling Association of B.C., and the Executive Director of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs.

The Task Force will consist of five people and support staff. The five people will include one liaison person from the B.C. Association of Non-Status Indians (BCANSI), one liaison person from the Native Courtworkers and Counselling Association of B.C. (NCW), and one liaison person from the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs (UBCIC), and two representatives of the Attorney-General's Department. Therefore, the majority of the Task Force will be Native People.

Delivery of Legal Services to Native People

The unmet needs of Native People of B.C. are many and varied. One of these pressing needs is the need for legal services. Too many Indian people are in the prisons. Too many Indian people need a lawyer but they cannot afford one, cannot get to one, do not know they need one, or are afraid of lawyers. This must be changed by Native People and it can be changed by Native People.

At present, the only effort to deliver legal services to Native People, other than by non-native lawyers is through the

6. Administrative Committee, 1974-76

Native Courtworkers and Counselling Association of B.C. This organization has been in existence for about two years and now has twenty-two courtworkers throughout the entire province. These courtworkers are Native People that help other Native People who run into trouble with the criminal law.

The problem is that twenty-two courtworkers for all of B.C. is not enough. Nor do these people have the time and training to help people with non-criminal matters, such as family law problems, landlord problems, credit problems, consumer problems, and others. There also is only one Indian lawyer in the entire province. This is not enough. All Native People need to know more about the law and their rights. The Task Force has been set up to start doing things to begin to solve these problems.

Why a Task Force?

The idea of a Task Force has been chosen because it is a good way to begin to deal with these problems. It can be a way in which Native People can think about these problems, learn more about these problems, and attempt to solve these problems. The Task Force can organize all of this and provide the funding and resources necessary for Native People to do what needs to be done.

History has shown that decisions made by non-native people in distant cities about Native People is a mistake. Programs created in this way do not work. Native People must decide for themselves what they need and want. Then Native People must be the ones to do it.

How Will the Task Force Work?

A majority of the people on the Task Force will be Indian, but this in and of itself is not enough. The Task Force must involve as many Native People in B.C. as possible. Only in this way will the ideas of the Task Force and the programs reflect the true needs and wishes of Native People in this province.

Only in this way can it be ensured that the ideas and programs will fit the particular needs of Native People in different areas of the province living in different conditions.

To do this the Task Force wants to hear your ideas. Call us or write us. We will be travelling all over the province many times meeting with representatives of band councils, district councils, BCANSI locals, and other Native People.

All the problems won't be solved tomorrow but the time has come to begin.

Some Ideas of the Task Force

The people responsible for the creation of the Task Force have developed some ideas that will be considered in greater detail by the Task Force in the near future. The following is a list of some of these ideas. We would like your comments on these ideas and any others that you may have. (The order in which they appear does not indicate any level of importance to one over another.)

- (1) Increase the number of courtworkers and provide a training program for them.
- (2) A toll-free legal information phone line from 9:00 a.m. to midnight to improve access to legal knowledge for Native People.
- (3) Set up a paralegal training program and provide paralegals (Native People to handle legal problems unrelated to criminal law) throughout the Province.
- (4) Increase the number of Indian lawyers.
- (5) Organize Community Legal Education Workshops around the Province to expand knowledge of the legal system and possible uses of it by Native People.
- (6) Set up the Access to Counsel Pilot Project. This will involve providing a lawyer at least one day a week to a band council and a BCANSI local as a test. If this works out well it could be extended to other places.

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- (7) Education of lawyers, law students and other professionals to encourage and improve contact with Native People and to sensitize these professionals.
- (8) Examination of the legal aid system to determine how available it is to Native People and how good a job it does for them.
- (9) Examination of various possibilities for providing group pre-paid legal services to Native People.
- (10) Workshops for band council members and the executive of BCANSI locals on the availability of government resources, programs and funding; on the ways to approach the government to get these things; on the responsibilities of different government agencies to Indian People; on the law as it relates to Indian People.
- (11) Examination of the possibilities for increasing the number of Native magistrates and on setting up courts on the Reserves.
- (12) Increasing the contact between Native People and the judges, the RCMP, and the Corrections staff on an informal basis so as to mutually share information.
- (13) Examination of the possibilities for increasing the number of Indian RCMP constables.
- (14) Expand the availability of legal information for Native People through pamphlets, radio, video, and television. This will involve distributing what is available and creating new things specifically for Native People.

As stated earlier, we welcome and need your comments, suggestions, criticisms, and personal experiences about these fourteen ideas and things in general. We hope that we will get a chance to talk to you in person, but if not, please call us or write us. Nothing can be done unless we do it together.

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NATIVE PEOPLE OF B.C.

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