

Keeping the Sash Around the Family:

A Look at Metis Child, Family and Community Services

Once a month, we profile a different program of the Metis Child, Family and Community Services (MCFCS) Agency, an affiliate of the Manitoba Metis Federation. This month, we look at its Family Enhancement Program.

The Family Enhancement Program is an innovative reunification program that provides an alternative way to return children to their parents when the parents have made life changes and demonstrated capacity to parent.

The program returns children to their parents in a supported living environment, matching them with a specialized foster parent with whom they will live and who will provide support, coaching and mentoring. "The foster parent essentially assists them in learning to parent again," says Ingrid Inglis, the agency's Residential Resource Development Coordinator.

Supported by the Program Coordinator and a Treatment Worker, the foster parent and parents attend weekly support sessions together, allowing the parents to actively participate in parenting decisions. They are also able to receive the additional support they need to make the changes necessary to resolve issues and build on their existing strengths. As well, they attend several workshops and training sessions together, learning about issues that are specific to their circumstances.

Monthly case planning is also a key component of the program. "In the beginning, the family and the team are given the opportunity to identify things they would like to see the family achieve during that year," says Inglis. "When we do the case planning each month, we tick off things that have been completed, so it's really an evolving case plan."

The program lasts a minimum of one year per family and has already grown tremendously. "We just started in June 2008 and are now working with ten different families. This is unique to North America, as far as I know," says Inglis. "It's very exciting to be part of something that is so cutting-edge."

For more information about the program, visit www.metiefcs.mb.ca or call (204) 927-6980. Watch for another feature about an MCFCS program in the next edition of *Le Metis!*