FAMILY GROUP DECISION MAKING:

NEW ROLES FOR 'OLD' PARTNERS IN

RESOLVING FAMILY VIOLENCE

IMPLEMENTATION REPORT
VOLUME I

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To Our Parents

Tom & Kitty Stern

and

Wilma Burford and The Late Virgil Burford

A note on authorship — A flip of a coin
determined on which of the reports
Joan and Gale's names
would be first and second author.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At first glance these acknowledgements may raise questions about why they are so long. There is one simple reason: it is quite impossible to carry out a project like this one without collaboration and partnerships. The debts incurred to people and organizations in bringing this project from its inception to close were initially large and grew throughout. The reader should understand that for every visible person in a project like this, there are a score of invisible ones who make it possible. If we have left anyone out, and we no doubt have, we apologize.

The first time we wrote down the idea for using family group decision making in the province, it was attached as an appendix to a proposal for a family violence research centre. While that proposal was unsuccessful, we received so much encouragement for the idea of family group decision making in the appendix that we carried it forward. The following groups gave us financial support during the development of that original proposal and the money ultimately served the end of winning the grant for this project: at Memorial University of Newfoundland, the Faculty of Medicine, the Schools of Nursing and Social Work, and the Institute for Social and Economic Research; and at the provincial government the Departments of Health, Justice, and Social Services. Subsequently, Terry Stapleton, then director of Child Welfare, was most generous in giving us a grant directly aimed at developing the proposal for the project.

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A PARTNERSHIP MODEL

1.0 Introduction

Family violence stems from a failure of partnership--the loss of caring within the family, isolation from relatives and friends, and inattention or fragmented responses from service agencies. Stopping family violence requires lacing, relacing, and at times unlacing the ties within and around the family so that people who have been trapped in abusive relationships have the necessary supports, voice over their affairs, and protections to lead healthy lives free from abuse. When joined, familial commitments, neighbourly connections, and government mandates have the strength to sustain a common effort--a partnership--to prevent violence over the long term.

The Family Group Decision Making Project started from the premise that such partnerships are needed to stop family violence. Simply removing children and women to presumably safe places is not enough, although this measure may be life-saving at the time. There is no way of guaranteeing that foster homes, youth facilities, or shelters for abused women will be safe; and the reality is that children, young people, and women commonly return to the same households from which they were apprehended, were ejected, or fled. Setting oneself up in a new locale is fraught with difficulties especially when supports and resources are limited. Turning to extended family and neighbours for assistance is hindered by the dislocation, isolation, and fragmentation characterizing so many communities today.

Nevertheless, a yearning remains to return to a society in which families take care of their own. Without safeguards in place, this ideal only serves to exacerbate abuse when people are caught within bonds which confine, exploit, and enforce the conspiracy of silence. The result is to strengthen the hands of those who perpetuate the violence. The reverse is for protective services such as child welfare and police to take over; while often necessary in the short term, such intervention over time saps the capacity of the family members to make decisions based on their experiences and cultures. The result in this case is externally imposed solutions that may have little relationship to the families' needs or aspirations.

The aim of the Family Group Decision Making Project was to reduce violence by stitching `old' partners together to determine solutions, but now these `old' partners--family, kin, community, and protective services--were to assume new roles, new configurations on working together. The method for carrying out this aim was patterned on a model developed in New Zealand called "family group conferencing." In this forum, a family who was referred to the project was brought together with its extended family and other significant social supports to work out a plan to stop the abuse or neglect. To be put into effect, the plan had to be approved by the referring authority, who then assisted with its enactment. The project was called "Family Group Decision Making" in order to emphasize the family group--that is an expanded notion of family--as a decision-making body.

1.1 Implementation Report

Instituting the model of family group decision making required extensive partnership among groups who did not have a strong history of working together, a weaknesses fraught with danger in highly volatile family settings where the fall-out from the conferencing could have a profound impact on people's lives. As the principal investigators and administrators of the project, we believe that reporting the process of carrying out the project is equally important to reporting its outcomes.

This report was prepared with the intent of providing a comprehensive review of the implementation phase of the project in which family group conferencing was carried out. For those readers who would like specific guidelines on organizing and carrying out this model, we refer you to our Manual for Coordinators and Communites. An outcome report will be prepared in 1996 on the findings from the one-year follow-up study of the families who took part in conferencing as well as a comparison with two control groups. The second phase of the study is being funded by Employability and Social Parnerships (formerly National Welfare Grants), Human Resources Development Canada.

The implementation report is organized into nine chapters which cover the following:

Chapter 1:
A Partnership Model

overviews the development of the project:
- model
- sites
- funding
- administration.

Chapter 2:
Collaborative Action Research

explicates the project's research and evaluation:
- methodology
- design development
- objectives & questions
- measures & procedures
- issues.

Chapter 3:
Referrals

summarizes the project referrals:
- reasons
- sources
- policies & revisions.

Chapter 4:
Preparations

describes the participating families:
- composition
- patterns of abuse

specifies the preparatory steps for the

	conferences: • consultations & negotiations • invitations & acceptances • support & safety measures • arrangements.
Chapter 5: Openings	overviews the first phase of the conferences: • arrivals • introductions • information giving.
Chapter 6: Private Deliberations	discusses the conference processes for reaching a plan: • roles of participants • decision making • safety issues.
Chapter 7: Plans	describes the plans: • authorization • content.
Chapter 8: Costs	presents the expenditures for: • holding the conferences • initially implementing the plans.
Chapter 9: Conclusions & Recommendations	summarizes the project's: • major findings • implications for policy and practice.

1.2 Developing the Project Model

Borrowing a model from another country necessitated negotiations with public authorities and community organizations around ways of introducing the model in Canada, specifically Newfoundland and Labrador. These negotiations as well as public education took place over a period of one-and-half years before federal funding for the project commenced. During this time, a partnership of representatives from the community, government, and university worked together to formulate the project's objectives, philosophy, and intervention approach and to develop a hospitable environment in the province for testing it.

1.2.1 Context

Beginning in 1990, the authors formally and informally presented the idea of using family group conferences to individuals and groups of provincial government and community leaders. The response was one of immediate interest. Their receptivity can, in part, be attributed to the greater awareness of abuse and its effects stemming from re-opening the investigation into abuse at Mt. Cashel Orphanage. Identification of the failure of authorities to act on reports of abuse at Mt. Cashel in the early 1970s, and the subsequent, drastic increase in reports of child abuse which occurred, combined to heighten the amenability of government and non-government leaders alike to trying something new. A consensus had grown that the present approach to child abuse was not being effective in enough cases and was very expensive.

A new spirit of questioning had surfaced about some of the unintended outcomes of recent initiatives which emphasized punishment and control of offenders without offering the victims and families a say in the process. The view that victims and families were being marginalized and disempowered by a justice process which had set out to protect them and which was in turn contributing to their re-abuse had gained currency in government circles. It had come as an afterthought that many victims and families carry on in relationships with the offender after the ends of justice have been served. From experience, officials and others had learned that many family members did not want to sever contact with their relative; they simply wanted the abuse to stop.

It was in this context that the authors were given a grant by the then Director of Child Welfare in the province to prepare a proposal for funding to the federal government in order to test the model. The authors designed a collaborative action strategy to adapt for use and to evaluate the New Zealand Care and Protection Model (as distinct from utilizing the model with families of young offenders) in three culturally distinct sites in Newfoundland and Labrador.

1.2.2 Objectives

Out of the collaborative planning process, two main goals of the demonstration project were articulated. These were to evaluate the extent to which the model of Family Group Decision Making can be carried out in a manner that:

(1) responds flexibly to the conditions and cultures of various provincial regions (Inuit, rural, and urban); and

(2) builds family, community, and government partnerships that offer family members support, protection, and opportunities for participating in decision making and carrying out these plans.

1.2.3 Philosophy

During the planning phase, possibly the one most important accomplishment was formulating a statement of philosophy which then guided the designing and initiation of the project. This statement was formulated by a planning sub-committee consisting of representatives from community, government, and university. It set forth the project's stance that all family members, child and adult, ought to be secure and supported and permitted to lead lives free of abuse and coercion. The statement then affirmed the belief that survivors of family violence, along with their kin and other formal and informal helpers, can and will unite to deal responsibly with the state's requirement that the violence stop, while at the same time coming to solutions that are meaningful to them in the context of their family, community and culture.

The following conditions were thought to mediate this outcome for the family members:

(1) they must feel safe and supported enough throughout the process to communicate their views in some way to the family group;

(2) they must perceive themselves to have a credible level of involvement in decisions that affect them; and

(3) they must have access to the material and non-material resources and protection to carry out their decisions.

To create these conditions it was recognized that the conference had to address violence within the family against any of its members, not just the person who was the immediate concern of the referring agency. In particular, this meant going beyond attending to the abuse of children to encompassing the abuse of their caregivers (usually mothers). It was further asserted that abusers do not typically stop abusing unless they are forced to stop, hence, the need for the involvement of authorities in insisting that the violence be stopped. And it was recognized that punishing and/or treating the offender with only criminogenic goals in mind is not enough by itself to keep the abuse from happening again and often acts to exclude or marginalize family and community members from standing up to the abuse themselves. Thus, the emphasis was on involving family, community, and government in reaching together plans for halting the violence.

For further explication of the project's philosophy and examples of its translation into practice, the reader is referred to earlier publications by Burford and Pennell (1995, in press) and Pennell and Burford (1994, in press).

1.2.4 Intervention Approach

Although the planners drew extensively upon the New Zealand experience with family group conferencing, the project model required reshaping to fit a different legal and

service context. In New Zealand family group conferencing was a legislated process, while in Newfoundland and Labrador it was orchestrated through a series of negotiations with the crown prosecutors and protective services. These are described and discussed in this report's chapters, especially on referrals, preparations, and plans. A detailed description of the procedures and processes that were used in the project can be found in The Manual for Coordinators and Communities (Burford, Pennell, & MacLeod, Revised August 1995).

1.2.4.1 Stages

Family group decision making had four main stages: referrals, preparations, conferencing, and authorization of plans. The process began with a referral from a protective service to the project coordinator at the demonstration site. Any family in which there was confirmed violence, including child abuse or neglect, could be referred to the project so long as the referring agency could underwrite the costs of travel and support the family in carrying out any plans that the referring agency approved.

Once a family was deemed suitable for conferencing, the project coordinator approached the family members to determine if they were willing to participate in the project and in the research and evaluation. No families were turned away if they decided not to take part in the research. It was expected that in the meantime police, or other people who were authorized by law, would continue to take measures to provide immediate safety for persons in the family as was required. No expectation was made that a referral to the project was a delegation of authority to do anything other than contact the family members to ascertain whether or not it was feasible and agreeable to convene a family conference.

After gaining consent, the job of coordinator was to direct the planning for the conference with input from referring authorities and family members at each step, facilitate the holding of the conference, record in writing the plan, and ensure that a specific plan for reviewing the progress of the plan was set in place. The coordinator as needed consulted with advisors specifically selected in each community for this purpose.

In preparation for the conference, the coordinator developed an invitation list with the family members and contacted relatives, friends, and involved professionals to secure their participation in the conference. During this stage, the coordinator consulted closely with participants in order to make the necessary arrangements for their attending and for protecting their safety.

At the beginning of the conference, information about the family and the abuse was placed before the group by the referring worker, usually the child welfare worker but at times the police, parole officers, or probation workers. Information about relevant options and services available to the family was presented by the coordinator or others who were invited for this purpose. Once the family had the necessary information, the professionals including the coordinator left the room. This allowed the family group to deliberate in private and develop its own plan without the interventions, or one could say interference, of non-family group members.

When the family group completed its plan, the coordinator was asked to return; and at this time, the coordinator reviewed the plan with the family to ensure that it was clear and practical, contained adequate measures for protecting survivors of abuse, and included a system for monitoring and evaluating the enactment of the plan. If the coordinator was in agreement with the family's decision or if there was no objection, then the referring worker was asked to authorize the plan including providing requested resources. In cases where the community lacked the necessary services for carrying out the plan, the project coordinator along with community and agency representatives were to be involved in finding and/or assisting in developing needed services locally.

1.2.4.2 Safety Measures

Special care was to be given to the safety of all family members. Where the offender would live prior to the conference was to be handled in much the same way that it would normally be handled. It was expected that in some instances the involved authorities or even a family member would have taken steps to obtain restraining orders or protective measures including the possibility that the abuser would be in jail at the time of the referral. In many situations, it was anticipated that the abuser would be living in the home, which is often the case anyway. The involved authorities were not to delegate or relegate their responsibilities to the coordinator, and it was expected that they would remain vigilant while the process was underway.

The interests of the child and any other abused person in the family were to remain paramount throughout the process. This project was undertaken with the understanding that there would at times be competing and possibly conflicting interests evident throughout the process. Staff and volunteers participating in the demonstration project were reminded that there is no such thing as an absolute guarantee of safety for victims and this applies to children whether they are at home or in the care of the state. It was emphasized that expectations could not be put onto families that demanded perfection and that the project would seek to achieve a "good enough" outcome for the families and that "optimal" or "fail-safe" models have not yet materialized. It was further noted that the use of the model in the demonstration project contained more checks and balances than did the present system of child protection.

It was made clear to staff that the province had a mandatory child abuse reporting law, and this fact was to be pointed out to family members participating in the project. If abuse which was not made known as part of the referral surfaced or if abuse continued, the appropriate authorities were to be informed. It was expected that in cases where there was a lack of evidence to charge, that offenders might well come to the conference minimizing or denying the allegations. It was understood that this had happened in some conferences in New Zealand. To reduce the likelihood that an offender's denial and blaming could turn the family against a survivor during the family's private deliberation time, support persons were to accompany survivors to the conference to lend emotional support and monitor their safety. Coordinators were asked to encourage abused adults to select a support person and to ensure that each child victim had a support person with the coordinator having final

say over the selection of that person. The phrase "take the kid and take the door" was sloganized to inform the children's support persons of their role if this ever occurred.

1.2.4.3 Distinctive Roles of Participants

It was hypothesized that a key to the success of this model was to combine confrontation by the criminal justice and/or protective services systems with participative models of extended family and community involvement. An important dimension in this model is found in the differences in the roles played by various actors. Unlike some models of interagency and interdisciplinary cooperation in child protection which tend to make the roles of the various players converge until they become interchangeable, the intent in this project was to highlight the differences. This was based on the assumption that each participant had something important to offer and that a complete understanding of the issues and the development of a plan were dependent upon each of these perspectives being made available.

The coordinator was to make sure that everyone's voice was heard and understood. The child welfare worker was to make sure that the effect or potential effect of the abuse on the child(ren) was clearly understood and to carry out the mandate of the child protection legislation. The main concern of the police and the prosecution was the protection of the community including family members and with criminal investigation including what to recommend at the time of sentencing when criminal charges had been pursued. The parole and probation officers were to ensure that the offenders would not recommit offences and harm the community.

Given the emphasis on retaining mandated roles, none of the deliberations precluded the crown prosecutor from pursuing criminal charges if that was deemed necessary and in the best interest of the victim or the community. It was expected that the fact of having attended a family group conference might be brought up at the time of sentencing; but such an eventuality in no way was meant to forestall, adjourn, or gain a stay of proceedings on any charges.

In all deliberations, it was emphasized that the safety of the members of the family who had been abused or were at risk for abuse was paramount. It was expected that a child welfare worker, parole officer, or whoever was the mandatory authority would remain involved with the person making the allegation or who was otherwise the target of the violence and would continue to monitor the situation during the planning process. At the same time, it was expected that great care would be exercised to ensure that the professionals did not "take over" the decision-making process and corrupt the family's capacity to come to a decision.

A key assumption stressed throughout the project was that families were more likely to "own" the decisions they made, thereby increasing their commitment to carrying out plans and in initiating changes to those plans when decisions were not being implemented. The plans were expected to be shaped around family involvement in monitoring their own situations in ways that were agreed to at the conference. Because families, child welfare

authorities, and police were to be involved in approving the plans, it was anticipated that this would emphasize to the family the requirement that monitoring outcomes be built into the plans. In effect, a program of community policing was expected to emerge at each project site in which family members consented to safeguard each other with the support and protection of the police and other authorities.

1.3 Inviting Project Sites

Recognizing that any model does not work the same way in all communities, it was decided to test the model in three locales, differing in culture, population, and region. Drawing lines between the three project sites forms a triangle encompassing the province which has a small population of half a million for its relatively large land mass of over 156,000 square miles. In this triangle, the first site Nain is the top point and in the province is the most northerly settlement; it is situated along the Labrador coast close to the 56th parallel and is the home of approximately 1,100 people predominately of Inuit descent. On the west end of the Island of Newfoundland is the Port au Port Peninsula, a region of the province that pokes out into the Gulf of St. Lawrence and has a population of over 7,000 dispersed into a series of small communities spread out along the peninsula. Here people are mainly of English, French, and Micmac ancestry. The most easterly point in the triangle is St. John's, the provincial capitol with a population of under 100,000 within the city limits and 250,000 if the environs are included; the area was largely settled by immigrants from Britain and Ireland.

1.3.1 Reasons for Selection

By including Inuit, rural, and urban sites, it was possible to test two common assumptions about family group conferencing. These are that, first, it only works with aborginal people whose traditions support this way of making decisions and, second, it only works in rural areas where people have closer bonds. The first presumption came up repeatedly during the developmental phase for the proposal and had to do with the origins of the family group conference model itself. Many people believed that it was being used in New Zealand only with Maori families; that it would be wrong to expect families of European ancestry to respond to the invitation to come together around issues like family violence; and that this was something indigenous families had done traditionally but white families had not. Our response to these questions was that the model was being used with families of all ethnic backgrounds in New Zealand and that the philosophy was quite consistent with the traditional expectations of European families to pull together with kin in times of crisis. Moreover, the assumption that all aboriginal cultures had traditionally worked in this way, or that they still had closer ties to extended family that would somehow make it easier for them to embrace this model, may be based on false assumptions about community and tribal connections and inter-connections not to mention the effects of cultural assimilation.

The second assumption that the model could not work in an urban setting may have been, in part, a function of its testing in Newfoundland and Labrador, a province viewed as primarily rural. It was important to note that the model was carried out in all areas of New

Zealand including the city of Aukland and in our project in St. John's, the provincial capitol and business centre.

1.3.2 Agreement to Participate

From the outset of the project, the intention was to use a community development approach in order to adapt the model with sensitivity to the culture and particular requirements of each community. This started with the site selection process where advice was sought from key informants including formal and informal community leaders and those who had an established reputation in local "anti-violence" efforts. Representatives from the communities were given final say over the selection of their community as a site for the demonstration; and in all three consultations evidence pointed to communities who wanted to address the problem of family violence.

The principal investigators conferred with community representatives as well as child welfare and police divisions in each of the sites to determine whether or not they were interested in participating in the demonstration project. Their understanding of the communities was deepened through staying in the homes of local residents in Nain and on the Port au Port Peninsula (and for Joan also the convent) who gave a warm reception and recounted histories of their community. In each community, key contacts organized, hosted, and facilitated community forums to discuss the project, and in these sessions, agreement was reached to participate. In addition for the Nain site, the principal investigators were asked to present the research proposal to the Labrador Inuit Association Health Sub-committee.

1.3.3 Nain

Nain is a community of Inuit as well as settlers of European and Inuit descent and is on the coast of Labrador, the mainland portion of the Province of Newfoundland. Thirty-five miles from the mining exploration site at Voisey Bay, Nain is the furthest north of the permanent settlements. It is somewhat protected in its natural state by virtue of the fact that it cannot be reached by road and ice prevents access by boat for much of the year although travel by ski-doo on the ice during the winter has replaced dog sleds greatly increasing the mobility of all coastal residents. To the outsider, the climate along the 56th parallel can be perceived as quite harsh but to the families of Inuit and settlers who have lived there for generations, the elements are part of daily life where the land and the sea, and the cycle of the seasons are closely interwoven to their existence.

Historically, Northern Labradorians were self-reliant and lived by hunting, fishing, and trapping; by 1980 Nain residents continued these traditional pursuits but also depended for their livelihood on waged labour (31%) and transfer payments (27%) (Usher, 1980). According to Social Service statistics in 1985, 30-40% of the people in Nain received social assistance and this group were almost entirely Inuit, in large part because of their greater family size (Brice-Bennett, 1986). As elsewhere in the province, the declining fish stocks had adversely affected employment as well as entitlements to Unemployment Insurance payments. The current mining explorations, however, have

increased the traffic in an out of Nain and changes to the community over the next few years of development are expected to be considerable.

The community was particularly concerned about the well-being of children and young people. According to the January 1994 Town of Nain population count, over 40 percent (475) of the population was under 18 years of age and, thus, the ratio of dependents to productive adults was high. It should be noted that the mortality rate due to accidental deaths was greater than that for aboriginal groups nationally, that many families lacked plumbing and sewage and suffered from overcrowded housing (Town Council of Nain, 1993), and that rates of substance abuse were high. Very few young people graduated from high school and unemployment was high. Many young people had not experienced living on the land and this interfered with their learning traditional skills including language. These same young people were prepared neither for the world of work nor for traditional ways of living off the land. Worse, their spiritual connection to the land was severed. Large numbers of young women dropped out school early because of pregnancy, and many young men entered the correctional system.

The elders had become gravely concerned about the lack of communication between the older and younger members of the community. In particular, the elders spoke of young people losing their sense of spirituality as the ceremonies regarding various now-defunct activities could no longer be observed. Through various educational programs, the community was struggling to re-instil knowledge and validation of Inuit culture.

The anomie was evident in the extremely high levels of suicide, over three times greater than the national aboriginal rate and seventeen times greater than the national average for young people (Brice-Bennett, 1986). For the period from July 1, 1991 to September 30, 1992, the RCMP reported 40 suicide attempts and 3 completed suicides. The majority of these were committed by young people between the ages of 14 and 25 years. The rate continued to rise with 5 more attempts reported in one week alone of November 1992 (Community Leaders' Dialogue Presentation to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 30 November 1992).

Suicide is commonly associated with either a history of or ongoing family violence (Pauktuutit, 1991; Sinclair, 1985; Stark, 1992) and such is particularly the case for native youth (National Task Force on Suicide in Canada, 1989). At a national level, the Inuit Women's Association, Pauktuutit, has raised awareness within the Inuit community of child and women abuse through its various monographs and newsletter. Similarly, the Labrador Inuit Health Commission's (LIHC) Needs Assessment of Family Violence Services and Programs for the Inuit of Labrador (Kemuksigak, 1992) highlights the need for action to counter abuse. Its findings reveal that the official statistics on abuse are far too low. According to the Department of Social Services' files, in Nain the cases of spousal assault numbered 54 from April 1991 to March 1992; and the RCMP had as its annual average for 1989-1991, 20 charges of partner assault and 5 charges of sexual assault of individuals under 18. On the basis of interviews with 71 members of Labrador Inuit communities, the LIHC determined that the "majority of people thought family violence was a problem in the communities" and one interviewee explained, "People come to think of family violence as

normal because that's what they see all around them. Family violence is `the norm' for Nain. It happens in the majority of homes" (p. 12). And another interviewee recognized the interconnection between the mother and her child's safety: "When a woman is abused - she can't be a mother - she can't look after herself let alone the children. This can cause neglect" (p. 14).

The LIHC's needs assessment further found that little or no help is available to the abused children, battered women, and abusing men. The professionals in the Inuit communities are few, preoccupied with high workloads, and often untrained in counselling. The women's group in Nain consists of seven members and, thus, is limited in the support it can offer. And the traditional helpers, the elders, are used less frequently today and, moreover, the women are hesitant to disclose abuse to them. The LIHC report stresses that "programs to help lessen family violence have to be community based or they just will not work" (p. 33). The LIHC and its parent body, the Labrador Inuit Association (LIA), however, point out that aboriginal groups are limited in developing culturally-sensitive social programming in general because of the 1949 terms of confederation bringing Newfoundland into Canada. Unlike other aboriginal groups in Canada, they have been prevented from directly accessing federal funding. Despite these constraints, the community of Nain has developed some important organizations for spearheading change.

Given these socio-economic patterns, the community of Nain was asked to participate in the project for the following reasons. First, it was an indigenous community and suffered from many of the same problems as other coastal native communities. Second, it had various indicators that it would be open to participating in the project. It had a larger population than the other Labrador coastal communities and one that was mixed in terms of ancestry; and, thus, it was likely to be relatively open to trying innovations. And in fact, it had engaged in a range of interventions in the past. Third, it had developed its local leadership and crucial Inuit organizations, including the Labrador Inuit Association repesenting membership's interests, Nain Women's Group operating a daycare and women's centre, OKalaKatiget Society producing and communicating Inuit programming by radio and television, and the Torngasok Cultural Centre providing cultural and language programs. The Town Council was very active and reflected the population's cultures. There were also within the community important supports for the project. Social Services and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) were based within Nain as well as a nursing station, LIHC representatives, school guidance counsellors, a substance-abuse program, probation officer, and a Moravian pastor. Moreover, they had formed inter-agency committees to resolve common concerns (e.g., Crime Prevention Committee which among other matters was addressing family violence).

These expectations were confirmed during Joan's visit to the community November 23-25, 1992, when she met with representatives of the Inuit and professional communities, including child welfare and RCMP. The professional groups agreed that they supported the project but left the decision to participate with the Inuit community. At the meeting with the Church Elders and Nain Women's Group, an Inuktitut-English translator was present and consensus was reached to participate in the project. The elders stated that they saw the

project as a way of returning to the old ways in which the family, rather than the Department of Social Services, made the decisions over their children.

The Labrador Inuit Association later requested that Gale and Joan meet with its Health Sub-Committee on February 17, 1994. This group included representatives from different Inuit coastal communities as well as the LIHC. During this meeting with Inuktitut-English translation, the group overviewed past problems with other university researchers, in particular, their misuse of quotations, invidious comparisons of Inuit with non-Inuit, removal of information from the communities without providing any reports in return, and failure to acknowledge the contributions of local organizations and persons to the research. At this meeting unanimity was reached on continuing to proceed with the project and the research. It was further agreed that principal investigators would submit copies of their reports reporting about Nain to the LIHC for comment prior to publication.

The Port au Port Peninsula is on the west coast of the island of Newfoundland and juts into the Gulf of St. Lawrence. It is a rural area in the Bay St. George region, and has a population of over 7,000 dispersed across a number of small communities. While overwhelmingly white, the peninsula evinces some cultural variation. The Port au Port peninsula has two francophone communities and is the province's only officially bilingual region. In addition, some Micmac groups are becoming more visible today as they overcome historic devaluation of their heritage and press for various entitlements. One of the communities, Port au Port East, now has a Chief and band council.

At the time of the project planning, the Port au Port Peninsula faced many of the same socio-economic problems occuring in Nain, and was beginning to evince many of the same strengths of organizing to surmount these difficulties. The peninsula was relatively isolated geographically and culturally from the rest of the province. Of incorporated communities in Canada in 1993, the Port au Port had the second lowest family income (Government of Newfoundland, 1995, October). Educational levels were well below norms within the province and nationally. Statistics Canada reported in 1986 that in the area 42.7% of adults had not obtained a grade 9 education and an additional 32.8% lacked a high school diploma. Similarly a 1992 survey of 2,400 residents on the peninsula (Hall, LeRoy, & Fenwick, 1992) found that 40% had lower than a grade 9 education, another 40% had between a grade 9 to grade 11 edcuation, and 20% had finished high school. High rates of pregnancy among young women contributed to the low educational levels.

The main occupation was labourer, commonly in make-work projects; the other common jobs were fishing, logging, fish processing, and carpentry. The region had extensive unemployment or underemployment, exacerbated by the depletion of fish stocks. As a consequence, there had been a steady out-migration of young people to other parts of the province or mainland Canada. A recent expansion of oil exploration in this coastal area, however, may bode well for future employment prospects.

A needs assessment by the Bay St. George Coalition to End Violence (Bella & Lanier, 1992) documented the prevalence of family violence. On the peninsula from January 1991 to September 1992, the local RCMP detachment recorded 63 sexual

assaults and 126 common assaults. The local Department of Social Services office had 21 alleged child protection cases in which 14 concerned sexual abuse and 4 concerned physical abuse, and 65 established child welfare cases, of which 13 involved sexual abuse and 6 involved physical abuse. Bay St. George probation statistics revealed that 83 (37%) of the 230 adults on probation had been convicted of assault and over half of these for wife assault. Although only one portion of the region, the Port au Port Peninsula contributed to probation caseload at the time of the survey 12 out of 35 individuals convicted of wife assault and 10 out of 25 individuals convicted of sexual offenses. In interviews with various professional and community representatives, the assessment team found that the "lack of opportunity," "isolation," "alcohol and drug abuse," and "traditional family structure" were regarded as promoting family violence in the region (Bella & Lanier, 1992, p. 3). They further explained that "the male household head had been seen by many as having the right to control and discipline his family by whatever means he chooses - including sexual and physical abuse. . . . A village may have been settled by a single family group, so people are related. As family members, therefore, all have been bound to keep the secret" (p. 3).

Services addressing family violence were limited. Social Service workers had very large caseloads and could provide little more than crisis intervention and mandatory child protection services. Moreover, services were primarily located in Stephenville, a town off the peninsula. Victims often hesitated to disclose abuse because they wished to avoid the court system. As the needs assessment report explains:

> The absence of a `family court' in this part of the province; the public nature of the court process (even when the court requires names not be published the names go round in a small community); the long delays between initial complaint and final hearings; the lack of specific provisions for children (informal settings, specially trained judges, videotaped statements, the use of screen, etc); and the emphasis on an `adversarial' process rather than mediation and problem solving (pp. 7-8).

The Port au Port Peninsula was selected for the project for the following reasons. First, it is a rural area with a somewhat culturally diversified population. Second, the peninsula had limited services but a growing desire to act to end family violence. Some well-publicized and recent cases of sexual offenses and family violence had galvanized awareness of abuse in both the anglophone and francophone communities. Third, community organizations had been forming to develop communication linkages and joint action strategies to address a full spectrum of problems. Besides the Bay St. George Coalition to End Violence, a notable example was the Port au Port Community Education Initiative that sought to elevate educational levels through a holistic strategy addressing simultaneously academic, social, and economic needs (Case, 1991).

November 12-13, 1992, Joan visited the Port au Port peninsula to explain the Family Group Decision Making (FGD) Project and determine if the community wished to participate. At a large public forum, she met with a broad-range of representatives of community organizations (including students) as well as Social Services and RCMP, and

they agreed to participate. They stated that they found the FGD model in line with their general initiatives to develop the region through a community-based approach. Recognizing the need to advance the profile of the project, various community participants took the initiative in organizing return visits for Joan (including finding her donated space on a local airline!). In April of 1993, she was invited to follow up the earlier visit with workshops at the local high school to dialogue with young people and (separately) with mothers. During these sessions, young people were generally favourable about the model but raised some cautions. Their comments included "people will come to the conference because they care about their families," "[it's a] way to put the male abuser on the spot," and "people will feel too ashamed to talk with their family about family violence." At this time, she also discussed the project with educators, police, social services, probation, Catholic father and sisters, and counsellors. Later in September 1993, Joan was invited to present the model on the west coast of the island at a regional consultation attended by lay people and professionals helping to develop a provincial strategy for stopping violence.

1.3.4 St. John's

The capitol and largest city in the province, St. John's, is located on the easternmost land mass of the North American continent. Emerging from its roots as a fishing community and territorial administrative centre situated around a natural deep-water harbour, the city has begun to take on certain of the problems which have beleaguered most urban areas in the country. As virtually the only administrative centre in the province the political and social realities in the city frequently collide with the interests of people in other parts of the province.

Problems of unemployment throughout the province attract people from rural communities to the city in the hope that jobs will be easier to find. This has contributed to a rapid rate of growth in the city. Other than this, St. John's has a low in-migration rate of growth. There are no substantial ethnic communities as are seen in other urban areas in Canada. Ninety-five percent of the population continues to be of Irish/British descent although small groups of people are attracted to St. John's by the university and other professional jobs.

Despite the increases in population in and around St. John's, the urban core of the city has seen a rate of depopulation which is greater per capita than any other urban centre in Canada. On the other hand, St. John's has more public housing per capita and more under occupied housing than counterparts in the rest the country. Despite this, rental properties in St. John's remain relatively limited due in part to the greater proportion of public housing.

Newfoundland/Labrador and particularly St. John's consistently evidence among the highest rates of unemployment and associated problems in the country (Government of Newfoundland, 1995, October). While the belief that informal supports and kin networks work to the advantage of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, little doubt exists that the formal network of services remains weak and underdeveloped. The province simply did not

experience the same surge in the development of services witnessed in other urban areas in the 1960s and 1970s. The prospect of cuts in service over the coming months are confounded by the escalating rates of unemployment due to the simultaneous fishery crisis and the lowering of transfer payments to the province. These trends are expected to result in reductions to basic services comparable only to those that will occur in other rural parts of the country characterized by fragile and marginalized economies.

The impact of two inquiries in the late 1980s into abuses of children by persons in positions of trust and authority was particularly felt in St. John's (Hughes, 1991; Winter, et al., 1990). The prosecution of well-known members of the clergy and the finding by a Royal Commission that the provincial justice department had covered up accusations of abuse at the Mt. Cashel Orphanage in the early 1970s have had far-reaching, if not yet fully understood, effects.

St. John's was selected for several reasons. From the beginning, we wanted to test the model in rural, urban and native communities. St. John's is the largest city in Newfoundland by a considerable margin. Additionally, being the seat of government and the administrative centre of the province, all the head offices of Justice and Social Services are located there. Most of our contacts in the community and in government were in St. John's at the start of the planning process. It was in St. John's that the consultation process with government and community representatives was first begun giving this group the longest period of time to consider the model and to agree to participate. And finally, the Mt. Cashel investigations had shaken the faith in old practices and loosened thinking approaches to stopping violence.

In St. John's the negotiations began the most informally with Gale discussing his study of family group conferencing in New Zealand with various government officials and community activists. By early 1992, these sessions became more formalized with the Director of Child Welfare calling meetings for Gale and Joan to discuss the model on February 10, 1992 with senior bureaucrats in Social Services and Justice and later on April 21, 1992 with community workers (including women's advocates, children's counsellors, male abuse workers) as well police, prosecutors, and child welfare. At both sessions, interest in proceeding with the project was expressed, and the same response was received from a meeting with the Women's Policy Office. To promote wider public discussion of the model, further meetings were held. These included Joan meeting with the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women and with the St. John's Parents' Rights Group (for parents who children had been placed in care) and presenting the model at the May 1993 conference of the Provincial Association Against Family Violence; and Gale and Joan presenting the project at a March 1993 Memorial University social work colloquium attended by numerous community- and government-based workers.

1.4 Securing Joint Funding

Alongside the consultations with the invited project sites, negotiations were proceeding for project funding. Reflecting the partnership model, moneys and resources were eventually obtained from six federal departments, three provincial departments,

Memorial University of Newfoundland, and for Nain the Labrador Inuit Health Commission. The multiple funding sources made it possible to carry out the project in three sites and to conduct the research and evaluation. In addition, to such monetary resources the project relied extensively on the support provided by numerous community organizations at the three project sites.

1.4.1 Impact on Project Schedule

With the assistance of a seed grant from the Director of Child Welfare, Joan and Gale developed a proposal for Family Violence Initiative funding submitted to three federal departments, Health (formerly Health and Welfare), Justice, and Solicitor General. The initial plan was for a two-year project beginning in April 1993 and ending in March 1995 when the Family Violence Initiative was to terminate. Approval of funding from these three departments, however, was delayed because of major changes at the federal level, including the election of a new government; and did not become available until September 1993, with the project shortened by half a year. Moreover, uncertainties around funding impeded advance development of the project sites such as recruiting staff. As a result, the project schedule had to be revised with the fall and early winter of 1993-94 devoted to start-up activities and securing referrals, and the holding of family group conferences confined to February 1994 through March 1995, with the exception of Nain where the LIHC funded continuation of the project for a further two months.

1.4.2 Cost Sharing

Through the contribution agreement the federal government supplied funding for salaries for site coordinators and researchers, central administrative support, and operating expenses. The provincial Department of Social Services provided office space at two of the sites, office supplies at all three, and donation of some teleconferencing time. Memorial University approved space for the administrative support personnel and sabbaticals for the two principal investigators.

In addition to these operational costs, the project required support for implementing the conferences. Organizations referring families to the project were required to underwrite such costs of travel as were required to bring the families together for the conference, to give final approval to the plans the family came up with, and to assist families, when assistance was needed, with the costs of carrying out the family's decisions. In particular, the provincial Department of Social Services made a substantial and unprecedented commitment to the project by providing written guidelines to guide their staff in clearly and quickly responding to plans developed by a family. In addition to sending a firm message of support for the project, the guidelines set out three very important procedures:

(1) dollar amounts that could be authorized by the referring child welfare worker for travel and outcomes costs for a family without the worker having to seek supervisory approval;

(2) written guarantee of quick turnaround time on requests for amounts greater than those that could be approved on-the-spot by their workers; and

(3) a formula for pooling monies between families with similar needs as expressed in their plans, to aid in helping the host communities set up services needed by more than one family if that service was not available locally.

The guidelines were expected to facilitate the giving of clear and quick answers to coordinators and families' requests in planning the conference and quickly responding to carrying out the results. As reported later, the first two guidelines were used to good effect; however, the third guideline was not utilized because the short demonstration period precluded such service initiatives.

Because the Department of Social Services made such a substantial contribution and commitment to the model, it was expected that most referrals would come from their child protection workers who were authorized to allocate resources to the families. It was a goal of the project to enlist other agencies in the province who already allocated money through interventions into family violence to test the model on a small number of their families. This would enable each of the major players to examine and work to overcome, on a case-by-case basis, obstacles to inter-organizational cooperation in order to evaluate the potential for integration of this model as an ongoing service. It was understood at the time that this was a tall order since agencies did not have a history of cooperatively allocating their resources around a family despite the fact that more than one agency was often involved with the same family.

Specifically, it was hoped that Correctional Services of Canada (parole) and the Adult Corrections Division of Justice (probation and victim services) would be willing to engage in this kind of problem-solving at some time during the life of the demonstration project if only to explore the barriers to using a family's plan as the integrating feature of their efforts. Towards the end of the demonstration project, Correctional Services of Canada was successful in securing Family Violence Initiative dollars for such a test. The same never became a reality for Probation.

1.5 Starting the Project

With the arrival of federal funding, the project formally commenced at each project site in the fall of 1993. Building on the earlier community work, the start-up period continued to widen and deepen local input into and ownership over the project. This was accomplished through community development work fostering local involvement in project administration, staffing, and training. In Nain, two community facilitators helped to promote this process.

1.5.1 Administration

To guide the total project, a voluntary advisory board called the Provincial Protocol Committee was formed of the two university-based principal investigators, community representatives from each project site, and representatives of government departments and provincial organizations (see back of front cover for names). The Committee conferred by teleconference on a quarterly basis to formulate, review, and, where necessary, revise project protocols; to check that project protocols are appropriate for each of the sites; to coordinate project protocols with those of other involved institutions or agencies; to ensure coordination on a provincial level among organizations and government departments represented; and to overview evaluative data from the project.

The principal investigators were directly accountable to the federal funding bodies and were responsible for the overall management of the demonstration project and its evaluation. Under the supervision of the principal investigators, a part-time administrative staff specialist was responsible for maintaining financial accounts for the entire project and a part-time secretary provided services.

At each project site, a Local Advisory Committee was composed of community activists and professional persons. Its membership evolved out of the initial consultations where individuals were identified as important to invite by persons who had already been consulted. This "snowballed" into the formation of local groups that were thought to be both representative of local needs and interests including people who wanted to do something about family violence. The role of the Local Advisory Committee was to shape the project model to fit the local context; participate in hiring, training, and guiding the project site employees; facilitate securement of community resources and support; and advise the principal investigators on creating and implementing a contextually sensitive study design.

In addition, independent Community Panels were formed to provide consultation to local project staff. With the permission of families referred to the project, the coordinator and researcher consulted on their approach to working with specific families. Panel members were also local people thereby further involving the community in the administration of the project locally. In Nain, the advisory elected not to have a separate panel. The health advisor for the LIHC was paid to consult with the coordinator on a family-specific basis instead.

In Nain, the project was housed in the same building as the LIHC. This was in keeping with the recommendation of the Local Advisory Committee that the legitimacy and trustworthiness of the project in the community's eyes would be enhanced by associating it with the LIHC for administrative purposes. In the summer and fall of 1993, community participation in developing the project in Nain was enhanced through the work of two experienced community facilitators, Sharon Taylor and Tony Williamson. They used a variety of community development approaches including participatory video to foster collaborative planning concerning the introduction of the project (see Appendix A for a detailed account of their work and findings).

1.5.2 Staffing

At each project site, a coordinator was hired in the fall of 1993 and a researcher early in 1994. Site staff were chosen from among those with knowledge and experience in the community. It was expected that people selected by the local hiring committees would have an awareness of the families' concerns and perspectives and an understanding of regional dialects or languages and that their involvement would be less intrusive than that of individuals from outside of the community. Furthermore, the employment of local people would provide some job opportunities in areas where economic strain typically results in tension when "outsiders" are bought in to fill jobs.

The coordinators were responsible for organizing and facilitating family group sessions, seeking consultation from the Community Panel, and assisting the principal investigators in the design and implementation of the study. In addition, the coordinators were expected to serve as liaison with the Local Advisory Group, maintain a working relationship with investigatory and referral bodies, find and develop methods to access professional advice and local support services, maintain the site facility, and account for expenses incurred in facilitating the conferences (e.g., coffee for the participants).

The researchers were responsible for collecting data for the evaluation of the project at the local site. This included observing conferences, interviewing participants, and completing research forms. The researcher were expected to consult with the coordinator, Local Advisory Committee, and Community Panel on the conduct of their work; and to provide advice to the principal investigators on culturally appropriate research/evaluation approaches in their region. At the conclusion of conferencing in March 1995, the researchers continued with the project to gather data for the one-year follow-up study.

The site staff were members of the project management team and met regularly by teleconference with the project directors and the other staff. The group was joined by social work students who were completing their field requirements with the project. The teleconferences gave the team the opportunity to provide updates, share strategies, make joint decisions on procedures, and build mutual support.

1.5.3 Training

In November 1993, three trainers were brought from New Zealand: two coordinators (one Maori and the other of European descent) and one researcher. Paid time-off for these visitors was given courtesy of their Department of Social Welfare and the Office of the Commissioner for Children and other costs were handled through a grant from the Canadian Employment and Immigration Commission. Two of the trainers travelled to Nain and the Port au Port Peninsula while all three provided lectures, training and consultation on the research design in St. John's.

In order to build community knowledge of the project, the training was aimed at a very broad audience of persons who were to be involved in the project, including managers and practitioners from Children's Protective Services, Correctional Services of Canada,

Adult Corrections, the police, and numerous non-governmental organizations, community leaders, and young people. The community representatives included in Nain the Church Elders and Women's Group, on the Port au Port Peninsula the Francophone Federation and Roman Catholic Parish clergy, and in St. John's the shelter for abused women and university students.

The training program offered participants the necessary information so that they could engage in the process of shaping the project to fit their community. The training oriented them as to how to carry out their roles, to inform others about the project, and to rethink the project as necessary to be congruent with their cultures. Connections were made across the three sites by bringing some participants from Nain and the Port au Port Peninsula to other sites' training workshops. This served to raise local participants' awareness that the project was being carried out in diverse locations and that each site could learn from the experiences and initiatives of other participating communities.

Following up these training workshops, the principal investigators remained in contact with the project sites over the winter of 1994. This included a visit to Labrador in January/February with meetings scheduled with project staff, Advisory Committee members, Social Services, RCMP, LIHC, and LIA; a visit to the Port au Port Peninsula in February with meetings held with project staff, Advisory Committee members, Social Services, RCMP, and the Bay St. George's Women's Centre; and a meeting with the St. John's advisory committee in April 1994 as well as more informal contacts with involved organizations and staff.

1.6 Summary

The intent of the project was to tap into the strengths of the involved communities and to develop cooperative practices among a host of participants. It was recognized that an effective effort to stop family violence needed to lace together the long-term experience and commitments of family for staying by its own, the local knowledge and accessibility of community organizations for working with residents, and the resources and authority of protective services for enforcing public standards. This model of partnership guided the development of the project from the designing of the intervention to the selection of sites to the sharing of costs to the administration of the project. The report next turns to the collaborative action research approach employed and stresses how it, in turn, advanced the model of partnership.

COLLABORATIVE ACTION RESEARCH

2.0 Introduction

Congruent with a partnership-building model of intervention, the study employed a collaborative action approach to evaluation and research. The intent was (a) to involve a wide spectrum of project participants in the study's design, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination; (b) to keep the study relevant to their concerns and appropriate to local conditions and cultures; and (c) to sustain a commitment to effecting change. This chapter summarizes the research/evaluation methodology and its development, objectives, questions, sample, and procedures, and concludes with a discussion of the reliability and validity of this research approach.

2.1 Collaborative Action Methodology

In collaborative action research, the research participants take part in studying their own problems in order to find resolutions to them: collectively they define their issues, figure out solutions to them, test these strategies, analyze their results, and through this process of "learning by doing," create knowledge that is useful and open to revision (see Friedmann, 1987; Whyte, 1991). When people who have not normally taken part in policy making are included as active participants, the research has the potential to advance new insights (Maguire, 1987); and when these people work together with policy makers, the cooperation can lead to the design and implementation of new practices (Stull & Schensul, 1987).

The preceding chapter laid out this collaborative action or partnership approach to developing the project and carrying out the family group conferences. As previously described, community organizations and government departments worked with the two principal investigators to formulate the project's philosophy, service protocols, site selection, and organizational and funding structure. The family group conferences were designed so as to invite family members and their social networks to undertake a collective study in order to arrest further family violence. This chapter describes the procedures used for documenting and analyzing the participation and views of family, community, and government at each stage of implementing the family group conferences. As true of other project aspects, these procedures were developed and undertaken in a collaborative manner and with a direct impact on action.

2.2 Development of Research Design

The study was designed by involving a range of project participants as well as external consultants. The research procedures were not set from the outset of the project; instead they were developed in a sequential manner by drawing upon the learning from earlier phases of the project. Moreover, procedures were revamped on the basis of feedback from participating families, community representatives, professionals, and project staff.

The principal investigators undertook the initial development of the research instruments, and consulted with researchers in New Zealand, Britain, Canada, and the United States. The drafted instruments were then sent for review by the local advisory committees, community panels, and project staff, and reformulated to fit the local cultures. Particularly in the case of abuse measurements and referral forms, counsel was sought from the Crown Prosecutor's Office as well as from the referring agencies, the Department of Social Services and Correctional Services Canada.

Workshops were held on two occasions (March 1994 and June/July 1994) with staff from the three sites to provide training on the research instruments and to amend them as necessary to be congruent with the cultures of their regions. During monthly teleconferences with project staff, research forms were discussed and at times decisions were reached on their revision. The project staff provided input from families which was then used to reformulate questions.

