



**National Hybrid Forum
on Income Assistance**
From Surviving to Thriving

**Forum hybride national
sur l'aide au revenu**
De la survie à la prospérité

Income Assistance Reform

From Surviving to Thriving

Annual Forum on Income Assistance

March 21, 2023

Enoch Cree Nation, Alberta

Assembly of First Nations



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Background

- Developed in 1964 to provide income support for individuals on-reserve to afford basic needs.
- Does not account for unique needs of First Nations or current socio-economic realities.
- Indigenous Services Canada has committed to program reform through a co-development process to make the program more responsive to First Nations First Nations-led engagement.



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Foundation for Reform

- AFN Resolution 28/2018, *Support for the establishment of a Technical Working Group on Social Development*
- AFN Resolution 89/2019, *Continuing First Nations Income Assistance Reform*



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AFN's Advocacy

- Ensure the voices of First Nations are at the forefront of all aspects of policy and decision making.
- Enhance First Nations capacity to govern and deliver the program according to their priorities.
- Support the shift from *Surviving to Thriving*.



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Co-Development Process

- AFN Resolution 89/2019, *Continuing First Nations Income Assistance Reform*, mandates the continuation of First Nations-led reform on Income Assistance and for the AFN to conduct a study on the gaps in data and services within the Program.
- Using preliminary data from the study and engagements conducted by ISC on Income Assistance, the AFN and TWGSD developed a policy document with recommendations for reform.



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Policy Recommendations

1. Develop and implement needs-based funding structure to account for factors such as remoteness, inflation and cost of living.
2. Align provincial, territorial and federal disability programming with the needs of Income Assistance clients.
3. Increase resources to promote First Nation self-determination including:
 - a. Additional case managers and administrative staff.
 - b. Resourcing and resources to promote self-determination.



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Policy Recommendations (Continued)

4. Support First Nations to strengthen data collection, storage, access and reporting to support evidence based funding
5. Adequate infrastructure to deliver programs and services and support self-governance.
6. Explore options to build a First Nations social safety net model to support First Nations with holistic, wrap-around supports to decrease poverty and support thriving First Nations.



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Where We Are Now

- *AFN Resolution 07/2022, Reform of the On-Reserve Income Assistance Program:*
 - Supported the First Nations-Developed policy recommendations,
 - Called on ISC to use the recommendations,
 - Called on the Technical Working Group on Social Development to conduct and oversee an assessment of the long-term financial investments required to fill the gaps in the IA Program.



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Next Steps

- The AFN will continue to work with the Technical Working Group on Social Development and ISC to reform the IA Program.
- The AFN will conduct a cost analysis to provide a First Nations-led assessment of the financial cost associated with the implementation of the proposed policy recommendations.