

The Aboriginal Court Worker Program is available through Friendship Centre's across the province.

Aboriginal Court Workers began to attend courts in the 1960's, the program has developed to a point where it has now earned the respect of police, courts, other related agencies and the Federal and Provincial governments.

As well, the Court Work Program has been a fundamental stepping stone to the development of Aboriginal Community Justice Program within a number of Friendship Centre communities across the province.

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A Program of the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centre's

The Ontario Aboriginal Court Work Program



N'SWAKAMOK NATIVE

FRIENDSHIP CENTRE

INTRODUCTION:

If you, or a friend or relative have a problem with the law, this brochure tells you some of the ways a Court Worker can help.

When a person is accused of a crime, or they are dealing with family issues in court, the system can be complicated, confusing and even a frightening experience.

The criminal and family justice systems can be particularly difficult to understand due to language and cultural differences between Aboriginal people and the mainstream system.

In Ontario, the Aboriginal Court Worker Program is available to provide assistance to all Aboriginal people who are in contact with the legal system, whether they are Status, Non-Status, Metis, or Inuit.

Aboriginal Court Workers help their clients receive fair and equitable treatment from the legal system and assist clients in gaining a better understanding of their rights and obliga-

tions in the legal system. ABORIGINAL COURT WORKER SERVICES A COURT WORKER WILL:

- ◆ Provide a variety of services to Aboriginal people who require support in court
- ◆ Deliver services to all Aboriginal people in strict confidence
- ◆ Explain the procedures of court
 - ◆ Assist Aboriginal individuals by acting as a liaison between the individual and the court
 - ◆ Explain to the individual the reasons for their arrest, their legal rights and responsibilities
- ◆ information regarding the charges they face ◆ Provide information about Legal Aid if the accused/family cannot afford a lawyer
- ◆ Obtain the services of an Aboriginal language interpreters when needed
 - ◆ Explain to clients the decisions that the court makes at various stages of their case
 - ◆ May participate in preparation of a Pre-Sentence Report to ensure that the background of a convicted person is properly presented
- ◆ Explain to a person placed on bail and probation what this means and what is expected of them ◆ Work with community agencies to help them meet their immediate and long-term needs and goals in relation to a court process
- ◆ Will make contact with the area Native Inmate Liaison Worker if the accused is sentenced to a provincial institution
- ◆ May visit inmates in jails and penitentiaries in their area to provide information and moral support
- ◆ Work with parents or families in the case of a child apprehension by CAS, to ensure that all proper steps are taken to protect the child and if possible to reunite the family.

COURT WORKERS WILL NOT:

- ◆ Provide legal advice
- ◆ Act as a language interpreter
 - ◆ Supervise bail, probation or parole

THE ABORIGINAL COURT WORKER AND THE COMMUNITY

A COURT WORKER WILL:

- Conduct public education workshops for the Aboriginal community
- Participate in the community development of prevention program, with an emphasis on youth to reduce the incidences of crime; and assist in the development and delivery of Aboriginal Community Justice program
- Provide education to the judiciary to help them better understand the culture, needs and aspirations of Aboriginal people.

THE OFIFC AND THE COURT WORKER PROGRAM

The Aboriginal Court Worker Program is administered by the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centre's (OFIFC) with funds provided jointly by the Federal Department of Justice and the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General.