All forms were examined by and received the approval of Memorial University's School of Social Work Human Subject Review Committee; the same applied to all revisions. As discussed in the prior chapter, the overall research protocols were reviewed by the Labrador Inuit Association's (LIA) Health Sub-Committee and an agreement was reached on terms for the participation of the Nain site in the research. These included that the Labrador Inuit Health Commission (under the LIA) would be given the opportunity to review and comment on publications concerning the Nain site. In general, the procedures adhered to the Canadian Universities for Northern Studies' (1982) Ethical Principles for the Conduct of Research in the North.

2.3 Implementation and Outcome Evaluation

The evaluation was designed so as to collect information on the implementation of the project and its outcomes. It was assumed that the impact of family group decision making could not be established unless its "degree of implementation" (Scheirer & Rezmovic, 1983), that is the extent to which it was carried out, was first determined. This report is primarily devoted to covering findings from the implementation evaluation; another report on outcome findings will be issued after concluding the follow-up interviews at the end of March of 1996. In order to provide an overall picture of the evaluation, two tables are included below: Table 2.1 outlines the implementation phase, and Table 2.2 covers the outcome study.

As shown in Table 2.1, the implementation evaluation is concerned about the achievement of two main objectives: (a) the responsiveness of the model to regional differences, and (b) its capacity to put it into effect a family-community-government partnership on stopping family violence. The implementation review encompasses the referral and preparatory steps for conferences, the processes transpiring during conferences, and the components of plans developed at conferences as well as their authorization and initial financing. Because the sharing of costs is seen as important

aspect of carrying out a partnership model, this implementation report includes within its purview the early costs for carrying out the plans. For each of these phases, data were collected from a range of sources through various research instruments.

Table 2.1
Implementation Study Objectives, Conference Phases, Evaluation Questions, and Data Sources

IMPLEMEN-TATION EVALUATION	OBJECTIVES: to evaluate the extent to which the model of Family Group Decision Making can be carried out in a manner that: (1) responds flexibly to the conditions and cultures of various provincial regions (Inuit, rural, and urban); and (2) builds family, community, and government parnerships that offer family members support, protections, and opportunities for participating in decision making and carrying out these plans.	
PHASES	QUESTIONS	DATA SOURCES
Referrals & Preparation	What types of referrals were received, and what were the impact of referral policies? What steps were taken to prepare conference participants? How satisfied were participants with the preparations? How did these steps vary by region, family composition, etc.?	Recordings Reflections Evaluations Interviews Focus Groups
Conferencing	What processes took place during conferences? Were they seen as promoting safe participation and effective planning? How did these processes vary by region, family dynamics, number of participants, etc.? What were the costs for holding the conferences, and who	Observation Reflections Evaluations Interviews

	paid for these costs?	File Analysis Focus Groups
Plans	What were the components of plans reached at conferences? What components did project participants view as important for their approval, enactment, and success? How were plans authorized and/or revised, and did this vary by region, referral source, etc.? What were the initial costs for implementing the plans, and who bore these costs?	Plans Interviews Focus Groups File Analysis

As Table 2.2 shows below, the outcome study has two main objectives: to assess the capacity of the model (a) to stop family violence and (b) to promote family members' well-being. It involves a longitudinal study of project families over a one-year period after the conference and a comparison of their developments with those of control group families, located within their own region. Given the distinct cultures and conditions of the three project sites, it was considered inappropriate to compare project outcomes against norms for dissimilar regions.

Table 2.2
Outcome Study Objectives, Phases, Questions, and Data Sources

OUTCOME EVALUATION	OBJECTIVES: to evaluate the capacity of the model as used with families from different provincial regions to: (1) eliminate or reduce the reoccurrence of intra-familial abuse and other ill-treatment; and (2) promote the well-being of child and adult members.	
PHASE	QUESTIONS	DATA SOURCES
Pre-Test	How do the project families compare with local control group families in regards to levels of well-being?	Family Interviews
6-month follow up	Since the conference, what progress has occurred in project families?	Family Interviews
1-year follow up	Since the conference, what progress has occurred in project families? Compared with control group families, what changes have taken place in project families in regard to members' well-being and further abuse or ill-treatment?	Family & Agency Interviews

2.4 Measurements

At each phase of family group conferencing, data were collected that yielded information regarding attainment of the two main objectives of the implementation study. Because some outcome measurements taken during the pre-test phase were used by coordinators in preparing for the conferences, these are described below and then related to implementation objectives. Given the collaborative action methodology, the intent was to employ research data where they would be helpful in organizing and carrying out conferences. See Volume II of this report for the the research

instructions, consent forms, and instruments used in the implementation study.

2.4.1 Outcome Measures and Instruments

The mandate of the project was to resolve family violence; this resolution was viewed in light of both the negative objective of stopping abuse and the positive objective of promoting family members' well-being. The decision to consider positive measures was reinforced by an increasing awareness that a narrow focus on the cessation of overt acts of violence may blind researchers to continued emotional and social abuse (see Holmes & Lundy, 1990).

Outcome measures were selected that would look at the abuse and well-being of both child and adult family members. It was recognized that the abuse of children often is accompanied by the abuse of their mothers (Stark & Flitcraft, 1991); and it was acknowledged in the project's statement of philosophy (see chapter 1) that the welfare of all family members is of importance and that the welfare of any one member affects other family members. In particular, the interaction between the welfare of children and that of their primary caregiver (usually mothers) needed to be taken into account.

Progress

In order to gain a sense of the project families' general progress, questions were asked about their perceptions of family developments since the conference.

Progress Report

At a six-month interval and one-year interval after the family group conference, the researcher will complete a Progress Report with family members. This includes questions on their perceptions of whether or not any changes took place in the family since the conference, if the plan was carried out, and what were the results of the conference.

Abuse

Family violence was defined as a recurring pattern of deliberate efforts to intimidate and control other family members through a range of means, encompassing physical force, sexual intrusion, emotional debasement, socio-economic deprivation. Fundamentally, it concerns the betrayal of trust in the context of a social institution where people are expected to be safe and supported, but where power is skewed by sexism, agism, and other oppressive structures and with the result that certain member are aggrandized and others are entrapped.

Abuse is difficult to measure for two main reasons. First, it is commonly underreported (Rodgers, 1994); concealed by perpetrators, victims, and witnesses; or ignored as a family matter by the community or service agencies. Second, among social scientists, there are pronounced disagreements on measurement instruments (Yllö & Bograd, 1988). In this study, abuse is measured through a number avenues and by looking not only at direct reports but also likely indicators of abuse.

Abuse Scale

For project families, the coordinators completed an abuse scale in order to characterize the type of current abuse along the dimensions of gender and age. At the time of the one-year follow up the researcher will complete the abuse scale again.

Case Events

At the one-year follow up, checklists will be completed on indicators of whether abuse occurred or appeared likely to have occurred since the conference for project families and since the pre-test for control group families. Where permission is granted, these checklists will be completed by family members and involved agency representatives (child protection, police, medical, and school).

Well-Being

In this study, well-being is defined as an estimate of global life satisfaction and is measured with two different indicators. For adults and young people, social support networks are used since these are assumed to be a buffer against stress and, thus, enhance well-being (Maxwell, Flett, & Colhoun, 1986). For children and young people, their development in relation to the kinds of care which they require is used because their achievements need to be viewed in the context of the nurturing which they do or do not receive (Parker et al., 1991).

Social Network Map and Close Friend Questions

To examine social support networks, a Social Network Map (Tracy & Whittaker, 1990) was made with key adult and young people members of the project families prior to the conference and two control groups at the time of the pre-test and will be completed again during the one-year follow up. Participants were asked to identify the important people and groups in their lives and then specify in regards to their social network members the following:

demographic information, the kinds of support which they were given and give, and the frequency of contact. In addition, they were asked to complete a scale on the availability of a close friend in whom they could confide, particularly regarding abuse. The coordinators administered the Soical Network Map and Close Friend Questions as part of their preparatory steps with project families. In this way, the coordinators could determine the guest list for the conference and assess likely areas of strength and problems in the family members' social networks that could affect the conference proceedings and plans.

Looking After Children

An instrument The Looking After Children Assessment Records was selected to measure the development of children and young people along seven dimensions: health; education; emotional development and behaviour; social, family, and peer relationships; self-care and competence; identity; and social presentation. As its authors (Parker et al., 1991) explain, "this multi-dimensional method of assessing outcomes is intended to reflect the concerns of reasonable parents, who try to consider all relevant aspects of their children's development" (p. 105). The specific items on dimensions vary for different age groups to better reflect their significant issues.

For the purposes of this study, the instrument was revised in order to fit better the Newfoundland and Labrador contexts; and items on action plans were reduced because the instrument was being used an assessment rather than planning device. Because the conference itself was unlikely to have an immediate, significant impact on overall development, the instrument was administered by the researcher either before or somewhat after the conference. Since the intent at the conference was to focus on the issues raised by the referring agency, the findings from the assessment were not shared at the conference. The instrument will be readministered to project families during the one-year follow-up. Likewise, the instrument was administered during the pre-test with the control group families and will be repeated one year later.

2.4.2 Implementation Measures

The implementation objectives are viewed not only as means for achieving the outcome objectives but also as worthwhile accomplishments in their own right. Within the philosophy of the project, it is considered valuable to be responsive to local cultures and to build relationships based upon partnership. These

process objectives are considered to be fundamental to a democratic and caring society. The ways of measuring achievement of the implementation objectives are described below.

Regional Responsiveness

Because family group conferencing was developed and tested in three disparate regions of the province, it was possible to compare implementation processes and to assess the extent of variation. Differences between sites were not viewed as signalling deviations from one best practice but rather were understood as responses to local conditions and cultures. Since most of the information came from local people and was gathered by locally hired staff, perceptions from the three regions were recorded.

Family-Community-Government Partnerships

Measurements were taken of the three principal means which the project's philosophy assumed were necessary for creating family-community-government partnerships that prevent further family violence. As discussed in chapter 1, these conditions were helpful supports, effective participation in decision making, and adequate resources and protections. Because these means are interrelated and pertained to more than one of the three conference phases, many of the same research instruments yielded information on all three means. Therefore, this section defines these means, and the next section describes the research/evaluation instruments for collecting data on them.

Supports

Supports here refers to the specific emotional and practical supports which participants required for taking part in the conferences. Supports do not refer to the family members' support systems as charted on the Social Network Map. Examples of supports for the conference are providing a ride to the meeting place, comforting by a support person, and assisting with reading forms.

Decision Making

Decision making refers to perceptions and evaluations of who participated, in what ways, and to what extent. It is restricted to the processes occurring during the conference from its commencement to reaching closure on the plan, and does not encompass the overall decision process from the point of entry into the project and exit from it.

Resources & Protections

Resources and protections are considered in terms of (a) what measures were required for the family group conferences to take place and (b) what measures were included in the conference plans and approved, provided, financed, and/or changed. Protections are considered to be a subset of resources and refers to safeguards provided by a public authority (e.g., child welfare, police, youth or adult correctional services) either at the conference (e.g., escort by a prison guard of an inmate) or in the plan (e.g., monitoring by a police officer, supervision by a children's protection worker). In order to distinguish resources and protections from supports, their meanings are construed within the following parameters. Resources for holding the conferences are narrowly defined as the direct financial outlays by the referring agency and the project for holding the conference (e.g., costs of transportation, meals, and translation). The resources for the plans are more broadly defined in order to capture the contributions, material and non-material, of a range of participants, which are often overlooked in cost analyses (see Knapp, 1984). The resources for carrying out the aims of the plans include for the referring agency such matters as purchases of counselling services or household appliance or provision of protective services. Examples for family members include offering babysitting services, giving furniture, and being available in times of emotional distress

2.5 Data Collection

The data collection was designed so as to highlight and compare the perspectives of all the different participants in the project--the family members, community representatives, government officials, and project staff. This section reviews the study's terms of participation as well as its sample and instrumentation.

2.5.1 Terms of Research Participation

Participation in the research and evaluation was voluntary. A refusal to take part in the study in no way precluded families from holding a conference. The majority of participants consented to take part in all aspects of the research, but a sizable minority decided to opt out of either all of the research or certain aspects of it (e.g., observation of the family group conference).

The consent forms clearly specified the purpose of the study, its methods, the storage of documents, the publication of findings, and the restrictions on the researchers. The latter included that they would protect the identity of the participants, with the exception of reporting new disclosures of child abuse.

2.5.2 Research Sample

Over the demonstration project 37 conferences were held, a figure lower than originally planned. We had hoped to have carried out at least 15 conferences per site. As discussed in chapter 1, the delay in receiving federal funding shortened the period of conferencing and, thus, the number of conferences which could be scheduled.

Of the conferences held, 32 were first-time conferences and 5 were reconvened conferences. As shown in Table 2.3, the number of conferences varied somewhat by site with the greatest number of first-time conferences held in St. John's and the greatest number of reconvened conferences held in Nain.

Table 2.3
Number of Conferences by Site

SITE	FIRST-TIME CONFERENCE	RECONVENED CONFERENCE	TOTAL
Nain	11	3	14
Port au Port	9	2	11
St. John's	12	0	12

The number of individuals involved directly and indirectly with these 37 conferences was extensive. Table 2.4 gives the number of individuals (other than project staff) who were recorded as taking part in planning the conferences and attending them. As documented in later chapters, the large majority of people in both categories were family group members, that is immediate family members, their relatives, and others whom they included among their close supports. The numbers of recorded participants in the urban centre St. John's is sizably greater than in the other two sites--the rural Port au Port Peninsula and the northern Nain. In addition, to capture some of the community involvement in the project, the number of people who gave feedback on the project through focus groups, interviews, and submissions is noted. The total came to 59, with the number of participants somewhat larger in St. John's.

Table 2.4
Number of Participants in the Research/Evaluation Activities at the Project Sites

PHASE	NAIN	PORT AU PORT	ST. JOHN'S	TOTAL
Preparation	92	117	246	455
Conferencing	159	130	183	472
Feedback	15	18	26	59

Descriptions of the referred families and conference participants are provided in chapters 3, 4, and 5.

2.5.3 Research/Evaluation Instruments

Table 2.5 provides an overview of the research instruments used for collecting implementation data at each phase of conferencing. The instruments are placed in the same row as the phase regarding which they yield the most information. The table reveals that multiple instruments and respondents were used at each phase of conferencing. The respondents who completed the instruments included family members and their relatives, community and government representatives, and project staff. As discussed later in addition to these instruments, community consultations offered further information on all aspects of the conferencing as well as the project as a whole.

Table 2.5
Main Instruments Completed for Implementation Evaluation by Phase and Respondent

PHASE	INSTRUMENT	RESPONDENT
Preparation	Fact Sheet on Interviewee in Preparation for Conference	Coordinator
	People to Invite to the Conference	Family Members
	Coordinator Reflective Notes	Coordinator
Conferencing	Family Group Conference Fact Sheet	Coordinator
	Family Group Conference Evaluation	Participants Researcher
	Observer's Checksheet & Sessional Recording Guide	Coordinator
	Impressions of Decision Making at the Family Group Conference	Family Members
	After the Conference Interviews	Coordinator & Researcher
	Coordinator & Researcher Reflective Notes	
Plans	Conference Plan	Participants
	Cost Records	Referring Agency

For each instrument, Table 2.6 notes the number completed at the three project sites. In spite of cultural differences, all instruments were filled out at each site; the rates, however, varied. This variation was a function of such factors as the

number of conferences held, the consent of family members to take part in a research activity, and the project staff's judgments on the key people to interview.

Table 2.6
Number of Implementation Instruments Completed by Project Site

RESEARCH FORM	NAIN	PORT AU PORT	ST. JOHN'S	TOTAL
Fact Sheet on Interviewee in Preparation for Conference	92	117	246	455
Close Friend Questions	48	8	24	80
People to Invite to the Conference	24	3	9	36
People Not to Invite to the Conference	24	3	9	36
Support Persons to Invite	24	3	9	36
Family Group Conference Fact Sheet	13	11	12	36
Family Group Conference Evaluation	42	90	198	330
Observer's Checksheet & Sessional Recording Guide	2	9	12	23
Impressions of Decision Making at the Family Group Conference	11	8	11	30
After the Conference Interviews	43	44	42	129
Abuse Scale	10	9	12	31
Coordinator's Reflective Notes	14	10	12	36
Coordinator Assistant's Reflective Notes	1	1	1	3
Researcher's Reflective Notes	7	9	12	28

Plan	13	11	12	36
Cost Record Per Referred Family	14	12[a]	12	38

[a]One referred family had travel costs paid for by the referring agency but did not proceed to a conference.

2.5.3.1 Preparatory Phase

From the New Zealand experience, it was apparent that inadequate preparations for a conference lead to misunderstandings about its purpose, confusions about participants' roles, and resentments concerning unfamiliar cultural practices (Ministerial Review Team, 1992). This research, thus, paid close attention to the preparations undertaken in advance of the conferences. The primary recording instruments are described below; however, information from these forms was greatly supplemented by instruments listed under the section on Conference Phase and was derived from the Community Consultations.

Fact Sheet on Interviewee in Preparation for the Conference

The coordinators kept a record of the steps which they took for preparing individual family members and others for the family group conference. This form documented the number of contacts; the individual's decision on whether to attend and, if not, the reason for not attending and alternative means of sending messages to the conference; and any expressed concerns about or special arrangements required for attending the conference.

People to Invite to the Conference

After completing the Social Network Map, family members were asked to list the people whom they would like to see invited to the conference and their reasons for wanting these people invited; whether or not they would want a support person and, if so whom and why; and whom they would not want invited to the conference and their reasons for excluding the individual/s.

2.5.3.2 Conference Phase

Because relatively little is available in the literature about the actual process of family group conferencing, it was considered important to collect as full of information as possible from a range of perspectives--coordinators, researchers, and family and non-family participants.

Family Group Conference Fact Sheet

On this sheet, the coordinator recorded basic information on the conference: its location, timing, participants, and costs.

Family Group Conference Evaluation

At the conclusion of the conference, evaluation forms were distributed to all participants. They were asked to evaluate the conference preparations and its venue, the running of the conference and the information presented, the participation of themselves and others, and the plan reached; and to make recommendations on how their conference could have been improved and how future conferences could be improved. Where participants had difficulty reading the form, they were assisted by other family members and sometimes the project staff in filling out the form. In all, 317 evaluation forms were completed for first-time conferences and another 13 forms were completed for reconvened conferences, for a total of 330. Out of the 330 forms, 293 were filled out by family group participants (excluding the coordinators, researchers, and professionals in the capacities of referring agency worker or information provider).

Observer's Checksheet & Sessional Recording Guide

With the permission of the family group participants, the researchers observed 23 of the conferences. During these sessions, they normally sat outside the circle of participants, remained silent during the deliberations (with the exception of friendly chat during the breaks), took notes in an unobtrusive fashion, and later completed this form. This form included two main parts: the first on general observations and the second on decision making. In the first part, the researchers were asked to give their views on the composition of the group; preparation of, support and information for, and participation of attenders; and the attainment of consensus on the concerns and the plan. In the second part, the researchers were asked to complete the Decision Assessment Questions on the amount and adequacy of individuals' participation and on the decision processes utilized by the family group in making their plan and those used in reaching the final approval of the plan. The items on amount of say were adapted from and used with permission of Jane Mansbridge (1983) and the items on adequacy of say and types of decision processes were adapted from Pennell (1990). In specifying the decision processes (e.g., consensus, bargaining), she drew upon the work of the organizational theorists James Thompson and Arthur Tuden (1959).

Impressions of Decision Making at the Family Group Conference

After the conference, the coordinators separately completed the Decision Assessment Questions. Their ratings are treated as "impressions" since unlike the researcher they were not usually privy to the entire conference.

After the Conference Interviews

Approximately one week after the conferences, the researchers were to conduct separate interviews with some key family participants who were likely to offer divergent views on the session. In the first part of the interview, the researcher asked family members about their general views on the conference: their personal experience of it, any remaining concerns about the conference, their thoughts on ways in which family members and the coordinator could have improved the conference. In the second part, they were asked to complete the Decision Assessment Questions. For those 109 of the 129 interviews whose length was recorded, they took took on average a little over a half an hour (36.51 minutes), with interviews averaging the longest in St. John's (46.43 minutes), the second longest on the Port au Port Peninsula (42.97 minutes), and substantially shortest in Nain (23.31 minutes). (Data on length were missing for 1 out 43 Nain interviews, 12 out of 44 Port au Port Peninsula interviews, and 7 out of 42 St. John's interviews.)

Reflective Notes

In order to record overall observations and thoughts on the conferences without being constrained by specific questions, the coordinators and researchers were asked to separately record their reflections on how each conference went, why it turned out the way it did, and how it compared with other conferences. In particular, they were asked to note any patterns that they had found across conferences or how this conference stood out as different from earlier ones.

2.5.3.3 **Planning Phase**

The New Zealand experience indicates the importance of developing plans with clear items on the actions to be taken and well as the monitoring and review of these actions (Ministerial Review Team, 1992). In this study, the plans formulated at the original conference and any reconvenings are considered in the context of the information provided by the conference participants, coordinators, and researchers in the above listed forms. In addition, the follow-up interviews will provide further information on their enactment and impact from the family's vantage point, and

the total costs of the plans for the referring agencies will be examined at the end of the follow-up study.

Conference Plans

A copy of the conference plan and any subsequent revisions to it at reconvened conferences have been collected. These plans were expected to include action, monitoring, and evaluation steps.

Cost Records

Initial costs for travel for family members to conferences, for related costs such as child-minding while family members attended conferences and for costs related to carrying out the plans were provided by the referring agencies. Additional costs related to holding the conferences (e.g., lunch, cost of renting space for some conferences) were submitted by the site coordinator. Although only 11 conferences were held on the Port au Port Peninsula, expenses were incurred for 12. One conference was cancelled at the last minute.

2.5.3.4 Community Consultations

The data collection instruments described above were all centred around a family group conference. In order to gain a broader picture of the project at each site, community consultations were undertaken. Three main strategies were employed for these consultations: on-going feedback from the local advisory committees and community panels; formal consultations through focus groups, interviews, and submissions; and an evaluation workshop with staff at the conclusion of the project.

Feedback

The roles of the local advisory committees and community panels were to provide advice and feedback respectively on the overall operations of the project and on the work with families. In Nain, the Labrador Inuit Health Commission provided consultation through the Labrador Inuit Health Advisor. This information was conveyed to the staff during meetings and individual consultations, to the principal investigators during site visits and telephone calls, and to the provincial protocol committee during teleconferences.

In Nain, informal consultations with a range of community members were held on September 13-16, 1994. Participants[1] included

[1]In order to avoid multiple countings of an individual, s/he was assigned to one category,

8 advisory committee members, 4 Social Services staff, 6 elders, 5 Inuit Women Group members, 3 school officials, 2 youth representatives, 4 court/legal officials, 3 crime prevention representatives, and 2 LIA representatives.

Focus Groups, Interviews, and Submissions

After each site had become familiar with family group conferencing, the principal investigators held focus groups and interviews with key stakeholders (e.g., advisory committee members, child welfare workers, family group members). The main purposes were to collect information to be used for (a) describing the process from the perspective of various participants, (b) improving the present delivery of service, and (c) planning for long-term sustainability of the model, if communities and government wished to continue this approach. Information was recorded in notes and, with permission, audio taped.

On the Port au Port Peninsula, focus groups and interviews took place in October 1994 and included 1 family group participant, 2 support persons, 4 Social Services staff, 2 community panelists, 4 advisory committee members, and 3 project staff.[2] In St. John's, focus groups and interviews were held over December 1994 through February 1995 with 1 family group participant, 3 support persons, 5 Social Services staff, 3 information providers, 5 community panelists, 6 advisory committee members, and 2 staff. In Nain, focus groups and interviews were held during the month of February 1995 with the community elders and the Nain Women's Groups and with 5 advisory members and 1 community leader. Later in April and May further interviews were carried out with involved professionals from the three sites: 4 parole officers, 2 police officers, 2 Social Services staff, 3 advisory group members, and 1 community leader.

Evaluation Workshop

At the conclusion of the project in St. John's and the Port au Port Peninsula, a two-day evaluation workshop was held with their site staff on March 26-27, 1995. Present were the 2 coordinators, 2 researchers, and 1 social work field student who had assisted with conference coordinating. The aims of the workshop were to provide an opportunity for collectively reflecting on how the project had progressed, sharing insights on the dynamics of family

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even if s/he had membership in a number of the groupings.

[2]Some of these categories are overlapping; an individual was only placed in one of them.

group conferencing, and formulating recommendations for others on how to carry out this approach. The session was tape recorded, and notes were taken from the tapes.

2.6 Data Management and Analysis

Information was analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data were coded and loaded into a statistical computer program SPSS with descriptive measures taken. Qualitative data (e.g., from reflective notes) were read into a qualitative analysis computer program Ethnograph and coded in order to pull out recurring themes and then to place them in context. Triangulation between quantitative and qualitative measures was used to describe and understand processes from multiple angles and to give greater substantiation to conclusions derived.

The two implementation objectives gave overall direction to the analysis. The emphasis on regional responsiveness led to a focus on interpretting findings within their local context rather than assuming that the same entities were being measured across the three sites and could be simply presented in aggregate form. For instance, responses to forced-choice questions on conference decision processes were considered within the culture of each site. The emphasis on building family-community-government partnerships led to a focus on the design and redesigning of social networks. For example, the conference plans were examined in terms of the mechanisms developed for forming and maintaining social supports.

2.7 Methodological Issues

The shortened period for carrying out conferences raises questions about whether or not the project can be considered an adequate test of the model. As will be discussed in later chapters, this did not appear to be problematic for testing the implementation of the model in St. John's and on the Port au Port Peninsula. In Nain, however, the project took more time to become established; the result was that the scheduling of conferences was skewed toward the final months of the project period (see Table 3.4). The outcome study will evaluate the impact of the compressed period for conferencing. It appears likely though that the collaborative action methodology helped to offset some of the effects of the shortened test period by enhancing the study's reliability and validity.

2.7.1 Reliability

Reliability refers to the dependability of the research device, that is the consistency of its measurements of the same phenomenon (Neuman, 1994). Qualitative data analysis is often questioned in terms of its reliability because it is harder to follow the line of inquiry through to its findings. The use of both quantitative and qualitative analysis made it possible to check their conclusions against each other. Moreover, the reliability of the findings were enhanced by using two research strategies: multiple indicators and multiple raters.

As relayed earlier, the three implementation means--supports, decision inputs, and resources and protections--were measured through a number of instruments (multiple indicators) and by respondents in different roles (multiple raters). Thus, the design made it possible to gauge whether or not the same findings were reached through different instruments and from different vantage points. For instance, the reliability of findings on the adequacy of preparations for a conference could be gauged by comparing conference evaluations completed by the various participants and by comparing those ratings with the coordinator's reflective notes.

2.7.2 Validity

The collaborative action methodology could be criticized as constantly changing what it is seeking to measure and, thus, invalidating its findings. This criticism, however, assumes a certain epistemology, that is presumptions about what makes for knowledge in which one can trust. Collaborative action research assumes that valid knowledge is generated by learning through action and that this learning is situated within local contexts rather than being universally applicable. Thus "local knowledge" (Geertz, 1983) is created that builds an understanding of how people within a culture view family group decision making and assists others in developing their own valid approaches to this model.

Within this notion of validity, the study enhanced validity on two main counts. First, it was took place in three quite different sites and, thus, focused attention on what practices were most suitable within a particular context. Second, the securement of local views by locally hired staff made it possible to record local perceptions of the project.

REFERRALS

3.0 Introduction

The project began receiving referrals in January of 1994 from the Department of Social Services' Child Welfare Division, and subsequently Child Welfare was joined by other referring programs--Youth Corrections, Parole, and Probation. A total of 37 conferences were held: 14 in Nain, 11 on the Port au Port Peninsula, and 12 in St. John's. Thirty-two were first-time conferences, and 5 were reconvened conferences. Family groups were reconvened because developments necessitated changes in the plan or because the original plan called for a second conference (e.g., prior to release of offender from prison). As the project developed and tested various criteria and strategies for referrals, the policies were revamped in consultation with the Provincial Protocol Committee and Advisory Committees at the three sites. This chapter presents the reasons why the families were referred, overviews the revisions made to the initial set of referral provisions, and concludes with the some consequences of the referral policies. The information is based on policy documents, service statistics, focus groups and interviews, and coordinators' reflective notes.

3.1 Reasons for Referrals

The referring agencies' reasons for the referrals ranged across a number of issues with several in far greater predominance. As shown in Table 3.1, the three most common reasons for the initial referral were child abuse (12), child neglect (10), and youth beyond parental control (8). In one instance each, the reason was abuse against a mother or a feud between two families. Since emotional abuse is considered to have happened in any instance of child abuse, referrals were rated as physical and/or sexual abuse if these manifestations of violence occurred. For the five reconvened conferences, the reasons for the referral remained the same with one exception. In this instance, an earlier conference led to revising the primary concern from the young person's unmanageability to the parent's inflicting emotional abuse on this young person.

Table 3.1
Main Reason for First-Time Referral by Participating Families at the Project Sites (N = 32)

MAIN REASON FOR REFERRAL	NAIN	PORT AU PORT	ST. JOHN'S	TOTAL
Child Physical Abuse	4	1	2	7
Child Sexual Abuse	0	2	0	2
Child Sexual & Physical Abuse	1	0	0	1
Child Emotional Abuse[a]	2	0	0	2
Child Neglect	3	4	3	10
Youth Beyond Parental Control	0	2	6	8
Woman Abuse	0	0	1	1
Family Feud	1	0	0	1

[a]A referral in a situation of child abuse was coded child emotional abuse when sexual and physical abuse had not also occurred.

The referring agents were not always aware of the extent or types of abuse occuring within the families. One particularly striking finding was that although only three cases were referred for sexual abuse, in another 7 families (5 incest, 2 extra familial abuse) sexual abuse surfaced as one of the underlying issues either during the preparation phase or at the conference itself.

The reasons for making the referrals reflected the mandates of the referring agencies and, if looked at in isolation, could mask the extent of other abuse occurring within the families. Table 3.2 shows that all but two of the 37 referrals involved Child Welfare as either the only referring agency (31) or co-referring agency (5). The two referrals, where the primary reason for referral was not an act committed against a child, came solely from either Parole or Probation. As summarized in the next chapter, the coordinators in discussions with workers or family members were made aware of extensive abuse committed against adult members, particularly mothers.

Table 3.2
Referral Sources by Number of Family Group Conferences at the Project Sites (N = 37)

REFERRAL SOURCES	NAIN	PORT AU PORT	ST. JOHN'S	TOTAL
Child Welfare	12	9	10	31
Child Welfare & Youth Corrections	0	1	1	2
Parole	0	0	1	1
Child Welfare & Parole	1	1	0	2
Probation/ Self-Referral	1	0	0	1

Issues concerning the placement of children dominated the Child Welfare referrals in all three sites (see Table 3.3). Out of the 35 conferences where Child Welfare was the referring agency or one of the referring agencies, close to half (16) of the families had children placed by Child Welfare in either non-kin care (10) or kin care (6). The absence of kin placements by Child Welfare in Nain may have been a function of culture: with Inuit families it is common for children to be placed in the care of relatives without any involvement by Social Services. In the remaining 19 Child Welfare referrals, the large majority (13) of the families had children for whom apprehension was imminent. The project coordinators stressed with the workers that referring a family to the project did not in any way prohibit the children's protection services from placing children if they appeared to be in danger. In fact, in one family the children were apprehended before the end of the family group conference, and in another a young person was moved from kin to non-kin care between the time of referral and the convening of the conference. As discussed in the following chapters, questions regarding where children were residing and should reside gave relatives and others a strong motivation for taking part in the conferences and an immediate focus to the family group conferences.

Table 3.3
Children's Placement at Time of Child Welfare Referral by Number of Family Group Conferences at the Project Sites (N = 35)

SITE	ANY CHILDREN IN CHILD WELFARE CARE?			
	NON-KIN	KIN	LIKELY[a]	NO
Nain	4	0	6	2
Port au Port	1	2	6	2
St. John's	5	4	1	1
TOTAL	10	6	13	5

Note. The table omits the two referrals in which Child Welfare was not involved. In both instances, the children resided with their biological parent/s.
[a]Children not in care but apprehension likely to occur in the near future.

The rate of referrals and the scheduling of conferences was affected by start-up concerns and seasonal variations. As shown in Table 3.4, family group conferences with some fluctuations were relatively evenly spaced over the course of the Port au Port and St. John's project implementation, but in Nain were concentrated into the final month of the demonstration project. Not shown on the table, the 14th conference in Nain was held in May 1995. At all three sites, there was an initial hesitancy around embarking on an unfamiliar approach, and as later chapters discuss, in Nain uncertainties about how to institute a family-community-government partnership were the most protracted for cultural and other reasons. In St. John's, the reluctance of workers to take part was evident in their decision to test the new project by selecting for the first referral a neglect situation in which the children did not appear to be at high risk. On the Port au Port Peninsula, referrals were initially stalled because of uncertainties on the part of both the project coordinator and local workers. As the local coordinator wrote, "The first referral was very slow coming although I felt fully prepared and organized to accept. I feel now that both the [child protection] workers and myself were dragging our feet. Although the concept is one we feel good about - we were scared to bridge the gap between talking and doing." In this case, a visit by the administrators in which possible referrals were reviewed was helpful in resolving these fears, and as the coordinator wrote, sparked a "desire" to start work.

Over the spring many of these concerns lessened as project, Child Welfare, and community participants successfully carried out a number of conferences. The summer, however, brought its own slow down as workers and extended family departed for summer activities. This was particularly true in Nain where families traditionally leave for their fishing camps and where a higher than normal level of employment decreased

the availability of participants. For instance with one family, the Nain coordinator reported, "My initial contact with this family was back in June shortly after I had received the referral. I have kept in contact with this family over the summer months, and because of seasonal work that these two parents were involved in they were put on the back burner until November." During the fall, the number of conferences rose, but over the Christmas holidays, conferencing shut down in all three sites. The Port au Port coordinator noted that "a father agreed to the FGC but not before Xmas because it was too busy a time for everyone." The Nain coordinator explained at length about the significance of Christmas in his community:

> Because of a tradition in Nain, people here celebrate three Christmas's, the first and probably the biggest for a lot of people is celebrated three Sunday's before December 25. At this time the children all hang stockings, not only in their homes, but in as many places that will accept these stockings. Then with our normal Christmas, December 25 and again stockings are hung in the same manner on Old Christmas, January 6th. Because of this very special time Family members requested that we not have the conference until after Old Christmas.

In addition to summer plans and holidays, scheduled trips, various unexpected events, a poor showing of family members, or bad travel weather also necessitated rescheduling conferences to a later date. The final 3 months of the 14 months of conferencing saw a disproportionate number of conferences with almost 40% (14) of the conferences being held during the period. By this time, the project sites had become familiar with family group conferencing and, as discussed in the following chapters, had developed a number of strategies and resources to facilitate the process.

Table 3.4
Number of Conferences by Month at the Project Sites (N = 37)

	1994											1995		
SITE	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M
Nain	1	1		1		1			1	1	1			6
Port au Port		1		1	1		1		1	1		1	2	2
St. John's	1	1			1		1	1	1	2	1		1	2
TOTAL	2	3	0	2	2	1	2	1	3	4	2	1	3	10

Note. The table shows the month in which the conferences were held for 36 cases. The 37th conference was held in Nain in May 1995.

It should be noted that the rate of referrals was not sufficient to necessitate

formalizing policies around screening referrals. To a limited extent some cases were pushed back to a later date because they appeared less urgent in the eyes of the referring workers. In St. John's where the number of potential cases was large, one community panelist commented that the low rate of referrals was a "sad problem"--"it would have been nice to have to worry about the volume."

3.2 Referral Policies

As the project participants became familiar with the dynamics and requirements of family group conferencing, a number of refinements were made to the original set of referral policies and procedures. Many of these protocols were preserved, but some changes were instituted in order to heighten the collaborative nature of the project at the point of referral.

3.2.1 Original Protocols

As described in the first chapter, during the start-up phase of the project the project administrators and the Department of Social Services negotiated an agreement concerning the involvement of Child Welfare in the project. In a memo signed by two assistant deputy ministers in the Department, it was agreed that Social Services would only make referrals where it was committed to paying as necessary for travel costs of family group participants (see chapter 4) and where its workers would participate in the family group conferences and in the approval, financing, and implementation, of family group plans (see chapter 7). In regards to referring families to the project, this memo included the following terms:

(1) Child Welfare workers make a referral with the approval of his/her supervisor.

The intent was to ensure that the referral was made with the knowledge and support of the Department.

(2) Child Welfare workers make a referrals only after the investigation and assessment are completed or until such a time as a clear care and protection concern about a child in the family has been established.

The family group conferencing was not to become a fact-finding mission for either Child Welfare or the police but rather to remain a vehicle by which the family group participants could have input into the planning for their young relative. It should be further noted that the Crown Prosecutor's Office made an undertaking that any person who has been accused of violence and who is involved in an ongoing Criminal Court case can participate in the family group conference without this being taken as an admission of guilt.

(3) Child Welfare workers obtain a signed consent from the family representative (e.g., parent or guardian of the abused/neglected child) to give their name and information on their situation to the project.
The signed consent for referral signified that the family was aware of and agreed to their name and information on them being given to the project coordinator. The consent for referral did not mean that the family was committing itself to taking part in a conference. Instead it gave the project coordinator permission to contact the family, explain in greater depth the project, and then determine with them whether or not plans for the conference should proceed.

(4) Child Welfare workers retain their role of protecting children after making a referral to the project.

The referral was not intended to change the role of public authorities such as children's protection services and police but rather to promote a process by which they could work together with the project. The project coordinator only assumed responsibility for facilitating a joint planning process.

Over the course of the project, ways of carrying out these terms had to be worked out in each site. For instance, the first protocol on approval by the worker's supervisor varied depending on the situation at the local Social Services office. In St. John's with numerous and changing child protection workers, consultation with the supervisors was crucial given that few workers had the opportunity to develop familiarity with the project; in Nain, the supervisor who was a social worker oversaw the work of the community workers who made the referrals; and on the Port au Port Peninsula, the 2 child welfare workers in the small Piccadilly office did not have a supervisor and were delegated authority by their district manager for selecting families. The third clause made it possible for Child Welfare workers to pass on information regarding the family to the project coordinator. In all cases, the workers provided at the time of referral sufficient information for the coordinator to contact the family members in a manner sensitive to their current situation, but the ways in which this transmission of information occurred varied. Most commonly this occurred verbally but in Nain a report was often written by the referring workers and at the other two sites some workers provided risk assessments on the referred family. The second and fourth clauses had to be frequently revisited so that the role of the project coordinator did not assume greater responsibility than could be carried by a nongovernmental service, and as explained below parts of the third clause had to be revoked in order to prevent any one family member from exercising undue power over whether or not a conference could be held.

3.2.2 Indirect Referrals

During the planning phase of the project, groups such as the police expressed frustration that they were unable to make referrals to the project because they could not meet the requirement of paying for travel and outcome costs. This frustration came to a

head in the early stages of the project when referrals were slow in arriving from Child Welfare workers. The local advisory committees consisting of various community representatives proposed the adoption of an indirect referral process. By this they meant that referrals would continue to be channelled through Child Welfare, but that initiative for starting a referral could come from other sources. It was also presumed that families might evince greater comfort in taking part if they were first informed of the project through an agency other than Child Welfare. This approach was agreed upon by Social Services, and inquiries around such referrals came from a range of sources including medicine, education, police, and probation and led to some families participating in the project. A police officer interviewed on his experience with the project commented that it had been a positive experience to become a referral agency, even through this indirect avenue.

One strategy for indirect referrals, however, was discontinued after its first use. A police detachment on release of an offender set an undertaking that he contact the project coordinator in order to learn about the project and make an informed decision on whether or not he would want a conference to be convened for his family. This condition did not provoke any objections from the offender, his family, or community and led to a conference where a plan was formulated and approved. The approach, however, raised questions for Public Prosecutions in regards to the police setting such a release condition.

Women's organizations, although they supported the project, never became indirect referral sources. A primary concern of these organizations was that their referrals would have to be channelled through Child Welfare. As one coordinator explained, they feared that Child Welfare would be overly "intrusive" in the women's lives.

3.2.3 Direct Referrals

As Child Welfare workers began making more referrals, a different concern emerged. Some referrals were being blocked by one parent who refused to sign the consent form although other family members such a wife/mother, children, or grandparents wanted a conference to proceed. In fact, the organization of one conference proceeded up to a week before the conference when the mother realized that the conference would be focusing on her abusive behaviour, at which point she withdrew her consent for participation. The Crown Prosecutor advising the project pointed out that the signed consent was not a legal requirement. He noted that Child Welfare had the authority to consult with whom it deemed necessary in cases where children were at risk and, thus, could directly request that the project coordinator organize a conference for the purpose of consulting with the family group. Women's advocates recommended adoption of this approach as well because they saw it as removing the onus from the shoulders of a mother for signing the consent for referral. In this way, her partner or family could not hold her accountable for involving the family in a conference.

It was eventually agreed by project advisory groups that Child Welfare should use direct referrals but that these referrals would only remove the requirement that the name of the family be passed on to the project coordinator with the family representative's signed consent. As true under the prior policy, a direct referral did not mean that a conference would necessarily be held or that anyone had to participate on an involuntary basis. The project coordinator would continue to contact members of the immediate and extended family to see if they wanted to participate, and then would only schedule a conference if a sufficient number wished to participate. The institution of direct referrals had a number of positive results.

First, parents could not veto holding a conference, contrary to the wishes of other immediate or extended family members. One coordinator observed that parents who had earlier rejected participating in a family group conference now agreed to take part once they recognized that other family members would carry out the conference with or without their direct involvement. Early in the project, this coordinator had received a voluntary referral concerning the physical and emotional abuse of the children. At that time, the coordinator met twice with the father, provided information on the project, and checked back "only to find out that [the father] didn't want any involvement in a family conference because he said that right now they were not having any problems." With the change in referral procedures, the coordinator received a half a year later the same referral. On approaching the father this time, the coordinator explained that a family conference was being arranged and "that this time it would go ahead even if he [the father] chose not to attend." The coordinator observed that the father "seemed to understand and signed the consent forms."

Second, the change to direct referrals meant that child protection workers went ahead with more serious referrals which earlier they had laid aside because they assumed the family representative would refuse consent. For instance, in one family where a boy had been in 13 different foster placements in slightly over one year of coming into care, one of the four workers for this family wanted to refer the family for a conference. This worker and the other three, however, had misgivings, including that they did not believe that the mother would be willing to participate. Since this referral was being considered during the change-over to direct referrals, child protection decided to proceed with the referral but advised the coordinator to contact the maternal grandparents first. The grandmother then accompanied the coordinator to visit the daughter who to Child Welfare workers' surprise turned out to be willing to participate.

Third, the move from voluntary to direct referrals helped to circumvent the parents' exerting undue control over who would be invited to take part in the conference. Under the voluntary system of referrals, coordinators found themselves trying to cater to parents' wishes so that they would not pull out of the project. Reflecting back on preparation for an early referral, one coordinator wrote,

I met the Mom several times during my preparation of the families for this

> FGC. In retrospect, I feel that the Mom's involvement with me was a deliberate attempt on her part to remain in control of every aspect of the proceedings. She even called me 11 p.m. the night before the conference to confirm who was attending. I feel she might have called the whole thing off if I had named a person she did not want to be there.

This was not an isolated incident. With the next referral still under the voluntary system of referral, this coordinator observed that a mother, who had a history of relationships with abusive men and mental illness, "had complete control of the preparation and conference proceedings. This was good because I feel she really needed the control [after experiences of disempowerment]. However, it allowed her to exclude many of the people in her extended family. I felt I had to do, whatever, in order to keep her in the project." Describing her work with a direct referral, however, the coordinator reported, "I began in the premise that everyone has to be invited and exclusions are made in extreme and rare circumstances. As a result I have a list of 30 people to work with."

3.3 Other Referring Sources

Gradually other referring agencies came on stream as they negotiated ways to meet the stipulation that they assist with resourcing travel and outcome costs of the conferences. The first of these additional referring sources was the Department of Social Services' Youth Corrections Division. An agreement was worked out that the division could refer cases in instances where a young person had committed an act of family violence. This restriction was imposed because the project was being funded under the federal Family Violence Initiative, but as Youth Corrections officials had correctly warned, the result was that few cases met the referral conditions. Youth Corrections never became a sole referring source but did participate directly in two conferences (see Table 3.2). In other conferences, young people were receiving services through Youth Corrections, but these issues were incorporated into the Child Welfare worker's report. The inability of Youth Corrections to refer a range of cases remained an unresolved concern and prompted all three project sites to request additional funding for testing the family group decision making model with young people who had committed other offenses such as break and entries.

Next Correctional Services of Canada secured Family Violence Initiatives funding for referring its own clientele to the project. They agreed to follow the same protocols as Child Welfare. As with the Youth Corrections cases, the referrals were restricted to instances of family violence. In addition, it was agreed that the parole workers should only make referrals where the offender and the survivor would have some reason for remaining in contact after his release from incarceration. Such reasons would include (a) plans to reunite as a family or couple and/or (b) on-going contact because of parentage of children. Unfortunately, funding for the parole referrals came near the end of the demonstration project, giving officers limited time in which to select and refer cases. As a result, parole was able to become involved as the primary or co-referring agency in only three conferences.

Referrals from probation at the provincial Division of Adult Corrections were even more limited. Although during the project's planning the division had expressed interest in becoming a referring agency, it had only referred one case by the end of the project and this in a situation where funding was not required for either travel or outcome costs. In another family, probation served as the indirect referring source but could not assist with funding the family plan. Unlike parole, probation had not determined a means of meeting the funding arrangements required for referrals.

3.4 Effects of Referral Policies

The channelling of referrals through a public authority who could pay for the conference expenses had a number of consequences, both beneficial and restrictive. On the positive side, the referral policies reinforced that the conferences were to serve as a forum for families making plans rather than as a means for agencies investigating or assessing families. Having an agency such as Child Welfare or Parole make the referral ensured that a mandated public authority would be responsible for approving the plans, an important safeguard given the severity of the violence in many of the families. The policies also led to families being assisted with costs for attending the conferences and carrying out their plans.

The policies, however, had a restrictive impact on referrals. First, they gave primacy to the concerns of the referring agencies, in particular, Child Welfare's assessment of children's needs. Although these concerns were important to highlight, it meant as discussed in the next chapter that often extensive preparatory work had to be undertaken in order to bring forward other family violence issues in families. Secondly, the policies inhibited other organizations from making referrals, especially women's organizations and police who would have liked to have made their own referrals directly to the project. Thirdly, in the St. John's and Port au Port Peninsula sites, the restrictions tended to encourage referrals where families were suffering from chronic problems rather than in the midst of an immediate crisis. This was less true of Nain where the close relations among various agencies fostered indirect referrals by the police and other groups.

PREPARATION

4.0 Introduction

Preparations for the family group conferences set the stage for the family, community, and government participants acting together to stop the violence. For these groups to form a working partnership required unlearning old patterns of interactions and developing ways in which the various participants would have sufficient information, supports, and protections to take part in constructive decision making. Organizing the family group conferences took considerable time and care. Coordinators had to explain a novel service approach, prepare large numbers of participants to take part in an effective and collaborative manner, make arrangements to meet their special needs, and ensure their safety. On the surface, preparing 32 families for one or more conferences may not appear to be that extensive; however, the numbers grew exponentially once all family members, their relatives by blood and marriage, other close supports, and the involved service workers were included. Moreover, all these parties had their own sets of relationships, affected by their shared histories and characterized by varying degrees of cooperation and tension.

This chapter begins by describing the families who participated in the project in order to introduce them and to provide the starting point of work with them. Who was considered to be an important part of the family group to invite to the conference, however, was a negotiated process. Thus, the chapter next outlines the steps taken by the project coordinators in contacting family members and explaining the FGC to them and identifying with them who should be included or excluded. The invitation list snowballed in size as the coordinators contacted prospective guests and learned about other individuals who might contribute to the conference. In order to lay the groundwork for a safe and effective conference, the coordinators consulted extensively with family members as well as involved professionals. The chapter then overviews the manner in which the project coordinators invited and prepared conference participants--family, investigators, and service providers--and provided necessary supports to meet their concerns in the context of often quite volatile and dangerous family situations. The chapter describes the arrangements made around venue, travel, translation, and other practical details for holding a conference at which as many guests as possible could attend and participate in full. Since first-time and later conferences for a family differed to some extent in their dynamics, the chapter compares the preparations for the two types of conferences and notes in the latter how much family growth the coordinator could draw upon. The chapter concludes with the family group participants' evaluation of the preparations after they took part in a conference.

Throughout this chapter the views of different participants on the preparations are included and themes around working within abusive family settings are addressed. Attention is paid to commonalities and differences across the three project sites in undertaking these preparations. The information presented here is primarily based on

various research forms, the community consultations, and the coordinators' reflective notes. The coordinators included both the regular staff and 5 others--4 social work field students (1 in Nain, 1 on the Port au Port Peninsula, and 2 in St. John's) and one employee of the Labrador Inuit Health Commission. For specific guidelines on organizing family group conferences, the reader is referred to the Manual for Coordinators and Communities: The Organization and Practice of Family Group Decision Making.

4.1 The Families

Of the 32 families who took part in the project, 12 were based in or around St. John's, 11 resided in Nain, and 9 lived on the Port au Port Peninsula. These families had a total of 82 children under the age of 18 at the time of the conference. This section first describes the families and then examines the abuse within the households.

4.1.1 Description of Families

4.1.1.1 Households

The 32 referred families lived in households that could, at the time of the initial referral, be characterized as two-parent, lone-mother, and, in the case of Nain, 3-generations. The last refers to a household where the grandparents, their children, and their grandchildren live together; in these cases, the parents of the grandchildren are single mothers. In must be noted that these categories changed, as in a situation where a lone parent began co-habiting with a partner, for example, and some of the categories overlap, as in the case of a lone mother whose children and grandchildren lived with her. As shown in Table 4.1, the three sites differed in terms of the most frequent household: for St. John's it was the lone-mother, for the Port au Port Peninsula it was the two-parent, and for Nain it was the 3-generations.

Table 4.1
Type of Household for the Referred Families by Site (N = 32)

SITE	TWO PARENT	LONE MOTHER	3 GENERATIONS
Nain	3	2	6
Port au Port	5	4	0
St. John's	4	8	0
Total	12	14	6

4.1.1.2 Children

The number of children was notably larger for Nain than for the other two sites, even when the number of participating families at each is taken into account. As Table 4.2 shows Nain had the greatest number (38) of children under the age of 18 while the Port au Port had the lowest number of children (18). The average number of children (3.45) in Nain families was also substantially greater than those for the St. John's families (2.17) and the Port au Port families (2.00). As noted in chapter 1, the ratio of children to adults in Nain is quite high.

Table 4.2
Number of Children in Project Families by Site (N = 82)

SITE	n	X for Families
Nain	38	3.45
Port au Port	18	2.00
St. John's	26	2.17
Total	82	2.56

Note. These figures include only the children under the age of 18 years in the 32 project families.

As seen in Table 4.3, there were somewhat more boys (47) than girls (35) in all project families. This pattern held also true for each project site.

Table 4.3
Gender of Children in Project Families by Site (N = 82)

SITE	MALE	FEMALE
Nain	22	16
Port au Port	10	8
St. John's	15	11
Total	47	35

As seen in Table 4.4, the 82 children at the three sites were dispersed across all age groups but with a somewhat higher concentration among the school age and early teens. This pattern tended to hold true for the individual project sites. In all, there were 19 pre-schoolers, 23 in the ages 5-9 group, 28 in the 10-14 group, and 12 in the 15-17 group. The overall average age was 8.90 years, with the averages for each project site

fairly comparable: 8.63 years in Nain, 9.06 years on the Port au Port Peninsula, and 9.18 years in St. John's.

Table 4.4
Ages of Children by Project Site (N = 82)

SITE	<1	1-2	3-4	5-9	10-14	15-17
Nain	0	3	6	12	12	5
Port au Port	1	2	1	5	7	2
St. John's	2	1	4	6	9	4
Total	3	5	11	23	28	12

Note. Children were divided according to age groups used by the Looking After Children Assessment and Action Records.

4.1.1.3 Ethnic Origins

As Table 4.5 show, a major difference among the three sites is the ethnic origins of the mothers and fathers of the children. When asked to identify their origins, all project families in Nain characterized themselves as Inuit or settler. The term "settler" refers to people who settled along the Labrador coast since before 1940 and tend to be a mixture of European and Inuit descent. Both Inuit and settlers are members of the Labrador Inuit Association. With one exception, the families in St. John's referred to themselves as anglophone; this finding is in keeping with the largely British and Irish demography of the capitol city.

Contrary to expectations, none of the families on the Port au Port Peninsula viewed themselves as francophone. Two parents were typed as métis, a mixture of European and Micmac descent. The rest characterized themselves as anglophone. It is likely that the research question which asked about language rather than ethnic origin masked the extent of French descent of the project families. Many families of French descent on the Peninsula use English as their first language although this is starting to change with the introduction of schooling and social programming in French. The francophone character of some of the families on the Port au Port Peninsula becomes more apparent when the names of the families and their extended family are taken into account. As discussed later in this chapter, a few relatives viewed themselves as primarily francophone (see Table 4.17) although none requested French translation for the conferences.

Table 4.5
Ethnic Origin of Children's Mother and Father by Project Site

SITE	MOTHER				FATHER			
	Anglophone	Francophone	Aboriginal	Other	Anglophone	Francophone	Aboriginal	Other
Nain [a]	0	0	11	0	0	0	11	0
Port au Port	7	0	2	0	9	0	1	0
St. John's	11	0	0	1	14	0	0	1
Total	18	0	13	1	23	0	12	1

Note. The number of mothers totals 32 for the 32 families referred to the project. The number of fathers totals 36 because some of the children in a family had different fathers. The category "Anglophone" refers to English-speaking, "Francophone" refers to French-speaking, and "aboriginal" refers to Inuit, Micmac, settler, and métis.
[a]Data are missing for 2 Nain fathers.

4.1.1.4 Caregivers

At the time of the conference, the large majority of the children were residing with parents or other kin. As seen in Table 4.6, 70% (58) of the children were with a parent/s and another 11% (9) were with relatives. The remaining 18% (15) were primarily in non-family foster care.

Table 4.6
Number of Children by Type of Regular Caregiving Arrangement (N = 82)

DOMICILE	Nain	Port au Port	St. John's	Total
Parent/s	32	12	14	58
Relatives	3	3	3	9
Foster Carer	3	2	8	13
Group Home	0	0	1	1
Open Custody	0	1	0	1
Secure Custody	0	0	0	0

4.1.2 Abuse

The project's statement of philosophy stressed that abuse against any one family member cannot be stopped unless abuse against other family members is also addressed. Thus, family violence in this study needed to be examined beyond the mandated areas of concerns of the referring agencies, whether it was child abuse in the case of Child Welfare or adult abuse in the case of adult correctional services (see chapter 4). In order to capture some of the broader patterns of abuse in the families, this study examined the violence in the 32 project families in terms of whether it was being committed by males or females against males or females and whether it was being committed by adults or children against adults or children. Gender seemed to be an appropriate variable to study since other Canadian studies have found that in situations of spousal assault that men are the chief perpetrators and women the chief victims (Trevethan & Tajeshwer, 1992; Wilson & Daly, 1994) and in situations of child sexual abuse that males are the main perpetrators (Badgley, 1984). A study of violence across and within generations made it possible to examine what types of violence go together. It is increasingly recognized that child abuse is often accompanied by woman battering (Bowker, Arbitell, & McFerron, 1988; Stark & Flitcraft, 1988).

To carry out this analysis, the coordinators completed an Abuse Scale on which they plotted their estimates of the percentages of abuse for a family along the dimensions of gender and age. In addition, they appended written comments on the patterns of abuse in the families. The term "abuse" here was kept separate from child

neglect. Coordinators completed these scales after the conferences, so that they would have as much information as possible on the families. On the scales, the coordinators limited their analyses to the families' current situation because the historical patterns often diverged into various permutations both in the parents' families of origin and any prior relationships with partners. As listed in tables 4.8 and 4.9, each dimension had four directions of abuse (e.g., male against female, child against adult). When completing the Abuse Scale for each dimension on a family, the coordinator's percentages for the four dimensions were to total 100%; for example, in one family the percentages on gender were 75% for male abusing female, 25% for female abusing male, 0% for male abusing male, and 0% for female abusing female, with all of these percentages totalling to 100%.

In 4 families where the concerns centred only around child neglect, the families were given a total of 0% for abuse. It should be noted, though, that abuse was often evident in their pasts. For instance, one coordinator wrote, "This is a single mother who grew up in an abusive home, has been in three abusive relationships, is not now in an abusive relationship but is unable to cope with raising her [children] without support." Although all of the remaining 28 families suffered from some form of abuse, percentages were not available for one Nain family, and thus 27 out of the 31 families were charted on the scale as having some form of abuse.

The frequencies of occurrences in Table 4.7 show that neither males nor females were exempt from inflicting or receiving abuse. Moreover, with a total frequency at 57, it is evident that in the 27 families with abuse, this violence was being committed in variety of directions. In fact, in only 4 of the families was the abuse committed 100% of the time in one direction: these included two cases of male abusing female, 1 of female abusing male, and 1 of female abusing female. Nevertheless, gender patterns are evident across the project families. Not unexpectedly, males were the most common perpetrators and females were the most common victims. According to the coordinators' estimates, males committed violence on average about 44% of the time against females and 6% against other males while females committed violence on average about 22% against males and 14% against other females. For example, a coordinator noted, "Ninety percent of the violence in this family is attributable to the father's drinking problem and explosive temper. . . . Abuse is . . . directed toward female children mainly by the father but also at times by the mother." The written comments also showed that male violence tended to escalate and encompass further victims. For example, a coordinator wrote, "The abuse began by the boyfriend abusing his girlfriend by beating her up; and after he had been in prison he began to make threats against the whole family."

Interestingly, these percentages also show that abuse tended to be highest across gender lines whether perpetrated by males or females. A case in point, a coordinator writing about a mother observed, "she . . . has been emotionally and physically abusive to her four children--she has been more abusive to her male children than her female children." It should be further noted that the standard deviation of

percentages is lowest for within-gender violence, and especially evident for male-to-male violence where in no case did the percentage of male-to-male abuse rise above 50%. Sometimes, though, the abuse appeared to be strongest within a gender. For instance, one coordinator observed, "the mom in this case tends to abuse her [young] daughter more so than the others, saying that she doesn't like girls."

Table 4.7
Frequency of Occurrence and Percentage of Abuse Committed in Project Families by the Gender of the Perpetrator and Victim

DIRECTION OF ABUSE	f OF OCCURRENCE	MINIMUM TO MAXIMUM %	X PERCENTAGE	SD of PERCENTAGE
Male Abusing Female	22	0 - 100	44.03	34.84
Female Abusing Male	16	0 - 100	21.94	27.28
Male Abusing Male	9	0 - 50	6.45	12.99
Female Abusing Female	10	0 - 100	14.19	25.47

Note. The scales were completed on 31 of the 32 families. Data are missing for one Nain family.

Table 4.8 shows that abuse in many families was committed by both adults and children and against both adults and children. Unidirectional abuse occurred in only 6 of the 27 families: 4 of adult abusing child and 2 of adult abusing adult. From the table, it is clearly apparent that adults were the chief perpetrators: the 45 instances where the adult was the offender consumed nearly 80% of the 57 occurrences of abuse. Moreover, the percentages showed that the amount of abuse being inflicted was greatest by adults. The coordinators estimated an average of 43% for adult-to-child abuse and an average of 35% for adult-to-adult abuse. The abuse committed by children remained relatively low, with a maximum percentage at 40% in any family. It should be noted that parents were not always cognizant that violence against children was not an acceptable practice; for example, a researcher observed, "I don't feel that the parents had any awareness that their behaviours were wrong or harmful. . . . It was a complete shock to the father to learn that you could get into trouble with the law for hitting another person."

Table 4.8
Percentage of Abuse Committed in Project Families by the Age of the Perpetrator and Victim

DIRECTION OF ABUSE	f OF OCCURRENCE	MINIMUM TO MAXIMUM %	X PERCENTAGE	SD OF PERCENTAGE
Adult Abusing Adult	21	0 - 100	35.16	33.08
Adult Abusing Child	24	0 - 100	43.39	34.46
Child Abusing Child	6	0 - 30	4.68	10.00
Child Abusing Adult	6	0 - 40	4.19	9.84

Note. The scales were completed on 31 of the 32 families. Data are missing for one Nain family.

While the scale ratings were confined to current family relationships, the appended descriptions revealed that the abuse in many cases crossed generations:

> The mom in this family was physically, sexually, and emotionally abused as a young person. She is now in a [long-term] relationship . . . where she has been physically abused and is being emotionally abused by her partner. Both parents are emotionally abusive to the children. The . . . son is physically and emotionally abusive to his mother and . . . sister.
>
> There was a long history of abuse in the family. Although I am not sure about the mother's family of origin, I know that there was abuse in the father's family of origin. When the father was alive he was physically abusive towards his wife and children. He also sexually assaulted one of his daughters. The mother's boyfriend now abuses her, and many of the children have been in abusive relationships.
>
> The violence in this family has been physical and emotional towards the female partner/mother in the family, and primarily emotional abuse of the children by the father. The father comes from a violent home. His mother has been physically and emotionally abused by his father for 45 years. All . . . of his siblings (including him) were physically and emotionally abused by his father. The mother's family has not been abusive.

4.2 Length of Preparations

Organizing the family group conferences was the most time consuming of the coordinators' activities and required throughout close consultation with family members and involved professionals. The main activities were contacting family representatives, identifying who to invite, inviting participants, addressing concerns about the conference, making practical arrangements for holding the conferences, and dealing with final preparations. Throughout, the coordinators were responsible for negotiating ways in which to ensure the participants' immediate safety while also pulling together the necessary people for formulating and implementing an effective plan.

On the average these preparations took place over a 3 to 4 week period in advance of the conference although the length varied by the needs and circumstances of particular families. For instance with one family where the parents were developmentally delayed, the coordinator explained that the full four weeks were necessary because of "the need to repeat key information and make sure they understood what I was doing every step of the way. The other reason for needing this amount of Preparation time was because of the large number of family/friends I had to contact and prepare for the FGC (35 in total)." In the next conference, she reported that the preparation time was again four weeks but "not as intensive as the previous FGC." As a result, she reported, "I was able to work with another family at the same time without feeling I was shortchanging either of the families."

The time necessary for preparations is quite similar to that reported for New Zealand where in a sample of 184 conferences the average length of time for convening a conference was 36 days from the date of referral (Paterson & Harvey, 1991). Since the New Zealand study was studying the practice of family conferencing during the first 6 to 18 months of implementation, they as true of the Family Group Decision Making Project were also reporting figures from when the approach was a recent innovation.

4.3 First Contacts

Once the coordinators had received the referral, they contacted the family, usually starting with the mother, father, or both. Who to contact first was determined in large part by family composition or dynamics, community culture, project policies, or simply immediate accessibility. Even when the coordinators had a local addresses for the parents, reaching them was not always an easy matter at any of the sites, especially when they did not have telephones. Recording her efforts to reach one father and his wife, the Port au Port coordinator wrote, "I had made four attempts before I reached them. They were not at home and did not have a phone so at the last visit to their home I left a note in their mailbox. The Dad called me that evening and I agreed to meet with them the next morning." The Nain coordinator spoke of "tracking down" parents in his relatively small community, finding a mother walking on the road or a father outside chopping wood. In cases where the a father or step-father was incarcerated, the

coordinators faced another hurdle to jump in making contact. Their ability to reach inmates, though, varied. One coordinator found the process quite frustrating while another was able to "touch base with the father almost on a daily basis."

The coordinators recognized that the difficulty at times was more than simply locating parents; the parents might have reasons for avoiding contact. One coordinator noted that she was unable to reach a mother for over one month and explained,

> She did not have a telephone and is in [a program] during the day. I dropped by her house at least 8 times but never found her at home. I sent her a letter and brochure describing the Project and asking her to contact me. She finally contacted me after I left a handwritten note under her door asking her to call me to confirm her interest or lack thereof so that I could let [the referring agent] know her decision. In essence, I believe she was wary of the idea initially but contacted me because she did not want to be seen as having a negative effect on her estranged common-law spouse's chance for Parole. As a victim of violence, I believe that she felt pressured to see me however once we met she was positive and keen to participate in the Project. I felt assured that after our initial meeting that she understood that she had a choice about participating and that if she did not wish to pursue this referral the offender's chance of Parole would not be hindered.

For many families, making contact with the project was more than learning about a possible service. Their relationship with the referring agency influenced greatly the way in which they viewed becoming involved with the project.

The normal intake procedure was for the coordinator to contact first the parent who was considered to be serving as the family representative. This meant that the usual first point of contact was the mother and/or father in two-parent families, the mother in lone-mother families, or the parent holding custody where the couple had separated, but the coordinators' approaches varied. The change in project policies from voluntary to direct referrals (see chapter 4) meant that the coordinator did not have to start with a parent and could contact first another family member such as an aunt or grandmother. The result as described in chapter 4 was that any one family representative could not exert an undue veto over the holding of a conference.

In planning their first contacts, coordinators also took into account the abusive situation in the home. For instance, one coordinator described the strategy employed in a domestic violence situation where the coordinator had worked previously with the couple in a different capacity:

> My first priority was the safety of the immediate family. I had experience working undercover with this Mom and I set about my work in that manner. I sent a message via the Homecare worker for the Mom to contact me

> when it was safe for her to do so. She did call and we planned when I would come to the house and what she would tell her husband about the phone call. I arrived on schedule and he met me at the door. He seemed happy to see me. We hadn't seen each other in about 2 years. He invited me in and we all sat at the table. I apologized for the mysteriousness of my visit but explained that I had wanted to speak with them both at the same time so they would both get the same information. This very statement protected her [the mother] from the accusations and harassment I know she would have experienced after my departure if he had known she had anything to do with my being in their home.

4.4 Role Clarification

Coordinators learned early in the project to separate themselves from the referring agency. First, they needed to clarify with families that their role was not to represent child welfare or another public authority but instead they were to organize a conference so that families would have greater input into decisions over their and their relatives' lives. This particularly remained an issue throughout the life of the project for the Port au Port coordinator since her office was physically located within the Department of Social Services, giving her at least initially the image of serving as its "snoop." While the issue was accentuated on the peninsula, this coordinator was not alone: coordinators at all three sites had to repeatedly distinguish their role as evident in their reflective notes. For instance, when another coordinator and site researcher contacted one mother, her "very first reaction was that we worked with the Department of Social Services and she didn't want anything to do with us." On learning further about how the project would provide an opportunity "whereby the family members would discuss and decide the safety of the children, and come up with a plan. . . . The mom then became a little excited" and eventually signed the consent forms. Another coordinator noted that a father eventually "trusted me a little" because of the coordinator's "neutral position" between the family and Social Services. For a different family, the trust building was a protracted process. Recording the aftermath of a home visit, the coordinator noted,

> Within an hour of returning to my office, I received the first of the many calls I would receive over the next four weeks. The Mom was extremely angry saying her husband thinks this is all `bullshit' and I'm only spying on them and reporting back to [the Department of Social Services]. I asked if I could come back to the house and meet with them again. She said yes. I went back several times after that and it wasn't until the end of the week and 5 visits with them that she signed the Consent to Participate in the Research form. It took a great deal of talking and trust-building which remains shaky even to today.

In another instance, a coordinator realized that she needed to physically separate herself from the child welfare worker whom she had accompanied on a home visit:

"during this initial meeting [the worker] proceeded to take an authoritative stance with the Mom and I felt I had to separate myself from him at that time. I went into the living room and played with the dog." Despite their best efforts to distinguish themselves from Social Services, "there is no escaping it" concluded one coordinator after being warmly welcomed by the child's caregivers who then "introduced him to me and told him I was from "Social Services." For some social work students who were placed with the project for their field work, their identity as conference coordinator needed to be quickly distinguished from their past or on-going role as an employee of the Department of Social Services. This strategy appeared to be effective in all cases; and as one student noted, the parents "did not appear to have any difficulty with this and seemed comfortable planning their Family Group Conference with me."

Second, the coordinators learned that they needed to keep an open mind about the families and avoid prematurely adopting the referring agent's assessment. A coordinator wrote in the reflective notes, "Initially, I was given a very negative picture of the Mom in this family by the Child Protection Worker. . . . I never met the woman described to me." With great honesty, another coordinator relayed overcoming prejudices shared by many of the professionals in the area. The coordinator wrote, "My first reaction when I was handed this referral was `Oh God - no.' I had dealt with this family before and I knew what I was in for. At first I found myself trapped in the same mind set as everyone else in this office - the `that family' attitude."

4.5 Explanations

In the initial meeting or meetings, the coordinators explained that they had received a referral from Social Services (or other referring agency) to contact the family and see if family members wished to hold a family group conference. They then explained its purpose, approach, auspices, and legal implications as well as the evaluation components. At this time they stressed that participation for family members was voluntary and that confidentiality would be respected with the exception of reporting child abuse. These explanations usually took a great deal of effort and time. This was evident in the description by one site researcher who accompanied the coordinator on a visit with a couple who were notorious both in the community and at local agencies for their obstreperous nature:

> The Coordinator was very explanatory in informing them [the family] what they can do about this i.e., having a Family Group Conference and telling their side of the story. The Coordinator used her expertise in dealing with this family and I was very impressed with the way she handled herself and the situation. Before leaving, everyone appeared very well informed of the (FGC) procedures and expectations and they both expressed they understood the explanation. Still they were not 100% sure that they would follow through with the conference. I felt totally mentally exhausted upon leaving their home.

On these visits, the Nain coordinator was often accompanied by the site researcher who provided translation for Inuktitut-speaking family members. Even if the family members were conversant with English, translation into their mother tongue was particularly important since he was not only conveying a factual description of the project but trying to help the families to envision what it would be like in terms of their own lives. In one set of reflective notes, he wrote, "I had [the researcher] interpret for me as I explained the reason for the referral and how the families in the past have gone through such a conference and what can be expected to come out of them, things like emotion and family members opening up and talking about things that they have held in for a long period of time."

After discussing the project, most family members despite some concerns became interested in taking part. The Nain coordinator described a mother as "very receptive of all of this information," and in another household he observed that "all seemed eager and willing to take part." In the case of a woman who had extensive injury from years of abuse, he commented, that "much to our surprise [she] was very easy to talk with and understood why we were there." The St. John's coordinator reported that a mother, whom the referring agency had assumed would refuse to participate and depicted as lacking any interest in her children in care, "was tearful and open in discussing what had been happening in her family. She signed the Consent to Participate in the Project on my second visit to her." And the Port au Port coordinator related that one family representative gave her a warm reception in part because she was a hospitable individual but also because "she was obviously a very desperate woman who deeply loved this child" for whom the conference was being called.

Because of the extensive community work in Nain, some people were informed about the project prior to becoming involved as family participants. The coordinator noted that in preparing for one conference "family members were very eager to get started with this conference as two or three of these family members already knew about the [project] through direct dealings with Joan and Gale [the project administrators] while they were in Nain talking with the different groups and organizations." In Nain and on the Port au Port Peninsula once the project had been in progress for some months, a number of families had heard about the project in advance of the coordinator's visit and were aware that other families had benefited from the conference both in terms of gaining supports and material resources. In fact, the Port au Port coordinator reported that one young person after talking with another young person who had attended an earlier conference expressed the unrealistic (from the coordinator's perspective) hope that a snowmobile might be included in his family's plan.

In addition to overviewing the family group conference, the coordinators explained the research and evaluation components of the demonstration project. They emphasized that participation was voluntary and that their confidentiality would be respected (see chapter 3). In St. John's, families were closest to Memorial University and tended to be somewhat more concerned than families at the other two sites about

the confidentiality of research documents. In one case, a St. John's mother asked to speak directly with a project administrator about research protocols before agreeing to take part. In Nain, the challenge was explaining research procedures and forms in the language of a very different culture from that of the university. Contrary to some of his expectations, the Nain coordinator found that families were able to follow his explanations. For example, when meeting with a couple with an extensive history of woman abuse, he reported,

> I had [the Inuktitut-speaking researcher] explain the consent forms as we went through them. Before we went through [the research instruments], I asked that we do one at a time and the other would mind waiting in the hall. I offered coffee and began to work with the [wife], who was very good and understood the meaning very well, because of her condition, crippled and badly scarred from beatings that she had received in the past, I just assumed that we would have a great deal of difficulty in making her understand.

4.6 Community Panel

As early as possible in their work with a family, the coordinators drew upon local resources for consultation on the most appropriate strategies and resources to bring to their work with the family. Although all the coordinators frequently contacted the project administrators for advice on working with families and collateral, they also required consultants who were versed in the local culture and organizations. As discussed in chapter 2, the coordinators in St. John's and on the Port au Port Peninsula consulted with a community panel; in Nain, where a separate community panel was not formed, the coordinator used to some extent the local advisory committee and a consultant from the Labrador Inuit Health Commission for this purpose.

Because the names and situations of specific families would be shared with community panelists, the coordinators reviewed with family members the list of community panelists. The family members then picked which panelists they did not want the coordinator to consult. In St. John's the family members did not usually know the panelists and few panelists were rejected; this left the coordinator with a large selection of consultants based in a wide array of organizations and disciplines (e.g, education, law, social work). Quite the reverse pattern was found by the coordinator at the Port au Port site where the large majority of panelists were known to the families and vetoed on the basis of their position (e.g., as a school authority).

After the extensive winnowing, the Port au Port coordinator found, on the one hand, that the two remaining panelists offered very helpful guidance in planning the conferences and, on the other hand, that it would have been helpful to bring a wider community representation to the panel and to enlist some counsellors to offer their clinical experience. In a focus group, the two community panelists and coordinator described their sessions together as beginning with an "update" by the coordinator on

the families and then moving into a "brainstorm" session. The coordinator had the benefit of one panelist's knowledge of many of the families from her own work with them and the other panelist's fresh perspective because she was a newcomer to the area. Both panelists agreed that the project was "valuable" with one describing it as "one of the most worthwhile programs the area," that their work as panelists was not overly demanding timewise, that their small numbers made it "easier to get together," and that their participation yielded personal benefits. The panelist who was new the area found it to be a way to make connections between her program and other ones; and the other panelist commented that the involvement "helped her have a non-judgmental view of the families whom have known her before."

In a focus group with her panelists, the St. John's coordinator summed up her experiences with them and stated "that from her perspective there has been a great deal of comfort in being able to contact people within various systems to get their points of view." For their part the St. John's community panelists appreciated taking part in a project which they depicted as "innovative" and "empowering" of families and as being "challenging and a learning process" for themselves. As members of the community panel, they broadened their contacts across disciplines, and they also were forced to re-think ways of working with families. In particular, as panelists they needed to stop coming up with the solutions, or to use their term the "fix," for families and instead contribute information and ideas to families who then had a basis from which to formulate their own plans. As true of the Port au Port panelists, they did not find the work unduly taxing, in their case because the voluntary nature of their involvement and the number of available consultants made it possible for them in good conscious to turn down the invitation to attend when their own work was very demanding; moreover, when they left the consultation, they did not walk away with more work, instead the coordinator would be acting on their advice.

In Nain, the local advisory committee decided not to form a separate community panel and explained that two committees would place too much of a demand on the community's volunteer resources. Reflecting back on the work of the advisory committee, one member observed that at first the committee had discussed numbers of referrals, stages in the process, where meetings would be held, and how plans were working out, but once the project appeared to running well, they did not hold many meetings. This interviewee felt that it would have been helpful to have a community panel because the advisory committee included a lot of outsiders (e.g., Social Services, the police) and did not deal with specific families; a community panel could have been composed entirely of local people, who could address the specific referral, would know the family history, and could contribute to a game plan for the conference.

The result was that the Nain coordinator did not receive the same degree of local consultation as true in the other two sites and was more dependent on close communication with and more frequent on-site visits by the project administrators. The administrators could not fill the gap on knowledge of Inuit ways, something that the coordinator tried to overcome by involving representatives from the Inuit Elders and Inuit

Women's Group in the family group conferences as information providers on Inuit ways and as support persons. In various meetings, both of these Inuit bodies agreed to assist the project, as one elder stated, "I can't help everyone but if someone comes for advice, I give it." A member of the Inuit Women's Group noted that "families are saying that the conferences are helping them" and "need community elders to come to the conferences"; the members of the group said that they "were willing to send a representative to the conferences."

4.7 Social Networks and Confidants

Once family members understood the project and had agreed to take part, they drew up an invitation list for the conference. To lay the ground work for making up the guest list, the coordinators first engaged the family member in mapping out the important people and groups in their lives and their relationships with them. To carry this out, the coordinators employed a Social Network Map whose findings will be reported in the 1996 report on outcome findings (see chapter 3) and a series of Close Friends Questions. Often family members assumed that they had few contacts, only to find at the end of the process that their social network was far greater than anticipated. One coordinator observed that after completing the map a mother "was a little surprised herself at the number of people she had in her life." The map also helped the coordinators become familiar with the family, their social networks, and their current and potential supports and stresses.

In conjunction with the map, family members completed a series of Close Friend Questions on whether or not they had a close friend in whom to confide, particularly regarding matters of abuse. These questions were completed by 80 individuals: 48 in Nain, 8 on the Port au Port Peninsula, and 24 in St. John's. The numbers for the Port au Port are low compared to those for the other two sites but represent at least one key individual participating in a conference where family agreed to take part in the research component of the demonstration project.[1] The Close Friend Questions included 5 items listed in Table 4.9. Each of these items were scored as follows: a "yes" response was given a score of 4, a "no" was given a 0, and a "perhaps" was seen as the mid-point and given a score of 2. Combined these 5 items formed a total Close Friend score with a possible range from 0 to 20. The total scores for the three project sites varied somewhat with the Port au Port having the highest mean at 17.50 (SD = 2.78), Nain having the middle mean at 15.62 (SD = 4.70), and St. John's having the lowest mean at 14.67 (SD = 6.09). It is difficult to form conclusions on the meaning of this variation because of the different numbers of respondents at the three sites. Nevertheless, one can speculate that in the smaller communities despite the fears around gossiping neighbours, people were more likely to have someone in whom they could confide.

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[1] For conferences where the coordinators completed the Close Friend Questions, Nain had an average of almost 5 respondents per conference, St. John's had an average slightly over two, and the Port au Port had an average slightly over one.

The table shows that the family members interviewed usually had a close friend who was considered to be trustworthy and understanding. The total average score is moderately high at 15.52. Given the abuse prevalent in these families, however, it is of concern that the lowest individual mean (2.35) in the table is for past performance in disclosing the violence. On this item Port au Port has the highest mean (3.25), St. John's has the second highest (2.44), and Nain has the lowest (2.17). When asked if they would go to this trusted individual if further violence occurs, however, the mean scores at the three sites become closer to one another (Port au Port $\underline{X}$ = 3.50, Nain $\underline{X}$ = 3.38, and St. John's $\underline{X}$ = 3.30). Although one is left wondering if the family members will actually carry through on informing a confidant in the future of a reoccurrence of the abuse, the hope is that the family group conference would have cemented positive ties and firmed up opportunities for future disclosures of abuse.

Table 4.9
Mean Responses to Close Friend Questions

QUESTIONS	X	SD
Do you have a close friend/family member in whom you can confide?	3.38	1.34
Is there someone who understands you?	3.35	1.26
Is there someone with whom you can openly discuss the violence/abuse in your family?	3.15	1.42
Have you discussed what has been happening with this person?[a]	2.35	1.49
Would you go to them if further violence occurred in your family?	3.37	1.22
TOTAL SCORE	15.52	5.02

Note. Yes = 4, perhaps = 2, no = 0. Total number of respondents was 80, with one missing value for the last two items listed.
[a]Forced-choice responses for this question only were "fully," "partly," and "not at all."

Combined with the map, the information from the Close Friend Questions offered the coordinators insights into the person's situation as one coordinator reported:

I asked [the family member] to map 15 people who her relationships with

were important to her. She gasped and said 15 - I'll never do it. When she finished, she had 30 people in her map. This woman is well connected in the community in terms of family, friends, neighbours and organizations. However, when we did the close friend scale - she did not have anyone whom she feels she can truly confide in. When . . . asked why, she responded that she does not trust anyone. . . . There is no loyalty - not even among most family members. The message seems to be "I like you today but I may not like you tomorrow" - depends.

In hindsight, the coordinators at times wished that they had undertaken the social network mapping with more family members, either to help them locate a support person to bring to the conference or to identify in advance of the conference possible programs or organizations to include in the plans.

4.8 Invitation List

After completing the social network mapping, the family members were then primed to develop a guest list for the conference. Typically, family members immediately identified certain relatives to invite, hesitated over others, and rejected a few. On a form entitled "People to Invite to the Conference," the coordinators recorded whom the family members wanted to invite; if they wanted a support person and if so, whom; and whom they did not want to invite. As seen in Table 4.10, overall respondents wanted to invite more people than they did not want to invite. On average they wanted to invite 11 guests and did not want to invite between two to three people.

Table 4.10
Mean Number of People that Interviewees Wanted to Invite and Not to Invite

	N OF RESPONDENTS	MINIMUM TO MAXIMUM	X	SD
How Many People Did They Want to Invite?	36[a]	4 - 27	11.00	6.12
How Many People Did They Not Want to Invite?	36[b]	0 - 6	2.56	1.37

[a] Data are missing for 3 respondents.
[b] Data are missing for 9 respondents.

Table 4.11 summarizes the roles of interviewees for whom the coordinators

recorded the number of people they wanted to invite. Although the data are incomplete for all families, the numbers indicate that coordinators consulted the most closely with mothers on whom to invite.

Table 4.11
Family Role of Interviewees Citing a Reason for Inviting a Guest to a First-Time Conference

ROLE IN/WITH FAMILY	TOTAL
Mother	16
Father	6
Daughter	5
Son	4
Other Family	3
TOTAL	34

Table 4.12 below lists the main reasons cited by family members for inviting a guest to the conference. By far the most frequently cited reason was that the guest was a member of the family, whether in the invitor's immediate family of origin or extended family. This reason was cited over 40% (151) of the time. The next most common reasons had to do with a positive rapport between the invitor and invited, with the latter seen as a friend (47 times), a supportive individual (45 times), or understanding/insightful (30 times). Comments in these categories included: "she is my grandmother and is supportive and tells it like it is," "she'll be there if I burst out in tears, swear, or do something bad," "he understands me and can help," a "close friend with good insight," "he sees what's going on," or simply "she'll be there for me." A caring relationship, however, was not always the criterion for inviting someone. In 22 instances, the presence of an individual was desired precisely because he or she was seen as involved in the situation or a part of the problem. Explanations for extending these invitations included: "she is part of my troubles and problems," "so he'll understand what's going on," he "needs to recognize that there is a problem so he has to be part of the solution of resolving," or on a pragmatic note, "she's the one who would be looking after my children when they go to my father's." In 17 cases, the person

wanted to be able to express their feelings to another person: "I want him to hear what we have to say about him" or "so she can hear what I have to say." Sixteen times people were desired because they wanted to help: "community elder and thinks he can help" or "my daughter's brownie leader who told us she would help." At other times (12), the person was invited because others wanted them to attend the conference; for example, one mother said, "I don't mind even though she isn't my friend anymore but the victim may want her there." Nine times the reason cited was an individual's professional capacity such as counsellor or daycare worker. And in 13 cases a person was placed on the guest list either because they were viewed as someone who could help (e.g., "don't talk much about it with her but I feel she can help me") or would speak out at the conference (e.g., "Good friend. Smart. Talks out.").

Table 4.12
Frequency of Reason Cited for Inviting a Guest to a First-Time Conferences

REASON FOR INVITING	f
A Family Member	151
A Friend	47
Supportive	45
Understanding or Insightful	30
Involved in the Situation or Part of the Problem	22
Wanting to Tell the Person How I Feel	17
They Feel They Can Help Me	16
Others Want Them to Come	12
A Professional	9
Can Help Me	7
Can Speak Up For Me	6
TOTAL	362

Note. Data came from 34 respondents.

4.9 Exclusions

In addition to citing reasons for inviting guests, family members also gave reasons why they did not want someone to attend. Where the coordinators recorded these reasons, the most common respondent was the mother, again indicating that her wishes were particularly sought after (see Table 4.13).

Table 4.13
Family Role of Interviewees Citing Reason for Not Inviting a Person to a First-Time Conference

ROLE IN/WITH FAMILY	TOTAL
Mother	13
Father	5
Daughter	3
Son	3
Other Family	1
Friend	2
TOTAL	27

As seen in Table 4.14, the most common single reason for not inviting was a child's age. Almost all the remaining rationales had to do with some limitation or negative characteristic of the individual. While the project was committed to overcoming various obstacles preventing people from attending, the inviters perceived these as too limiting: "he is deaf and wouldn't be able to understand," "she is disabled and may not be able to come," or "she has bad nerves and may not want to come." Others were rejected because of their history with the family: I "don't feel this person knows enough about our problems and should not get involved," "she never cared or helped anyway," "his presence will only cause unnecessary tension at the conference," "when she drinks she talks about family matters and makes things worse," he "may tell his other friends and embarrass me and my family," or a terrifying possibility, I "do not want children's father involved as he is dangerous and may attempt to exert control and take the children out of the country."

Table 4.14
Frequency of Reasons Cited for Not Inviting a Person to a First-Time Conference

REASON FOR NOT INVITING	f
Too Young to Take Part	12
Do Not Like Them	11
Don't Think It Is Their Business	11
Will Make Things Worse	9
Wouldn't Understand My Problem/Family	8
Don't Trust Them	6
Would Not Be Helpful	5
Too Inconvenient for Them	4
Don't Care About Me	3
TOTAL	69

Note. Data are from 27 respondents.

Although no individual family group member had the power to exclude any other person, the coordinators attended closely to the wishes of persons who had been abused or the wishes of non-abusing mothers. Over the course of the entire project, only one person was formally excluded by a coordinator, and this decision was later reversed at the family group conference. It was a situation of a separated couple where the woman had been severely abused by her former partner, the biological father of some of her children. During the initial planning with the coordinator, the mother expressed fears about her ex-partner returning to the community for the conference; and contrary to the expressed wishes of the father, the coordinator refused to request travel funds for his attending the conference. At the conference, the family identified that his participation was necessary for developing a plan for meeting the children's needs and, with the concurrence of the mother, asked that he be invited to a second session of the group. Formal exclusions were not only imposed by coordinators. In one case, an offender had a court order to stay away from the victim; although contemplated, the judge was not asked to lift the ban because the focus of the conference was not on the offender's relationship with his ex-partner.

At times, coordinators wondered if they should be excluding offenders or their side of the family, particularly in situations of long-term physical and sexual abuse. Reflecting back on the preparations for a conference where the child had connections to the maternal family, biological father's family, and offending step-father's family, the coordinator wrote,

> My first mental debate consisted of thinking around whether or not the offender's family should be invited to the conference. Now that it is over, I feel I made the right decision [to invite them]. However, I also know that a very different conference would have occurred had they not been there. Without doubt, had they not been there the Mom would have been aggressively challenged by the members of the [biological father's] family. I feel I made the right decision because during my preparation with this family it became very clear to me that the two families were very enmeshed in each others' lives and they all considered the victim a member of their family. As well, it was very clear to me that the offender would continue to be a part of the Mom's life and the involvement of the offender's family in the plan was essential to the safety of the victim and the other child in the family.

In the evaluation workshop at the end of the project, one coordinator observed that she had gone through similar uncertainties about inviting a father who had abused his wife and children (now adults) over many years. She said, "I talked about excluding him but they [wife and children] all wanted him to hear it all."

Far more common than formal exclusions were informal ones that occurred through a variety of means. In some cases, family members did not make the coordinator aware of relatives, sometimes deliberately but also through oversight or ignorance on their part of these connections. In Nain where it was not uncommon for children at an early age to be placed by their parents in other homes, the kinship ties were often quite complex and unclear. The benefit was that with some work, the coordinator could uncover a wide network of connections which could be drawn upon in pulling together a family group for the conference. Family or community elders, relatives, and often the Inuk site researcher were rich sources of information. In all three project sites, the hard lives of some family members made it difficult to locate them. One coordinator learned that "the Dad has two brothers, one who is referred to as the `murderer' and the other as `lost'. The `murderer' was an extremely violent alcoholic. . . . No one knew where he is now or even if he is still alive. The other brother has not been home for many years and no one ever hears from him. Again, no one I spoke with knew how to reach him."

In other cases, family members withheld names at least initially. Likewise, a New Zealand study (Patterson & Harvey, 1991) of 184 family group conferences found that numbers of participants were often kept relatively small at an average of 6, often

because immediate family members refused to identify extended family out of shame or an effort to maintain their privacy. Although in the Newfoundland and Labrador project the average number of family group participants was somewhat greater (see chapter 5), coordinators faced resistance as well.

Much of this reluctance was a result of the family members' past and current relationships with their relatives and other community members. In pulling together the guest list with one mother, the coordinator reported,

> I spent a great deal of time negotiating with this Mom about who to invite to the conference. She has received so much negative feedback from everyone in her life and her community that she didn't want anyone to come. I kept saying to her "what do you think they'll learn at the conference that they don't already know?" She could not answer that question but confidentiality remained a really big issue throughout my work with this family.

Persevering, the coordinator was eventually able to elicit some names. These relatives, although they had lost contact with the mother, showed that they "care very much for the Mother" and at the conference "gave quite valuable input" and "good direction and support." Since the conference, the coordinator learned from the mother that these relatives have maintained contact and "although the Mom said they were busynosing - I sensed that she was really quite pleased about this."

As in the above example, further clarification of the conference's purpose and how it worked sometimes led family members to change their minds on who to invite. In another case, a mother who was being urged by the family of her former abusive partner to accept him back was "hesitant about inviting members of his family to the FGC at first, but as we began preparations she wanted them all there so they would get correct information about the situation and stop pressuring her." In other instances, the coordinators came to the same conclusions at the family members on not inviting certain relatives. For example, one coordinator reported,

> Both of the parents were reluctant to share the names and numbers of family members with me. It took a fair bit of discussion to get the names of the father's family, and I was only given the names of two sisters and a brother on the mother's side. I did have an opportunity to speak with the mother's mom, the critical nature of this contact and the adamant position of the mother that she did not want her parents involved led me to support this course.

It was common for coordinators to find that the mothers wished to exclude the biological fathers of their children. These were men with whom the women might not have had contact in years or did not want the father's exerting influence over the children. In one case, the mother simply did not know the whereabouts of the biological

father although both she and the young person in question would have liked to have had him attend. Some young people had reservations about inviting their biological fathers as evident with one youth when the coordinator "asked him about his father - he was adamant - he did not want him to be there." A young woman when asked if she wanted her biological father to attend said that "she really didn't care if her father was there or not and she meant it." In this case the coordinator decided not to call upon the father because "contacting him would certainly have caused a lot of pain in his family and possibly even a breakup - since the conference was not about her [the young woman] - there was nothing to gain."

4.10 Size of Invitation List

The project staff wavered on the optimal number of people to invite to a conference. At the end of the project in an evaluation workshop, the Port au Port and St. John's coordinators and researchers debated the merits of larger versus smaller sized conferences. Coming down on the side of larger as better, the Port au Port coordinator described the progression in her thinking on this matter:

> At first I was really towards everybody coming. And then I was more towards whoever is important to that person and who they feel is a part of the family. But the more people that I could negotiate with that person to get there, the better the conference was. . . . Definitely, the more family you can get to attend, and whatever skills that involves, I'm not sure I would want it to be law, but whatever skill it takes that you can negotiate to get people together. To get them agree to come together. The bigger the conference the better they were, the small ones were good too in that there were good plans and that, but a lot of stuff did not get addressed, dealt with, confronted, established, and left the same way it came in.

When asked why the larger size made for more challenging and confronting, the Port au Port researcher replied, "Because of the information that everybody had. There were more people there to share, to pass on to each other. Whereas with a smaller group, everybody just came with bits and pieces." Qualifying this position, the St. John's researcher stated:

> I think that it depends on each family. For each family I think there is an optimal number or size and I think that maybe it's hard to tell what it is. I agree that some are too small. But I also look at some of them that were quite large, almost unmanageable. I think that in the last one, if certain people hadn't been there and it had been just a little smaller that maybe discussion might have been a little more open. Some of the older people . . . were not comfortable, who didn't contribute a lot.

While acknowledging that the large group was unwieldy, the St. John's coordinator pointed out, "If I had excluded some of those people, none of that side of the family

would have come." She added, "I think that the opportunity to invite everyone and give them the choice to come is very important."

4.11 Children

Although the project did not formally set an age limit below which children were not to attend a family group conference, 12 years was the age normally used at the three sites. Below that age, children were usually seen as too young to take part because of the length of the meetings and their subject matter both by family members and the project coordinators. The project differed in this respect from family group conferences in New Zealand where legislation supported children's participation. According to the New Zealand Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act of 1989, children and young people have a right to take part in decisions at the family group conference but can be excluded if the coordinator believes that attending will not be in their best interests or for other reasons such as their degree of maturity or understanding of the proceedings. The Patterson and Harvey (1991) survey found that a child had been excluded in over one-fifth of the cases sampled.

In Nain, Inuit customs on young people not speaking in front of their elders reinforced to some extent the decision. In his reflective notes, the Nain coordinator recorded the discussion on this matter in one family: "the oldest of these five children is eight years old and family members from both sides agreed that they would be much too young to have any involvement in this conference." Strategies were used though to secure the views of children in Nain. These included the coordinator holding a pre-conference session with the children and then sharing their ideas later at the conference or picking a spokesperson to speak on behalf of the children at the conference. Likewise at the other two sites various means were used to ensure that the wishes of the children were taken into account. These included meeting privately with children to find out their views, having children prepare a written statement which would be read out at the conference, or placing a very young child's photograph in the middle of the conference room.

4.12 Support Persons

The project policy was that any child under the age 16 who had been abused and planned to attend the conference must choose a support person to accompany them; adults who had been abused would be strongly encouraged to do likewise; and others if they wished could bring a support person. The support person was to be an adult who could provide emotional support, speak on behalf of their companion as needed, withdraw their companion from the meeting if they needed time out, and generally monitor their companion's well-being over the conference.

Coordinators completed a form stating whether or not the interviewee requested a support person. As seen in table 4.15, for the 60 individuals whose responses were recorded, the large majority (50) said that they wanted a support person.

Table 4.15
Number of Interviewees Recorded as Requesting a Support Person

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Do You Want a Support Person?	50	9	1

Note. Data are from 60 respondents.

As seen in table 4.16, their reasons for selecting these individuals paralleled many of those for inviting a guest to the conference, except that now friends figured in greater numbers than family members. In their rationales, the support persons were portrayed as caring, understanding, and deserving of trust. Their comments included: "this person feels I may need someone, I trust him," "she speaks her mind, she has been a lot of help to me in the past and I trust her," "she is a very caring person, she will be there and remain objective," and "I talked with him before in grief and when I was down."

Table 4.16
Frequency of Reason Cited for Selecting a Support Person at a First-Time Conference

REASONS FOR SELECTING	f
A Friend	21
Understanding	15
Supportive	14
Can Trust	12
A Family Member	9
Helpful	8
Will Speak Up For Me	4
A Professional	3
TOTAL	86

Note. Data from 50 respondents.

Mothers

At all three sites, women often agreed to have a support person. They welcomed the support in a situation anticipated to evoke anger, blame, and fear. The women tended to make wise choices. For instance, one abused mother selected a support person who "had also gone through abuse from her husband" and became her strongest advocate at the conference. Unfortunately another mother who needed a support person attended the conference alone. When her counsellor was unable to attend, the mother could not come up with a replacement because as she explained, "I don't trust anyone and I have no friends here."

Young People

Sometimes the young person was immediately able to identify a support person, as in the case of a youth who asked that his oldest sister serve as his support person because she was the "only person in his life that he trusts." Young people often picked a relative, guidance counsellor, or foster parent for their support person. In many

instances, helping young people to select a support person took skill on the part of the coordinators, who worked to create a context in which the young people felt safe to reflect on their needs and articulate them to the coordinator. Describing one such successful process with a youth, the coordinator wrote:

> I spoke with the . . . boy. he did not want to speak to me so I made it as easy for him as possible. I told him he did not have to speak but just listen. So I stared at the wall and began my explanation in a language he would understand. I told him I would really like for him to come to the conference and that he could choose a support person and any others that were important in his life. I told him to send the message by his Mom and I would get it. The next day his Mom called me and told me he would go to the conference if his former foster-father would go with him.

Although no one young person who had been abused was to attend the conference without an adult support person, in practice this policy was not always carried out. A major reason was that the young person could not or would not identify a support person. Describing her efforts to secure a support person for a young person, the coordinator wrote:

> I had a discussion with her the day before the conference. She shared with me some of her true feelings with regard to her family and she felt confident that she would be able to express herself at the conference. I asked her if she wanted a support person but she declined. She did need a support person however, because she did not share her feelings with her family at the conference.

Another difficulty was that young people often wanted to select a peer to be their support person. In one conference, this worked out well because the young woman was accompanied by a teenager who was very understanding while also having the benefit of an adult relative assigned as her formal support person. For a young man, selecting another adolescent "wasn't a good choice." The coordinator explained that the young man could identify "no adult in his life he trusts" so "he chose his peer, one year older than him - his best friend." On the day of the conference, the coordinator sent a taxi to pick the friend up but he refused to get out of bed.

Fathers

Besides the persons who had been abused, the coordinators quickly learned that the abusers as well as other family members often needed and wanted a support person. Although some offending fathers presented themselves as too strong to need a "support person," they did acknowledge the benefit of having someone to assist them in keeping their anger under control. Describing one such situation, the coordinator noted, "The two uncles who attended the meeting were people the Dad had respect for and he wanted their approval. It was imperative that they be present at the FGC as this

ensured the Dad's attendance and his good behaviour." In another family, the coordinator was less successful in helping the father identify the need for support person:

> Dad is a large macho, athletic man who presents as a tough guy. . . . He was able to open up in private but not with anyone else present. He declined a support person and said it would be best for him to shut up in the meeting (I believe this a pattern for him in how he has handled problems within his family - say nothing, let his wife take the blame, make decisions by refusing to make decisions).

Yet another father refused a support person but in this case a relative served unofficially in this capacity at the conference:

> One of the concerns expressed by all family members was the temper of the father and his ability to control this. I encouraged him to choose a support person but in the end it was his decision to go it alone. What I did do in preparation for this was be quite honest with him about what he could expect from information providers and family members. We talked in some length about his drinking and his temper so that on the day of the conference there were not going to be any surprises for him. As well he had a major voice in choosing his brother in-law as the note keeper/facilitator of the family deliberation time, a person who he identified as someone who would recognize and respond if he started to lose his cool.

Summing up her experience with urging men to select a support person, a coordinator concluded that she needed to avoid the term "support person":

> For boys and men I often said "Someone who can help you keep your temper if you feel it's going to go off the handle and who can go out and have a smoke with you. And they can understand that. But to say "support person" they see that as some kind of weakness or I need someone else to do my work for me. When we would put it that way they would often name somebody. . . . And then we would talk to that person and say to them, "This is your role." It's in this culture.

4.13 Inviting Guests

Once the coordinator had a guest list from immediate family members, they began to contact the prospective conference participants. As with locating parents, the coordinators often found themselves in an extensive search to reach the guests. Describing the preparations for one conference, the Nain coordinator observed that "a great deal of time was spent contacting family members and making sure that they fully understood what this project was about and the importance of family members being

involved."

Determining how much information to convey to relatives before the conference took judgment on the coordinators' part. In these initial contacts, the coordinators needed to provide sufficient information so that relatives were willing to attend and prepared for the upcoming meeting while not engaging in a case review. Greater detail was more appropriately shared at the conference by the investigating worker, who then would be available to address family members' questions (see chapter 5). In these discussions, the coordinators had to take into account the highly sensitive nature of the information which they were conveying. On meeting with the members of the offender's family, a coordinator wrote, "It was very painful meeting them because in order for them to create a good plan they first had to be educated around the issues of sex offenses and sex offenders. It was difficult to hear their brother spoken about in this way but they did not attempt to stop me."

On being contacted, the responses varied depending on the local culture. For instance, the St. John's the reaction tended to be more overt: "Most family members contacted were shocked by the apprehension and believed that these parents truly love their children their children and had not been abusive in their eyes, however all agreed the family needed support in parenting the children and most saw a role for themselves in helping provide that support." In contrast, the Nain responses tended to be more muted: "during these explanations [of the project] there was very little questions from any of the family members. Only one of the family members on [the father's] side of the family was interested and all of the rest of his relatives were deceased. Of the two family members on [the mother's] side of the family again only one was able to come."

The discussions with relatives and other guests were carried out through a number of means--individual sessions, group meetings, telephone calls, or a combination of these. Coordinators noted that meetings with individual parents often provided greater opportunity to discuss the family and its history, but that joint meetings provided insights into the couple's interactions and ways of best organizing the conference. Contrasting individual and group sessions, a coordinator wrote,

> The Mom in this family had a large number of siblings and their spouses to be prepared for the FGC. Met with one of Mom's sisters alone and met with a large group of family together to prepare them for the FGC. While meeting with a group of people is time efficient it was important that I also met with key Family members alone. . . . as not much detail surfaces or is offered in a group setting. The family dynamics and history tend to be outlined by individuals.

Describing a group meeting with relatives, another coordinator noted how much she learned through observing the family members' reactions to each other:

> I met with the Mom's family as a group. It was a very interesting meeting

as they informed me when I arrived that they really didn't know too much about what was happening. I gave them an in-depth description of the project from both a research and a process perspective. They indicated to me that they felt it was a good idea and they would all be there to contribute. What was really interesting was the non-verbal communication that I was receiving from them. The Mom was talking as if everything was pretty normal and that when the [partner] returns life will be back to the way it was. The family members, in particular, the grandparents and the eldest brother were communicating to me that they did not agree with her."

Coordinators quickly learned that young people required private sessions in which to speak their minds more freely. Writing about preparations with a young person for a conference early in the demonstration project, the coordinator observed:

> My encounters with the victim [a young person] were frustrating and very strained until the last meeting we had which was the day before the conference. I figured out what the problem was almost too late. My lack of communication with the victim contributed greatly to my feelings of apprehension and nervousness prior to the conference. I felt she was going to attend but had no idea of what was going to happen there. I realized that she was subject to the control of the mother the same as I was. So, when I requested to meet with her on [date] I asked to see her alone. When I arrived, Mom left reluctantly and I was introduced to a completely different person. We had a great conversation and she shared a lot with me.

4.14 Family Group

To document their preparation activities, the coordinators completed a "Fact Sheet on Interviewee in Preparation for Conference" for each main person with whom they worked in advance of the conference. These included people who planned to attend, those who declined but wished to convey a message to the conference, and those who refused any involvement. The number of completed sheets per conference varied depending on the number of invited participants and the individual coordinator's assessment of whether or not this was an important contributor to the conference. Nevertheless, the recorded information can be used to provide a rough overview of the people with whom the coordinators worked and what their requirements were for contributing to the conference.

Table 4.17 summarizes the demographic information on these interviewees. The table only includes recorded interviewees for first-time conferences, a total of 433 individuals. If the recorded interviewees for reconvened conferences had been included, the total number would have come to 455. Since many of the same people were at first and later conferences, the interviewees for reconvened conferences are

omitted from the table so that certain family groups would not unduly weight the table.

As shown in table 4.17, more females than males were interviewed at all three sites, but the difference was smallest in Nain; and interviewees were primarily adults. Between sites, the greatest difference evident was the interviewees' ethnicity: in Nain, Inuit interviewees far outnumbered the Anglophone ones while at the other two sites Anglophones dominated.

Table 4.17
Number of Family Group Interviewees for First-Time Conferences by Gender, Age, and Ethnicity at Each Site (N = 433)

DESCRIPTION	NAIN	PORT AU PORT	ST. JOHN'S	TOTAL
Gender[a]				
Male	40	31	81	152
Female	51	64	165	280
Age[b]				
Under 18	2	12	17	31
18 and Over	89	82	200	371
Ethnicity[c]				
Anglophone	3	78	237	318
Francophone	0	4	0	4
Aboriginal	88	12	0	100
Other	0	1	7	8

[a] Datum is missing on gender for 1 Nain person.
[b] Data are missing on age for 1 Nain person, 1 Port au Port person, and 29 St. John's people.
[c] Data are missing on ethnicity for 1 Nain person and 2 St. John's people.

The overwhelming majority of the recorded interviewees were family members or friends. As seen in Table 4.18, the identified abused persons, abusing persons, family members, friends, and legal guardians (blood only) made up over 80% (353) of the total of 433 interviewees.

Table 4.18
Number of Family Group Interviewees by their Role for the First-Time Conferences at Each Site (N = 433)

ROLE[a]	NAIN	PORT AU PORT	ST. JOHN'S	TOTAL
Abused Person	3	8	13	24
Abusing Person	14	6	15	35
Abused/Abusing Person	0	0	2	2
Family Member	65	54	142	261
Friend of Family	2	7	24	33
Legal Guardian	0	3	1	4
Support Person	2	7	10	19
Foster Parent	0	4	6	10
Investigative worker	0	1	6	7
Other	2	5	26	33

Note. Legal guardians include non-abused and non-abusing parents or other relatives with custody of the child. Support persons include family and non-family participants.
[a]Data are missing on role at the conference for 4 Nain people and 1 St. John's person.
Note. Fifteen of the "Others" for St. John's were categorized as "Resource/Information Persons".

4.15 Acceptances

Usually invited guests agreed to take part or, if not planning to attend, to send a message to the conference in order to convey their views. This positive response was similar to that in a New Zealand study (Patterson & Harvey, 1991) which found that nearly three-quarters of family group members who were invited attended the conference. As seen in Table 4.19, most guests whose responses were recorded on the Fact Sheet on Interviewee in Preparation for Conference agreed to attend.

The coordinator's reflective notes reveal the same pattern. For instance, a coordinator reported for one conference that "in all a total of eighteen family members were approached of which fourteen agreed to come and sign consent forms to participate." Describing a different conference, the coordinator noted when family members declined the invitation: "The son . . . who lives in [name of place] said that he had already made previous commitments and wasn't really interested in taking part in a family conference" while "another son now living in [name of place] was very interested and wanted to be here for the conference." Often family members responded very positively to the invitation to attend. For instance, a coordinator noted that "all the family members seemed to have a good insight of the abuse that was happening and was eager to come to the FGC in order to have a say and let their ideas of how it should stop be known."

Table 4.19
Number of Family Group Interviewees Agreeing to Attend Conference (First-Time or Reconvened) or Planning to Send a Message

WAY OF CONTRIBUTING	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Agrees to Attend[a]	380	49	25
No, But Wishes to Send Message	30	19	0

[a] Datum is missing for 1 St. John's person.

In families where few relatives agreed to attend, the coordinators questioned proceeding with the conference, and as discussed further in chapter 6, these were often but not always the conferences at which plans were less developed. For the one conference which did not lead to formulating a plan, the coordinator looking back at the preparations wrote, "I was a little concerned that this conference wouldn't go anywhere, because a lot of the family members refused to come." The coordinator also observed that invitees were less likely to express their concerns about holding the conference and noted that when two adult children were asked why they refused to attend the

conference, "they just turned away without saying anything."

Sometimes relatives agreed with reluctance to attend because they realized that their family needed them. This was particularly evident with one adult daughter who told the coordinator that "she would not be attending. She had finally escaped from her mother. It was a very difficult and painful process for her and she did not want to have to repeat it." On learning that her younger sibling wanted her there as support person, the daughter on further reflection decided to attend for his "sake only."

On other occasions people agreed to attend but did not commit themselves to the process. This was particularly apparent with one young person for whom the conference was being held. Voicing her frustrations, the coordinator concluded that the young person "was not willing to become involved in planning the FGC. Unfortunately this meant that she did not feel the same sense of control or ownership of the process. She had a vested interest in keeping family away and proving that family are really, as she as always believed, on `Mom's side'."

At times fathers refused to attend. Reporting on unsuccessful attempts to involve a biological father, a coordinator wrote,

> We spoke over the phone and he refused to meet with me. I tried to keep him on the phone for as long as I could - which turned out to be approximately 20 minutes. His overall attitude is that he is not even sure the victim is his natural daughter (although she looks just like him), and even if she is, he is not interest[ed] in developing any kind of relationship with her. . . . What I was battling against as well, was the Mom on the phone to him almost every day threatening him and doing everything in her power to destroy any hope of a reconciliation between the victim and her father.

Although this father never agreed to attend, some of his relatives attended on his behalf. In another family, a coordinator found with a father,

> After a few visits he disappeared whenever I came to the house. He deliberately avoided me. I never did get to speak to him about his alcohol abuse or his physical and verbal abuse of the Mom. I did continue to extend an invitation to him to attend the conference which I know the Mom relayed to him. He did not attend the conference and I was unable to get his views but he did make us a big pot of home-made soup for lunch on that day and sent along with the soup a list of instructions for me around adding water and the right temperature to heat the soup on. I thought - this man is a walking contradiction. Why is he so willingly feeding us knowing we are probably discussing taking his family away from him.

It should be also noted that unexpected guests showed up at the conferences,

people whom the coordinators had not invited. These surprises, though, seemed to be generally positive. In one conference, the biological father refused to come but a member of his family came unannounced. And at another conference, the pastor arrived without warning but was particularly effective in ensuring that the gathering attended to the views of the mentally delayed couple.

4.15.1 Sending a Message

As noted in table 4.19 above, a number of people who could not attend sent messages to the conference. These messages were to be conveyed by the coordinator, relative, or other participant or presented in written form (see Table 4.20). As reported in chapter 5, these messages were usually (though not always) well received at the conference, added greatly to the deliberations, and let their relatives know that although they could not attend, they cared about what happened to them. This was also a route by which non-attenders could convey some of their heart-felt views. For instance, a coordinator reported that a "sister seemed very weary on the phone and said she could not make it but wanted me to talk to her brother about the pain of family when alcohol is abused by one of the parents." Continuing, the woman explained its impact within her own household.

Table 4.20
Frequency of Method of Sending Message Selected by Family Group Interviewees

METHOD FOR SENDING MESSAGE	f
Coordinator	18
Family Member	6
Other Participants	3
Written Statement	6
Audio or Video Tape	0
Other	3

4.16 Concerns

During the preparations, many interviewees raised concerns about taking part. On the Fact Sheet on Interviewee in Preparation for the Conference, the coordinators recorded the number of interviewees who expressed concerns and noted what the nature of those concerns were (see Table 4.21).

Because interviewees did not express concerns, this in no way should be taken for a lack of concerns. Young people, in particular, were likely to be unable or unwilling to express their concerns. The "main concern" of one coordinator in preparing for a conference was her "inability to engage the [young person] in the process." This was a youth whose siblings "affectionately described . . . [him] `as the perfect child'" and whom the coordinator was "most worried about" because "he does not express his feelings and has a hard stereotype to live up to." With a another young person, a coordinator along with her family were frustrated that "their efforts to engage with this young person, both before and during the FGC were met with silence."

Of particular interest is the fact that members of the immediate family in which the abuse had taken place were concerned that other family members would be against them in the sense that they would be blamed in an unhelpful way. These concerns were expressed by people who had been abused, their caretakers and the abusers. Like the professionals, these interviewees were also concerned that some people might intimidate them and that arguments would predominate if the family was brought together.

Table 4.21
Frequency with which Interviewees Expressed Concerns About the First-Time or Reconvened Family Group Conference

CONCERN	f
Concerned No One Will Attend The Conference	6
Confidentiality/Privacy	8
Worried About Interfering	8
Worried About Family Arguments	12
Worried About Presence/Intimidation From Certain Family Members	11
Inconvenient Time/Length of Conference	7
Unsure What To Expect	15
Worried Everyone is Against Them	19

The coordinators not only helped the interviewees to express their concerns but also helped to resolve or ameliorate these concerns. As discussed below, the reflective notes of the coordinators give further insights on some of these concerns and present some strategies that they developed for addressing them.

Confidentiality/Privacy

A major preoccupation for many family members was confidentiality at all three project sites. For instance a father in St. John's worried that "everyone in the community would know his business and be gossiping about it." On the Port au Port Peninsula where families lived in small communities issues around confidentiality became paramount in their minds and a recurring refrain from prospective participants was that they "didn't want everyone to know their business" or they saw the conference as just one more opportunity for "everyone [to] talk and assume things as always (in a bad way in the community)." Moreover, the arrival of the coordinator in itself would start the "grapevine" in motion so the coordinator and family member might decide to meet away from the home in a larger town off the peninsula. In Nain, families wanted to their privacy respected but they also wanted the coordinator to make it possible for them to attend. One family decided that the coordinator should write letters for the employers of certain family members so that they could be released from work to attend the conference.

During the preparations, family members also were concerned that other family members would be offended by the information which they had shared with the coordinator. The coordinators developed a number of strategies in handling such disclosures. In one family, the coordinator promised not to relay a matter further without first alerting the father in this case:

> He [the father] said that he just wanted the fighting [between himself and his wife] to stop and Mom to deal with her problems which he believed stemmed from her sexual abuse as a child. He told me that he had discovered this secret about a year before and that she did not want anyone to be told nor did she want to discuss it. He was very concerned that I would tell her that he had told me; I assured him that I would not discuss this matter with her unless I advised him first. (As it turned out when I did get to talk to Mom about this, many members of the Family had disclosed this information to me.)

Concerns about confidentiality had a history which coordinators needed to help family members articulate and then to develop with them strategies to not repeat history. For instance, in one family the coordinator learned that the "causes of past communication difficulties involved assumptions about the confidentiality of statements made by family members to a . . . Worker. The family had spoken quite openly with a worker assuming that these comments would be kept private. When the worker shared the concerns expressed to her in an open meeting there was serious fallout within the

family." This was not an isolated incident in the family, and the coordinator decided to set up a system of "accountability" among family members for what they disclosed to him. The coordinator explained,

> My approach on this was to tell all family members not to tell me anything that they did not feel could be shared with other family members. I stressed the fact that I was not going to be a gossip and go around telling stories. I stressed that I was responsible for ensuring that family members were as clear about the issues they were facing and had as much information as was necessary to enable them to develop a concise workable plan. I do not feel that this honest approach to confidentiality in any way impeded my ability to get family members to share, but it did clearly establish a fundamental ground rule. It was amazing that this approach to confidentiality preceded me to many meetings and was raised by people saying "Now I have heard that nothing that I say is confidential so . . ."

Unsure What to Expect

The perpetrators were often quite afraid before the conferences and not sure what to expect, and required much preparation by coordinators. Coordinators needed to help the offenders acknowledge their abusive behaviours while affirming the positive actions which they were now taking, including participating in the conference. Regarding work with a violent father, one coordinator wrote:

> I spent a lot of time preparing the offender for what he would be facing, discussing his own troubled childhood and lack of opportunity with him, emphasizing the seriousness of the situation and confronting his minimizations so that they would not resurface at the FGC, and acknowledging the fact that he voluntarily left the family home (rather than have his kids placed in foster care) and voluntarily agreed to this process.

Worried About Family Arguments

Family fears of arguments were not unrealistic given their depictions of family dynamics. Nevertheless, the coordinator could help family members to avoid fruitless arguments at the conferences by helping particularly volatile members identify their own potential for becoming angry and enraging others. For instance in preparing for one family conference, the coordinator reported,

> The Mom in this family was described by all family members and extended family members (on both sides) as being the problem. She was described as having a "split personality", as a "Bitch", as a compulsive liar, and as singlehandedly causing every problem ever experienced by everyone in the family! While there is no doubt that this woman has some major

> emotional problems she has definitely been a scapegoat in this family. I met with her several times during the preparation time and she was able to be open and honest about her problems and her part in contributing to the family's problems. She showed good insight into her unresolved issues and I believe will do well in counselling. She was ready to unload when I came to visit her and was able to focus on her issues when she did not feel like she was being judged or blamed. She identified that with family she always is on the defensive and her "buttons are easily pushed".

Another strategy for keeping matters in hand was helping people select a support person who could exert a calming influence. Reflecting back on a conference where a father conveyed his strongly held views through sweeping gestures and harangues, the support person concluded that it was a "good idea" to have her present as a "means of taming the situation when it was getting out of hand."

Worried Everyone Is Against Them

Those who were identified within the family as the `problem' often worried that others would join forces against them. The "major concern" of one youth who was referred to the project for being beyond parental control "was that people are mad at him and will gang up on him," and the coordinator further observed that "it was obvious that he is shouldering a great deal of responsibility and shame concerning the problems in the Family." In the second meeting, the coordinator involved the support person in helping the boy prepare for the conference and found the strategy to be "really positive." Now the boy could attend better to "a repeat of the information from . . . [the] first visit" because "he was less nervous/upset and heard more the second time around." The support person then went on to arrange another meeting with the boy so that they could "prepare together the views/issues he would like to see discussed at the FGC."

Incarcerated offenders were often difficult for coordinators to reach, a particularly problematic situation since these men had many fears about the up-coming conference and especially about how other participants would view them. In organizing one conference at which an inmate would be attending, the coordinator wrote:

> One of the frustrations of the preparation process was my inability to adequately prepare the offender prior to the FGC because he was in a [penitentiary] and I only had telephone contact with him. . . . This offender is a man with little education and who has limited ability to understand the full extent of the dynamics of abuse . . . [and the family group decision making] model. He is a concrete thinker who had trouble seeing past the fact that he promised never to hit her again, that it didn't happen very often, that there were a lot of guys who are more violent than him, and that in time she would take him back. He was wary of the process first - he pictured everyone ganging up on him and telling him what to do, and he felt everyone in the community would know his business and be gossiping

about it.

Given the man's record, the coordinator identified that his becoming upset at the conference could easily develop into a very dangerous situation for the victim. To prevent this from happening, she discussed with him over the course of 6 telephone conversations "what was going to be said, . . . how we were going to address the issues, and what could and couldn't he handle, and who could go out for a smoke with him if he felt that things were getting too hot, so that there's no surprises to him ahead of time. "

Intimidation from Family Members

Some family members were very intimidating individuals. This became clearly evident in a coordinator's poignant descriptions of her own reactions to one father:

> We arrived on time - knocked on the door and were called into the house. The TV was extremely loud. The [children and mother] . . . were sitting in the living room with their eyes glued to the TV. They did not look at us or acknowledge us in any way. Dad was sitting in the dining room at the head of the table smoking and drinking tea. (the lion in his den). . . . He looked at us and nodded his head and said something I assume was a `hello.' He didn't invite us to sit so I just led the way over to the table and sat next to him. [The student assistant] sat adjacent to me. Needless to say it was very uncomfortable - it was awful. Both of us just wanted to walk out and never come back.
>
> I began speaking my usual introduction. I spoke as loud as I could - one decibel below screaming. . . . He seemed to understand everything I said. He appeared pleasant enough but made no request for the TV to be turned down - neither did I ask for him to do the same. I was feeling very intimidated - what was coming out of my mouth and what was going through my mind were two completely different things. At the end of the conversation he agreed to review the process with his family and I told him I'd call him in a couple of days. We practically ran out of the house. We didn't say good-bye or nod to anyone. Both of us seemed to know instinctively that they were still glued to the TV and wouldn't acknowledge us anyway.

After this initial contact, the coordinator was ready to call off the conference and only persevered at the urgings of the child protection worker. The coordinator's uncertainties continued to heighten as it appeared that almost all immediate family were forbidden to speak with her or attend the conference. The child protection workers advised that "for their [mother and children's] safety [the coordinator] should concentrate on the extended family." On contacting the invitees on the father's list, the coordinator found that almost all extended family were refusing to attend. Finally, one paternal relative explained that

"the family is not close and they particularly avoid any contact with [this father] because of fear" and "would be unable to speak one word [at the conference] without repercussions - so what's the point in going." An exception was a lone maternal relative who "was very keen on attending and welcomed the opening to reestablish ties with [the mother]." This maternal relative later served as the conduit at the conference for the views of different members on the mother's side of the family. Although the coordinator's depictions of the preparations were singularly "hair-raising" and make one wonder if she should have cancelled the conference, the immediate outcome appears positive for some family members who either gathered the strength to disclose the abuse to the public authorities or to escape from the household.

4.17 Personal Statements

Over the course of the project, the coordinators developed an array of strategies for preparing participants for taking part. One particularly useful tactic was having the participants write in advance a statement to be delivered at the conference either by themselves or through another participant (often their support person).

Preparing a written statement helped participants to think through their views in advance of the conference. This was particularly crucial for young people because, as one coordinator observed, "even the most vocal young people clam up at the FGC." She further noted:

> [The young people would] at first talk like . . . they would/could go in there and say what they want. And then when they would get in there they wouldn't say a word - be totally intimidated. What became clear is that they had to write down their views ahead of time, come prepared with a statement of what they wanted to say, because that was the only way that they were heard. Sometimes they read it themselves, but more times they had their support person say it for them. But it was prepared ahead of time between them and their support person.

Agreeing, another coordinator found that preparing a personal statement helped a usually reserved young woman to express her sentiments. She was "described by everyone as good girl who never caused anyone any problems, someone who probably would not say a word about anything because she was so quiet. . . . This young woman was quite articulate when given the freedom to express her concerns and fears. She was very tired of being `the good little girl' and was able to prepare a pointed heartfelt statement that she wanted to read herself."

Typically `macho' fathers were resistant to the idea of preparing a statement, only to find themselves in tears at the conference and unable to express their views. Summing up her experiences with the fathers, a coordinator reported, "Most of them refused to write down what they were feeling or what they thought, about what they wanted to say ahead of time." She persisted, nevertheless, because she found that

"even more importantly than preparing the victim or the people who have been abused, for me, in situations where the abuser is going to be present, is preparing them. And spending as much time with the abusers as with the victim. To make sure that they know what will be expected of them and what it will be about, and calling them to task ahead of time."

The personal statements served as a safety measure, not only with abusers but other participants. For instance, a support person acknowledged that before the conference she had "worried that the person would blow up" but that the woman's volatility was alleviated by her writing down in advance what she wanted to say. A coordinator stressed how preparing a personal statement helped to safeguard some people from attack during the conference. Relaying her learning from one conference, this coordinator wrote:

> I was concerned that the mom in this family would come under fire at the FGC. I met with she and her support person to discuss this and suggested that the Mom prepare a personal statement taking responsibility for her part in the problems they were experiencing and stating what she would like for her family. This has become a standard practice of mine in preparing family members who are likely to be criticised drastically in the FGC (when a person identifies all their faults themselves at the outset, there is little to be gained by family members repeating these faults in the form of criticism.

Another coordinator noted the positive impact of the personal statement not only on family but also the referring worker. A personal statement in which the family members accepts responsibility for their actions serves not only "in allaying concern that this would slip into a shouting, blaming session" but also "tempered" the views of the child protection worker "once she realized that family members were going to take ownership of their pieces and were planning to seek the assistance that they required."

4.18 Preparing Other Participants

4.18.1. Support Persons

Usually support persons seemed to be clear about their role and, as discussed in subsequent chapters, became some of the most helpful participants at the conferences. In focus groups and interviews, a number later spoke in glowing terms about the project and their involvement in it. One support person who was an employee of the Department of Social Services commented that she saw the project as "working very very well" and noted that the conference improved her supportee's views of the department from "busy noses" to "helping." She added that she would be "willing to be a support person again." Another support person who was connected with the school system said that he felt that he had a "good sense" of his role as a support person and was prepared to support the young person going into the conference.

Problems arose, however, when the support persons were either unclear about their role or unilaterally decided to assume one different than that envisioned by the project. In one situation, the meeting went ahead without the presence of the support person because this individual, as the coordinator explained, "wasn't prepared to just sit there and be a support person . . . she wanted to be involved and had we let her, I think that we would be still scraping her off the wall." In another conference, the investigating worker and a relative "felt that the support person "stepped out of her role and became group facilitator and spoke too much for the Mother." Disagreeing in this case, the coordinator pointed out that in her view, "if the support person had not done this the plan would not have included the views of the Mother. The Mother became totally disempowered by the criticism she was receiving from family members and became silent. Her support person made sure things they discussed in preparation for the FGC were said" at the conference.

4.18.2 Investigators

Investigating and referring authorities such as child protection workers, police, and parole officers needed guidance on what information to present and how to present it. In one conference, the coordinator and others appreciated the police officer's presentation which was delivered in a clear and factual manner. In an interview later, the mother said that the officer's report was particularly helpful because he reviewed but did not unduly dwell on details of the offender's actions and because he gave a sense of hope by relaying the offender's statements of remorse. At another conference, a different officer, however, was less successful; he was described by the coordinator as taking "an authoritative stance" with the result that the young person being addressed began to feel "uncomfortable and defensive." The coordinator decided at the end of the conference "to do more work with him [the officer] if he presents in the future."

At an evaluation workshop held at the end of the project with the Port au Port and St. John's coordinators and researchers (separate evaluation sessions were held in Nain), the St. John's coordinator compared her experiences as an urban coordinator with those of a rural coordinator:

> [The Port au Port coordinator] and I talked about how this became more important to me and less important to her as time went on because she was dealing with the same workers who were coming to the conference and after awhile they got it. Whereas with me it was constantly a new worker and refining how and what it was that I had to say to each of them. [I would say] to dress casual, to not come with big files in their hands, to speak to people and not at them, to be clear and factual and brief, and I would always go into detail, give lots of example of what I meant by clear and factual, what to cover and what was not necessary to cover, to leave judgements out of it, but to be clear about the whole bottom line piece. What are the things, that without them in the plan, you could not approve

> it. What are things that you will not be satisfied with any plan that does not include this, this and this."

Agreeing and adding in, the Port au Port coordinator said that she stressed with information providers "to not really concentrate on [the family's] faults, but find some strengths in the family and address the strengths."

Another problem was when coordinators found that the referring agent had not clearly informed the referred family of their concerns. "My expectation," said a coordinator, "was that some of that would have been done by the child protection worker, and it's not done. In this one case, the mother had no idea that she was considered to be emotionally and physically abusing her son. And I didn't think that it was our place to have to tell her that." Yet another difficulty for the coordinators was when the workers were unfamiliar with the cases, again this was more problematic in St. John's where young workers were carrying large caseloads and the division was going through a rapid turn-over in staffing. In order to prepare for the conferences, workers had to become more familiar with the family and relied on the coordinator to give them questions to prepare for their presentations. This placed a greater load on the coordinator to "giv[e] them the questions to think about, to prepare for their presentation. In addition to becoming familiar with new case, the child protection workers in a focus group noted that they also had to redefine their role within a model that "gave ownership back to the family." One worker recounted that in preparing her presentation for the conference, she had to think through the minimal standards which needed to be applied in this family while at the same time moving away from the assumption that she was responsible for determining all the solutions."

Knowing the families, though, could pose its own set of issues. For instance, a coordinator recorded:

> The [investigator] was unsure exactly of what their role should be, they have been involved with the mother and said that they couldn't give this without the mom's written consent. One [investigator] told me that he didn't want to come because he was a good friend of the mom's brother and though he would feel very uncomfortable. The end result was that they decided to write a brief letter (brief it was) outlining the mom's drinking problem.

In small communities, coordinators needed to work with investigators on how to present very sensitive information to a group of people with whom they had many past ties and anticipated many future interactions.

4.18.3 Information Providers

Service providers such as a shelter worker, Inuit elder, and nursing staff were frequently asked to present information at conferences. Sometimes they spoke directly about the family situations as in the case of a guidance counsellor, physician, or immigration officer. More often, though, they had not worked with the family before the conference and instead relayed information about areas of concern such as the impact of woman abuse on the children or the treatment of attention deficit disorder. The presenters were selected with care since their information was crucial for the families' deliberations, and the families' views on the selections were solicited. Describing this planning, a coordinator wrote, "The resources that were consulted/suggested were with the approval of the Parents and they felt positive about the helpers they chose through the FGC process." "Every time we have done that [consulting on the choices]," a coordinator remarked, "the mothers who say that yes this is the kind of information I want presented at the FGC, it is a way of them feeling more empowered too. And also a way of them saying, `Gee, maybe so and so will get some help too'."

As a coordinator recorded, "a great deal of time was spent in making sure that the information givers were well prepared and that they were given enough notice as to the date of the conference." For a conference where a number of information providers would be coming, the coordinator collected them into a group "to make sure that the family would get the best possible message without resource people repeating each other." Another coordinator noted that for one conference "the major work in the preparation process was ensuring that all the necessary information givers could attend and preparing them."

Rushing the preparations could have a negative impact on the conference as one coordinator found: "because of the push . . . to get [a number of] families through conferences [at the same time], I failed to make all the arrangements as required, not that I didn't have resource people there, but that I didn't have time to think things over carefully enough to make sure that the right people were there." Omitting resource people was also problematic, as one coordinator observed, "In the conference we did where we didn't have any information person, there was clearly a gap there."

Another issue for coordinators was that at times they felt that they were "walking a little bit of a tight rope with wanting to ensure that a balance was struck between appropriate challenging of individual responsibility [e.g., for violence or substance abuse] and not wanting to get defenses up so that the messages were falling on deaf ears." With some exceptions, the coordinators thought that they were usually successful in these preparations and described the resource people as "well prepared when they arrived at the FGC and were clear about their role."

Through their mistakes and feedback from information providers, coordinators

improved their approaches for including and preparing information providers. First, they learned to organize the conferences so that the investigating authority's presentation were separate from that of the information provider. One information provider generally described his involvement with the project as highly positive but noted that it had some negative repercussions on his later work with the family. In this case, the information provider had sat through the entire set of presentations including the one by the child protection worker. He observed:

> What's happened . . . [is] a major fudge factor. . . . Because some of the information that [the family] know I've gained in that meeting they didn't want me to know. And sometimes when a [person] doesn't think you know something, that you are suspicious of or may have thought something they may not call you when otherwise they would call you. . . . I've . . . felt that I had been intentionally shut out and it may be because I may dig for information they did not want me to know.

The information provider had described an early family group conference; after that experience, the coordinator made sure that information providers were not present for the investigator's report.

Second, coordinators learned to offer greater preparation to information providers about their role and the general process of conferencing. A focus group at the mid-point of the project with two information providers was particularly instructive. In recounting her experiences, one of these information providers commented that it had been very disconcerting to speak at the family group about matters which she sensed applied to their lives but did know exactly how they did. Moreover, before she even began to speak the group was quite tense because a family member had just walked out of the session. Sharing similar feelings, the other information provider described her own confusions at a conference:

> Even though I didn't know a whole lot about the woman who was at the centre of this Family Group Decision Making Project I still felt somehow in giving this information. . . . I was revealing stuff about her. And I felt like I as almost talking about her. . . . I felt like I was almost putting things on to her . . . in trying to explain what some of the common effects of this are and what some women experience I felt like I was saying that this woman had done this and this and that was not what I was trying to say so then I would pull back and try to find another way to say it and then I would end up going around. . . . I felt like I was exposing her.

Both agreed that some of their personal discomfort would have been eased if a preparatory session had been provided to the information givers so that they had had a clearer idea of what to expect and what part the coordinator and others at the conference would play in handling any "fall out" from the information presented.

Recognizing the merit of feedback, the coordinator stated:

> There is also a big difference in the resource people who you bring in and the key there is to prepare them for what it is that you want them to do. I underestimated initially how much I had to do this. I assumed too much. I had to be very specific about what they were coming into, describing that process and what they were coming into the middle of. I had to tell them of the intensity and emotion, because they would be speaking right before the CP worker or right after it, and that these are people who are from both sides of extended families and who possibly have hostility between them and there is that dynamic. Also, letting them know, so they felt comfortable, why they were there and what we were hoping this information and conference would do for the family and what the plan is likely to look like and who is going to be following through on some of the stuff that the family came up with. They felt very weird giving the information and then not counselling afterwards. They had to feel comfortable about the process.

The coordinator's statements were being made the evaluation workshop held with the Port au Port and St. John's coordinators and researchers at the end of the project. From the researchers' comments at this workshop, it was obvious that their coordinators had learned how to prepare information providers.

4.19 Making Arrangements

A sizable portion of the coordinators' time was devoted to making arrangements for holding the conference. One of the most important was determining the location for the conference. In Nain, all conferences were held in the Labrador Inuit Health Commission so as to clearly place the deliberations under Inuit auspices. At the other two sites, the family members picked a spot at which they would feel comfortable. These included a parish house or hall, a neighborhood community centre, a nurse’s residence, a women’s organization, and a rented conference room.

Besides securing the venue, the coordinators made arrangements that made it possible for the individual invitees to take part in the conference. As seen in table 4.22, funding for transportation was needed for participants at all 3 sites, child care was requested often in St. John's and on the Port au Port Peninsula, and Inuktitut-English translation was essential for many Nain family members.

Table 4.22
Requested Arrangements for Attending First-Time or Reconvened Conference by Number of Family Group Interviewees at Each Site

ARRANGEMENT	NAIN	PORT AU PORT	ST. JOHN'S	TOTAL
Transportation Funding	11	51	61	123
Child Care	0	18	28	46
Translation	18	0	0	18
Temporary/ Permanent Release	1	2	0	3
Escort	1	0	1	2
Accessibility	0	1	0	1
Other	0	1	3	4

Note. The number of respondents was 172. Because some respondents requested more than one arrangement, the total number of requests (197) exceeds the number of respondents.
[a] Data are missing for 4 Nain people, 1 Port au Port person, and 1 St. John's person.

Transportation

Families required transport assistance to relatives residing at a distance or within the community to the conference. Arranging transportation so that family members could attend the conference consumed a significant portion of the coordinator's time. Transportation needs ranged from international flights to a ride on a snowmobile. In Nain, the coordinator on occasion scheduled a charter airplane to bring in a group or groups of relatives from another community. In St. John's, the coordinator frequently arranged taxis to pick up participants. And on the Port au Port Peninsula, the coordinator and researcher often organized car pools, not only as a means of transportation but also as a way to offer emotional support to participants who appeared to be "getting antsy and a bit panicked."

Travel for some conferences became a major cost, but one that the referring

agencies agreed to provide as necessary. Both the Department of Social Services and Correctional Services Canada authorized their front-line workers to approve up to $2,000 per conference and, if costs exceeded this figure, the request was to be submitted to their designated senior official. This official was expected to communicate his or her ruling on the request within five working days of its receipt. With some exceptions, this approach to travel funding worked well in part because family members kept costs within reasonable limits by selecting key relatives to bring in and in part because of the speedy response of the referring agency. For instance, the Nain coordinator reported,

> After going through all the forms with family members it was clear that two family members out of town was looked upon as being important players to this conference. These two people . . . were contacted and both agreed that they would like to take part. A letter was sent off to [Social Services] requesting their approval on travel funding for these two family members. [Social Services] was very fast to approve this letter and they made all the necessary arrangements for travel the same day at a cost of $973.66.

The money was well spent; these relatives often made a significant contribution to the deliberations and afterwards in carrying out the plans. It should also be noted that some relatives, even those across international borders, volunteered to pay these costs. They recognized their relatives' need and took upon themselves this expense.

In cases where family members were unable to travel to the conference, an alternative arrangement was to hook them in by speaker phone. For instance, one woman who could not travel to the conference because of her exam schedule was linked in by speaker phone. This arrangement appeared to work well in a number of conferences, including ones where translation was required.

Translation

Over the course of the project, translation services were necessary only in the Nain project site. On the Port au Port Peninsula, family members, including those of francophone ancestry, were comfortable having the conference conducted in English. In contrast, only 2 out of the 11 Nain families did not have at least one interviewed member requesting interpretation. There the Inuktitut-speaking researcher provided assistance with translation during individual interviews. For the conferences, sometimes family members assisted with translation but usually an external translator was hired. Because the translator would be party to all of the family's deliberations, the coordinator consulted with them on whose services to secure. Describing the work of one translator, the coordinator observed that "our interpreter was very good and understood the family group conference. He was very fast and explained things so that the family was able to understand. He also gave very good English interpretation as well."

Escort

Police and parole cooperated in providing escort service as necessary. For instance, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police escorted a family member who "ended up in jail" just before the conference was scheduled so that "he could have input into his family's decisions." Police escort was also provided in one conference to increase participants' sense of safety. In this case, both a young woman and her boyfriend worried about the latter being in the presence of her father. Initially, the boyfriend said that "he didn't want to have anything to say because of fear that family members might turn on him. After it was explained that he could have a member of the [police detachment] in the next room or just outside the door, this seemed to ease his mind."

4.20 Reconvened Conferences

As discussed in the preceding chapter, 5 reconvened conferences were held in order to address major changes in the family's lives. Three families had one reconvened conference each, and one family had a second and a third conference. For two of these families, it was agreed at the first conference to meet again: in one case because an offender would be shortly leaving prison and in the other only if the father failed to carry out the terms of the first plan. In the other three instances, conferences were reconvened at the request of Social Services. In one of these cases, Social Services approved the original plan but asked that the family reconvene in order to discuss some additional concerns, a request to which the parents agreed. In the remaining family, the approval of plans was not finalized at the end of the first conference and a reconvened conference was requested by Social Services; a third conference was later requested by Social Services because parts of the plan from the second conference were not carried out.

Although the sample is small, it offers some comparisons between preparations for first-time and subsequent conferences. The main source of information for this analysis was the qualitative data in the coordinators' reflective notes with some reference to the quantitative findings.

Contacting Parents Easier

Parents no longer feared the contact and were much easier to reach. This change was particularly striking in the family which had 3 conferences. Describing the process of first contacting the mother, the coordinator wrote, "Attempts to make appointments . . . with this lady has been made with no success. She was made aware of time and place for meeting but did not show." By the third conference, all evasion was gone and the mother was described as "very eager to take part and even telephoned me before it was decided that we would give her and her family another try [at a conference]."

Fewer Explanations

The reason for calling the second conference usually did not involve extensive explanations. For instance, the coordinator wrote, "The reconvening of this conference was a plan devised by the family at [the first conference]. In the first plan the family had two options - first they could remain together as a two-parent family unit given that Dad pursued help for his violence and alcohol problems. . . . [Second,] if Dad did not attempt to get help than Mom would leave with the children and establish a one parent family and home. The time period for this to take place was 5 months." When the first option was not carried out, the family reconvened in order to assist the mother with the second strategy.

Invitation Process Simpler

The second time around, it was easier to determine who to invite and not to invite. The old invitation list could be pulled out and reviewed. Participants who had been unhelpful either during or after the conference could be crossed off the list. For instance, a coordinator wrote, "Two people were excluded from the original list - [two maternal relatives]. They did nothing to assist [the mother] in the interim but were responsible for generating a great deal of community gossip."

The invitation process was relatively simpler and more predictable. In a first conference the coordinator reported that contacting family members and explaining the project took a large amount of time while for the second conference which came closely on the heels of the first, all that was required was mailed invitation to each participant. Another coordinator noted that people who had found the prior conference a worthwhile process "agreed to come again without hesitation." The responses of people who had wanted to avoid involvement the last time came as less of a surprise. Remembering the prior experience, the coordinator noted, "As per usual, the biological paternal family did not want to [see] me and actually preferred to discuss the situation on the phone."

Resolving Unfinished Business

Any issues lingering from the first conference needed to be addressed before holding the conference. A coordinator found that not only had some grudges remained but that history had been subtly recreated as apparent in the meeting with the family of the man who had sexually abused his step-daughter:

> First I had to apologize to them for insinuating that their brother would be unable to change - this folly I made at [the prior conference]. I did stick to my guns, however, and attempted to educate them. Their other brother [also a sex offender] was present. . . I also had to apologize to the brother for not inviting him to the last conference. I told him I could not remember exactly why he was excluded but I felt it had to do with [the victim's] state of mind at that time. She was very fragile and her emotional safety was

> very important to everyone. We weren't sure how she would interpret his presence. I also remember that it wasn't an issue then either. They have all become much closer as a family and are now looking back on the situation differently. He is wearing the insult he felt last time and playing it for all its worth. They were all trying to blame it one me. I took the blame because I didn't really care and I didn't want it highlighted as a relevant issue.

With one exception, these apologies were sufficient, and the step-father's relatives turned up at the conference.

Reduced Concerns

Because of the prior experience, anxieties for those returning tended to be lower. On the "Fact Sheets on Preparation of the Interviewee for Conference," the coordinator's noted for the first-time conference that the interviewees expressed fears about being believed or becoming overly emotional or voiced scepticism about the project's ability to keep the participants safe. For the second conference, no concerns were reported on any of the 9 fact sheets available (for some conferences closely spaced to the first one these forms were not completed).

Less Preparation of Officials

Usually there were fewer investigators to be educated on family group conferencing. For those who were new to the process and required preparation, it was simpler for the coordinators since they could predict better the family dynamics and needs at the conference.

Tapping Family Strengths

Between the conferences, growth in some cases had occurred, and these greater strengths could be drawn upon in designing the conference. This was particularly evident an interview with an incest survivor who had had a year to live in relative safety since the first conference and had had the benefit of in-depth counselling. In an interview with this young woman, the coordinator found that she was able to discuss the plans for the conference and articulate her wishes including on where the offender should sit at the conference. This young woman, as the coordinator observed, had made a "truly amazing" transition: "she was so mature and grown up - she was completely different from the child who would not speak to me one year ago."

4.21 Evaluation of Preparations

Most of this chapter has been devoted to looking at what was done to prepare for the conferences; it now turns to how the family group conference participants viewed these preparations after taking part in the conference. This retrospective perspective

provides important information on the adequacy of the preparations. The material for this section is taken primarily from the Evaluation Forms completed after the conference by all participants. At this time, only the evaluative material pertinent to the preparations is reported. This includes responses to three questions: “Was the preparation for the conference adequate?” “Did you like where the conference was held?” and “Were the right people at the conference?” The latter two questions are covered because both involved activities which needed to be carried out during the preparatory phase--the selection of the venue for the meeting and the inviting of participants. On the evaluation form underneath of each of these three questions, the respondents were asked to write down any problems they had experienced in this regard. These qualitative data are also reviewed below. In addition, where relevant, information was gleaned from answers to other questions such “What especially needed to be changed to make for a better conference?” and “Is there anything else that you think we should know in order to organize conferences in the future with other families?” The findings summarized in the tables below come only from family group participants (i.e., family, friends, and support persons) and do not include professional participants (i.e., project coordinator, project researcher, referring/investigative workers, invited information givers).

4.21.1 Adequacy of Preparations

To the question "was the preparation for the conference adequate?," an overwhelming number of participants answered in the affirmative. As seen in Table 4.23, 95% (278) answered “yes” while only 5% (15) responded “no” or expressed uncertainty.

Table 4.23
Number of Family Group Participants Who Agreed That the Preparation For The Conference Was Adequate

Response	Nain	Port au Port	St. John's	Total
Yes	38	74	166	278
No	3	1	1	5
Don't Know	1	3	6	10
Missing	0	0	0	0
Total	42	78	173	293

Eighteen people gave written comments on the FGC Evaluation Form in response to the question "If there were any problems, what were they?" The responses revealed a range of concerns. Reinforcing the need for support persons to be involved, one abused person (an adult) missed the presence of a support person and own mother, which made this individual "feel kind of alone." Indicating that participants

needed more orienting to the purpose of the conference, a different abused person said of another conference that "They [the other people at the conference] were worried about themselves" and not about the abused person. Wanting more preparation of the abused person, two people at another conference were frustrated because the young person who had been abused would not tell the group how she felt about things. Reflecting on the lack of focus at still yet another conference, one person felt the re-convened conference lacked an agenda and was uncontrolled with a "couple of conversations in the same room."

4.21.2 The Importance of Place

Closely related to the topic of how well prepared people were for the conference is the question of where the conferences were held. The following table (Table 4.24) summarizes the responses from the FGC Evaluation Form. It shows that the participants were generally satisfied with the location of the conference. In response the question of “did you like where the conference was held?,” 96% (282) said “yes” while only 4% (11) voiced negative views or uncertainty.

Table 4.24
Number of Family Group Participants Who Agreed that They Liked Where the Conference Was Held

Response	Nain	Port-au-Port	St. John's	Total
Yes	40	73	169	282
No	2	3	2	7
Don't Know	0	2	2	4
Missing	0	0	0	0
Total	42	78	173	293

Ensuring that All Perspectives Are Heard

Thirty-two persons gave written responses to the question "Who else should have been there?" The majority of these comments indicated that there should have either been more or certain family members at the conference. We are strong in the view that all sides of a family need to be represented, things did not go as well when an entire side of a family was missing. This was particularly true in the case of missing fathers. Fourteen people (from three conferences) pointed to the absence of the father of the child in question. As discussed earlier in this chapter, this finding underscored the ongoing problems encountered by all 3 coordinators in getting men, especially fathers, to attend the conferences.

It was also a glaring omission once a conference started to discover that someone was present who was too vulnerable to speak for him or herself or had not prepared adequately for the powerful emotional reactions engendered by being faced by such a large number of family members in one room. Most of these people, especially young persons and younger parents, had never seen so many of their family at once. For these people and others who had refused to have a support person with them, the absence of someone to be there for them was evident once the conference commenced. In some cases, someone "jumped in" to be that person's support and this was quite helpful, but this is clearly an area to be explored further in future conferences. It became apparent early in the project that perpetrators were among those who needed support people with them.

The After the Conference Interviews with families revealed a variety of feelings about people who were either not there or were unable to participate. For example:

- The father should have been there to give his side of the story.
- [The conference would have been better] if they showed up on time and sobered up to be at the meeting.

Limiting Exclusions

Only three written comments were given by the 293 persons in response to the question "who should have been excluded?" One person said "more here," another said "me because I don't live here and I have my own family" and one person described as the abuser didn't like a particular person being there. We are confident in saying about this last conference that not a single other person present would have agreed that the person in question should not have been there.

Despite the presence of people at some conferences who were quite difficult for the rest of the participants to deal with and on some occasions they were outright quarelsome and dominating, they still were not identified as people who should have been excluded. The premise of inclusion seems well supported by the family members themselves. We conclude that exclusions should be exercised rarely and then only after extensive consultation with the family to gain a diversity of opinions.

4.22 Summary

The findings on preparations and the later feedback from the conferences confirmed that the organization for the conferences should include the following:

- Providing clear information to the participants about the purpose and structure of the conference so that they know what expect and what is expected of them;

- Inviting a group that is as representative as possible of the kin and other

important ties so that no one perspective or resource is excluded;

- Making the practical arrangements so people can get to the conference and participate without undue inconvenience or frustration;

- Ensuring that participants have necessary supports so that they can participate effectively and safely at the conference.

OPENINGS

5.0 Introduction

Thus far, we have given an overview of the philosophy, operation, and research methodology of the project as a whole and reported the findings on the way referrals and preparations for the conferences were handled. We now turn attention to the conferences themselves.

5.0.1 Grounding the Research in Experience

Before continuing we wish to comment on the liberal use of quotations that we make in the prior chapter, this chapter, and the following two chapters. The intent is to keep the focus of the evaluation close to the actual experiences of the people who were involved in the conferences. Where relevant, we supply numbers and other computations but we think there is no real substitute for the first-hand reports of the family members and the professional persons who attended the conferences. This includes the coordinators who organized and facilitated the conferences and the researchers who observed the conferences, carried out the interviews, and administered the questionnaires. It is mainly from their accounts that we paint a picture of the conferences and draw our conclusions. Of course, we as the authors select quotes around which to wrap the discussion and analysis in order to deepen the reader's understanding and appreciation for how this model works. We attempt to give a balanced expression to the variety of experiences reported by different people, even those that happened rarely, revealed mistakes or omissions on our parts and instances where we simply could have done something better. In particular, we have attempted to highlight important themes and their meanings.

5.0.2 Organization of Chapters Five Through Seven

To impose some order on the material, this chapter and the following two are organized around the process of the conferences: they walk the reader through the stages of the conference while reporting the findings along the way. This chapter (Chapter 5) overviews the beginning phase: arrivals at the conference, introductions of participants, opening comments and ceremonies, and the Information giving. The next chapter (Chapter 6) focuses on the deliberation processes for developing a plan; and the following chapter (Chapter 7) reviews the formalizing of the plan in writing and its approval and implementation.

5.1 Arrivals, Introductions, & Openings

5.1.1 Countdown to the Conference & Arriving

At the appointed hour, extended family members came face to face with each other, with the professionals and ultimately with the facts of the situation. For some families,

particularly those in Nain and on the Port au Port Peninsula, arrival at the meeting meant seeing people they saw most days but with whom they had never openly discussed the problems. At other conferences family members met relatives they had not seen or spoken to for a long time. This was particularly true in families characterized by long-standing feuds or ex-nuptial parents who had no contact with one another. In others the family members were introduced to people they had either never met or did not know were their relatives until the planning had begun. This was particularly true in families characterized by high levels of cultural assimilation including loss of language between generations. In some cases, biological parents were coming face to face with their own children after long periods of separation or, in cases where their children were in protective custody, their representatives as well (e.g., foster parents, protection or youth corrections workers)..

It was typical for family members to become more optimistic during the preparation stage. They were often relieved with the discovery that certain family members whom they had feared would refuse to come had, in fact, agreed to attend. The mood, however, altered in the final hours leading up to the conferences, and even the moments of arrival, which tended to be rampant with anxiety. Typically a drama of some kind unfolded in the final hours. An aunt who was refusing to come showed up anyway. Another person who said she would not have anything to do with the conference decided at the last minute to give a letter to a relative to deliver to the conference. A grandmother who declared that she was deliberately coming late because she was not going to "listen to those child welfare people" [from field student's journal] heard the report anyway, with positive effect. Writing about this incident, the regular coordinator reports:

> The group started a little late because some family members were detained. This caused some anxiety for all of us, particularly [the student social worker coordinating the FGC], who had been worried that some family members would fail to show up on the actual day of the conference. The Grandmother called to inform us that she was coming, but would not be present for the information giving session because she did not want to hear it. As it turned out, she *was present* for it because by the time she got there the FGC was only just beginning. This worked out for the best as she was an important member and needed to hear the information presented.

5.1.2 The Family's Fears Becoming the Concerns of the Coordinator

Excerpts from the coordinators' reflective journals are used to introduce by way of example, what at the beginning of the project was among the worst fears shared by the coordinators, that a key person would not show up at the last minute. As was noted in the chapter dealing with preparations, this was a frequently expressed fear of family members during that stage. The example below shows how creatively the coordinators and the family members were in dealing with turns of events. A young person in a family where several of the children had attempted suicide prior to the referral, intentionally stabbed himself days before the conference and another young adult in the same family overdosed

the very day of the conference. The student social worker who was facilitating this particular conference wrote:

> On . . . the evening of the conference, I arrived at the office . . . to prepare for the conference. One of the counsellors . . . was already there, he was serving as both a resource person and a support person. [The coordinator and researcher] arrived just after I did. The child welfare workers arrived just before 7:00 p.m. The mother did not show up, so her oldest son called her, and her step-mother also spoke with her. She informed both of them that she would not come. The children said that they really wanted her there so [one of the adult children] along with [the coordinator] went to the home, and they returned with her. The mother did not look happy about being there.

Significantly, both the boy who had stabbed himself and the young woman who had ingested pills that morning were at the conference. Three hours later all declared they were glad they had come. In fact, this family was so encouraged by their own ability to talk with one another that they met again the following day to finalize a plan about which the coordinator later wrote:

> We began again at approximately 10:00 a.m. I called the 18 year old at the treatment centre and again connected her to the rest of the family by speaker phone. The aunt that had come in from [out of town] was not present this morning because she had to leave on an early flight . . . but she had left a message for the family. . . . She wanted them to know that she loved them and that they need to support each other.

5.1.3 Creating an Awareness of Family Identity

Tensions aside, the arrival patterns and sheer numbers of extended family and guests set an important climate for the meeting. In her description of one family's arrival at their conference, the researcher captured an essential difference between a FGC and a meeting of immediate family members, and underscores how the "gathering" of the family has the potential to create a climate of dignity and circumstance.

> Coordinator, Police Officer and myself were the first to arrive. . . . Family members started to arrive at 9:50. The maternal family arrived first, a few at a time. The second family was the step-family [of the abused person], the last to arrive was paternal side of the family. Mostly everyone who arrived had a look of fear mixed with anticipation. Some people walked in and sat down right away, this was mostly the younger ones in the group. Grandmother of [abused children] was totally scared to even enter the house. I happened to be outside at the time and spoke with her briefly-introduced myself, spoke of the weather, then asked her to come in and have a coffee. She eventually went in after 8 minutes but was very shy. I was also outside

> when the paternal family members came and they all seemed very quiet and very intense. Everyone eventually arrived by 10:05. Once everyone was inside they appeared calm and relaxed, casual conversation occurred and they had coffee and cookies. Circle started to form before any direction from coordinator. All three families sat next to their own family members. At the start of the circle, which I thought interesting was the mom of . . . , then straight after was [abused teen] and following her was the step family. Continuing on down the circle was the family members of the paternal side. Continuing around was the maternal family. Everyone except the mom sat with immediate family members.

Evident from this depiction of the circle formation is how the family members settled into a configuration reflecting their kinship alignments. The gathering reaffirmed their identities as family members.

5.1.4 Establishing a Climate for Respectful Communication Towards the Family

Prior to the conference, the coordinators had the opportunity to gain advice on cultural and family matters from individual family members, especially senior members, and from their community panel and, in the case of Nain, from individual members of the local advisory group. Emphasis was placed on respecting cultural, family and local traditions and practices (e.g., opening with prayer, acknowledging senior members of family or members had come from out of town).

In Nain, the conferences typically opened with the coordinator inviting the senior family person, the Chief Elder or church pastor to lead the group in a prayer. On the Port au Port Peninsula, where family members expressed the most concerns about confidentiality, a bible was used in some sessions upon which all present swore an oath to keep private what was said in the conference. While this oath had no legal sanction, the practice did, according to the coordinator, make people feel at ease. In St. John's, openings were organized around the unique needs of particular families. One family who had invited their church pastor said they wanted that person to open with a prayer. In another, the eldest person in the family welcomed everyone and urged the family to come together to solve the problems at hand.

During the introductions, the coordinators were further able to set a tone for respectful communication by acknowledging a particular family's uniqueness and ability to come together. They achieved this by such means as thanking the members for coming, acknowledging the particular efforts of some to come from far distances or participate by other means such as written statements or conference call, or affirming the significance of the attendance by senior family members.

5.1.5 Preparing the Stage for the Abused Person to be the Focus of the Meeting

Adequate time during the opening of the conference was to be given for each person to identify themselves and their relationship to the abused person(s). This was done to encourage people early in the meeting to distinguish their own personal issues and feelings that they may have as family members from the need to protect the person(s) for whom a plan was to be developed. Coordinators were encouraged to practice beforehand saying the purpose of the conference in clear language just the way they would be saying it to people at the conference. The aim was for everyone to hear the same, clear message and for this statement of purpose to be repeated throughout the course of the FGC. The coordinators were expected to tie their statement about the purpose of the conference to the need to protect a particular person or persons. The ingredients of a good statement of purpose were clarity, preferably both verbally and in writing, of the reason for the conference, the outcome sought, and the name of the person(s) on whose behalf the conference had been called.

The opportunity presented to the coordinator at this stage of the conference to empower the family, or discount them, deserves attention. It took much in the way of skill to get the statement of purpose right especially since it must foster strength and a sense of efficacy in the family group rather than usurp their role or risk redirecting their attention as a result of a more flamboyant demonstration of technique. The coordinator's maturity was greatly tested during the opening stage. At first conferences, the family's attention and tension were both significantly focused in a way that was probably quite new for them as a group. This coupled with the fact that the amount of knowledge the coordinator had about the family at this stage, including their history with helpers and legally mandated authorities, meant that how they chose to facilitate the opening was a significant intervention. As one family member pointed out in an After the Conference Interview:

> The coordinator set the tone of the conference by clearly stating in a gentle way, the problem, and gave some information that helped the group on reflective listening skills. She handled the interruptions very well because she asked each member to respect each other by not speaking until that person is finished.

As one social worker pointed out, "All the coordinator does, really, is set up a meeting." How this meeting was set up, prepared the way for what was to follow.

5.1.6 Setting the Ground Rules for the Meeting

At the outset, the coordinators laid out the rules for the conference. These would have been reviewed during the preparations with family members but it was important to state them before the entire group. One researcher described the coordinator's habitual manner of starting the conference and covering the ground rules:

> I knew exactly what she was going to say. It always follows the same basic format. You'd [the coordinator] always start with introductions, housekeeping [e.g., timing of breaks], orientation to facilities [e.g., where the phones and washrooms were located], ground rules, set some standard of behaviour such that no one would be abusive to each other, and give them an agenda, outline of the day, give them an idea of what to expect, and then go into information providing.

A coordinator at a different project site explained how she laid out the ground rules at a conference:

> I then discussed housekeeping items. I advised them that they could refresh their coffees and have a cigarette when they needed to but to let [some]one know if anyone left and did not return for I would then try to get them back. Then I moved into the ground rules which included no violence, name calling or abusive language. As well, no interrupting--everyone is to be given the opportunity to express their views. This moved along to confidentiality and the rights of all FGC members to privacy and that what is said in the room must remain in the room and only among them and they must respect an trust each other with that responsibility.

5.1.7 Acknowledging that the Proceedings May Be Painful

Once this coordinator had completed the ground rules and reviewed the purpose of the conference, she then moved into identifying that the discussion could evoke strong feelings in the participants:

> At that point, I acknowledged the pain in each of the families and that I knew it was difficult for them to be there to discuss these painful issues. I indicated that it takes a lot of courage to sit together and discuss these issues and that they needed to respect each other and each other's feelings.

Observing the coordinator, the researcher wrote about the impact on the family:

> Coordinator's introduction took 20 minutes total and she gave a lot of encouragement and thanked everyone for being a part of the abused child's concerns and ongoing support. At this point of the conference everyone was sitting straight up and attentive. Everyone seemed positive and understood the goal of the conference.

5.1.8 Expecting the Unexpected

While the coordinators had some set patterns, they developed their own strategies for dealing with the unexpected at this stage of the conferences and the need to do that was the rule rather than the exception. In one situation where the mother could not speak

in front of her family, the coordinator asked everyone except the woman and her support person to leave the room for a period of time. It was simply too painful for her to get her words together without some preparation. Her support person helped her frame her feelings into words, and when everyone came back, the woman was able to say what she wanted. In another, a teen did not want to sit in the same room as the family so the coordinator kept the door panel open to the next room and a vacant chair in plain view of the family to give her a seat if she so chose in their midst and to remind them of her presence throughout the deliberations. As the following excerpt from one coordinator's journal notes, sometimes the openings were unsettling:

> At the beginning of the meeting prior to the presentation from [two invited persons], the grandmothers began to argue who was most at fault. I interrupted this exchange to remind them that this meeting was about the baby and not a place to lay blame. This seemed to [defuse] the situation and both. . . . settled back. . . . Mom was upset with this and left the room with her support person. When she returned, she felt that people were still talking about and blaming her; she left the room again saying that we could take our meeting and shove it etc. her support person and this coordinator followed her out of the room to the parking lot and tried to convince her to come back. She was eventually able to focus on the concept that this was a meeting to help her with the baby and she returned to the conference.

In the post-conference de-briefing for this conference, the coordinator observed that a turning point occurred when the two grandmothers who had sat across the room from one another at the start moved to sit next to each other.

5.2 Participants

The smallest conference had 4 participants (family and professional) and the largest had 25. The following table (Table 5.1) shows the number of people in attendance at each site and for all of the 37 conferences. On average, the conferences in St. John’s tended to be somewhat larger than those at the other two sites.

Table 5.1
Number of People Attending the First-Time and Reconvened Conferences by Site

SIZE	NAIN	PORT AU PORT	ST. JOHN'S	ALL
Total Number	159	130	183	472
Mean per Conference	12.23	11.82	15.25	13.11
Standard Deviation	4.50	5.64	4.39	4.95
Median	12.0	9	15	12
Mode	8.0	8	11	8
Minimum to Maximum	4 - 21	6 - 24	10 - 24	4 - 24

5.2.1 Working Within Variable Attendance

Not everyone who showed up for a conference stayed for the whole meeting. As will be seen later, the climate of the conferences themselves ranged from solemn and subdued where family members sat straining for someone to speak to the moderately chaotic with members coming and going, taking breaks at different times, and at times seemingly unproductive venting of frustration and conflict. As could be expected, the character of a conference was directly related to the character of the family: the family's typical way of relating extended over into the conference. Because the conferences tended to be stretched out over several hours, some people could only come for a short time, but even putting in an appearance was nearly always helpful and taken as a supportive sign by the family. With some exceptions, out-of-town visitors typically stayed at the conferences throughout. The exceptions tended to be when the family decided to have an additional meeting that interfered with travel arrangements.

5.2.2 Setting Limits Around Professional Involvement

Before the project started, concerns were expressed that having too many professionals at a conference would overshadow and therefore inhibit the family from

speaking out. The next table (Table 5.2) shows that for the three sites combined, the average number of family members ($\underline{X}$ = 9.86) exceeded that for the average number of professionals ($\underline{X}$ = 2.97). Contrary to expectations for an urban centre, in St. John's where one would presume the presence of more professionals, the weighting toward family ($\underline{X}$ = 13.17) and away from professionals ($\underline{X}$ = 2.08) was the most pronounced for any site.

Table 5.2
Numbers of Professionals and Family Members at First-Time and Reconvened Conferences by Project Site

ROLE	NAIN	PORT AU PORT	ST. JOHN'S	TOTAL
Family	119	108	157	384
Mean	9.15	982	13.08	10.67
Min to Max	4-16	4-22	8-20	4-22
Professionals	40	22	26	88
Mean	3.08	2.0	2.17	2.44
Min to Max	0-5	0-4	1-4	0-5

On one occasion early in the project, a coordinator kept several professionals present in the room for much of the conference. This proved unsatisfactory and was not repeated. A professional said of the conference, that although it was clearly helpful to the family, the process had given him information that he would never have come by in his particular role. He reflected that the practice of having all professionals in the room at one time would contribute to their over involvement. At another early conference where the coordinator and the child welfare worker stayed in the room and did not give the family private time, family members said they thought the child welfare worker should have left.

5.2.3 Ensuring Supports for Participants

Each person who came to a conference had a designated role. The following table (Table 5.3) shows the number of people who came to these 37 conferences by site and by their role at the conference. The overwhelming majority came in the capacity of family member of the abused person/s or abusing person/s and, thus, reaffirmed family ties and caring. The presence of non-family whether as friends, officially designated support persons, or information providers reinforced that this was more than a family gathering; it was a crucial planning forum. Morever, non-family were helpful in managing some of the family tensions and often played important supportive roles when this would not have been feasible for family members. In fact, the use of family members as support persons proved problematic on two occasions. At one conference it was disclosed that the older sibling

who was the spokesperson/support for the younger siblings had sexually abused the others when they were children. At another, an abused woman was supported by her abusive husband. In this instance, the family supported the abuser in denying the existence of the problem. In Nain family members opposed the inclusion of non-family support people because they did not believe the problems in the family should be known to outsiders.

Table 5.3
Number of People Who Came to the First-Time and Reconvened Conferences by Site and Role at the Conference

ROLE IN THE CONFERENCE	NAIN	PORT AU PORT	ST. JOHN'S	TOTAL
Abuser	15	6	17	38
Abused	4	7	14	25
Abuser/Abused	1	2	1	4
Biological Family	87	71	96	254
Family Friend	6	5	12	23
Support Person	3	8	10	21
Legal Guardian	0	2	0	2
Foster Family	1	7	7	15
Information Giver Mandated	20	14	14	48
Information Giver Invited	20	7	8	35
Missing Data	2	1	4	7
Totals	159	150	183	472

5.3 The Information Giving Stage

Once the introductions were finished and any ground rules shared, the coordinators shifted to the information-giving stage of the conference. Information was given by two groups of professionals:

(1) the referring worker and any other people who had been involved in the investigation of the abuse, and

(2) the invited professional/s who gave information on a specific topic to the participants at the conference.

These information givers most often presented to the group verbally although in some instances brief hand-outs or flip-chart paper was used to highlight points of their presentation.

In addition to the presentations by the professionals, statements of family members were often read out to the group at this time. These included both statements by family members who could not be present and those who were present and had messages which they wished to convey at the outset of the meeting. The statements from absent members tended to be delivered by the coordinator while those of persons in attendance tended to be relayed by the person or his or her support person.

5.3.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Information-giving stage of the conference was two-fold: (a) to foster a climate of partnership between the extended family members and the mandated authorities, and, (b) to make sure that the family members had good quality information at their disposal with which to render decisions in the best interests of the abused person(s). It was during this stage that the level of preparation of the information giver for what they were getting into and their own abilities to talk with the families in respectful ways were carefully scrutinized by everyone.

5.3.2 Information From the Referring Agent/Investigative Authorities

These presenters included workers from child protection, youth correction, police parole, and probation. Having carried out the investigation or assessment of the family's situation, they had some familiarity with at least one or more people in attendance but did not, at least in St. John's and on the Port au Port Peninsula, know the entire family group.

5.3.2.1 Establishing the Care and/or Protection Concern

The task of the referring authorities, along with any other people who may had been involved in investigations or assessments relative to the abuse, was to set before the family information that would establish that the abused person was in need of care and/or protection. During this stage, any ideas the coordinator or investigative authorities had about how the case should be resolved were offered as suggestions rather than as definitive recommendations in order to not inhibit family creativity in forming a plan. At the same time if the legally mandated authorities had a "bottom line" (e.g., "this child will not be permitted to live in the same house as this relative"), they were encouraged to be honest about it and not give the family false impressions about the extent of their decision making. In situations of repeat abuse or longer-term involvement, it proved most helpful when the investigatory authorities took a stance of "What we have been doing is not solving the problem."

5.3.2.2 Breaking Through the Denial

This part of the conference tended to stimulate high levels of emotion. The impact on the family of hearing the facts with everyone present in the room was regarded by the family members themselves as one of *the* most significant milestones in the in the process of the family cohering around a validated set of facts. The information stage brought things which could previously not be openly discussed out in the open. Even in situations where the perpetrator had been convicted in court, family members had varying conceptions about what had happened and levels of denial remained high until the facts were set forth. How this was done was very important. As one researcher pointed out:,

> [The turning point is] when the child welfare worker gives a brief history of family and bottom line. Some workers were really vague, uncomfortable and afraid to be direct. This made the family uncomfortable. Some workers came in, sometimes with little charts identifying the main concerns. The clearer they were the better it was. In one case it was very badly done and the family got very hostile because she went digging back too far and presenting information that wasn't really relevant and which shouldn't have been brought up at the time.

5.3.2.3 Going with the Family's Reactions

Families were encouraged to wait until the non-family members left the room to begin their discussions, but this did not always happen. Coordinators, mandated authorities and often other guests had to be patient and respectful of the family's right to do things their way. The following is excerpted from the researcher's notes of one conference:

> After a round of introductions, [the coordinator] gave a brief address concerning ground rules, the agenda for the day, and administrative details.

> The atmosphere was very tense, and the family looked nervous and apprehensive. The child protection worker outlined CPS concerns for the family and explained them thoroughly: emotional abuse toward each other and towards [the child], physical abuse between [the parents] and could happen [sic] with [the child] in the heat of an argument, lack of supervision, during quarrels [the child] is not supervised and could have an accident, [child's] physical and emotional health, plans for future in the event that [child's] health worsens, use of alcohol, if they're going out for an evening, one person must be capable of caring for the child when they return home. [The paternal grandmother] asked why they fight so much and so violently, claiming she cannot understand the reason for it and that they should be able to handle their problems better. [The mother] interpreted her comments as blame and rushed from the room crying. She was followed by her support person, and they stayed out of the room for about 15 minutes. After this, the grandmothers began to argue. . . . After [coordinator] smoothed this over, [child protection worker] continued with her presentation.

5.3.2.4 Continuing the Conference Despite the Reactions

At times, the conference had to continue its work despite the reaction of one or more participants to the information giving. A case in point is a teen who was uncomfortable with the presentations at her conference:

> The letter from [a professional] and the information presented by [Child Protection Worker] related a great deal of negative information about [the young person], to which she reacted by fidgeting, playing with her hair, smirking to herself, and generally giving the impression that she wasn't listening, wasn't impressed, and didn't care. . . . At one point one of the aunts became very annoyed at [the young person], asking her "What's wrong with you? Are you even listening to any of this? Why are you sitting there with a big smirk on your face?" Other family members calmed the aunt down and defended [the young person] by explaining that she did understand everything that was being said, but that the only way she could cope was to act that way. It was recognized by the group that she had to be permitted to deal with it in her own way. . . . During the lunch hour, [the young person] announced that she was leaving the conference. She ensured that everyone present knew this and went out of her way to make it a dramatic event. . . . the family continued without her and created a plan which did not include her views.

5.3.2.5 Usually Positive Evaluation of Presentations

The ratings of the presentations by child welfare, police and parole workers were nearly always positive as evidenced by the candid written feedback from the researchers, coordinators and family members. Written comments typically noted how respectful and supportive these people had been in their presentations. For example (all from different conferences):

- [Name of child welfare worker] did a great job of outlining child protection concerns in the case.
- Constable [name] did a great job explaining her involvement with the family.
- Parole officer [name] was very informative and supportive of the family.
- The Social Worker and the CNIB spokesperson were especially effective in presenting their information in a very helpful and clear manner.
- Parole officer was very helpful and explanatory in every aspect. Help put light on what [offender] has been working on.
- [Child welfare worker] very informative and to the point on what needs to be put in place. Stayed the whole day to offer support and guidance when needed.

When the authorities, such as child welfare, police, or parole, presented at the same time, the effect on the family was invariably positive and motivating for the family. For example:

> [Police officer] explained. . . . involvement with the family, relating the major incident where the father could have been charged with assault and the daughter with trafficking drugs. In the interests of preserving family unity and saving the child from being prosecuted for selling drugs, the [police officer] decided not to lay charges. She showed unusual compassion and understanding for this family, which they appreciated. [Child Protection Worker] then continued, outlining CPS concerns for the family's safety.

The feedback was equally candid on those few occasions when the presentations were not helpful or could have been better. One person was described as "preachy" in the words of a researcher and at another conference a presenter was described in the evaluation by several participants as "arrogant." Family members in two different After the Conference Interviews were unhappy with the way they perceived that a police officer had addressed their relative:

- If in future conferences, [if] there are children present, any information regarding the child should be reflected or maybe the child should leave the room. [Child] felt like the police officer was putting him down [when giving information].
- Where there's children present they should be spoken to with care.

The coordinator and researcher both agreed that the officer's presentation was abrasive and made the family and the child defensive.

Comments from other conferences included:

- I felt that the child welfare worker could have been less hesitant and more direct/clear in presenting...information.
- Child welfare worker not well prepared and appeared to[o] late as authorization role [sic].

Our impressions from the conferences, later confirmed by the written evaluations, was that the coordinators increasingly got it right as to who to invite to the conferences as information givers and how to prepare them to give empowering messages to the family.

5.3.2.6 Beneficial Effects

Everybody Knows: Bringing the Issues Out in the Open

One mother said of her daughter's sexual abuse that before the conference everyone was always asking her what had happened, despite the conviction and imprisonment of the family member, but since the conference, no one asked. They all heard it at the same time and all present had stopped blaming the victim.

Sympathy for the Abused Person Increases

One of the main effects of this stage of the conference, as confirmed by the observers and in the after-the-conference interviews with participants, was that sympathy for the survivors was increased.

Investigating Authorities Share Responsibility

In later feedback from focus groups on the experience of attending conferences, investigatory authorities with near uniformity noted that they no longer felt that the family was hostile toward them and that they now felt some partnership with some family members. The conferences increased the families' understanding of and appreciation for the role played by the authorities and vice versa for the situations of the families. In the words of one child welfare worker, "I no longer feel like the family is blaming me for placing the children. They have accepted that there is a problem and are taking on some of the responsibility."

5.3.3 Presentations by Invited Information Givers

The second type of information given at this stage of the conference pertained to the types of problems that were contributing to the violence in the family and what supports

were available to assist the family in overcoming those problems. A wide variety of community professionals attended the conferences to give information including representatives from women's shelters, substance abuse programs, immigration, medical personnel, and therapists. Some had worked with the family before, but many, particularly in St. John's, arrived without being familiar with the family or their situation.

5.3.3.1 Strong Impact of Information

As evident in the description below for the information sharing, these presentations had a profound effect on the conference participants:

> The [second information giver] arrived at this time for his presentation on [the child's] illness. As soon as he began to talk about the child's [condition], the family focused intently on him. (You could hear a pin drop.) It was easy to see that whatever differences this family has, the [child] is the centre of the universe for this group, and is a major source of unity. I could sense a great feeling of anxiety and tension from the group. It had existed all morning, but it worsened during this time. After [the doctor had finished], the group looked very sad and sombre. The parents are facing so much stress at a young age and it seems to be taking its toll on them. This fact was stated and acknowledged by all the members of the group. [The coordinator] proceeded by reading statements of family members who could not attend the conference [and then the group broke for lunch].

5.3.3.2 Positive Reception

The praise for the quality of the presentations by the information givers (other than mandated authorities) was again nearly universally positive as stated in the assessments of the coordinators, researchers and family members. For example:

- Doctor in particular was very straight forward and clear. . . . however, all information givers were excellent.
- Person from [women's shelter] presentation on family violence was excellent.
- The presentation on survivors of sexual and physical abuse was very informative.
- [Name] did a great job explaining the effects of mental illness on other family members.
- Presentations by both information givers were excellent--very well tailored...without being specifically directed at any individuals.
- [Name] gave a very clear, down to earth presentation on abuse/violence and substance abuse.

As judged by the family's written evaluations and interviews and the observations of the researchers, the impact of their presentations were almost uniformly positive among perpetrators, survivors, and other family members alike.

In one presentation regarding the effects on children of growing up in a home where there was alcoholism, the perpetrator demanded to know whether the person was talking from her position as an "expert" or whether she had experienced it first hand. The response "both" made a visible difference for him. As discussed in the prior chapter, care was taken to invite people from the community who were respected, who supported the philosophy of the model, and were known in their own right for the respect they demonstrate in their dealings with colleagues and clients.

5.3.4 Personal Statements by Family Members

After the professionals had completed their presentations, personal statements by family members were often read out or conveyed. Authors of these statements included children too young to attend, relatives at a distance, survivors, perpetrators, and other family members in attendance.

5.3.4.1 The Importance of Prepared Personal Statements

Not only did things go better during the opening and information giving stage if the coordinator and information givers had carefully prepared what they were going to say, but it was during this same stage of the conference when family members gave their personal statements that their level of preparedness, or lack of it, came under the scrutiny of the group as well. One researcher pointed out:

> I really liked how [coordinator] got people to prepare personal statements and in many cases that saved the day. If that hadn't been done, the conference would have gone a lot differently. For example, a mother who was taking a lot of blame from family members had all the responsibility placed on her. When she could get a chance to say at first "Well this is what I have done wrong. I take responsibility for this. This is how I'd like things to be different." She had already said all the bad things about herself, and had basically apologized to the family, and asked for their forgiveness and support. And they didn't have anything to say then. They didn't have a chance to put her down.

And a coordinator concluded:

> Always have it down in writing. And usually have their support person read it...Towards the end [of the project], I always required it of any young people, any teenagers. The ones that I didn't do it with and the ones afterwards where I did do it, there was dramatic differences in the way that the teenagers were able to participate in the FGC.

This same coordinator tied the issue of preparing family through the use of written statements to their very safety:

> A lot of it for me started when I started paying particular attention to the measures to ensure the safety of people...Taking personal statements from people. That was directly because of a strategy I used with one mom to ensure that she got to say what she wanted to say or to make sure...that her voice was heard, that she wasn't shut down by people criticising her.

As mentioned in a previous chapter, male perpetrators and young people tended to overestimate their abilities to handle things without preparation. In discussing this at the final focus group evaluation, the transcript reads as follows:

> Coordinator: [Written preparation] gives [teenagers] much more encouragement to come out and say it because they actually can see it there in front of them.
> Research\observer: And afterwards if they didn't have a statement, they would say "I really should have written that down."
> Coordinator: It was mostly the men who wouldn't want to do it. They were too macho. They thought that they didn't need anything like that.
> Research/observer: And then at the FGC they would start to say something and get all filled up. . . .
> Coordinator: . . . race out of the room, and get me to do it for them. That happened 3 different times. The men, or the offender, and in this last one, he ran out of the room, he was the only one at the conference who cried, when I read what his son said. And he wanted to say something but he just couldn't. But the women always would. And if they were illiterate I would help them. And the same with teenagers. I would almost have to do it with them. They would say it and I'd say "Now here, you write that down, put it in your own words." It was a real struggle to get them to do it but I think that it was really significant in terms of the focus of the meeting, and how people perceived them then. For the teenagers, it gave them credibility. It allowed them to say how they were hurting and how they were feeling, without coming across as saucy brats ready to come into the meeting with this tough attitude which would have been dismissed by the family, by the elders.

5.3.4.2 Beneficial Impact

The effect of reading letters from absent persons or of reading prepared written statements was nearly always positive and often had a powerful effect on the family. In once instance where a daughter and her mother, both in attendance at the conference, had written down what they wanted to tell their family, the researcher recorded the events as follows:

> After Mr. [information giver] departure, [daughter's] support person read out her personal statement to the family, with a voice that often wavered and broke. The daughter's words were very simple and honest, causing a lot of emotion in the room. She clearly stated that she did not want to return to her

> parents' home and the she has no relationship with her father as she feels he favours his sons over her. She also said that she does not trust him any more and is afraid of him. I think this was a shock to everyone in the room, as people appeared shaken after this had been read.

The journal entry continues revealing that not only had the daughter carefully thought out what she wanted and written it down but so had her mother. Both were well-supported at the conference. Of additional interest is that the researcher herself had seen enough conferences by the time she wrote this journal that she spontaneously offers a comparison:

> At this point, [mother's] support [person] read her personal statement. This statement differed from the usual format in that it addressed people individually in the room, saying specifically what she wanted each person to know. This contrasts with the usual format, in which the statement addresses everyone in the room. It was extremely effective, defusing the tension and hostility in the room, and setting the stage for constructive discussion. In her statement, the mother asked the family members for what she needed from them and thanked them for their support and help over the years. Almost every family member in the room was crying during the reading of this statement. The family took a much-needed break at this point, and resumed after about 15 minutes.

In her continuation of the reflective journal for this conference, the researcher alludes to some fast thinking done by the coordinator over the break with the father who had not done his homework. The example highlights how the coordinator facilitated the transition to the family's private deliberation time.

> After consulting with [the father] during the break, [the coordinator] made a brief statement on [his] behalf, expressing his shock at finding that his daughter is now afraid and distrustful of him. She [the coordinator] stated that he wants his daughter back home, but recognizes that it may not be the best thing for now. He is willing to try to be flexible and open-minded, and to help his daughter to get what she wants and needs. Having said this, [the coordinator] confirmed with the father to see if she had accurately represented his thoughts and feelings. [The coordinator] then directed their attention to the list of topics taped to the wall, outlining the key areas to be decided and included in the plan. The family broke for lunch at this point [to begin their private deliberations afterwards].

5.4 Evaluation of Information Provision

The evaluation form completed at the end of the conference yields some information on the family group participants' views regarding the beginning phase of the conference. One question asked, "At the conference, did you get the information you needed?" In response, 93% (272) checked "yes" (see Table 5.4). In other words, most felt that on entering their private deliberations they had been provided with the necessary information.

Table 5.4
Number of Family Group Participants Who Agreed that They Received the Information Needed by Project Site

Response	Nain	Port au Port	St. John's	Total
Yes	32	74	166	272
No	8	0	1	9
Don't Know	2	4	5	11
Missing	0	0	1	1
Total	42	78	173	293

The figures deserve comment especially for Nain. Interestingly, 9 of the 10 persons who expressed dissatisfaction or uncertainty with the information they received were from the Nain site at its first 4 conferences. These were conferences at which either no or very few information persons had been invited. This was due to a perceived lack of information persons in that community. Hence, the coordinator attempted to act as the information giver in those sessions. The roles did not mix. At the first conference, the coordinator even agreed to be the family's worker to help solve the problem of alcoholism for the mother rather than involve staff from services set up for that purpose in the community. For subsequent conferences, the coordinator located and deliberately increased the number of information presenters including members of the elders' group and the local health commission in the community. The concerns about not getting information disappeared in the later Evaluation Forms and were rarely brought up in the discussions at these conferences.

This did not mean, though, that the concern about the lack of resources disappeared in Nain. Even before the project began, concerns were reiterated about the limited number and range of services available in Nain, and, thus, the fewer resource people. The problems associated with women wanting shelter from domestic abuse having to leave town has already been mentioned. If a person with an alcohol, or other substance abuse problem, needed residential detoxification or treatment, they too had go out of town and face very limited resources for relapse prevention and support when they came back. One couple wanted residential treatment as a couple for their addictions but knew that the only centre available to them in the province would not admit them at the same time. The participants' evaluations reflected these realities. Many either did not know what culturally appropriate services were available, locally or elsewhere, or knew that the service they needed would be hard to come by.

5.5 Summary

Our experiences with the opening phase of the conferences revealed that with adequate preparations, the conference format makes it possible to respect the family group's way of being together while also introducing new information and decision-making procedures. The steps which promoted this integration of the family's culture and family group decision making included:

- Welcoming the arrivals while having the family decide how the session should open (e.g., a prayer, thanking people for coming);

- Creating a circle seating configuration while leaving the participants to select their own seats and form their own groupings;

- Infoming participants of housekeeping arrangements and ground rules for participation while leaving them to decide when to have breaks, lunch, etc.;

- Clarifying the purpose and structure of the proceedings while reaching out for the participants' views, wishes, and hopes;

- Including referring/investigative workers and invited information givers while limiting their numbers and involvement; and

- Articulating a philosophy of collective problem solving while providing information and creating space for the family group to take charge of the planning.

Before turning to the section of the report dealing with the family group's deliberations, we have presented one last excerpt from a research observer's notes that we think gives a good snapshot of the process from the beginning of one conference and on into the family's private time. Despite the antics of the father, and the variable levels of input from participants, the example is a reasonably good one, from a practice perspective, of "getting it right":

> [The mother] chose her friend . . . to speak for her at the very beginning of the meeting. The friend briefly spoke, thanking relatives, [the coordinator], and the child protection worker. She asked her family for support and assistance if they felt they could help her. The child protection worker spoke next, outlining his role in the family's case. He also gave his two basic requirements for approval of the plan: that the mother have plenty of supports to help her care for her children and that a safety plan be formulated to protect her and her children from abuse or harm. He also stated the possibility of revising the plan as time went on. . . . The group then asked the worker some questions. [The worker] concluded by reassuring the group that

he could be called back to answer questions during the family's deliberating time. . . . The other information giver presented information on the impact of abuse on a person's life and thinking patterns. . . . The group asked a number of questions and she gave some advice. . . . continued on to talk about child sexual abuse. . . . Private family deliberations began about 12:10 p.m. . . . There were constant jokes and horseplay throughout the private deliberations. . . . A great deal of work did get done however. . . . Some people gave much more valuable and thoughtful input than others. For example, the foster mother and best friend/support contributed many good ideas and supportive/positive views, however, the father continually disrupted discussion with wisecracks and quips.

PRIVATE DELIBERATIONS

6.0 Introduction

The families' deliberations are at the heart of the conferences. This is the time when the coordinator and other professionals leave the meeting room and the family with their relatives, friends, and other close supports take charge of the planning. Up till now at the conferences, the professionals were the primary speakers with their views predominating: the coordinator laid out the process for working together, the mandated authorities set forth the areas of concerns as they saw them, and the invited information providers overviewed relevant topics from their perspective. In the opening phase of the conference, the family mainly listened and asked questions. Nevertheless, the beginning phase also set the stage for their assuming ownership. It opened in a way that paid attention to to the customs of the family, that gave a warm reception to invitees, that oriented attendees to family group conferencing and the rules for working together, and that provided the necessary information for decision making.

This chapter now turns to looking at how the families handled the role of decision makers. Because many questions are raised by the prospect of leaving on its own a family group where serious family violence has taken place, we begin by laying out some of the the most common fears generated and emphasize that the group is not abandonned but instead provided tools for problem solving. Our understanding of the families' private time is greatly enriched by the reflective notes and observations of the researchers who stayed in the meeting room in 28 of the 37 conferences. Attention is then devoted to examining how the family groups engaged in decision making. In addition to the reflective notes of both the researchers and coordinators, the findings are drawn from the participants' written evaluations of the conferences, post-conference interviews with participants, and decision-making ratings of researchers and coordinators. Because first-time and reconvened conferences differed in their dynamics, comparisons are then made between them.

6.1 Fears About Leaving the Family Alone

The coordinator and investigating authorities were expected to leave after the information-giving portion of the meeting to give the family private time in which to deliberate. Throughout the planning phase of the project, the model had immediate appeal to a wide variety of groups until they understood that the professionals did not stay in the room for the whole time. Even people who had reservations about perpetrators having any input into the proceedings could set them aside given the known results of excluding them entirely or focusing only on their arrest and prosecution. But when they realized that the professionals actually left the room, the greatest number and level of questions and concerns were raised:

(1) If the professionals leave the room, will the family turn on the abused persons and deny, discount, and revise the facts of the abuse and attack them further for disclosing?

(2) Will the abused persons be powerless to stick up for themselves and will they inevitably be re-abused by being thrown to the families?

(3) Will most of the families be so dysfunctional that they will have no idea of how to stop the abuse, will they know what the abused person needs, and will they ever be able to stick to the main purpose of the conference and come up with a plan without a professional facilitator in the room?

These fears, we learned, were in large part unfounded as long as the family group was adequately prepared for and supported in their role as decision makers. Moreover, keeping the coordinator in the room was not a positive alternative. In those situations where the coordinator, or another professional person stayed in the room, they `facilitated' in the usual sense of the term. It was impossible for them not to since family would somewhat naturally look to them to answer questions or step in to guide them or control someone. The most glaring and negative by-product of the temptation to `take over' occurred in the first conference at one site where the coordinator stayed in the room and facilitated the conference. To make matters worse, no information providers, not even child welfare, had been invited. Not only did the coordinator end up volunteering to be the one to bring to child welfare the family's accusation that a foster parent (also not present) was neglecting a child, but in the end she also agreed to be the primary direct service provider helping the mother with her problem of alcoholism in order to get her children back from child welfare! This was clearly outside the scope of what the project was set up to do and the family was invited, and did, come back together. Yet, the coordinators each, in turn, had to struggle with their own fears of what would happen if they left the room. Their concerns were partially fuelled by the fact that their own reputations in the communities where they worked and lived were `on the line.' One coordinator was told by a previous colleague that she could lose her credibility altogether if the project turned out `not to work.' It was on this point of private family deliberations that most attention from outside was directed to the coordinators.

6.1.1 Fears About Violence at the Conferences

Fears that violence would erupt at the conferences did not materialize. In no case was there violence at a conference nor was there, in any case that we are aware of, any violence immediately afterwards that could be attributed to the fact of the family gathering. On the contrary, we are reassured from our interviews with participants, including professionals, that the process is *at least* as safe for abused persons, and in many cases better, than any other option currently available to them except permanently fleeing, which the majority of families referred did not want to do.

We are aware of some situations where abusive situations that were at the centre of the referring worker's concerns continued unabated throughout the process, but these situations were ones in which investigators were unwilling or unable to decisively intervene. This was particularly true in Nain where, as others have observed (Pauktuutit, 1991) and we concur, police and child welfare officials did not intervene in the same way as they did in white communities. This will be discussed further in the next chapter dealing with plans and their authorization.

6.1.2 Fears That Families Cannot Address Sexual Abuse

Particularly in cases where sexual abuse had occurred in the family, views were expressed that perpetrators should not be involved because they are so skilful at manipulating, and their control over family and victims so pervasive, that they would use the conference private time to bring the victim back into their sphere of influence with the whole family watching. Many people assumed that families in which sexual abuse had occurred would automatically be excluded from participating in a conference. It did not occur to some that family members, including abused persons, may want to have the problem of sexual abuse addressed as they might any other problem and not quarantined, as one teen put it "as if I had the plague." She just wanted it to stop. This young woman pointed out that prior to the original disclosure of sexual abuse, and the consequent mobilization of investigation and prosecution, that she was "just a kid with problems who everyone was hassling to get to behave and do better in school" but after the disclosure it was considered "'Oh, she's been sexually abused'. Now everyone leaves me alone. I'm still a kid with problems. I'm still doing lousy in school but they just say 'Its because she's been sexually abused!'"

In one situation, a family member intimidated the research observer at a conference after he was confronted by his now grown siblings during the family's private time that he had sexually abused them. He made it clear that he would be unhappy if the researcher noted the disclosed facts in her observations. Obviously she did anyway even though at the time she put her pencil down and stopped writing. The situation was not one that required mandatory reporting, nor were any of the now grown family members who had been subjected to his abuses as children vulnerable to further abuse of the kind disclosed. This complex situation provided much insight for the whole team into the nature of conferences including the danger of excluding families in which sexual abuse had taken place from having access to a family group conference. This family, like several others where the presence of sexual abuse, sometimes over 2 or even 3 generations, had not been referred because of sexual abuse, nor had it even been mentioned. Yet the family members either brought it up during their preparatory interviews with the coordinator, or it came up, as in the above example, at a conference. In fact, as noted in chapter 3, sexual abuse was identified as one of the types of abuse prompting the referral in only three families although an additional 7 also later identified that they suffered from sexual abuse.

These experiences with families where incest had taken place changed our views about how current practices may be contributing to the isolation of the abused persons by enclosing them in a cloak of professional protection. The effect of the conferences in increasing sympathy for the abused persons by getting the facts of the situation out in the open were encouraging. The following is an excerpt from the transcript of the evaluation workshop with the coordinators and researchers:

> When we did the Map [Social Network Analysis, Tracey & Whittaker, 1990] with the mother and the survivor, the survivor's map and grid was non-existent! The mother's was huge! When [the researcher] went back and did the year follow-up, the survivor's grid grew massively, and the mother's shrank. Because the number of people supporting the mom and her decision to reunite with the sex offender has drastically decreased since the conference because they were given the details, like using the words 'sexual intercourse' instead of leaving it up to their imagination as to what exactly this fellow did. When you give them the accurate factual information instead of rumour and what the people involved choose to let out so that they can influence the whole picture, it changes the way they see the victim and the way they see the offender. That was really significant.

Likewise, from the transcript of the evaluation workshop, the benefits of breaking the silence on sexual abuse were reiterated in discussions on another family:

> Because [of their conference], sexual abuse has become a household word in this family, and as a result . . . [these children and] . . . their families that they are living with are more able to cope with this situation. The mom, the one whom I was most concerned about, we talked and they instantly recognized that [the children] were in pain. No one had to tell them that something has happened to them. She connected herself that, and said it to me about 3 times, about how [the children] were in school before. They were always well behaved, good students. And starting around [month], she started hearing from the school about what [the children] were doing, acting up, drinking at school, having this suicide threat behaviour . . . and she instantly connected it to this offender being released. . . . There is no denying. They are ready and willing and want [the children] to disclose what has happened to them and who it was so that they can get to work on it.

6.2 Leaving the Family With the Tools vs. Leaving Them on Their Own

By the end of the project, it was standard practice for all the coordinators before leaving the conference room, to put on display for the family group written guidelines, visual cues or other techniques for focusing the family's attention on the issues for deliberation. The advantages of doing this grew out of the coordinators' experiences

with their first conferences. While these aids would not have been necessary at some conferences, since the families had either come with a plan worked out or had in their midst a leader or leaders who took sufficient initiative from the start, it was a strong consensus among the coordinators that it was better to leave a clear statement on the wall for all families in case it was needed.

This does not seem such an extraordinary tactic since it an acceptable tenet for most committees and work groups that things go better when the purpose of a group meeting is clear. Yet it could be argued that the use of such a technique is an opportunity for the person who writes the reason for the meeting or the guidelines to exert influence over the family's private deliberation time by controlling the agenda and the approach to achieving that agenda. Our stance was that we were quite happy to control the agenda to the extent that no conference would have been called if someone had not been abused. If people did not want to address that issue, the conference would be called off. We were particularly interested for the evaluation to show us whether the use of techniques like this exerted too much influence over the direction the families took in reaching plans.

It was absolutely necessary at this juncture for the coordinators to discover if there was agreement in the group about whether or not a protection concern existed. This could be done by checking with the group about whether the goal or main purpose written on the wall was the right matter for them to be addressing or not. Again, this was regarded as a vital step in ensuring that the abused person's immediate and future safety was the paramount consideration.

Families were told when particular information givers could be called back by the family for clarification during this stage. Some of the most memorable conferences were ones where investigating authorities stayed in the building with the coordinator. This time was used to prepare lunch for the family at those sites where lunch was offered. The effect of feeding the family, at the two sites where this occurred, was regarded by everyone as positive and the costs of providing lunches, usually consisting of soup and sandwiches, was negligible. Although out of the room, the coordinators all stayed close at hand and made themselves available as needed.

If the climate was too hostile, the coordinator was expected to stay in the room or stop the meeting, or if the researcher observing the conference believed anyone (or herself to be in danger), she was to leave the room and alert the coordinator. While this policy stood throughout the project, It was never actually necessary to invoke it to halt a conference.

6.3 The Private Time: From the Outside of the Conference Room

The coordinators were instructed to resist the temptation to remain and take over the session. And the temptations were strong. Although sorely challenged, for the most

part, the coordinators provided reassurance but refrained from taking over the facilitation of the conference. This became easier for them with experience.

At one conference where the family was stalled with no one speaking, the coordinator had to refuse in a firm and supportive manner the plea for her to return and facilitate the deliberations. She wrote in her reflective notes:

> We [coordinator and child protection worker] were in the kitchen making the sandwiches. After approximately 15 minutes the Mom's sister-in-law came into the kitchen to tell us that this process is not working because no one is talking, everyone is just staring at the floor or at the wall and no one knows what to say. I advised her that his situation is quite normal. . . . She said OK but if it continued she would be back. I held my breath and prayed. At 12:30 I went out and announced lunch. They told me they were finished. . . . Throughout the lunch I noticed that everyone except [one person--not the abused person for whom the conference was held] was in good spirits and all seemed to be talking with each other. This made my heart soar and I loved every individual in that house.

Likewise it was difficult for the coordinators to stay out when they were keyed to the dynamics within the group and felt their own emotions mounting. The coordinator's reflective notes at one conference are telling of the tension for the people outside the room that was familiar when a conference was unfolding:

> The highlight of the whole conference for me was when the mom came out of the conference to get a cup of coffee. Without asking she told us that she wasn't going to come here tonight, but now is sure glad that she did. Hearing this just about brought tears to our eyes, we knew now that things were definitely going the way they should.

And the student social worker's reflective journal had a description of the same event:

> I was especially glad when the mother came out, [the Coordinator] asked her how things were going and she replied "good." She said that before the conference she was angry at her family for trying to get her here and she really did not want to come, but now that she was here she was really glad that she did . . . [and after the conference was over] the mother said again that "No one was going to get me to come down here tonight but now I'm really glad that I did."

When coordinators in the next room could hear families feuding or grieving, it took self-discipline especially at the beginning of the project for them to resist the temptation to rush in and rescue. Frequently, a family member would leave the conference in anger. In nearly every instance family members, sometimes with the coordinator or another family member or guest, would talk to them for a while and they

would return. In one instance, a teen left in a rage, and the family kept right on until they had come up with a plan of what to do with this young subject of the conference who had been declared by child welfare as being Beyond Parental Control. At another conference, a young person who left the meeting and walked down the road where the the student assistant along with the mother picked him up and drove him to the house. While he decided to remain at home , his older brother, who had been refusing to come to the conference, now agreed to take part in the deliberations with the student assistant serving as his support person. Meanwhile, although the group was quite concerned about the younger brother, the conference carried on.

6.4 The Private Time: Inside the Conference Room

When the door to the conference room shut, coordinators were often left uncertain about how the deliberations would proceed and their level of concern rose sharply on overhearing loud outbreaks as soon as they left the room. On the inside, however, the researcher could observe how the family group began to take charge in responsible manner. A prime example is a researcher's notes on a conference where:

> Almost immediately everyone was yelling and disagreeing, pointing fingers at each other. The father started pacing the floor and swinging his arms every time he spoke. Foster mother did not back down or feel threatened at this point, but she did request him to sit, because he was making her nervous. [Stated as "Siddown, yer makin' me nervous!"--from de-briefing] [He did].

This section begins with selected excerpts from the reflective notes of the coordinators and researchers to give insight into their first-hand experiences. These examples show both how no one can predict what will happen at conferences and how families are often able to rise to the occasion and to make sound decisions about how to proceed.

6.4.1 Getting Down to Business

Families who began arguing and quarrelling as soon as the door shut were notable exceptions. More common were families who began immediately to discuss what the information givers had said. One coordinator pointed out that "good information giving in the session is the key to break the silence." Many families simply went about the business in a matter of fact manner and made decisions. These family members had evidently spoken to one another beforehand and came to the conference "knowing" what had to be done. In some cases, a particular family member took in upon her or himself to lay out the primary issue as evident in the following excerpt:

> Immediately after [coordinator] left the room family members began talking. The first thing that [son] said was "Nothing is going to change if she [mother] doesn't stop drinking."

Some families broke into tearful subgroups comforting one another until someone in the family group took it upon themselves to rally them. Other families sat in long and pained silence, knowing what they had to discuss, until someone would finally break the silence and speak to the issues at hand. Members of these latter families were most often the ones where someone came out of the room to try and get the coordinator to come in and take over out of fear that the family would not pull together.

6.4.2 Asking the Translator to Stay in the Room

The following notes describe the moment that the Nain coordinator was about to leave the room when it dawned on everyone (family included) that no one in the family was fluent enough to translate between the elderly persons in the family and other members. It turned out to be a positive lesson in dealing with the unexpected:

> When this coordinator informed family members that in order for them to come up with a plan and to have a family discussion, all people who are not family members including this coordinator and the translator [Ed. note: who had been there to translate between the investigating authorities and the elder family members] must leave the room [two of the adult children] asked other family members if translator could stay because they were unsure if they could communicate with their parents properly without translation.

Unsure how the family would manage even with the translator, the coordinator accepted the family's invitation to stay in the room also:

> Finally members began deliberation with the help of the translator. The uncle began talking how things used to be years ago. He said that when children were taken away years ago they used to be sent to live with total strangers, he said that this was a very sad thing to witness and that families should now realize that when there is a problem they should try and correct it before it goes too far.

Interestingly, family members who had been consulted prior to the meeting about the need for translation thought this would be unnecessary for the family's private time. It was often repeated during the setting up of the project in Nain that the elderly people "watch TV" meaning that their English was good enough to participate in the project without the use of translators. After the information had been presented in the above conference, and the emotions were flowing, the younger generation in the family discovered that they wanted their elder members to fully understand, and be fully understood, in the discussion.

6.4.3 Respecting A Teen's Honesty

At one conference where a teen declared in her prepared personal statement during the information-giving stage that she did not want to live with her father because she was afraid of him, the researcher wrote of the beginning of the private time:

> The family wasted no time and delved into the issues, starting with living arrangements for [the young woman]. The family members pooled and listed all possible options open to [the young woman], and then discussed each one. It was clear, however, that [the young woman's] view was most important. Family members told her directly that she would not have to go anywhere she didn't want to. This was important for her to hear because the decision obviously caused her a lot of pain, as she cried on and off.

But how did the father react to his own family planning in this way for his daughter? In some ways, this situation is exemplary of the ones in which it was feared the abuser would be able to manipulate the family. The researcher's notes continue:

> The father kept attempting, in a very gentle way, to reach out to his daughter. For a long time, he got no response. However, as the day went on, she gradually made eye contact with her father and responded to several of his questions. After much discussion, [she] decided to stay with her paternal grandparents, as long as she could maintain contact with her friends. They then agreed upon some rules regarding: telephone use, homework, household chores, smoking, and curfew. The family also decided that [she] could visit her relatives in [another province] for the summer and if she likes it there, will be allowed to go to school there. The group will meet in [month] to make a final decision on [her] living arrangements. There was consensus in the group that it would be [the young woman's] decision at that time. The family took a short break at this time. [The young woman] made a commitment to continue with counselling sessions, which she feels are very helpful [even though she] is reluctantly attending counselling, but is willing to give it a chance. The father expressed his feeling that he did not need counselling and was not interested. His daughter challenged him on this by saying that she didn't want to go but was trying anyway, and couldn't see why he couldn't do the same. In response to this the father said: "Well if [his daughter] is going I guess I'll have to go too." At 3:25 [the coordinator] was called back in to write up the plan.

6.4.4 Challenging Family Members

One frequently asked question about the private time was whether or not the family, and particularly the abuser, was sufficiently challenged or if issues that were thought to be important were avoided. The questions about challenge were approached for the evaluation with some trepidation. We could not be certain that families who directly challenged issues or people during the conferences would come up with any better plans than those who did not. To ascertain this information the research observers were asked to comment on this in their notes, family members were asked in the After the Conference Interviews and the topic was directly addressed in the final focus group with coordinators and researchers.

In all but 5 of the conferences attended by a researcher, the answer was yes. Typical written commentary when the researcher felt the family had been sufficiently challenged included:

- There was no avoidance of unpleasant or particularly troubling issues. Support persons insisted on discussing them.
- Challenged [each other] to put aside historical issues between various portions [sic] and asked to deal in the present tense in terms of what was in the children's best interest.
- Yes, those who occasionally said negative things . . . were challenged by other members of the family.
- The presence of the mother's brother had a good influence upon the father. He [the father] was apologetic, cooperative, and genuinely interested in the plan.
- Family members checked one another when they got sidetracked onto inappropriate topics and reminded each other of the agenda for the day.
- Presence of parole officer in the room ensured the offender did not step out of line.
- Especially with regard to the grandmother. She did not control this meeting to the same degree as she did last time. The mother defended herself and responded to these verbal attacks.
- Group would ask each member . . . what they see now and in the past and what they would like to change. All had a chance to speak.

These observations also reveal what different definitions were considered with the notion of "challenge." In one "saying negative things" at the conference needed to be challenged while two of the observations point to the presence of a trusted male friend/relative or authority figure as a sufficient challenge to keep a perpetrator working cooperatively with the rest of the family. Three conferences (two initial and one re-convened) were so aggressively dominated by a family member (one male, two females) that planning was made difficult, but the family still managed to come up with an acceptable plan.

Comments from the 5 conferences where the researcher did not feel that sufficient challenges had occurred included:

- No one challenged at any time. It appeared father was going to be challenged but no one went ahead with that.
- Every time someone tried to challenge they were cut off and not allowed to continue concerns.
- Family members were very careful not to upset the mother. At times she would blame the children for being bad, and the family members would agree that it isn't as bad as child welfare workers made it out to be.
- The father was not challenged enough on his contribution to the family's problems and what he plans to do for the future. The family was too afraid of him to do this.
- They never really discussed anything challenging.

The feedback from the family members after the conferences was consistent with the research observers' descriptions about which conferences needed to have had more confrontation. The need for challenge was identified as being both about the need to curb someone who was seen as attacking others verbally or dominating the session by talking too much and/or about pushing someone who was holding back and not sharing their feelings and views. Family members comments included the following:

- Every time I felt I spoke I got cut off or verbally attacked.
- I felt we could not say enough because of child had too much to say and he could not be challenged.

The following two people were at the same conference after which a disclosure of new information occurred. They were interviewed a week later separately:

- I think it was a waste of time because the real issues were not brought out.
- My first family group conference. Nothing to cross-reference. Definitely a learning experience. After learning new things after conference, I think if we had all sides of story the outcome or plan would have been different.

Futher discussion is given to the effect of post-conference disclosures of abuse in Chapter 7.

The following three people from another conference were interviewed separately a week after their conference. The second and third persons are referring to the first person:

- Not too good. I didn't have anything to say if I did they would cut me off. I never want to see another conference again. They make the mother look like dirt.

- Appears [the above person] wasted all group members time because she has not completed any one thing in plan. Again this proves she is very selfish and not competent enough to think of her children.
- Conference went well but I feel it would work best when all participants are interested in developing a real solution. In this case I feel that [the mother] was not interested in process at all and therefore it fell short.

6.5 Decision Making During the Family's Private Time

A detailed examination was made of decision-making processes and involvement during the family's private time given that this was one aspect of the model about which so many questions have been raised. Besides wondering about the dynamics of family group conferences which included people who had abused and been abused, questions have frequently been asked as to whether or not the contributions of family members were overshadowed by those of professionals and as to how the decisions were actually reached. In our analysis, we were interested in determining (a) who made the decisions, (b) whether those were regarded as the right people to be making the decisions, (c) how decision making was approached, (d) the proportions of people who were regarded as holding back or saying too much, and whether or not individuals themselves felt able to say what they thought was important.

The data came largely from the decision-making questions on the 330 Family Group Evaluation forms of which 293 were filled out by family and friends, the 129 After the Conference interviews in which the researchers met usually alone with family members about one week after the conference, the 23 completed Observer's Checksheet and Sessional Recording Guide, and the 30 Impressions of Decision Making at the FGC filled out by the coordinators. Since on the latter three instruments the same decision-making questions were asked of family group participants, researchers, and coordinators, their responses could be compared.

6.5.1 Who Made the Decisions?

The following table (Table 6.1) shows the respondents' answers to the question "Who do you think were the main people involved in reaching the decisions during the family's private time?" Two-hundred and thirty-two of the 330 respondents (including family group as well as coordinators and researchers at first and reconvened conferences) gave at least one response to this question in the Family Group Conference (FGC) Evaluation.

The figures in the table confirm that it was family members who were most involved in making the decisions and that the question of whether or not family "could" and "would" be up to the task was adequately answered. Out of the 532 persons listed, 454 (85%) were identified clearly as family members whether by blood or marriage; an additional 59 (11%) were identified as family friends, supports (whether family, friends,

or professionals), or foster parents, while only 17 (3 %) were definitely non-family-group participants (i.e., the coordinator or social worker). The figures further confirm the importance of including, unless there are good reason not to do so, representatives from each generation, representatives from both biological sides of the family, step-family and trusted family friends or confidantes. At least parents, aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters, and grandparents need to be invited to take part in the family circle.

Table 6.1
Number of Times a Type of Participant Identified as the Main Person Involved in Reaching the Decisions During the Family's Private Time

MAIN PERSON INVOLVED	# OF TIMES MENTIONED
Mother	98
Father	65
Parents	7
Aunt(s)	50
Uncle(s)	33
All family members	50
Family (unspecified)	13
Grandparent(s)	37
Sister(s) of abused person(s)	44
Brother(s) of abused person(s)	21
Family friends	23
Support person(s)	13
Coordinator	13
Social Worker	4
Foster parent(s) or former foster parent(s)	17
Abused young person	8
Cousin(s)	5
Sister-in-law	6

Daughter	5
Son	4
Counsellor	2
Teacher	2
Clergy/Minister	2
Common-law spouse	1
Niece	1
Fiancé of Aunt	1
Stepfather	2
Mother-in-law	1
Step-aunt	2
Not the abused child	1
Not the grandfather	1

Note. The number of respondents was 232.

Some conferences are overrepresented in the figures since the table includes all persons who returned a form; hence, this measure provides only a rough estimate of who was perceived as making the decisions. For example, the 13 mentions of the coordinator as one of the main people making the decisions during the family's private time came, to the relief of the principal investigators, from only 3 conferences. One respondent each listed the coordinator for two separate conferences, but 11 persons mentioned the coordinator as being a main contributor to the family's private decision making time at one conference, even though the coordinator and the researcher insist that the coordinator left the room for the family's private time! Several family members did leave the conference room to consult with the coordinator privately during that time, however. All three of the conferences where the coordinator was listed as a main contributor occurred very early in the project when coordinators were still expressing ambivalence about leaving the family alone in the room. The social worker was named as a main contributor during the family's private time once each at two conferences and this corresponded to early conferences when they stayed in the room.

6.5.2 Were the People Making the Decisions the Right Ones?

After asking who made the decisions, the FGC Evaluation form posed the question, “Do you think that the right people were involved in reaching the decisions?” As seen in Table 6.2, close to 90% (259) of the respondents agreed that the right

people were involved in making the decisions. In other words, most participants agreed that not only were family making the decisions, but that family members should be making the decisions. Where participants replied in the negative or expressed uncertainty, they tended to be concerned about the dominance or lack of participation of certain individuals or sides of the family:

- Would have been better if everybody was talking.
- One family seemed to dominate. Families need to have equal input.
- Mother needed to be more involved.

Table 6.2
Number of Respondents Agreeing that the Right People Made the Decisions at the Family Group Conference

RESPONSE	NAIN	PORT AU PORT	ST. JOHN'S	TOTAL
Yes	35	69	155	259
No	5	3	2	10
Don't Know	2	6	13	21
Missing	0	0	3	3
Total	42	78	173	293

Note. The figures only include the responses of family group participants, not of the professionals, completing the FGC Evaluation form.

6.5.3 How Did they Arrive at Their Decisions?

One of the most frequently expressed concerns about the model of Family Group Decision Making is that a few individuals, particularly the abusers, would dominate the decision making and create a context in which supposedly consensual decisions were reached, in fact, through bullying or manipulation. Such pseudo agreements would then presumably entrap the abused family members further since now all their extended family and friendship network along with the public authorities would be legitimizing the perpetrators' goals. Such a prospect is frightening. The findings that the main persons involved in decision making provides reassurance that a wide range of family members took part in the decision making. Nevertheless, In our analysis, we recognized that we needed to examine closely what decision-making strategies were employed both during the family's private deliberations and later in approving the final plans. The findings from the latter are relayed in the next chapter on

plans. In carrying out this examination, we further recognized that the standpoint of the individual might influence their views and, therefore, sought input from family members (After the Conference interviews), the coordinators (Impressions of Decision Making at the FGC), and the researchers (Observer's Checksheet and Sessional Recording Guide).

Using a decision assessment instrument developed by Pennell (1990), all three groups of respondents were asked to identify what decision processes were used by the family group in making their plan. As instructed on the form, they were to "consider the decision making up to the point when the coordinator return[ed] to negotiate the plan with the family group." On the form, they were provided with 9 possible categories of decision processes and definitions for each process. For instance, consensus was defined as "pulling together everyone's ideas and coming up with a plan which everyone is comfortable with"; and inspiring was defined as "going along with what a trusted leader says should be in the plan." Two of the 9 categories available were labelled "Other" in order to leave room for respondents to identify processes not included on the list. They then were asked to rank these decision processes from most important to least important. For the calculations, the most important process was scored as 9, the second most important as 8, and so on down to 1 for the least important if all the options were identified as occurring.

For the first-time conferences, Table 6.3 below summarizes the decision processes from the perspective of the family members; Table 6.4 is from the perspective of the coordinator; and Table 6.5 is from the perspective of the researcher. As seen in the three tables, It is evident that respondents rarely went beyond the available decision categories to identify the processes taking place. In Nain, the 0 frequencies for the "Other" categories show that they never formulated additional processes while on the Port au Port Peninsula and to a lesser extent in St. John's some respondents (including family group members, researchers, and a coordinator) developed their own. It is also evident that the participants were able to select out decision processes to characterize the private deliberations as evident in the quotes below from the reflections of two mothers at different conferences:

- Think we only did bargaining and consensus. Don't think that the rest apply.

- Bargaining was most important because they haggled and argued back and forth for hours. There was no inspiring at this stage because none of the FGC members present had any faith or trust in each other, so they wouldn't go along with what one person was saying. There definitely was manipulation because threats were used to try to force [me] to go along with parts of the plan. [My mother] would say things like "You do this or I'll go for custody of the children." Avoidance took place when certain FGC

members refused to discuss particular issues. [My mother] refused to admit to or discuss allegations of abuse by her [me].

As evident in the 3 tables, the respondents whether family members, coordinators, or researchers saw themselves as having used a wide range of decision processes in their conferences from ones that would appear to be democratic (i.e., consensus, bargaining, inspiring, and voting) to others of a more questionable character (i.e., ordering, avoiding, manipulating) for a group problem-solving forum. The rankings of the processes, however, show that the democratic processes outstripped the others in terms of importance. We turn now to looking the data in each of the tables as well as the comments of the participants explaining or elaborating on their responses.

As seen in the final column of Table 6.3, the family group members ranked consensus as the most important decision process at their conference, with bargaining and inspiring respectively in second and third places. When the responses are broken down by site, though, some differences for the Nain site become apparent. Unlike in the two predominately white project sites where consensus was considered to be the most important decision strategy, the Nain family group participants ranked inspiring more highly. Their comments about their ratings show that they saw some participants as serving as trusted leaders who either spoke on behalf of the group or helped others to express their views or they saw the participants as going along with the views of the majority. This pattern was evident in the following statements made in After the Conference interviews by family participants who had attended one Nain conference:

- This person kept the family on the right track in dealing with problems and explaining about what was done in the past by community elders.

- This person was seen as abusing her children, she was slow in taking part, but after a trusted family member was supporting her, she began to take part.

Or as seen in the comments regarding another Nain conference:

- This family member had very little input into the FGC. However, did get to say what was bothering him, but seemed to go along with another trusted outspoken family member.

- This person was the most important, in regards to having the family say what they want and encouraging other family members to speak.

- This family member had very little to say, however he did go along with what ever the majority of the family members agreed upon.

An exception who was viewed negatively at this conference was the abuser:

- This family member took part in every aspect of the FGC. But did want things to go his way. Wasn't prepared to listen to the person who was abused.

At the other two sites, the consensus approach was evident in the following comments from After the Conference interviews regarding different conferences;

- Consensus was what we did the most--we all talked together and agreed on most things. But sometimes we argued back and forth and finally agreed on something, so that would be bargaining, I guess.

- Very helpful to have a leader as she guided group in making their plan and all shared equal understanding.

- No one person really stood out--we all just talked back and forth and had our say.

- We argued things out and tried to reach an agreement. . . . [Name] stood out as a leader during this time. Then we all checked to see if everyone agreed to the plan. . . . Finally, I added some things I needed in the plan for myself.

The consensus at another conference, however, appeared to be more strained:

- Most of the avoiding was on part of the mother. Unfortunately, most of the consensus . . . had to be guided, otherwise the family would have not reached a decision at all.

In yet another conference, the final agreement was characterized as function of manipulation, not true consensus:

- I find father . . . manipulated the girls and avoided a lot of the issues because he wanted to talk good & have the ball in his court. I also feel the girls could not say what they wanted because he stated at the beginning that he might not live for the next five years. This threw a loop hole in their whole thinking. I also have to say part of this manipulation was on the night before the conference, he took the girls out to dinner and then dancing. This is something he has never done before. I feel he bought their silence, this is really upsetting to me.

It was apparent that family group participants could be quite discerning in categorizing the deliberative processes.

{Jill, I need you to complete the following Table 6.3 and do the same for Table 7.3 in Chaper 7. I tried to do it off of your figures that you wrote into the attached pages. However, I couldn't be confident in the figures since you had odd medians such as 8.8 or 7.3 rather than having them such as 8.5 or 7.5. Since I didn't have the St. John's ratings by frequency, I couldn't do these calculations myself. Please double check your figures and typing. Also revise numbers in the text. Let me know if I need to revise the prose (e.g., because the rankings switched for two decision processes).}

Table 6.3
Family Group Participants' Views of Decision Processes of the Family Group in Making Their Plan by Site

DECISION PROCESS	NAIN[a]	PORT AU PORT[b]	ST. JOHN'S[c]	TOTAL[d]
Consensus				
f	25	38	42	105
Md.	9	8.5	9	9
Rank	2	1	1	1
Bargaining				
f	26	35	40	101
Md.	7	7	8	7
Rank	3	3	2	3
Inspiring				
f	36	37	34	107
Md.	8	7	7	7
Rank	1	2	4	2
Ordering				
f	18	27	37	82
Md.	6.5	7	6.5	6.5
Rank	5	4	3	4
Avoiding				
f	12	14	22	48
Md.	6	7.5	5	6
Rank	7	5	6	6

Manipulating				
f	16	6	6	28
Md.	5	6.5	6.5	6
Rank	6	8	7	7
Voting				
f	22	14	22	58
Md.	6.5	6	7	6.5
Rank	4	6	5	5
Other 1				
f	0	8	0	8
Md.	-	9	-	9
Rank	-	7	-	8
Other 2				
f	0	1	2	3
Md.	-	-	-	-
Rank	-	-	-	-

Note. Frequency refers to the number of instances where the decision process was seen as being used, and the median is based on the frequency of instances where the process was seen as being used. The processes were ranked by multiplying f by Md. The highest rank is 1. Medians and ranks are only calculated when the frequency is above 4.

[a] Nain had 43 respondents.

[b] Port au Port had 44 respondents.

[c] St. Johns had 42 respondents.

[d] The total number of respondents was 129.

The coordinators' rankings of decision processes tended to parallel those of the family members with some exceptions. As seen in Table 6.4, the "Total" columns places the same 4 decision strategies at the top that the family members did. For the fifth spot, the coordinators were more likely to select avoiding while the family members were more likely to pick voting. Within each site, the coordinator's and family members' top selections were roughly similar: in Nain both coordinator and family members ranked inspiring first and consensus second; on the Port au Port Peninsula they agreed that consensus was the most important strategy but diverged on whether bargaining or inspiring came in second; and in St. John's they placed consensus and bargaining at the top but in reverse order.

Table 6.4
Coordinators' Views of Decision Processes of the Family Group in Making Their Plan by Site (N = 30)

DECISION PROCESS	NAIN	PORT AU PORT	ST. JOHN'S	TOTAL
Consensus				
f	9	7	11	27
Md.	8	8	8	8
Rank	2	1	2	1
Bargaining				
f	7	5	11	23
Md.	8	7	9	8
Rank	4	3	1	2.5
Inspiring				
f	10	5	8	23
Md.	9	8	8	8
Rank	1	2	3	2.5
Ordering				
f	9	2	9	20
Md.	7	-	6	7
Rank	3	-	5	4
Avoiding				
f	6	3	10	19
Md.	5.5	-	5.5	6
Rank	5	-	4	5
Manipulating				
f	2	3	6	11
Md.	-	-	6.5	6
Rank	-	-	6	6
Voting				
f	4	2	0	6
Md.	-	-	-	6
Rank	-	-	-	7
Other 1				
f	0	1	0	1
Md.	-	-	-	-
Rank	-	-	-	-

DECISION PROCESS	NAIN	PORT AU PORT	ST. JOHN'S	TOTAL
Other 2				
f	0	0	0	0
Md.	-	-	-	-
Rank	-	-	-	-

Note. Frequency refers to the number of instances where the decision process was seen as being used, and the median is based on the frequency of instances where the process was seen as being used. The processes were ranked by multiplying f by Md. The highest rank is 1. Medians and ranks are only calculated when the frequency is above 4.

Overall, the research observers' rankings of decision processes tended to be somewhat more negative. As seen in the last column of Table 6.5, they agreed that consensus was the most important decision process, but unlike the coordinators or the family group participants, they ranked ordering as the second most important strategy utilized. When the figures are examined by site, this pattern continues to hold true for the Port au Port Peninsula but not for St. John's where bargaining was ranked second. Because of the low number of decision processes scored in Nain, comparisons cannot be made for that site.

Table 6.5
Research Observers' Views of Decision Processes of the Family Group in Making Their Plan by Site (N = 23)

DECISION PROCESS	NAIN	PORT AU PORT	ST. JOHN'S	TOTAL
Consensus				
f	2	9	12	23
Md.	-	9	8	8
Rank	-	1	1	1
Bargaining				
f	2	6	12	20
Md.	-	6.5	7.5	7
Rank	-	5	2	3
Inspiring				
f	1	7	11	19
Md.	-	6	6	6
Rank	-	4	4	4

Ordering				
f	2	7	9	18
Md.	-	8	6	8
Rank	-	2	4	2
Avoiding				
f	1	6	8	15
Md.	-	8	5.5	7
Rank	-	3	5	5
Manipulating				
f	1	2	2	5
Md.	-	-	-	5
Rank	-	-	-	6
Voting				
f	0	0	4	4
Md.	-	-	-	-
Rank	-	-	-	-
Other 1				
f	0	1	1	2
Md.	-	-	-	-
Rank	-	-	-	-
Other 2				
f	0	0	1	1
Md.	-	-	-	-
Rank	-	-	-	-

Note. Frequency refers to the number of instances where the decision process was seen as being used, and the median is based on the frequency of instances where the process was seen as being used. The processes were ranked by multiplying f by Md. The highest rank is 1. Medians and ranks are only calculated when the frequency is above 4.

6.5.4 Involvement in Decision Making

Since many decision processes were employed from consensus through manipulation, the question remains as to whether or not all participants had enough say in decision making. Two sets of questions asked about each participant's involvement in decision making at the conference. The first asked about the amount of their participation and the second asked about the adequacy of this amount of say. The following 3 tables (Tables 6.6 - 6.8) show the ratings on involvement in decision making

as scored by the coordinators (Impressions of Decision Making at the FGC), the researchers (Observer's Checksheet and Sessional Recording Guide), and the family members (After the Conference interviews). On the forms, they were asked to rate the involvement in decision making for each participant at the conference. The first part of the table shows the ratings of "How Much Say" the person was rated as having and the second part shows the rating of whether or not that "amount of say" was "just right," "too much," or "not enough." In this way, we hoped to get an idea of the proportions of people who were regarded as saying too much or perhaps controlling the discussions, the proportions who were regarded as contributing too little, and those who were regarded as properly involved in formulating decisions. The results are presented by site beginning with Nain (Table 6.6).

At all three sites participants were seen a varying in their amount of involvement in decision making whether the ratings were made by the coordinator, researcher, or family members. When the ratings are totalled for the coordinator, researcher, and family, at any one site the large majority are roughly split between the categories of "less than average" or "average" with under one-fifth rated as "more than average." Thus, participants in general were not perceived as all having the same extent of input into decision making.

Interestingly, the ratings at each site were affected by the rater's perspective but not necessarily in the same way. In Nain, the coordinator was more likely than either the researcher or the family to see participants as having less than average say while the researcher was more likely to rate participants' say as average. Conversely on the the Port au Port Peninsula, the coordinator tended to accord a rating of average most often while the researcher was the one to see participants' say as less than average. Here the family were the ones to select more than average slightly more frequently than either the coordinator or researcher. In St. John's, the researcher was the one to see participants as having the greatest spread in participation and rated involvement as either less than average or more than average the most often; these perceptions ran counter to the family's ratings which tended to fall most frequently into the average category.

The written comments on the After the Conference Interview forms give insights into the ratings. When family members were asked about the amount of say people had in the decisions, a common response was that someone in particular should have said more than they did. The following are typical examples:

- My mother was pretty quiet. She could've said a bit more. My sister said more than average. She was really helpful.

- I still have a lot of things that I never said at the conference.

The following excerpts from the written evaluation and interviews are examples of the different ways decisions and ultimately the plans typically emerged:

- [The] mom spoke just enough. [The older son] said some things over and over but was important. [The daughter] was not present during most discussions. [The younger son] left and had no input whatsoever and appeared nervous, which is understandable. Remaining people, support person, brother and myself pushed to make concrete plans and decisions for mother and child.

- Plans were only finished at the end. Nothing really was planned until in the end when coordinator and child welfare worker were present.

All four people interviewed after one conference praised the family member who had emerged as the leader during the family's private time. One said:

- It was good to have a leader. Even though she was [the offender's] sister she was fair and equal with both sides.

While the participants' amount of say was not perceived as equally divided, the more fundamental question is whether or not this division was perceived as equitable. In other words, did participants have a sufficient amount of say even if their say was not distributed equally? To address this question, we turn to the responses on whether the say was "not enough," "just right," or "too much." As seen in Tables 6.6-6.8, at all three sites, there are substantial numbers of participants who were rated as having adequate say or as having insufficient or excessive input. In terms of total ratings, the category of a "just right" amount of say was the most commonly one selected in St. John's (69%) with the Port au Port coming in a distant second (45%) and Nain being the lowest (39%). If one stopped here, it would be assumed that the model tended to work best in the urban centre. If the findings are examined further in terms of who was carrying out the rating, though, other patterns emerge. Interestingly, in Nain family (37%) were less likely than either the coordinator (64%) or researcher (59%) to perceive the participants' say as inadequate. It is quite likely that because much of the deliberations in Nain were done outside of the conference setting itself during the evenings, neither the researcher nor the coordinator had as full a picture as the family group had of who was influencing the decisions. On the Port au Port Peninsula, the family (38%) and the coordinator (32%) were less likely than the researcher (51%) to rate the amount of say as not enough, but they also were more likely to see some individuals as having an excessive amount of say. While in St. John's ratings were tilted toward "just right," the family (66%) tended to be somewhat less positive than either the coordinator (75%) or the researcher (74%).

Table 6.6
Nain: Number of Ratings by the Coordinator, Researcher, and Family on Amount and Adequacy of Involvement in Decision Making

INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION MAKING	COORDIN-ATOR	RESEAR-CHER	FAMILY	TOTAL
AMOUNT OF SAY:				
Less than average	52 (45%)	6 (35%)	136 (38%)	194 (39%)
Average	42 (37%)	8 (47%)	137 (38%)	187 (38%)
More than average	21 (18%)	2 (12%)	56 (16%)	79 (16%)
Don't know	0 (0%)	1 (6%)	31 (8%)	32 (7%)
ADEQUACY OF SAY:				
Not enough	64 (64%)	10 (59%)	136 (37%)	210 (44%)
Just right	26 (26%)	6 (35%)	158 (43%)	190 (39%)
Too much	8 (8%)	1 (6%)	22 (6.0%)	31 (6%)
Don't know	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	50 (14%)	52 (11%)
MISSING OBSERVATIONS	17	0	6	23

Table 6.7
Port au Port: Number of Ratings by the Coordinator, Researcher, and Family on Amount and Adequacy of Involvement in Decision Making

INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION MAKING	COORDIN-ATOR	RESEAR-CHER	FAMILY	TOTAL
AMOUNT OF SAY:				
Less than average	20 (32%)	34 (47%)	100 (30%)	154 (33%)
Average	35 (55%)	31 (42%)	142 (43%)	208 (45%)
More than average	8 (13%)	8 (11%)	62 (19%)	78 (17%)
Don't know	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	26 (8%)	26 (5%)
ADEQUACY OF SAY:				
Not enough	24 (32%)	37 (51%)	125 (38.6%)	186 (39%)
Just right	33 (43%)	33 (46%)	144 (44.4%)	210 (45%)
Too much	12 (16%)	2 (3%)	28 (8.6%)	42 (9%)
Don't know	7 (9%)	0 (0%)	27 (8%)	34 (7%)
MISSING OBSERVATIONS	6	1	6	13

Table 6.8
St. John's: Number of Ratings by the Coordinator, Researcher, and Family on Amount and Adequacy of Involvement in Decision Making

INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION MAKING	COORDIN-ATOR	RESEAR-CHER	FAMILY	TOTAL
AMOUNT OF SAY:				
Less than average	57 (38%)	68 (43%)	175 (38%)	300 (39%)
Average	66 (44%)	55 (34%)	219 (47%)	340 (44%)
More than average	25 (17%)	35 (22%)	60 (13%)	120 (15%)
Don't know	2 (1%)	2 (1%)	11 (2%)	15 (2%)
ADEQUACY OF SAY:				
Not enough	30 (20%)	17 (16%)	120 (25%)	167 (23%)
Just right	113 (75%)	79 (74%)	314 (66%)	506 (69%)
Too much	6 (4.0%)	9 (8%)	23 (5%)	38 (5%)
Don't know	2 (1%)	2 (1%)	16 (4%)	20 (3%)
MISSING OBSERVATIONS	1	53	8	62

6.5.5 What About You? Were You Able to Say What Was Important?

The questions on involvement in decision making encompassed all of the conference participants. Taking a different approach, the FGC Evaluation form asked specifically of each respondent, "At the conference, were you able to say what you thought was important?" This self-reflective question revealed a more generally positive view about participants' ability to have an adequate level of input into the deliberations. As seen in Table 6.9, nearly all respondents agreed that they personally were able to express what was important to them. While the number of responses are lower for Nain, it would appear that participants at all three sites saw themselves as making the

necessary input into the conference proceedings, a conclusion supported by the After the Conference interviews.

Table 6.9
Number of Family Group Participants Who Viewed Themselves as Being Able to Say What Was Important at the Conference

Response	Nain	Port-au-Port	St. John's	Total
Yes	35	74	162	271
No	7	1	5	14
Don't Know	0	2	6	8
Missing	0	0	0	0
Total	42	78	173	293

Note. The figures only include the responses of family group participants, not of the professionals, completing the FGC Evaluation form.

The After the Conference Interviews suggest that most people felt they were able to say what was important, but their responses revealed two important things. First, evidently, not all people who felt they were able to say what was important did so but that was discovered inadvertently through the written responses. One group of people said that it had already been said; hence, they did not think it needed to be repeated. Another group of people said they thought it was more beneficial to the outcome for them to remain silent in that it would not have been helpful if they had said what was important. This supported our suspicion that challenging someone may not always be the best thing. The proof is more likely in the family's plan and its successful carrying out rather than just in making sure every issue or person is challenged. Second, others said they did not speak up because it was just too painful. This was particularly so in Nain where people said it would be necessary to meet on an ongoing basis to deal with all the "hurt" they felt.

A small number of people wrote that they did not say what they felt was important because they were afraid to speak up. For example, the following is paraphrased from an After the Conference Interview conducted by one of the researchers:

- I did not speak because I live next door to the family and I did not want any bad feelings towards me. [Particular person] would have been mad with me and I do not want this.

In retrospect, we could have added another question that being "Did you say what was important?" in order to distinguish those who felt able to say what they wanted but chose not to speak up. This would have been useful in examining individual

conferences but overall it would have added little since the aggregated feedback was predominantly satisfactory.

6.6 Reconvened Conferences

Although the number of reconvened conferences is small, some differences between them and the earlier conference can be teased out of the reflective notes written by the coordinators and researchers. The changes listed below should be viewed as preliminary generalizations, and some have greater applicability when there was a longer time period between conferences. In order to keep together in one section all comparisons of the proceedings of first-time and reconvened conferences, we cover here the three stages of the conference from the opening through to the planning. We also discuss post-conference disclosures since these also indicate learning that takes place during a first-time conference.

6.6.1 Greater Degree of Comfort

The atmosphere at the second conference tended to be less strained. For one family, the coordinator had described the people arriving to the first conference as "friendly but a little tense at that point"; by the second conference, the arrival period now appeared to be a "a reunion for most - and quite jovial." People who had been abused did not evince the same degree of shame. At a first conference, an incest survivor hid behind a partition and sobbed throughout the session while at the reconvened conference she again selected this seating arrangement but her manner had changed--she appeared far more at ease and talkative. From the researcher's perspective, she had "come a long way since 1 year ago and she is healing & becoming a fine young woman with lots of confidence."

The same applied to the investigators who reported personally feeling a greater degree of comfort at the conference. Contrasting experiences at a first and second conference, the child protection worker observed that the latter was "a lot less stressful." Reflecting on the reasons for the change, the worker pointed out that in the first conference he "played a hard role": he had to explain to the family the type of sexual abuse, the effects of the abuse, his responsibility toward the victim, and the possibility that he might have to bring this young person into care. The impact of this report on the family was "quite traumatic" with family members dissolving into tears and walking out of the proceedings. In the second conference, his report generated far less tension because he no longer had to go into details on the abuse and was able to focus on necessary supports to keep the young person safe. Moreover, in this conference, he had the support of the parole worker who was generally regarded as presenting his position in a very firm but understanding manner.

6.6.2 Greater Discussion

Family members could question investigators with greater ease. For example, one family group who had concerns left over from the prior conference were able to voice their questions to the Social Services workers. At another conference when the child protection worker asked if anyone had any questions about his report, the "mother came up front & explained to C.P. worker that she feels C.P. worker is a busy nose and she has the fear that C.P. worker are going to take children." This gave the worker the opportunity to explain the meaning of a supervision order.

The capacity of young people to share their views with the adults expanded. Although an incest survivor did not speak directly to the conference participants, she made sure that her support person conveyed her sentiments and wishes. Comparing the first and second conference for a different family, the coordinator described a boy as "being much more verbal. It was obvious he felt much safer to speak than at [the first conference] where he did not speak at all." Confirming the coordinator's depiction, the researcher referred at various points across her reflective notes to times when the boy expressed his views and to times when the group supported him in doing so. For instance, when the mother became outraged by some of the boy's disclosures, the researcher wrote:

> [the foster mother] then joined in & stated to Mother that child is not trying to hurt his mother but is only bringing out things . . . that are on his mind & bothering him." Intervening further, this same woman "took leadership role . . . & brought mother back to focus & asked mother to listen to child & give him a chance to express what's on his mind without getting upset. . . . Friend of family now joining in conversation with very soft tones & this was effective to bring mom back down with group. Mom then laughed & gave group satisfaction of her attention.

6.6.3 Raising Concerns

As evident in the above example participants could more readily place their issues on the table. In addition, the coordinators helped to structure the sessions to make this possible. For instance, a coordinator invited a foster parent to attend a reconvened conference because in the prior meeting he had been accused of failing to adequately feed the child in his care:

> [The foster parent and child] came to explain to the family group how this daughter was being looked after, how she is loved and cared for, and that she knew that she was allowed to visit with her mother any time she wished. At this time the daughter told her mother that she would love to go, and that she loved her. To this, there was a breakdown and a few tears were shed. [A relative], over the speaker phone, told this foster

parent that she thanked them for looking after this child, and that it was OK by her for the child to remain in their care until such time that they could go back with her mother. [Another relative] also thanked the foster parent for doing such a fine job and that he was thankful for that.

6.6.4 Increased Leadership

Family group participants were prepared to assume positions of leadership at the reconvened conference. Describing the leader from the prior conference, the coordinator wrote:

> The foster father again emerged as a natural leader, and really had prepared for the same. He had a notebook in which he had formulated some plans already." For a different family, the researcher comparing the emergence of leadership observed that at the first-time conference, the family sat in silence for 10 minutes before a relative took charge of the meeting; in the reconvened conference, this same relative immediately assumed the role of facilitator at the start of the family's private deliberations. In a very efficient manner, she updated participants absent from the prior conference, reviewed the earlier plan, and in her "softly" voiced manner created a context in which "everyone [was] in . . . control [and] . . . eager to make new Plans."

6.6.5 Stronger Planning

The families could move faster in developing the plans. As described by one coordinator, "The plan was really good. Family knew exactly what to do. Two parts to it - one to address needs of [the abused person] and one to address needs of offender. All plans slanted toward [the survivor] and her comfort and recovery." By reviewing what had been carried out and not carried out in the earlier plan, families had a basis from which to develop a new and realistic course of action. For instance, in a prior plan a brother had agreed to provide game meat to his sister; this time around the family recognized that the brother had not been able to deliver meat on a regular basis because of his work schedule and asked that Social Services purchase a freezer for their relative so that she would be able to store large quantities of meat at one time.

6.6.6 Growth as a Family

Over the process of taking part in a series of conferences, the participants appeared to become more aware of the dynamics of abuse and the roles which they needed to play in stopping abuse as well as stronger and more honest as a family. In particular, families seemed better prepared to challenge their relatives on their inappropriate or abusive behaviours. Comparing the first and second conference, the coordinator pointed out that the mother "was truly challenged by the family at [the second conference] in a way that she wasn't at the [the first one]." The coordinator

attributed the alteration in the family's response to the mother not being accompanied by the same support person at the second conference where "Mom did not have him to protect her and cater to her theatrics." It is also likely that the family by this understood better its role, and from the coordinator's description, the mother was more willing to hold herself accountable for her actions:

> Mom slammed out of the room a couple of times really angry. She always returned when she was calmer and surprising to everyone - she actually dealt with these issues in a real way. Everyone was blown away by this. Apparently, from everyone's experience with her, this was the first time she's ever acknowledged any responsibility for herself, her children and all of their lives.

Likewise, another conference showed such a progression in the family. Describing a particularly moving moment in the second conference, the coordinator, who had been highly sceptical of the ability of the offender's family to recognize his limitations, wrote:

> When the plan was negotiated offender asked to speak to the group. He apologized to both families and to [the victim] especially for all the pain he had caused. He said he was full of shame and guilt - he appreciated them accepting him back into family and promised to make it up to all of them. Everyone was crying at this point. Then youngest sister in his family, natural leader, & recorder spoke, "We do accept you back - but we've had enough embarrassment as a family - we will all be watching you -no need for parole or anyone else - no one else in this family will be hurt or will hurt another - you now have to answer to us! It was amazing. . . . A family broke through denial and its own system of protection & abuse -and took control.

6.6.7 Disclosing Abuse After the Conference

Over the course of the first conference, family members gained an increased level of confidence in their family and the involved professionals to act on reports of abuse. This was evident in the occurrence of some post-conference disclosures of abuse. These had a strong impact on the participants from the conference, including the coordinators and researchers. After the initial shock waves, two of the three disclosures could clearly be understood as having been facilitated by the conference process and the task became helping anyone (especially professionals) see the disclosure as a positive outcome rather than jumping immediately to the conclusion that the family's meeting 'hadn't worked.' In one instance, however, professionals and family alike were left feeling that a teen's disclosure had not really produced any new information. In fact, they came to collectively view the timing and intensity of the accusation as a hostile strategy on a teen's part to get something from the family they viewed as an unreasonable demand. The family left their offer in tact and worked to increase their contact with her in foster care but the young woman refused to live with any family members.

6.7 Summary

The ratings, the interviews, and the observations all support the notion that people felt safe during the private time, that internal leadership was sufficient, that the participants pulled together and were able to discuss the important issues, even sexual abuse, and that they made decisions through a variety of processes that were consistent with the unique characteristics of their family.

Our conclusion is that the family private time is essential to promote unification between the generations and sides of the family. Without this, the members are left with the impression that it is the professionals who will look out for the long-range interests of the children. As long as the family members acknowledged that there was a problem with family violence or neglect, and that the survivor, if any, was not to blame, they were positioned to come up with sound plans. We now turn to looking at the final phase of the conference in which plans were approved.

THE PLANS

7.0 Introduction

When the family either reached a stalemate, recognized that they needed an additional meeting, or formulated a plan, they asked the coordinator, and often the child welfare worker if that person had stayed, to come back into the room and review their plan. This chapter deals with the stage of finalizing the plans in writing and seeking authorization of those plans as well as analyzing the content and costs of the plans. Since this is the last stage of the conference, we begin by briefly describing how the conference worked as a whole and then focus on the decision making around finalizing and authorizing the plans. In regards to the content of the plans, we first take an in-depth qualititative look at their text with Nain discussed separately since the plans there were by necessity quite specific to the cultural and geographical requirements of that site. Those aspects of the plans that could be quantified are then presented.

7.1 The Whole Process

In the final evaluation workshop, the researchers and the coordinators from St. John's and the Port au Port Peninsula tried to put the whole process together. One of the researcher's summaries on observing conferences follows:

> You have an idea of how things are supposed to flow, and every family is different, none of them are exactly the same but they all have a common thread that runs through them and use a general format to follow. Now I could tell you word for word everything [the coordinator] is going to say. You also get a better sense of when things are going off track and when you are going to need a bit of help. During the first conferences I would get so frustrated that I'd run out to [the coordinator] and say "you have to go out and talk to them." Now I won't do that at all unless I see that things are really getting off track. You start to accept that maybe they aren't going to discuss every single thing on that chart and they will waste a bit of time here and there. But before the day is over they will get it all done. You learn to stand back a bit more and give them a chance to get it done.

And we give one coordinator's summary, especially with regard to the conferences dealing with sexual abuse in rural communities:

> [The family members] are connected, intermarried, related, so when you talk about how a community gives a victim support, you're talking about their family, you're talking about half of that community. When you put them together in a room, and they are told, factually , what happened to that person, and then have a resource person following saying how that experience impacted on that individual, then the way that family gives support to that person is completely different. And it is really significant in terms of

the concept of revictimization. Typically, for example, when an offender returns to a community, after having sexually abused someone in that community, or more than one person, the community rallies around the offender as opposed to the victim, and can't wait for them to get home. And then they talk about the victim all through the year that she was, say, well developed at ten years old, flirtatious at three, and wanted all this to happen to her, and asked for it. Once you educate the family, about the sex offender, who he is, how he thinks, and then you educate them on the impact of sexual abuse on people, how it reflects itself in their behaviour, and how they feel about themselves and the things that they do, then the way that they react or treat that survivor really changes completely.

7.1.1 Length of the Conferences

As seen in Table 7.1, first-time conferences lasted on average slightly over 5 1/2 hours with the shortest being 1 1/4 hour and the longest being nearly 8 hours. Eleven conferences lasted between 5 and 6 1/2 hours, and 9 conferences lasted between 7 and eight hours. Conferences tended to be longest in St. John's. On the Port au Port Peninsula and in St. John's the families preferred to meet in one long meeting with a break for lunch at mid-day. In Nain, especially when members of the Community Elders' Group were in attendance, families preferred to meet in the afternoon and then meet the following day after having time to think about the meeting and discuss it amongst themselves.

Table 7.1
The Length of the First-Time Conferences

TIME	NAIN (n = 11)	PORT AU PORT (n = 9)	ST. JOHN'S (n = 12)	TOTAL (N = 32)
MEAN	4.75 hrs.	5.75 hrs.	6 hrs.	5.53 hrs.
SD	375.0	94.06	55.03	103.09
MEDIAN	4.75 hrs.	4.66 hrs.	5.75 hrs.	5.5 hrs.
MODE	4.75 hrs.	4.5 hrs.	5.33 hrs	4.5 hrs.
RANGE	1.25 to 7.5 hrs.	4.25 to 8 hrs.	4.75 to 7.5 hrs.	1.25 to 8 hrs.

Although the data are scanty, the pattern appears to be that a family group takes less time in a reconvened conference than in their first experience with conferencing. For the three sets of conferences where lengths were recorded for the first and reconvened sessions, a family group reduced its conferencing time by 4.52 hours for 1 Nain family, by 3.16 hours for 1 Port au Port Peninsula family, and by .56 hours for another Port au Port Peninsula family.

7.1.2 Satisfaction with the Way the Conferences Were Run

The following table (Table 7.2) summarizes by site the responses on the FGC Evaluation Form for the question "Were you satisfied with the way the conference was run?" Very few people in the After the Conference interviews had a complaint about the way their conference was run but much praise was given to all the coordinators. The most frequently cited negative was from people who wished that the coordinator had stayed in the room to facilitate the conference. Voicing a different complaint, one person resented a coordinator stating that once a person is convicted of [a sexual offense] that "you'll always have the problem" and felt that "this did not sound good." The respondent went on to say:

- [I don't] understand or agree why family members who have been previously charged with offenses pertaining to our conference, why they can not attend. . . . In my view, their input would be valuable. Also, it should be [the family's] right choice [sic] who to have there.

Table 7.2
Number of Respondents Satisfied with the Way That the Conference Was Run

RESPONSE	NAIN	PORT AU PORT	ST. JOHN'S	TOTAL
Yes	37	75	163	275
No	3	1	5	9
Don't Know	2	2	5	9
Missing	0	0	6	0
Total	42	78	173	293

Note. The figures only include the responses of family group participants, not of the professionals, completing the FGC Evaluation form on first-time or reconvened conferences.

7.2 Finalizing the Plans

The last stage of the conference was finalizing the plans. This was the time when the family group felt generally satisfied with the plan which they had worked out and invited the coordinator as well as any remaining referring agency workers back into the meeting place to review their plan. This tended to be a very active time for the coordinators. They asked questions of the families, when necessary, aimed at specifying who would do what, by when, how and when it would be evaluated.

7.2.1 Decision Processes in Reaching the Final Plan

With the return of the coordinator and often the referring worker as well, one might wonder if the decision processes would shift. Would the professionals tilt decision making away from a group problem-solving approach to one in which their authority would take ascendency? To gain an overview of the final deliberations, 129 family members were asked in After the Conference Interviews to reflect back to this phase of the conference and to identify the decision processes used. They used the same decision process categories employed for classifying the earlier deliberations (see chapter 6) but now applied them to "the decision making from the point that the coordinator return[ed] to negotiate the plan through to the point where the plan [was] finally approved or that no plan [was] approved." The coordinator and researcher were asked to do the same respectively in the Impressions of Decision Making at the FGC and the Observer's Checksheet and Sessional Recording Guide.

The main finding is that the return of the coordinator and/or referring worker had some but not extensive impact on how decisions were made. This held true whether the decision processes were being ranked by family members, coordinators, or researchers at any of the three sites. A comparison of the decision processes tables in this chapter (Tables 7.3-7.5) on the final planning with their counterparts in chapter 6 (Tables 6.3-6.5) on the private deliberations reveal minimal alterations in rankings. Most of the comments of the raters indicate though that the impact which the coordinators and referring workers had was largely beneficial.

An examination of all of the family group participants' rankings (final column of Table 7.3) shows that the decision processes maintained the same rank order as they did during the private deliberations (final column of Table 6.3). When the findings are broken down by site, they show that in Nain inspiring still remained in the top rank, but there was a shift in some other rankings: second place went from consensus to bargaining which pushed consensus into third place. There were no changes in the ranks of avoiding, ordering, manipulating, and avoiding which remained respectively in fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh places. On the Port au Port Peninsula, the top four ranked processed stayed the same, but there was some decline in the frequency and ranking of avoiding. In St. John's, the decision processes shifted positions with consensus still at the top but bargaining dropping from second to fourth place and inspiring jumping into second place. Thus, across the three sites inspiring was now consistently in the top of second from top position. It is possible that the coordinators or referring workers were able to give some helpful leadership and their presence moderated debating among family participants, who had already had the opportunity to vent their opinions. These suppositions are supported by the following comments of family interviewees:

- Most of the arguing had been done by this point, so there was more consensus. The group did tend at this stage to be guided by the coordinator in writing the final decision.

- This time [the coordinator] helped us a bit. She gave us advice, you know, and we would listen because we all trust her.

Moreover, the family members felt that the coordinator and/or referring worker were responsive toward their ideas and respectful of the family's leadership:

- The child protection worker and coordinator were very helpful at this point in figuring out how to put plans on paper and very flexible in agreeing with decisions.

- Coordinator was helpful in writing up plan, [child protection worker] was flexible with making new plans already written.

- [Child protection] worker was happy & impressed with plans at final stage.

- [Family member] organized everything and told [the coordinator] what our plan was. (1) She checked to see if everyone agreed, (2) We made sure that [name] had written everything that we decided.

Table 7.3
Family Group Participants' Views of Decision Processes in Reaching the Final Plan by Site

DECISION PROCESS	NAIN[a]	PORT AU PORT[b]	ST. JOHN'S[c]	TOTAL[d]
Consensus				
f	26	30	40	105
Md.	8	9	9	9
Rank	3	1	1	1
Bargaining				
f	28	30	37	106
Md.	7.5	8	8	7
Rank	2	3	4	2
Inspiring				
f	31	38	37	106
Md.	8	7	7	7
Rank	1	2	2	2

DECISION PROCESS	NAIN[a]	PORT AU PORT[b]	ST. JOHN'S[c]	TOTAL[d]
Ordering				
f	20	30	36	86
Md.	6	7	7	7
Rank	5	4	3	4
Avoiding				
f	8	7	19	34
Md.	5	8	5	5
Rank	7	6	6	6
Manipulating				
f	11	6	5	22
Md.	5	6.5	5	5
Rank	6	7	7	7
Voting				
f	25	15	24	64
Md.	6	6	7	6
Rank	4	5	5	5
Other 1				
f	0	4.5	0	4
Md.	-	7.5	-	7.5
Rank	-	8	-	8
Other 2				
f	0	1	0	1
Md.	-	-	-	-
Rank	-	-	-	-

Note. Frequency refers to the number of instances where the decision process was seen as being used, and the median is based on the frequency of instances where the process was seen as being used. The processes were ranked by multiplying f by Md. The highest rank is 1. Medians and ranks are only calculated when the frequency is above 4.

[a] Nain had 43 respondents.

[b] Port au Port had 44 respondents.

[c] St. Johns had 42 respondents.

[d] The total number of respondents was 129.

The coordinators' views shifted little or not at all from their impressions of private deliberations to those regarding the final planning phase. A comparison of the total columns for Table 7.4 below with the comparable Table 6.4 in the prior chapter show that consensus, bargaining, and inspiring remained in the top three ranks in that order; avoiding exchanged places with ordering and moved from fifth to fourth position; and manipulating

and voting remained respectively in sixth and seventh ranks. When the figures are broken down by site, Nain shows no movement among the ranks with inspiring, consensus, ordering, and bargaining remaining in the four top tiers in that order. Likewise on the Port au Port Peninsula, the decision strategies' ranks did not alter: consensus, inspiring, and bargaining maintained their same level of high importance. In St. John's, consensus exchanged places with bargaining and progressed into the top most rank, but besides these two, no other decision process shifted its position. Thus, in Nain inspiration continued to be viewed as the most influential decision process while in the other two sites consensus maintained its importance.

Table 7.4
Coordinators' Views of Decision Processes in Reaching the Final Plan by Site

DECISION PROCESS	NAIN[a]	PORT AU PORT[b]	ST. JOHN'S[c]	TOTAL[d]
Consensus				
f	10	8	10	28
Md.	7.5	8.5	9	8
Rank	2	1	1	1
Bargaining				
f	9	5	11	25
Md.	7	8	8	8
Rank	4	3	2	3
Inspiring				
f	10	7	9	26
Md.	8.5	8	7	8
Rank	1	2	3	2
Ordering				
f	10	2	6	18
Md.	6.5	-	6	6
Rank	3	-	5	5
Avoiding				
f	6	4	9	19
Md.	4.5	-	6	6
Rank	5	-	4	4

Manipulating				
f	2	2	5	9
Md.	-	-	6	6
Rank	-	-	6	6
Voting				
f	4	1	0	5
Md.	-	-	-	6
Rank	-	-	-	7
Other 1				
f	0	1	0	1
Md.	-	-	-	-
Rank	-	-	-	-
Other 2				
f	0	0	0	0
Md.	-	-	-	-
Rank	-	-	-	-

Note. Frequency refers to the number of instances where the decision process was seen as being used, and the median is based on the frequency of instances where the process was seen as being used. The processes were ranked by multiplying f by Md. The highest rank is 1. Medians and ranks are only calculated when the frequency is above 4.
{Jill, are the following correct?}
[a] Nain figures are for 11 conferences.
[b] Port au Port figures are for 8 conferences.
[c] St. John's figures are for 11 conferences.
[d] The total number of conferences covered is 30.

As with the coordinators' impressions of decision making, there was little change in the research observers' views regarding the private deliberations and the final planning phase. A comparison of Table 7.5 below and Table 6.5 in the preceding chapter reveals only minor revisions in the researcher observers' rankings of the decision processes once the coordinator reentered the meeting. The ranks in the final columns of the two tables show no alteration with consensus, ordering, bargaining, and inspiring in that order continuing to lead. Because of the low rate of completion in Nain, the figures for the private and final deliberation phases could not be compared. An examination of the findings for the Port au Port Peninsula shows some movement among ranks: consensus stayed at the top but avoiding rose from third to second place while ordering dropped from second to third, and likewise inspiring and bargaining exchanged places with the latter gaining more prominence. Similarly in St. John's consensus stayed in front with other decisions processes jockeying for position: ordering surpassed bargaining to come in second while bargaining fell back to third and inspiring remained fourth in line.

Differences that had been evident during the family's private time were typically, but not always, submerged during this time to facilitate the coming together of an agreed upon plan. One researcher observed:

- All appeared well and together at this point even though [child] was not present. Everyone involved tried their best to plan what [child] needed and maybe wanted.

Table 7.5
Research Observers' Views of Decision Processes in Reaching the Final Plan by Site

DECISION PROCESS	NAIN[a]	PORT AU PORT[b]	ST. JOHN'S[c]	TOTAL[d]
Consensus				
f	2	9	13	24
Md.	-	9	9	9
Rank	-	1	1	1
Bargaining				
f	2	6	11	19
Md.	-	6.5	8	7
Rank	-	4	3	3
Inspiring				
f	2	6	10	18
Md.	-	6	7	6
Rank	-	5	4	4
Ordering				
f	1	7	12	20
Md.	-	7	8	7
Rank	-	3	2	2
Avoiding				
f	1	8	2	11
Md.	-	8	-	8
Rank	-	2	-	5

Manipulating				
f	2	1	8	11
Md.	-	-	5.5	5
Rank	-	-	5	6
Voting				
f	1	3	2	6
Md.	-	-	-	7
Rank	-	-	-	7
Other 1				
f	0	0	0	0
Md.	-	-	-	-
Rank	-	-	-	-
Other 2				
f	0	0	1	1
Md.	-	-	-	-
Rank	-	-	-	-

Note. Frequency refers to the number of instances where the decision process was seen as being used, and the median is based on the frequency of instances where the process was seen as being used. The processes were ranked by multiplying f by Md. The highest rank is 1. Medians and ranks are only calculated when the frequency is above 4.
{Jill, are the following correct?}
[a] Nain figures are for 2 conferences.
[b] Port au Port figures are for 9 conferences.
[c] St. Johns figures are for 12 conferences.
[d] The total number of conferences covered is 23.

7.3 Gaining Authorization for the Plans

Once a plan had been completed, it was subject to two types of approval. The first approval was by the mandated authorities who had referred the family to determine whether or not the plan met their requirements for keeping safe the person who was the subject of the referral. The second type of approval had to do with any resources that were requested to carry out the plan.

As discussed in chapter 1, the Department of Social Services developed a set of policies around approval of plans, and these guidelines were later adopted by Correctional Services of Canada when it became a referring agency to the project. In addition to paying for travel of family members to the conference (see chapter 4), the referring agencies agreed to pay for costs of carrying out the plans. They opted to keep decision making at the front line and authorized their workers to approve outcome costs of up to $500/month

per family. For any expenses higher than these limits, the Department promised to give a 5-day turn around on approvals by a senior administrator.

7.3.1 Port au Port Peninsula and St. John's

At these two sites, all plans were immediately agreed to in principle by the front-line workers from the referring agencies as meeting their expectations for the care and safety of the abused person. Authorization to resource the plan was given on the spot by the referring worker in all but 2 cases and in both these cases the response was forthcoming well within the 5-day turnaround time that the Department of Social Services and Correctional Services of Canada agreed to when requests exceeded the financial guidelines set for the project. Moreover, on-the-spot approvals were given in several situations where the amounts requested were in excess of these guidelines without supposedly asking for management approval. In these cases, the workers had no doubts that they would be supported by their superiors and acted with confidence. In one case early in the project it did take 2 months for the actual approval to be carried out, owing to a bureaucratic wrangle internal to the Department of Social Services but senior and middle managers sorted it out and that type of hold-up was not repeated. Problems with authorizations at the Port au Port and St. John's sites, when they happened, tended to be about individuals keeping to commitments (e.g., authorizing a bus pass on time). Overall, the collaboration among the Department of Social Services including the child welfare workers, the families and the project met, and in many cases exceeded, the expectations of model as described. The same has been true in the case of Correctional Services of Canada after it obtained funding to become a referring agency. With quick turnaround time for approvals, the families and service agencies were encouraged to carry out their jointly agreed upon plans.

7.3.2 Nain

The situation in Nain was quite different where approvals of the safety plans and the resource plans continued to be problematic throughout the life of the project despite the written guidelines provided by senior management. Although the district manager did not regularly attend conferences, all plans were subject to his review and approval. The model calls for a rapid and clear response on the part of authorizing officials to tell the families whether the plan was satisfactory from a protection point of view and whether or not the plans would be resourced. At one stage, the district manager expressed his concerns to one of the project directors that in his view the plans were not related closely enough to the safety issues for the children. The expectation that this information needed to be told to the families at the conferences was reviewed, but the manager still preferred to tell the coordinator or the attending community or social worker his views of the plans after the fact rather than conveying the message to the families themselves. The district manager subsequently attend a conference and acted as the primary information giver on behalf of child welfare providing a highly detailed description of the involvement of the family with the Department over many years. This was the family that did not come up with a plan.

This particular adaptation of the model in which plans could not be approved or negotiated on the spot by the investigating worker had the unfortunate effect in Nain of reinforcing the existing view that the Department of Social Services was only interested in taking children and not in helping people. Specifically, the evaluation revealed that some staff in the Nain office did not believe that they could speak for the Department and, therefore, had to defer approval of the plans with the family in order to check with the district manager to find out if plans were to be authorized.

A family member in the one-week follow-up interview at this site when asked if he had any remaining concerns about the conference commented:

> No except that I would like to know if the plan has been approved. Me and my wife are already taking part in some of the plan, we are trying to get help.

Yet the Department remained silent on this plan until the couple gave up their efforts thinking that the Department must have forgotten. When the coordinator contacted the district manager to find out what was happening--a task that was meant to be carried out by the attending worker--the coordinator was placed in the position of acting as the family's advocate and discovered that the manager was unhappy about the plan but had not said anything until he was pressed on the issue. The concerns about the plans were quite legitimate ones, but it was feared that the response was now too late to act on and still have the momentum of the family behind the plan.

One person who facilitated a conference describes in the reflective journal her experience in presenting the plan to the district manager of Social Services:

> As he was looking over the plan he was shaking his head. When he came to the part in the plan that said that the family wanted to go off with a counsellor for five days the District Manager made the remark "They want to go off on the land like the Innu now do they?" I was offended by this remark and I could see that the community worker did not think that it was appropriate either. We looked at each other and I think that the District Manager knew that we did not like it. When talking to the CSW [community service worker] later that afternoon, she informed me that he had apologized to her for making the remark, and he did apologize to me the next day when he called the LIHC office looking for someone else and I happened to answer the phone. Most of the time that he was looking over the plan, the District Manager was shaking his head, and I could tell that he was not pleased. He made the remark that it makes him very angry when people ask for so much. The CSW asked him what he thought of the part where they wanted to go off, and the part where they want to go to rehab as a family. The second part he said that he thought sounded okay, but he did not say much at first about the family going off. Later he asked if LIHC would be responsible for this because he remembered hearing something about the agency planning for mobile treatment. He also said that he thought that LIHC should pay for the

> family to attend the rehab centre as well, because they pay for individuals to attend rehab.
>
> The CSW also asked about a section of the plan that had to do with the mother requesting help to have her house fixed up, because she said that her furnace was broken, that she had no floor, and she was having problems with her water and sewer. The District Manager said that it was not the concern of the Department , that it is a relatively new home, and she is responsible for fixing it. The CSW said that she was thinking of writing a letter to Torngat housing even before the conference just to see if there was anything that they could do. He said that he knew that they would not be able to do anything. He then said that maybe this was my responsibility. I informed him that my responsibility was to organize the family conference, which I did, and that I thought that it should be the concern of the Department if they planned for the child that they had recently apprehended to return to the home. As well there is still another child in the home. He did not respond to this.
>
> Finally, he did not mention anything specific, but he said to type up the plan and send it over, and that he would send it to the Director of Child Welfare, that he was not going to touch this one.

Even after the project was over, evaluative feedback was that the policies had never been implemented at that office. Of the 9 plans requiring child welfare approval, only two were done within the 5-day limit. One took a month, another took 2 months, another 2 1/2 months and 4 were not finalized at the end of the project each already having gone over a month. Haggles over money were dragged out to the point where some families simply gave up or forgot about the plan. In one situation, two other social service agencies liked the plan [the plan for the family to go on the land with counsellors] that the family came up with so much that they offered financial contributions to prevent the plan falling through. The plan never reached final approval to the point where it could be carried out, despite the unanimous support of the plan by the Department of Social Services child welfare and community service workers, project personnel, personnel from two other service agencies in town, and concerted effort on the part of several family members who made concessions to the original plan. By the end of the project, the family situation had changed. A family member had re-attempted suicide. Another was out of town in an alcohol treatment centre and several other family members could not be contacted. Efforts to re-group the family were being undertaken. In the final stage of the implementation review, one Department of Social Services worker at that site summed up:

> [There is] confusion as to who approves a family plan. I was told by the coordinator of the project that a social worker can approve up to $500 per month until the plan is carried through. The District Manager [of Social Services] in our office usually decided whether the plan was feasible. [I] would like to know exactly what [my]. . . . role is in the approval process. . . .

> and [I] would like more information on the project in the other sites so this office could see what we are doing differently.

It bears reiterating that the above observation took place *at the end* of the project.

The planning process in Nain were also distinctive from those on the Port au Port Peninsula and in St. John's because the plans there at times were employed at the time of sentencing. This occurred in two cases. In one the judge orderd that regular family meetings be held which would include involved professionals. In another, the judge reviewed the plan in court and encouraged the family to continue to pursue the plan.

7.4 Qualitative Examination of the Family's Plans

In looking at the families' plans, we begin with a qualitative examination of various themes evident in them. Because of cultural differences, we present the Nain plans separately from those developed in St. John's and on the Port au Port Peninsula. For those who would like to see a plan in its entirety, we refer you to our Manual for Coordinators and Communities, which includes a sample family group plan.

Judging from the After the Conference Interviews and the Family Group Conference Evaluation Forms, the written plans were the source of much trepidation for participants. It was at the time of final completion of the written plan when all concerned make an assessment of whether the plan focused on the right things and whether or not people were likely to carry out their roles in the plan. The anxieties expressed by family members about whether or not their relatives would come to the conference re-surfaced as fears that they would not do what they said they would do.

7.4.1 Coordinator's Influence on Plans

Before discussing the themes in the plans at the sites, we would first like to note that the similarities between the plans at a given site suggest that the coordinators had considerable influence during the final stage of the conference when they helped the family write the plan. For example, nearly all the plans at the Port au Port Peninsula site had detailed regulations for keeping family members involved in monitoring the safety of abused persons and for solving certain kinds of tensions. An excerpt from a Port au Port plan:

> [Child] can visit with his father on Saturday and Sunday afternoons. Aunt will provide transportation whenever she can at $10.00 a return trip. If Aunt is not available a Taxi will provided for [child]. [Child] must return home by 5:00 p.m. on both Saturday and Sunday. After one month, if all is well, [child] can stay over on a Saturday night. This can continue as long as [Dad] is sober and [child] is safe.

Not only did the plans at a site tend to be alike, but they became more focused in their similarity and in terms of what the family requested. For instance, on the Port au Port

Peninsula the plans became increasingly focused on regulating the interaction between family members and more elaborate in their emphasis on individual and family recreation as the project drew to a close.

This pattern was also evident in the St. John's site with the main difference being a function of the type of referral. There the referrals tended increasingly toward teens with behaviour problems so the detailed plans involved not only regulating those interactions that were thought to lead to violent episodes but also to regulating the teen's actions that were presumed to lead to conflict (e.g., disagreement over curfews, uses of abusive language, and chores).

In Nain, the plans involved the central problems of alcoholism and the impoverished conditions under which many of the families lived. As discussed above, the expectation that the plans had to receive the approval of the Social Services District Manager contributed to a tentative tone in the decision making.

Throughout the project, the written plans at all three sites became increasingly more detailed and shorter as the coordinators learned more about what was essential, what would be approved, what would lead to confusion and what kind of loopholes could be anticipated as people went about the business of making the day-to-day decisions necessary to accomplish the statements of intent in the plan. Interestingly, at each site when a student or volunteer person would be involved in facilitating a conference, the plans tended to resemble those done by the regular coordinators at the beginning. The Nain plans adopted the tentative statements of general intent rather than specific commitments while the plans at the other two sites had longer descriptions rather than simply recording the decisions and facts.

7.4.2 Monitoring and Evaluating Plans

All plans were expected to have specific measures for monitoring that their terms were implemented and for evaluating the results of these terms. It is important to bear in mind that a family's plan for monitoring was never intended to replace or usurp the role of the mandated authorities to monitor the safety of persons involved; instead the plans were aimed at assisting in the creation of a network of monitoring. What this system of monitoring meant in practice evolved throughout the life of the project and evolved somewhat differently at the 3 sites depending on a number of things but particularly the style of the coordinator and the culture of the community.

Monitoring plans were originally expected to ensure the safety of abused persons but were extended to include whether the monitoring plans themselves were being carried out. Having a monitoring system in place was seen as a necessary support to *both* families and the professionals. In the former case, it was discovered early in the project that family members needed to identify someone who felt safe enough to challenge their own family members and the professionals when something that was supposed to happen was not happening. This evolved originally out of two situations in St. John's, the first where a

supervisor held up for 2 months the approval of a purchase that a worker agreed to which was well within the limits set by senior managers in the Department of Social Services. The second related to a family's frustration at a child welfare worker who allegedly gave the brush-off to a woman who called to get a bus pass that had been agreed to once she registered for school by saying he did not have time to do it and "would come in next week." These two incidents focused the two family's attentions on the potential for advocacy inherent when a group of people are brought together. It also gave the project evaluators insight into the effect of introducing accountability of this kind into the relationships between the professionals and the family members. This is discussed in greater detail in the final chapter.

7.4.3 Plans in Nain

Reflecting the wishes of the family, plans in Nain tended to be written in tentative tones, especially at the beginning of the project. Being involved in planning of this kind was such a new idea for the families and the confidence levels in the Department of Social Services (DOSS) in Nain left many families in a position where they were "asking" for services rather than contributing to decision making. As the project went on, some families became bolder in taking initiative, whether in asserting their needs or, in one case, denying all the problems set before them by child welfare and medical personnel. The themes below speak to both the economic circumstances of the families as well as to their culturally based solutions for improving the lot of their relatives. Although we have highlighted a theme in each section below, it will become quickly apparent to the reader that the themes interact in the families' lives and in our presentation we have not sought to isolate them from each other. This approach is in keeping with the conclusions from the Inuit Women's Association Pauktuttit's (1990) needs assessment on health promotion and substance abuse in Inuit communities in Labrador, Northwest Territories, Nunavik, and Quebec:

> Inuit communities are experiencing, and attempting to deal with, a wide variety of problems. Unemployment, housing, suicide, poverty and substance abuse are viewed as serious problems by many of the people who responded to Pauktuutit's questionnaire. The best approach to addressing any one of these issues may, in fact, be one which has the potential of addressing them all. However, reality is such that the separate jurisdictions and responsibilities of the many organizations, agencies and boards operating in Inuit communities often result in each issue or problem being dealt with in isolation. (p. 8)

7.4.3.1 Getting Food for Lone Mothers and Their Children

Having a steady and adequate food supply was a recurring issue across the single-mother households referred to the project. The following plan of action excerpted from the coordinator's reflective notes shows both how the family recognized that their relative lacked food and interpretted this lack as break down in traditonal ways of ensuring that all family members are provided for.

> It was stated by family members that [single mother] sometimes has no food at home due to lack of money. . . .The family decided that they would go the traditional way of helping [her] out with regards to her food problem. The traditional way is that when a family member kills fresh meat like seals, caribou, ptarmigan, or catches fish, this is first shared with family members **regardless of the degree of need**.

While this plan was agreeable to all , a subsequent conference was required to work out the specifics for its implementation, that is where the food would be stored and who the woman should speak to if her brothers did not bring food:

But the family members also thought the problems ran deeper:

> Family members feel that [she] does not know how to cook and the children sometimes are hungry because of this. [She] wants to learn how to keep house and learn how to cook. [Two family members] both offered to teach [her] how to cook and prepare meals.

The Labrador Inuit Health Commission (LIHC) offered counselling, a Parenting Group, and a soon to be started single-parents group to deal with such matters as budgeting, cooking, coping and discipline [child].

> [The mother] has agreed to take counselling at LIHC for anger management . . . [and attend] . . . Parenting Group. She says that she wants to get her children back and will seek as much help as possible to better herself.

And a most typical preference of families in Nain was expressed in this situation:

> [Relative] suggested that [the mother] have supervised visits with her children right now and that this should lead up to longer visits to eventually getting them back full time as she shows that she is making progress. All family members feel that the children would be best off with their mother and they will support her actions and needs so that the children are again placed in her care.

7.4.3.2 Getting Heat and Power

Likewise, electricity and a wood supply recurred as a major concern, especially given the extreme cold of the region. Since the area surrounding the town had been denuded of trees, residents could only secure wood by hauling it a relatively long distance across a terrain without any roads. The plan for one family pointed to their dire circumstances:

> The [couple] have 7 children, ages 2 to 14, they have bought a second hand wood stove so they could have heat, they presently cook meals on a "Coleman" camp stove that runs on white gas. They are in desperate need of better arrangements for cooking proper meals . . . In the meantime, [relative who lives across the street] has offered them the use of his stove to cook on and bake bread.

The living conditions for the family are further revealed in the plan as are "culturally relevant" social assistance requirements:

> [Relative] has offered [the father] the use of his ski-doo to haul fire wood. [He] presently has no means of getting fire wood except by physically hauling a Komatik (sled) full of wood five or six miles. [The couple] are presently both on social assistance and cannot afford the price of fuel that is needed to run this snowmobile. They feel that the price of ten gallons of gas and two quarts of lube per week be added [sic] to their social assistance cheque would enable them to provide sufficient wood to keep the house warm.

The family also asked that the Department of Social Services pay a back electricity bill so the family could have their power turned on. In a most tentative tone, the plan states that:

> If the hydro bill cannot be paid, family members feel that [the couple] need a wood stove that is suitable for cooking on.

The family added one last piece to the plan to deal with a common fear in Nain: that the house will burn down with the children in it.

> Family will offer to look after the children any time [the parents] need to go some place so that the children will never be left alone especially where they burn candles for lights. Family all have agreed as well to visit more often to give support . . . and just to check and see that everything is alright or needed [sic].

The coordinator was very concerned about this family and, in the same tentative tone as the family had addressed the issue of the back electricity bills, added his own commentary at the end of the plan:

> This coordinator can see future problems with this family if electricity is not restored. I know that this family must take responsibility for their actions and repay if at all possible. This family is presently living in a hazardous environment, in regards to the health of the children and the potential of fire where they use candles for light. I feel that getting their power back will eventually save everybody money in the long run.

7.4.3.3 Finding Housing

Given the high costs of construction, housing in Nain was in tight supply with three or more generations often under one roof. Moreover, repairs were also prohibitive if only because of the expenses incurred transporting supplies into this northern community. Not surprisingly, lack of adequate housing appeared as a problem across many family plans, especially those for single mothers, and often called for an adult member to get housing of her own. In the following example, all the family agreed that this mother and her children would do better on their own:

> It was agreed upon by family members that [the mother] and her children would be better off living on their own. Family members would like to see [her] placed in housing or an apartment by [the Department of Social Services]. Family members would check on [her] to make sure the house was kept clean and that the children were well looked after.

But in the meantime:

> [Relative] will take [the mother] into her house until something is done about housing. At the present time, [the mother] is living in her parents old house that has no running water, no electricity and requires wood for heat. [The relative who offered to take her in] believes that this is not good living conditions for the children and the it shows how desperate [the mother] is to be on her own.

7.4.3.4 Treating Alcoholism

The sale of alcoholic beverage in Nain at the time of the project was restricted to a limited number of hours each evening at the local hotel. Nevertheless, the Nain Town Council had identified that alcoholism was a problem in many households and had attempted unsuccessfully through a referendum to terminate the sale of alcoholic beverage. This continues to be an area of controversy within the community and increasingly so because of pressures to extend alcohol sales in order to meet the demand from the workers at the recently initiated mining development at Voisey Bay. The ability of the community to respond to alcoholism is limited by the fact that the closest addictions treatment centre is in North West River and can only be accessed by air. As a result, with the exception of some counselling for alcoholism through the local LIHC office, individuals must leave their family and community in order to receive treatment.

It was typical in the Nain family's plans to make specific mention of the problem of alcoholism:

> It was felt and agreed upon by the family members present that [parents] main problem is alcohol abuse. Family members agreed that other problems like arguing, anger, child abuse and child neglect result because of this. It was agreed upon that attending a rehabilitation centre would only add to present problems and doesn't seem to work. Both [parents] want to get

> regular counselling for alcohol abuse, anger management and marriage counselling available through the LIHC.

In the following plan, the parents ask to go to a treatment centre outside the community and the extended family offers to look after the children in the family home:

> [Couple] requested that they be sent to a treatment centre that takes couples. They would prefer the [name of centre]. . . [Couple] do realize that they need counselling for alcohol abuse and would also like to do marriage counselling. Family members requested that this take place as soon as a treatment centre placement can be found. The LIHC would be responsible . . . for all travel arrangements and costs.
>
> Family members all agreed that the children should stay together at their home and that all family members will be responsible for helping out with their care but with [two people] being the two main carers while parents are away. Other family will all share responsibilities and give these two main carers a break when needed.

While willing to assume these caregiving responsibilities, the family members requested some things to help them in this task. For example:

> There is no proper cooking stove to cook meals on, the only source of cooking right now is a wood heater. Family request that an electric range be purchased right away. There is an electric outlet already in the house so there should not have to be any rewiring done. Family see this as a necessity not only during the absence of the parents but preparing properly cooked meals.

In the meantime, the family reconvened at the request of child welfare to put in place plans for the safety of the children:

> The public health nurse would continue to make regular visits to the parents trying to teach them better feeding skills and nutritional values; she would set up appointments at the clinic for [the parents] to attend (tentatively to begin tomorrow morning); the nurse will continue to monitor the child's weight and health; this will be done on a schedule of once each week.

7.4.3.5 Keeping Children with Family

Social Services' practices of apprehending children in need of protection from their parents ran deeply counter to Inuit ways of caring for children within the extended family network. As explained in The Inuit way: A guide to Inuit culture (Pauktuutit, n.d.), child care was not viewed as solely the responsibility of their parents:

> The bonds between children and adults are quite fluid in Inuit society. Children are commonly seen darting around town visiting several homes, asking for food or seeking attention and then darting off to the next home. They may even decide to go live with another related family for a period of time. In this case, the parents can sway the child's decision if they feel that it would not be a good idea, but they will likely support the decision if the child is insistent. (p. 11)

Because of this collective participation in child rearing, Inuit customs around adoptions and fostering diverged radically from the methods promoted by the Department of Social Services. Elaborating further, the Pauktuutit (n.d.) guide explains:

> This fluidity of bonds between children and adults extends itself into the adoption practices of the Inuit. A child who loses his natural parents bears no stigma. Orphans are readily accepted into another household, usually that of a close relative. A couple who wanted a child, might ask another couple who were expecting a child if they could have it to raise as their own. Generally, the adopting couple would make such a request initially to relatives that were quite close but if this avenue proved fruitless, they could try more distant relatives or friends. The child would know who his biological parents were but his primary loyalty would be to his adoptive parents. (p. 11)

A recent examination of Inuit custom adoptions by Suzanne Manomie (1994) notes that such adoptions are probably more common today because of the greater number of surviving babies being born to young, single women. She commends this approach as working in the main to the advantage of the child, biological mother, and adopting parents but cautions that some checks and balances need to be instituted to safeguard infants from being adopted into unsafe situations.

Divergences between Inuit ways and Social Services policies were evident in the Nain families' plans and the manner in which they defined terms. An example that comes mind is of a single mother who had had one child apprehended and several others being considered for apprehension. In this case, the family group disagreed with their relative who had told child welfare to place her child up for adoption. There were clearly some differences in meanings about the notion of adoption in the discussion. The family meant for the child to be 'fostered.'

> The family wishes that she remain in town and be adopted by someone local. They want her to be placed with this family until she is eighteen years of age, at this time she will be able to decide if she would like to return with her family.

In regards to the children who had not already been apprehended by child welfare, the family asked to be allowed to monitor the children's safety so that they would not be taken them. As evident in the excerpt from the plan below, they even said they would

report to child welfare on their monitoring "if necessary," further revealing their basic dissatisfaction with child welfare "telling them what to do."

> The family does not want Social Services to have a six-month supervision order on the remaining children in [the mother's] care, instead [3 members] want to be the ones to check on [the mother] and the children and if necessary report to Social Services on a regular basis.

In this family and for that matter all other conferences in Nain, the issue of Inuit identity, particularly in regards to children, was a dominant theme. The families objected to what they perceived to be white rules that "take children" and give them to people outside the community or to people who are not Inuit. To them this is taking away the child's Inuit identity. In this family, the mother who was to appear in court was afraid that she would be sent out of town and that her children would be placed in separate homes:

> [The mother] says that if the courts order her to take counselling for her drinking, she would prefer to do so in town through a native healer. She does not want to go to the rehab in [another location]. . . . If [the mother] is court ordered to get counselling out of town the family does not want the children separated. [Two family members] offered to care for the children in their home.

7.4.3.6 Mediating between the Family and Social Services

Differences in language and culture exacerbated tensions between Social Services and Inuit families on their caseload. The following example is of a woman whose family felt that many of the problems the child welfare person had presented could be attributable to misunderstandings between their relative and the Department of Social Services because the Department lacked a worker who spoke Inuktitut.

> [The mother] still feels uncomfortable with DOSS and sometimes cannot grasp or understand their reasons or actions. Family members feel that Social Services should contact [her] support or [a person in the community] and have one of them present when [she] is visiting Social Services or when they do a home visit.

7.4.3.7 Monitoring Plans

It was rare for the plans to include steps for monitoring and evaluating the enactment of the plans. Many plans did not refer to monitoring and evaluation at all. It is likely that this omission was both a function of a culture where social control is enacted through indirect means such as ignoring or withdrawing (Pauktuutit, n.d.) and a function of the uneasy relationship between the Inuit community and the Department of Social Services.

The notion of monitoring family members was foreign to the elder family members in Nain where it is regarded as an unwarranted intrusion not to take what someone says at face value. For example, if a person says they will quit drinking now, then that is the end of it. Younger people in Nain families sometimes raised challenges to this type of thinking as in one case where an eldest son said, "We've heard that before" when his sibling defended their mother and declared, "She said she would quit drinking." Unsurprisingly then, it fell back to child welfare to do the monitoring, or family members volunteered but with little enthusiasm evidenced.

After a lengthy discussion at one conference, all family seemed to be in agreement that if a particular child did not want to go to school then there was nothing that could be done. During the planning phase, however, two family members agreed that the school officials could call them when the child was not in school but did so only because the family was told there had to be a way to monitor the situation. One young adult who wanted the child to go to school said that he had been involved in trying to monitor the situation but felt nothing would get better until the mother stopped drinking or the family pulled together more.

Variances in expectations for children expressed by different generations were the most difficult impasses to families coming up with plans and monitoring strategies in Nain. On the other hand, the shame experienced by family, and the levels of pain expressed, as family members described the havoc that has been wrecked on their families by the clashing of traditional and modern cultures were noted as the most beneficial parts of the conference by most participants.

7.4.3.8 Bringing the Pain into the Open

After suffering from centuries of cultural assimilation, the residents of Nain found that one of the greatest benefits of conferencing was being able to speak their piece. The two most often-repeated observations by family members about the conferences in Nain were first that it was good for the family to talk and get things out in the open, even though it was painful, and secondly that they needed on-going family meetings. An example from one conference:

> The family would like to have a follow up conference in about a month from now. . . . They felt that just getting together and talking was a great help to them and made them feel much better.

While getting the pain into the open was highly prized by the families, the coordinator was less certain about its long-term benefits or even his capacity to pull the family together:

> I had a great deal of difficulty in getting this family to come together. On my first attempt, only [the mother] showed up. It took two more attempts before the family was able to come up with this plan. There isn't a whole lot to this plan and there are no serious commitments by any family member to deal with [the mother's] drinking problem which is the root of all this abuse.

In this case, the conference was a first step and one that the family rated positively. In all likelihood more meetings and hard work would need to be undertaken in order to achieve long-range goals concerning the children's safety and the mother's substance abuse and more fundamentally concerning a sense of pride in their cultural heritage.

7.4.4 Plans in Port au Port and St. John's

As true of the plans in Nain, those on the Port au Port Peninsula and in St. John's revealed that the family group recognized the tensions existing between their relatives and the referring agency. The depth and extent of these tensions, however, never reached the same proportions as in Nain. Controversies over state intervention versus family rights were apparent, but the St. John's and the Port au Port Peninsula families did not have to traverse wide cultural rifts to work out ways of resolving them. Although many of the families in St. John's and especially the Port au Port Peninsula suffered from economic hardship, they did not approach the life-and-death struggles for survival evinced by so many of the Nain families. Thus, the issues which we have highlighted below from these two sites focus primarily but not entirely on improving relationships within and around the referred families. From the examples provided, however, it will be seen how these relationship issues interacted with material needs in many of the situations.

A comparison of plans from St. John's and the Port au Port Peninsula with those from Nain reveals another striking difference, this time in style as opposed to content. The Nain plans leaned toward a tentative tone, reflecting the families' uncertainties about developing plans in conjunction with the Department of Social Services. In contrast, those in the other two sites appear far more confident and far more detailed in terms of what steps were be implemented, when, and by whom.

In this section, we have elected to look at the plans for the Port au Port Peninsula and St. John's together because of their similarities. Differences in the weightings toward particular issues are reviewed later in the section on the quantitative analysis of the plans. Similarities in the plans for an urban and rural area may appear surprising if only because of the greater availability of resources in the former setting. It should be noted that while the Port au Port Peninsula had limited programming on the peninsula proper, residents were able to access various services in the relatively near-by town of Stephenville. Given their concerns around confidentiality, going to Stephenville for programs was often viewed in a positive light rather than as an obstacle. As discussed later under costs for the plans, this meant that plans for the Port au Port Peninsula stood out in regards to their requests for transportion funding to assist relatives in attending counselling and availing of other programs.

7.4.4.1 Meeting Basic Needs

Many of the families referred to the project were struggling to make ends meet on their Social Assistance checks from a province with one of the lowest rates in Canada. Not surprisingly, concerns about shortfalls in material resources were evident in many of the plans. A prime example comes from the plan for a Port au Port lone-mother family, which like many others in the area was dependent on woodburning for household heat but lacked the husband/father to cut and haul back the wood. In her reflective notes the coordinator described the mother prior to the conference as "suffer[ing] from Major Depression" and "concerned about her ability to provide adequate care for her [teen-age] daughter." During the conference, the family identified the economic basis of so many of the lone mother's concerns and developed a plan that included the following items:

1. Phone bill, light bill, and grocery bill at [name of store] will be paid. . . .
2. [Child protection worker] will provide [mother] with $300.00 to purchase the basic staples in groceries. . . .
3. [Relative] will take [mother] to Stephenville once every two weeks to purchase her groceries. [Child protection worker] will give $10.00 for transportation if the trip was not planned.
4. [Name] will find a deepfreeze for [mother] and deliver it to her home.
5. [Child protection worker] will assist [mother] in purchasing two loads of wood in preparation for the winter months.

Visiting the mother after the conference, the researcher reported:

> [The mother] said she was feeling much better. . . . She had 2 loads of wood bought, stocked up on her necessities, she appeared a whole new person, and was glowing. She was smiling and laughing and really at ease with herself and [her daughter].

Families at the St. John's project site also had concerns about basic necessities as evident in a plan where family and friends volunteered food:

> When [mother] is running low on necessary food/household items she was given permission to ask family members for help. Her father and her sister agreed to provide her with pampers for [baby] if she runs short before she gets her check. [The mother's] family and friends gave her information about food banks she can use when she runs out of basic food items.

7.4.4.2 Securing Safe Housing

As in Nain, housing was of concern for a number of the families referred to the St. John's and Port au Port project sites, but in these latter sites the concern was focused less on the building's state of repair and more on location. An example from St. John's:

> [The mother] has contacted [Housing Authority] to request a transfer from [area of town]. It is a known drug related area and has contributed to the amount of violence and fear this family has experienced. Most of the drinking and drug involvement that [the father] had been involved in prior to his incarceration was centred around contacts and associates in [that area].

In this case, the plan requested that letters supporting this transfer be written by the parole officer, child protection worker, and project coordinator to the Housing Authority.

A Port au Port family group recognized that the daughter's proximity to a sexual abuser necessitated a move but wanted at the same time to ensure that relocating the mother and daugher would not become just one more destabilizing event in their lives:

> [The mother] will choose a home for her and [her daughter] carefully to be sure that it is one in which they will be comfortable and happy. The home is to be clean and well kept. They are to try to remain in the same house for at least one year.

7.4.4.3 Treating Substance Abuse

Families both in St. John's and on the Port au Port Peninsula suffered from the substance abuse of one or more of their members. As evident in the excerpt from the plan below, the family regarded the abuse as being linked to alcohol but they wanted the abusive behaviour addressed directly:

> [The father] has agreed to continue taking Antibuse and attending AA to help him deal with his alcohol addiction. As well he will be looking into the possibility of attending the group for male batterers that is run by [name of counsellor]. Contact will be made with [counsellor] this coming week to have an initial meeting about getting involved with the next group.

Plans, however, were not always so definite as in one case where the family group plan facilitated but did not enjoin that the father seek help for his alcoholism:

> [The father] **can** attend AA in [name of place] whenever he feels he needs to go to a meeting. Transportation will be paid. [highlighting added]

The one-year follow up will determine if the father seeks out this help, but to our acknowledge he has not done so to date.

7.4.4.4 Supporting Healthy Family Life

The family groups were cognizant of the turmoil and stress under which their relatives lived. Many of the plans had quite concrete strategies for improving family life.

Household Organization

One example is of a plan which was designed to increase the organization within a household:

> [Dad & Mom's] plan: [Mom] will stay home from school two days per week. On those days she will be responsible for supper preparation. [Dad] will be responsible for preparing supper on the other three nights. [Friend] will speak to [mom] about this part of the plan. [Mom] will do the shopping on cheque day. [Friend] will provide transportation but [mom] will shop on her own. [Dad] has agreed not to complain about her shopping when she returns home. [Friend and sister] will be support people for [mom]. [Friend] will discuss this with [mom]. Upon agreement from [mom] they will do things with her that she likes to do. [Social worker] will refer [mom] to the Women's Support Group at the Women's Centre . . . if she wants to go.

Recreation for the Family

Families frequently wanted recreational activities as a way to reduce the stress:

> [Mom and Dad] will take a break away from the children the second weekend of every month. The children will be cared for. . . . [by aunt1, aunt2, friend, sister-in-law. . . . Once per year, during the summer months, [mom and dad] will take a one week holiday. . . . children will go to their respective baby sitters. . . . [mom & dad] will be provided with a babysitting allowance. . . . to encourage them to go out and enjoy themselves as a couple. . . . The family will go on one outing per month of their choice. . . . The children will be enrolled in a peer activity of their choice. . . . The entire family has decided to do a family collection of money. . . . [Aunt] will collect from her family and [grandmother] will collect from hers.

And in some instances the families wanted the recreation to begin while children were still in care. The following family anticipated the assistance that would be required once the children came home:

> It was felt by the group that the children should be involved in some sporting or recreational activity. 0113, 0109, and 0125 will look into the possibilities and Child Protection will pay for one activity per child while they are in foster care. When the children return home this activity should continue and will be

paid for either through existing funds at child protection or through monies available for the family decision making project.

Family Planning

The range of issues that were discussed in plans seemed limitless at times and extended to recognition of birth control in a family where two young parents were having difficulty coping with four young children:

> [Mom & Dad] have decided not to have any more children. [Dad]. . . . make an appointment to see a Doctor. . . . discuss. . . . vasectomy.

Stop the Arguing

Some plans even suggested specific ways to stop parents from fighting:

> [Dad & Mom] will try to argue in a healthier manner. No name calling, insults or bringing up the past. Who ever is angry will leave the house and not return until he/she feels they can discuss their feelings in a safe way. . . . [Aunt] and [grandmother] will be the monitoring team. They will review the plan every two months. [Five family members] will be the review committee. This committee will meet every eight months. [Family member] will initiate the first meeting to be scheduled for around [date]. The review committee can also meet earlier or more often at the request of the monitoring team to address difficulties with the plan.

7.4.4.5 Supporting Parents in Caring for Children

Many of the plans were focused on strategies for helping parents deal effectively with their children. The families recognized that their relatives needed assistance with meeting the many needs for caring of their children.

Child Care

Family and friends were the ones who most frequently volunteered to provide babysitting or child-minding to give the parents time-off for carrying out other tasks or just relaxing:

> [The maternal grandfather] and [step-grandmother] agreed to take one child for one Saturday night per month. The children will take turns going to their grandfather's on these nights. [The grandfather] and [step-grandmother] said that once they try this and see how it goes, it may be possible for them to take both children for the night on these occasions. [Mother's boyfriend] agreed to baby sit two nights per week so [the mother] can go out on her own. [The aunt] agreed to baby sit one night per week (dart night) for 4-5

hours. [The mother] agreed to pay her $5.00 per hour to do this. She also agreed to baby sit one night per month on a week-end. [The mother's] mom agreed to babysit twice a week during the day to allow [the mother] a chance to get groceries, run errands, or see a counsellor or a doctor. She also agreed to be a back up babysitter for [the mother] when she is going to school and her regular babysitter is sick etc.

Behavioral Limits and Special Assessments

The families also recognized when children had special requirements and worked out plans when setting limits and learning difficulties for children needed attention:

> The family agreed that [the mother] and [stepfather] have trouble setting limits for the children and using discipline/consequences for their behaviours that teach them instead of scare them. . . . [The mother] and [stepfather] both asked for help with learning better parenting skills. . . . [The social worker], with the Department of Social Services has agreed to meet with [the mother] to assess [the child's] development and to introduce her to the Child Management Specialist. . . .
>
> Family members expressed concern about [the child's] speech, his school work, and his behaviour. They would like him to be referred for testing for his speech and would like him assessed for Attention Deficit Disorder. They would also like to ensure that his school performance be closely monitored so that if he has the same learning difficulties as other family members he will receive the help he needs right away.

7.4.4.6 Safeguarding Family Members from Abusers

The family group recognized that their own son, brother, or uncle posed a danger his wife and children. They knew their relative well and knew what needed to be put in place to ensure the safety of his family. A case in point is of a family group who evidenced that they had "been there" when they suggested the need for a detailed plan of what to do once the father is released from prison:

> [The mother] stated that she wishes only phone contact with [her husband] initially upon his release [from prison]. If [he] shows up at [her] house unannounced and/or uninvited [she] will call either [his sister 1], [his sister 2], [his uncle], or [his sister 3] who will assist her in making sure he leaves the premises. If he appears to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs [correctional officer] will be notified immediately. [The husband] agreed to this since it was clearly stated at the meeting that he wants to deal with his addiction problem and family members would not be supporting him by covering for him if and/or when he has a slip. It was also agreed that [the father] will not go to the home of [mother's mother] unannounced and/or

> uninvited upon his release. The same process will apply if he does show up at her home.
>
> It was felt that [the mother] will require a telephone to ensure her safety once [her husband] is released. Due to an outstanding phone bill of approximately $300.00 she is not able to get a phone. This bill is a result of collect phone calls from [her husband] since he has been incarcerated [which she has previously been afraid to refuse]. [Mother] accepts responsibility for this bill and plans to pay it off to the best of her ability. If she has not achieved this by the time [husband] is released, [social worker] of Children's Protection Services agreed to pay this outstanding phone bill on [the mother's] behalf, with the understanding that [she] will repay the amount of the bill to Children's Protection at a rate of $50.00 per month.

This family group also evidently subscribed to the "trust with verification" adage in dealing with abusive members. Taking into account to the boy's fears of his father, they responded with caution to the father's request for contact with his son:

> [The father] also indicated he would like an opportunity to speak to [son] about his fear of [his father], to assure him that he will not have to worry about his behaviour anymore. Family members clearly stated that this should only happen at [the boy's] request and should be done only once [son] is receiving counselling, with his counsellor present. [The father] agreed to this plan. It was stated that the best reassurance [the father] can give [his son] will be through a positive change in his behaviour over time.

And they wanted the father to support his family in the meantime:

> [The father] agreed to pay child support to [his wife] once he has an income. The amount will be determined at a future review meeting based on the amount of income [he] is receiving.

7.4.4.6 Removing Abusers from the Home

Families more often preferred to have an actively abusive person leave the home, if that was necessary, rather than removing those who had been abused:

> [Father] has not been residing in the home since the incident on [date] which prompted the referral to Children's Protection. The family agreed that this separation will continue until [he] has received treatment for his alcohol abuse and his violent behaviour. It was further decided that before [he] can return home, a review meeting will be held with the family and Child Protection to determine if this would be safe for the children.

And this family was specific in what they wanted the abuser to do in the meantime:

> [Father] agreed to begin attending AA. He agreed to call and find out where and when the nearest meetings to him are held and find out what arrangements he can make for transportation to and from meetings. Child Protection agreed to assist [him] with transportation costs to attend the meetings when he has no other alternative

Nor was the mother left out:

> In addition, [parents] agreed to attend counselling to deal with their addictions to alcohol and drugs as well as to receive help with regard to their relationship and their inconsistencies in parenting.

In fact, the family was comprehensive in their expectations of not only wanting the abuse to stop, but for the abused persons to get help for abuse they had experienced at the same time:

> [Two children] indicated they would like to attend counselling to deal with the sexual abuse they have experienced [from someone outside the immediate family] and to deal with the problems they are experiencing in their family. [One] stated she would like to see a male counsellor and would like to begin by attending counselling bi-weekly. [The other] requested a female counsellor and would like to attend counselling on a weekly basis.

And the family brought their "insider" [information that only family could know] knowledge to bear on the analysis of the problem and the plan in a way that supported them all:

> All family members expressed concern that [father] was particularly overprotective of [daughter] and unreasonable in his expectations of her. Several examples of how he treated [her] differently from [two other children] were discussed. . . . It was acknowledged that it will be difficult for [him] to stop some of the inappropriate parenting without support. He agreed that when he becomes upset or concerned about something he has heard about one of the children, he will call [the uncle] to discuss the problem and figure out the best way to handle it before confronting [his wife] or the children with anger. . . . It was also stated by family that a major source of confrontations in the home are the result of gossip, rumours, and third party information that [the parents] receive about the children from [the sister-in-law]. Much of the information she offers is not accurate and leads to major confrontations. [The father] agreed to discuss this with his sister in law and ask her to please refrain from repeating information that may be unfounded and will cause unnecessary problems for the family.

7.4.4.7 Reuniting Children with Family

The family groups not only demonstrated a strong commitment to keeping family members safe and supported within the home, they also were committed to reuniting children with family where it was both safe and feasible. Overall, they preferred children being with their parents or parent; where this was not possible, then with kin; and only as a last resort having them reside with non-family foster carers. In the last instance, though, they pushed to ensure that contact would be maintained between their young relatives and family.

The families made realistic appraisals of their relatives' ability to manage the return of their children and recognized that an extensive and coordinated effort was required. A case in point is a couple who had repeatedly in the past demonstrated incompetence in caring for their small children. The plan that the conference pulled together called for a large-scale mobilization of extended family and professionals:

> A number of safety items will be purchased and installed in the family's apartment by [uncle 1] by [date]. [Uncle 2] agreed to follow up on this to make sure these things are in place before the children return home. [Parents] would like to have a staff person from [organization] come to their home to do [their Child Safe Program] . . . [Consultant from another organization will] come to her home and help [mom] make things in her house easier to manage now that she has lost some of her vision. . . . [Uncle 3] agreed to help them find a suitable car to buy and. . . . agreed to help keep the car running by doing any necessary repairs when needed as he is a mechanic. [Uncle 1] agreed to do any needed body work on the car. . . . Home Support Worker will visit the family home on mondays and fridays beginning [date]. . . . [Parents] agreed to be home when [she] arrives. . . . All family members present agreed to help the family by lending them food items on an emergency basis when they run short, with the understanding that on the next grocery day [Home Support Worker] will help [parents] make sure those items are repaid when necessary. A new respite worker will need to be found by [date]. Everyone at the meeting clearly stated that [parents] are capable of doing far more for themselves than they have been doing and [parents] said they would like to be more independent. Therefore the role of the new respite worker will be to help [parents] prepare meals, learn new recipes, assist them in learning household chores, help with [child's] homework, read to the children, and help with care and supervision of the children while at the home. [Social worker] made it clear that hitting, pushing, biting, etc. of the children or of each other will not be allowed at all. [Parents] agreed that they need help in learning good ideas about what to do when the children "act up" and what to do when they are angry at the children or at each other. [A staff person from an organization] will meet with [parents] at their home once a week for four weeks to help them with parenting/discipline.

The families also identified that planning was required to prepare children for returning home. In a situation where the plan called for children to be reunited with a parent following a period of placement, the following family made very specific plans:

> [Mom] will increase her visits with her children at her mother's house to twice per week. She will go to her mom's Saturday mornings, stay over night and return to her grandmother's Sunday evenings. She will return to her mom's Wednesday mornings and return to her grandmother's Thursday evenings. This arrangement will continue until [mom] is in her own apartment. The Department of Social Services will provide transportation for [mom] and [brother] will assist her in securing a driver. . . . [Two friends and grandmother] will help [mom] find an apartment as soon as possible . . . [friend] will give [mom] a davenport, dishes, towels, sheets, blankets, and a washer. [Friend] will deliver these items to [mom]. . . . [mom] will go to counselling with [counsellor]. . . . Department of Social Services will pay transportation. . . . [Friend] will baby sit for [mom] during her counselling sessions and the children will be dropped off at her house. . . . [Brother] will baby sit [son] up to two days at a time whenever [mom] needs a break. During these breaks [grandmother and sister] will baby sit [son]. . . . [Home Care Worker and social worker] will meet with [mom] when she is in her own place and develop a budgeting plan.

7.4.4.8 Decreasing Isolation of In-Care Children

Although conference groups usually wished to reunite young relatives with family, most placed protection above family unity. They recognized when parents were not ready to care for children or young people and how stress contributes to abuse. At the same time, they were aware of the importance of decreasing the distance between young people and their family. The following excerpt from one set of reflective notes shows that this family had considered simultaneously issues of protecting the young person while reducing her isolation from her parents:

> The goal of the FGC was to reconnect [daughter] with her extended family since she has isolated herself from all family since coming into care of the Director of Child Welfare, to consider possibilities for her future care, and to gain input and ideas from family with regard to the kinds of help and intervention that might help both [daughter and her mother] with their problems. . . . It was agreed that with the present level of stress and difficulty between [the parents] that returning home is not an appropriate plan at this time.

The following excerpt shows how the extended family wanted to build up the contacts with the young woman who lived in a foster home and, in particular, they wanted

her to start seeing her siblings regularly. At the same time they were highly sensitive to her choices:

> All family members recognize the importance of visits between [the daughter] and her brothers and are committed to making sure [she and her brothers] see each other on a more regular basis. [Four relatives] offered their homes as meeting places and all family members will take responsibility for ensuring these visits happen. [The daughter] is aware that she is able to visit all of her family members whenever she wishes and/or whenever possible in terms of people's schedules. [The father] and [mother] indicated that they are anxious to resume some kind of contact with [their daughter] and while they do not want to push this issue, were clear that whenever [their daughter] is ready for this their door is always open to her.

7.4.4.8 Promoting Inclusive Foster Care

Families with a child or young person in care made plans to be involved with their relative during the care and to work cooperatively with the foster parents:

> Visits will be arranged between the foster parents and the family members. Family members will call foster parents to set up suitable times for visits. This arrangement applies to all family members with the exception of the children's father. Because of concerns of child protection and family that [the father] tends to give the children false hopes and inappropriate information, visits or phone contact between [the father] and the children will take place only if the children wish to have this contact and only with monitoring and supervision. This means that foster parents will monitor phone conversations by listening on an extension during calls and will intervene if inappropriate comments are made. Should [the father] return to Newfoundland in the future visits with the children would be supervised.

And to keep the father from interfering with this plan:

> Family members stated that [the father] should be contacted to make sure he understands these concerns. It was felt that [the father] should seek counselling to help him understand the negative effect his behaviour and comments have on his children. [Therapist who was present during the information providing part of the conference] agreed to contact [the father] to further explain this to him. She will also send him a copy of this plan so he will be informed of the decisions and help now in place for the children.

And the family knew that the plan had to be specific as to when, where and how the mother would visit:

> [The mother] will visit [the son] once a month on a Saturday or Sunday and take him on an outing (e.g., a movie, MacDonalds, etc.). She will also take [the daughter] on a similar outing once a month. She will arrange these visits with the foster parents. At first these visits will be with each child alone. If these go well she will take [the daughter] and [son] together on these outings. $100.00 per month will be provided to [mother] by [the worker] of child protection out of monies available through this project to cover the costs of these outings. . . . This will improve the quality of visits as it is hard for [mother] on a limited budget to entertain teenagers during visits. It also will take into account the importance of enabling families to have fun together. [Three family members] offered to help make this possible through providing transportation for the children to these visits whenever possible. [A relative] offered his home to be used as a meeting place for [mother] and the children when they are going on visits together. When family are not available, transportation for these visits will be provided through child protection.

And the mother did not want to be left out of important events in the children's lives:

> [Mother] would like to be notified about any upcoming special events or important happenings in the children's lives (e.g., school concerts, illness). Foster parents will keep [mother] informed about these things.

The family seemed determined to make this all happen:

> [Two relatives] agreed to be the monitors of the plan. They will each phone half of the family members and the professionals involved on a monthly basis to determine if everything is in place and people are following through with their responsibilities. They will then check with each other and make sure that the appropriate action is taken to catch any problems with the plan quickly. They will also present their information at the review meeting.

7.4.4.9 Increasing Parental Access to the Children

Families frequently by-passed warring parents and gave children access to both parents as in the following example:

> [Son's] visits with his father will be unsupervised. . . . While [dad] is living in [nearby community], [son] can go to his father's house for lunch. [Son] must return to classes in the afternoon and must return to [mom's] house after school. . . . [Son] can visit with his father on Saturday and Sunday afternoons. [Aunt] will provide transportation. . . . After one month, if all is well, [son] can stay over on a Saturday night. This can continue as long as [dad] is sober and [son] is safe. [Mom], [aunt], and [friend] will be the monitoring committee around the visitation plans and will advise [social worker] if the plans are not working.

7.4.4.10 Enhancing Foster Care

When children or young people could not return home, the family group also paid attention to improving their situation in care. This applied to both kin or non-kin caregivers. Several excerpts from reflective journals and the plan itself are used to illustrate how willing most families were to engage in the planning process with the professionals once they had decided what needed to be done.

In the case of a teen who was residing with her aunt and uncle, the family took on her troubles in school as a central issue requiring a detailed plan resembling a medley relay of family cooperation:

> Given that [the teen] has been having so many difficulties at her current school and the approximately $800.00 per month that it costs to transport her to and from this school, it has been agreed that a change to the [school area] is in order. [The caregiving uncle] and [aunt] are to be responsible for all communications with which ever school [the teen] attends. It was decided that [the uncle] and [aunt] will contact [school] to have [the teen] transferred there as soon as possible. A meeting will be arranged with the school and [the mother's support person] will attend this if possible. If [the mother's support person] cannot attend this initial meeting she will contact the school to start the process of ensuring that there is consistency between the school and home in dealing with [the teen's] behaviour. [The mother] will be contacting the Department of Education to see what can be done to ensure that [the teen] has access to every possible resource to assist her in getting an education. It was also recognised that [the teen] going to [the father] and [mother's] during lunch time on school days is not working out and alternate plans have to be made. Once plans have been finalized as to which school [the teen] will be attending this issue will be addressed by [social worker] and [the uncles] and [aunt].

The family also recognized that the placement at the aunt and uncles' home might not work out and set in place a contingency plan:

> If the placement of [the teen] with [the uncle] and [aunt] does not work out then [the teen] will be taken into the care of the Director of Child Welfare and placed in a foster home until such time as a vacancy becomes available for the Therapeutic Foster Home Program (TFHP). In order to cover all bases [the social worker] will place [the teen] on the waiting list for the TFHP now, in case the need arises in the future

And in all this planning around the daughter in care, the other daughter residing at home was not forgotten:

> If [the older sister] feels that she needs support due to ongoing substance abuse or fear of violence at home then she will contact [aunt 2]. [Aunt 2] is to then get in touch with [the uncle] to share what is happening and discuss whether there is a need to call a meeting to review the plan.

And a coordinated effort to get the second daughter and her parents different housing is undertaken:

> It has been clearly identified that living at [place] is not the best environment for [the older sister] or the family as a whole. There was a consensus that it would be in the best interest of all family members for the family to find another residence in the [end of city] or [another part of city]. In order to support this move the following persons will be encouraged to write letters of support for the family to [name of person at Housing]. Letters will be sent by: The Family Group Decision Making Project, [social worker] (& her supervisor), [mother's support person] and family members.

And how shall this be monitored?

> [The uncle] will be the plan monitor. [The uncle] has agreed to call the following persons once every two weeks to check that they are following through on their responsibilities as outlined in the plan: [the social worker, the mother and 7 family members]. The purpose of contacting [the mother] is to keep her up to date on how the plan is going as well as to ensure that she is on top of things such as making sure the financial commitments are met. To help make the financial arrangements easier to coordinate [the uncle] and [the aunt] will be issued the finances approved in the plan and ensure that [the father] and [mother] get their portion of what has been agreed to.
>
> The plan will be reviewed every three months unless circumstances require action sooner. [The grandmother] will contact [the child protection worker], all family members involved in developing the plan, and any persons who have become involved in the plan since the time of the meeting. The review meeting will take place on [date], the time and place to be determined.

7.4.4.11 Calling for Extended Family Members to *Stop* Interfering

Not all plans called for increased family involvement. Some called for particular members to emancipate themselves, some for increased cooperation and less feuding and the following one called for extended family to stop getting so involved in personal arguments of a young couple. The following example is shown twice, both times from the perspective of the research observer: first when the matter was brought up during private time and then later when the issue was raised to be included in the plan after the coordinator was in the room:

> [Husband and wife] agree that they will not call their extended family members and involve them in their personal arguments. They also agreed that when family members outside their home tried to involve them in debates they would respond by not engaging in the conversation by saying this is none of my business. . . . Extended family members need to understand that by including [relatives] in their arguments they are fuelling their fighting and causing them to ignore [child] during these arguments. . . . Everyone in the family agreed that they would avoid involving each other in their fights and thus trying to ease the tensions that these issues cause.

But the extended family did not simply want to pretend that the couple was not fighting either. Discussions centred on how the couple could work out their differences themselves and get some tangible help from family aimed at increasing the time the couple had to socialize together with the assistance of family members providing babysitting.

Dissatisfied with the young couple saying during the private discussions that they would "try" to do better, one relative brought the issue up for inclusion in the written plan:

> [Relatives] advised that [parents] not to run to family to tell them all about fights and not to bring up family members during arguments. Also they said that parents should not get involved in their squabbles or take sides with anyone. [The coordinator, who had been out of the room for the previous discussion] stressed the importance of this, saying that it makes the situation worse when the entire family gets involved and takes sides. [One relative] made a significant comment on the communication problems between the mother and father, saying "If you've got time to argue, you've got time to communicate."

7.4.4.12 Building in Monitoring and Evaluation

Over the course of the project, the coordinators came to recognize more and more the importance of building in clear systems of monitoring and evaluating the plans. With some prodding by the coordinators, the conference groups shaped the systems of monitoring to reflect the particular dynamics of their familial constellation. Sometimes they thought family would make the best monitors; other times they thought outsiders would be less biased in watching over developments. In the following case, the family wanted outside monitoring because they realized that no one in the family could be objective:

> [The fiancé of the maternal aunt] then read to [the coordinator] all the details of the plan, with frequent input from other family members. The group preferred to have a professional/social worker do the monitoring, as they wanted someone neutral and unbiased outside the family. The plan was then approved by [Child Protection Worker].

At another conference where the mother's family, stepfather's family, and biological father's family gathered, the group sought to achieve a balanced perspective by having the monitoring carried out by representatives from all sides of the abused young person's family:

> One representative from each family will meet in two months to review the plan and check on its progress. [The step-aunt], [the maternal grandfather], and [paternal uncle] will meet and [the maternal grandfather] will initiate their first get together.
>
> One representative from each family will continue to meet as a group of three every two months to assess the plan. The family member attending a meeting will give the name of the family member who will attend the next meeting. The family members will take turns meeting and monitoring the plan.
>
> If the families feel the plan is not working or things are going wrong they will meet as a family to try to solve the problems. If this does not work, they will contact [the child protection worker] and request to reconvene the Family Group Conference.

7.5 Quantitative Analysis of the Plans

In the prior section we examined themes that emerged from a qualitative examination of the plans. In this section we pulled out aspects of plans that could be enumerated and compared across sites.

7.5.1 Almost All Families Developed a Plan

Thirty-one of the 32 families, and each of the four families who re-convened, came up with a plan that was deemed relevant to the stated concerns. The one exception involved a woman described as severely abused who attended a conference with no support person, despite the expectations of the project that no conference would go ahead under such circumstances. None of the children were present and their views were not presented. There was no agreement on the part of the other members of the family who attended that a problem existed. The family was referred back to child welfare.

7.5.2 The Family That Did Not Develop A Plan

The one exception deserves description. A woman described as severely abused attended a conference with no support person, despite the expectations of the project that no conference would go ahead under such circumstances. None of the children were present and their views were not presented. After hearing detailed presentations from child welfare and medical personnel, the family deliberated for over 6 hours (over two days). At the end, the self-appointed spokesperson for the family, the alleged abuser, summarised by contradicting all the information that had been presented at the beginning (and to which he had then admitted in front of the family): he had no problem with alcohol, the child welfare authorities were spying on him and his family and catching them only on the rare occasions when he and his wife did drink to excess and pass out in their home, the children had problems in school only because they had bad teachers, and the evidence of severe physical abuse to his wife as documented in medical files for over 20 years was the result of the drugs that medical people had been giving her in their "experiments". He likened those experiments to the family group conference which he declared also to be an experiment and all family members in attendance supported his view, including his wife who according to medical reports suffers from severe brain damage from his beatings.

While this situation would possibly have gone differently if the mother had been represented by a strong support person, and if the voices of all the children had been represented at the conference, it is also understood as a good example of why referrals should be taken when there is a clear will on the part of the mandated authorities to insist that something be done. Interestingly, the authorities who referred this latter family have taken no action to protect the children before or since the conference and police have never laid a charge relative to the alleged beatings of this woman despite the Zero Tolerance policy in Canada which places in the hands of the prosecutor the capability of prosecuting without an abused woman having to lay a charge. This instance served as a negative reminder to project staff, managers and researchers that having support people at the conference for everyone who is believed to have been abused is essential. While no one believes that the family group conference made things worse for the woman or the children, the process has underscored for the family (who were still happy with the outcome at the time of the one-week follow up) that defiance of the authorities is bolstered by a unified front from the extended family.

7.5.3 Extent of Agreement With The Plans

The degree to which family members agreed with the plan was evaluated on the FGC Evaluation Form and in the After the Conference Interviews. The following table (Table 7.6) shows the responses to the question "Do you agree with the plan decided on?" from the FGC Evaluation Form. At all three sites, the overwhelming number of respondents agreed with the plan decided upon.

{Jill, the figures do not add up properly in the following table. I was not sure if the site columns or the total column were the ones that were off.}

Table 7.6
Number of Family Group Participants' Agreeing with the Plan

Response	Nain	Port au Port	St. John's	Total
Yes	33	64	174	271
No	5	0	2	7
Don't Know	4	8	3	15
Missing	0	0	0	0
Total	42	72	179	293

Note. The figures only include the responses of family group participants, not of the professionals, completing the FGC Evaluation form.

The questions asked in the After the Conference Interviews confirmed the above figures that that most people agreed with the plan, but many people expressed anxiety and uncertainty about plans especially in relation to whether people would follow through with their agreements. In some cases, their anxieties were heightened by the time the After the Conferences were held because they saw evidence that people were not carrying through. This uncertainty was a central theme to emerge from these interviews. A flavour of these themes is given in the following excerpts:

- No remaining concerns [about the conference]. Just hope everyone sticks to the plans made at the conference.
- I am a bit wary of father if he will follow through with plans that were made.
- I feel the plans made at the conference were good but I think in regards to the mom and children moving out will never happen. I also know the child does not want to move and that the father is not as bad as people think, he does everything around the house and most problems in the home are because of the mom. Also, the mom makes things bad for herself because she always phones Social Services and police for no reason.
- I have concerns about Social Services following through with the plan, I will know more in 6 months.
- Very worried that the plan will not be completed in that [mother] seems to have not fully grasped/accepted her responsibility in the plan. I feel very concerned for the well-being of her two [children].

Sometimes, people disagreed with the content of the plan:

- I feel [the mom] has gotten too much for herself, e.g., money given with no receipts. Also, taxi purposed [sic] around visits with children is being used for her own personal use. At monthly visits, all attention is given to [other child] and none to [child]. This is very upsetting to [child] and I truly believe that these visits are very unbeneficial to [child].
- Children and mom should have been allowed to visit their father on the weekends because he does not drink all the time . . . This conference made the family worse off. The only help I get from this conference that was in the plan is from my [relative].
- I think its a waste of everyone's time and money. I feel that the children should be with their father.

Persons wanting custody of a child(ren) who did not get what they sought were sometimes in agreement with the plan but not always:

- Although we did not get what we truly wanted [custody of the child] we feel good about having extensive access.
- I found that about the conference was that my [child] was told what to say when she would sit by me, they would take her away [sic]. For me, they were the parents and I love my kids and I want them back.
- If my family could just leave me alone, or mind their own business.
- I wish I had [children] back here with me because I'm having a hard time with them away. They are also having a hard time in [their placement].

But the majority of people interviewed and who gave written feedback at the end of the conference were satisfied. Examples of their comments included:

- What took place was good. Gave me a better understanding of what [abused child] went through. I feel more feelings [sic] and will be able to support her better by attending family group conference by becoming aware of actual problems.
- [I've] been upset since [two years ago] but left conference feeling like 1000 pounds lifted. Overall positive #1 communication, sharing views, opportunity to work together instead of against each other.
- Only concern is abused child. Thought this was great for [child] becoming aware that everyone was there to support her and that no one was mad at her or blamed her for anything.
- It was a good process. Everybody meant well but if I had my time back I would not have gone through with the conference.

All of the following six comments are from different people about the same conference:

- To me it was OK. Things at home have improved extremely and this was brought out from the conference. This project was positive and helpful for my family. I will do my part and I hope Social Services will do theirs.

- Outcome of conference was good. Most issues were dealt with and life at home between myself and mom are better. Also conflicts between [younger brother] and myself are no-more. Overall it was great.
- I think this was a really good thing for the family. Also having me come from another province as I had a lot of input in a positive way which was effective.
- To me it was a really good process and I hope everything works out as planned.
- I thought it went great. I think this family definitely needed a program like this. I think all families need more cooperation from professionals and organizations, i.e., Social Services. I think it was a good eye opener for all family members and helped them to learn how to deal with family problems and issues.
- It provided a forum for people to come together in a single space. Feedback from person I spoke for [child in question] replied to me that he felt relieved and got a lot off of his chest. I think this is a start to a very different and long process for the family to come together and support and understand one another.

The following conference had mixed reviews from the 3 people interviewed and sheds light on the very question of expectations for success of any conference. The young person at this conference liked the way things turned out. His mother thought not and a family member seemed to see more than one side of things.

- I think the conference made this family worse off [the mother].
- I felt it was not too bad. I like being able to visit my dad as often as I get to [now]. I also feel me and my mom are more closer now and understand each other better [the child].
- I guess to a certain extent it was successful. It got [the mother] out of the house, but not out of the situation she was in.

As evidenced in the written evaluations conducted immediately at the end of the conferences, the one-week follow-up interviews, and the focus groups, the participants expressed high satisfaction with the conference as a way of making decisions. Even biological parents named as the abusers gave mainly, but not always, positive evaluations, contrary to expectations that they would have seen the conferences as threatening their parental authority.

As might be expected, the various participants had their own conceptualizations of success for a conference. A police officer viewed it as a success after one conference when a mother identified and brought forward a charge of sexual abuse against a man who allegedly abused her child. A parole officer said he felt the family's plan for monitoring a sex offender "was excellent" and that he could never have "covered all the bases without their (the family's) help." One child welfare worker viewed it as a success when a boy disclosed immediately after the conference that the parent who was previously thought to be non-abusive was also abusing him and his siblings.

The necessity to look at the worth of a plan rather than keeping to any preconceptions about how a family should arrive at that plan is revealed in the following researcher's entry in her reflective notes:

> Although there was a lot of screaming and arguing, all members stuck to main issue, where the child would live and why. All were supported differently and by different people.

We were particularly eager to discover what the abused persons (or their representatives) thought about the plans. The following are examples of the diverse responses in the interviews and on the FGC Evaluation Form from people who identified themselves as a person who had been abused:

- It was good in the sense that I became aware of people who cared about me. At the same time, I was scared to see how family members would react to what had happened.
- It was better than I thought it would be. I thought it would be a lot of fighting and yelling. We settled a lot of things that were wrong. Dad was not mad and he expressed himself in a good way.
- In think everyone spoke truthfully and were right in the things [they decided].
- [The only way the family could have made it better was] They could have argued a little less and tried to cooperate. They could have tried to think about how I felt a bit more . . . I think its a pretty good program and it was really helpful.

We also here wish to refer the coordinator’s reflective notes in which she recounts how one young person who had been abused took ownership over the planning:

> The. . . . [young person] was the one who initiated the referral at Child Protection by telling a school counsellor what happened. She is also the child over whom the father is overprotective and controlling. She ensured she had control of the plan and the decisions agreed upon at the FGC by being the note taker during private deliberations time. She did a fabulous job and had all decisions recorded in great detail. Although this was not planned in advance (at least not by me), this was a really neat way for the victim to regain some control of their situation and to ensure that the plan is one that they are in agreement with. When I asked her at the end of the FGC if she was satisfied with the plan, she grinned and said, "I wrote it, didn't I."

In addition, we wanted to know what abusers thought:

- I found that they [other family members] were doing all the talking and nobody could not [sic] say anything. One of them were making all the plans. I think it could have been better.

- Not too good. I didn't have anything to say. If I did they would cut me off. I never want to see another conference again. They make the mother look like dirt.
- No, I don't feel good about it all.
- The plan we came up with is okay. I'm a little concerned about future living arrangements for [one child]. She is living with her grandmother now, but that isn't the best place for her to be. She doesn't have many rules there, so she does whatever she likes. She walks all over her grandmother and is risking getting her evicted from the seniors complex she lives in.
- I think everyone needs to be clear on exactly what will be talked about at the conference. There shouldn't be any surprises. [One participant] brought up some issues we weren't prepared to discuss and it made certain people uncomfortable.
- I'm really glad that we did this. I think it will help our family and I would recommend it to any family who needs help.
- I get upset thinking about all of this, but then I get upset very easily about this anyway.
- It was ugly because they were saying ugly things [to me].
- I found it good. It opened more feelings for the family.
- It helped me to find out who really cares about us.
- I was the only one doing any talking at the meeting [didn't like that].
- [Would have been better] if feelings were more spoken instead of keeping them in . . . Not all just hatred.
- To me it was like the family did not talk enough.

7.5.4 Content of the Plans

The following table (Table 7.7) summarizes the most frequently identified goals and strategies in the plans overall. The figures in the table are simply the number of plans in which something was mentioned, e.g., 30 plans identified a need for someone in the family to receive counselling. Definitions for the categories are provided in the subsections below. It should be noted that the categories are not necessarily discrete and exclusive and overlap with one another in several areas. For example, the category of child mind/babysit overlapped with recreation in Nain where some requests were aimed at reducing occurrences of children being left at home unsupervised for the evening, overnight, or even when a parent had to leave town for a period of time. At the other sites, the requests were for time to take a course, shopping, having an evening off. In addition, as will be discussed below, a family might be placed in several categories that on the surface might appear to be mutually exclusive; in these cases different options were being employed for different members of the family.

From Table 7.7, it can be seen that overall the families were selecting approaches that would not appear to be dissimilar from those which professionals might wish for them. For instance, counselling/therapy appeared in nearly all family plans with in-home supports to improve parenting capacity as a close second. It is likely though that the families paid closer attention than many professionals would to needs of their relatives for material goods

(e.g., equipment purchases) and recreation or other forms of relaxation and family bonding activities. From the discussion below it will also become apparent that the families were not expecting government departments or community agencies to provide all of the means and resources to achieve these goals or to implement these strategies. They were taking upon themselves many of the responsibilities such as providing babysitting and transportation.

{**Table 7.7**
Number of Times Most Frequently Cited/Requested Goals and Strategies Included in Plans by Project Sites

ITEM	NAIN	PORT AU PORT	ST. JOHN'S	TOTAL
Counselling/therapy	10	10	11	31
In-home supports	7	5	11	23
Child mind/babysit	6	3	6	15
Transportation	2	10	6	18
Housing related issues	8	4	5	17
Equipment purchase(s)	5	5	5	15
Recreation/leisure	3	9	8	20
Family reunification	5	4	7	16
Family preservation	3	3	3	9
Inclusive foster care	5	2	1	8
More parent access	1	5	3	9
Food	6	0	2	8
Paying back debts	2	1	1	4
School related plans	2	6	5	13
Emancipate adults	3	1	0	4
Mediate child welfare	3	0	0	3

Note. The family that did not come up with a plan is not included.

7.5.4.1 Counselling/Therapy

Counselling or therapy was requested or urged upon parents and/or children in the plans of most families at all 3 sites. What was meant by counselling and therapy, however, diverged in Nain to extent what was meant in the two predominately white project sites. In

the latter, they were referring to conventional, professional services. In Nain, some family members specifically said they preferred that the counselling come from "traditional healing" although what was meant by "traditional" was not always clear. In some instances people were referring to a specific person who had visited Nain and given workshops on the subject. Others said those methods were not traditional to the Inuit of Nain and objected to what they believed was the particular religious emphasis of that counsellor. Other family members wanted the community Inuit elders to direct them in what to do and yearned for past times when this group had the power to enforce their decisions. One man wanted the elders to tell his majority age daughter that she had to obey him (her father) as long as she lived in his house, meaning that she could not go out at night, and could not see her boyfriend. Not all family members said they would listen to the elders or follow their decisions. Counsellors and healers who were contacted in other Inuit communities in Canada were so busy in their own communities that they either could not come to Nain at all or could not come on a regularly scheduled basis. Additionally, the differences in the way Inuktitut was spoken in different regions posed problems.

Apart from the question of what was traditional was the question of what was available. Almost all the families said they did not want to have to leave Nain to get the counselling. Most information givers came from the LIHC and told of the services they offered, hence, most requests were for LIHC services and this was acceptable to many family members. Some however, objected to seeing counsellors from LIHC. Two reasons were given by them. Some did not feel safe in terms of confidentiality. They said they were afraid their secrets would be spread around town. Interestingly, this was the same reason some families gave for not attending AA. Others, especially those with alcohol problems said they did not have confidence in the counsellors because some they claimed had alcohol problems.

7.5.4.1.1 Intended Recipient of Counselling

The following table (Table 7.8) shows for whom within the family, the counselling was sought at the three project sites. Families at the three sites identified foremostly parents' needs for counselling and secondarily those of children or young people. Counselling for the family unit was only requested in 3 Nain plans. In the two predominately white sites, family therapy did not appear to be an option which families wished upon their relatives in situations of family violence.

Table 7.8
Number of Times in Plans that Counselling/Therapy Is Requested for Particular Family Members or Groupings by Project Site

FOR WHOM COUNSELLING SOUGHT	NAIN	PORT AU PORT	ST. JOHN'S	TOTAL
Parents(s)	8	8	10	26
Child(ren)	2	4	8	14
Family	3	0	0	3

7.5.4.1.2 Reason for Counselling

The reason for seeking counselling was not always specified in the plan. Table 7.9 shows the reason (if there was any) as given in the written plans. Some plans specified more than one reason for a person to be referred for counselling.

The prevalence of alcohol-related reasons for referral to counselling (10 cited) in Nain both makes it clear what the priority needed to be in these families but at the same time masks the nature of some of the discussions that took place at the conferences. While it was generally agreed by most of the families that no progress could be made by certain family members until they quit drinking, not all families agreed that anything else needed to be done. Others believed that sobriety on the part of family members would only represent the beginning of a healing process that needed to go on throughout the family and the community and was covering up more basic problems associated with the cultural assimilation of the Inuit. We are inclined to agree with the latter group but acknowledge that little help can be expected from those community and family members who lives continue to be severely affected alcohol use.

Despite its being the most often recommended thing to do, the plans lack specificity about what is to be expected from counselling. In the 'Other' category (Table 7.3) is included counselling for sexual abuse but even this was not always specified, especially in those instances where it was not part of the reason for the referral. More detailed analysis will be carried out of the role counselling played in the plans in the 6-month and 1-year follow-up interviews. The similarities between plans at particular sites pointed to the coordinator's preferences in terms of what should and should not be included in the plans.

Table 7.9
Number of Times that Plans Specify the Problem to Be Addressed in Counselling for a Family Member by Project Site

REASON FOR COUNSELLING	NAIN	PORT AU PORT	ST. JOHN'S	TOTAL
Alcohol	10	0	3	13
Drugs	0	0	2	2
Abuse	1	2	1	4
Young Person's Behaviour	1	0	1	2
Other	2	2	3	7

7.5.4.2 In-home Supports

Requests were classified as in-home supports if they were carried into the home to help the parent and/or child increase their own abilities to parent their children or make the necessary preparations to receive a child back home. Included in this are parent training and education, child discipline, teaching a young parent to cook and care for her young child, budgeting, nurse coming to the home to teach about taking care of a malnourished child.

Even in families where it was the teen or child who had been abused, family members were sympathetic to parents' frustrations, especially in regards to how teens and/or child behaviour problems were contributing to the stress and tension in the household. In those situations, the family members attempted to set age-appropriate limits in the plan and all agreed to assist in reinforcing the messages. The following is excerpted from one such plan:

> All family members agreed that it is important that consistent messages be given to [young person] by all family members with respect to limits/rules. The following guidelines will be followed regardless of where [young person] is living:
>
> [young person] expected to keep her bedroom clean;
> - help with dishes every second night;
> - telephone will not interfere with studying--if grades drop the use of the telephone in the evenings will be limited;
> - study time is discretionary as long as [young person] maintains marks;
> - not permitted to smoke in the house;

- curfew--on week nights not allowed out with friends but will be permitted to go for a walk, to a store, etc. On week-ends curfew is 11 p.m. this means that by 11:00 [young person] will have been in contact with an adult family member for a ride home. This curfew will be flexible for special events.

It should be noted that 8 families requested education in parenting or assistance in behavioural management for parents and children in the families.

7.5.4.3 Child Minding/Babysitting

Child care/babysitting overlapped with recreation especially for parents to have a break away from children. In Nain, family were specific that babysitting was necessary if a mother went out drinking: she should have someone who would stay with the children until she was sober enough to take care of them herself. Child care was also requested so mothers could attend counselling, do shopping and errands and attend classes or school. Child care and babysitting were almost always specified in the plans as something family and friends would provide.

7.5.4.4 Transportation

Transportation was seen as needed for a variety of reasons: attend counselling sessions (especially true on the rural Port au Port Peninsula), increase contact with other family members as part of arrangements for regular custodial access and visits, transport children to special schools and recreational activities. In Nain, transportation was required by families who neither own a ski-doo nor have central heating to get wood for their wood stoves for heating and cooking and by families who have no running water, to get water for cooking and washing. One Nain family asked for transportation assistance to take the family for an intensive counselling experience outside of town; and a young mother asked for transportation to take her children and go stay with a relative in another community.

7.5.4.5 Housing Related Issues

Some housing related problems were specific to the site and others were universal. Housing issues related to the need for more space, repairs, running water and sewer or electricity, as well as the neighbourhood being unsuitable and for homelessness. Housing was cited the least often on the Port au Port Peninsula (4 plans) and the most frequently in Nain (8 plans). In St. John's, housing issues were identified in 5 plans. In two of the St. John’s plans, it was noted that the family needed to get out of a neighbourhood for their own safety. In three, age-appropriate safety measures needed to be installed to protect children in the home. In one of these latter conferences, everyone agreed that a woman and her children needed to get out of a house that the landlord had let slip into such disrepair that it was not suitable to live in.

Frankly, we were surprised that housing issues were not identified more frequently in Nain. The housing situation there deserves detailed comment. Even before the mining explorations near Nain caused an influx of people, there was a serious dearth of housing in Nain and many of the families who were referred to the project lacked adequate housing. In two situations, adult children could not move from their own parents' homes to raise their children separately because there was no where to go. These women were caught between the expectations of their own parents who believed that they should be able to discipline the women as long as they were living at home and the women's wish to exercise rights to date whom they wanted and to go out in the evening.

Moreover, a large number of homes in the community did not have electricity or running water. Imagine being a single mother who must get water from a hole in the ice by bucket, get wood to heat and cook with and still get several children cleaned, fed and to school on time each day. Add to this the concerns that were raised in the conferences about women living on their own in the community. Having a place to live leaves you vulnerable to people coming to your house to drink, thus, leaving you no choice but to go to the police for help or to put up with their behaviour. Going to the police unless its a life or death issue brings a great deal of social pressure on a person (Pauktuutit, 1991), hence, it is a most undesirable alternative. Consider also that if you are being abused, one of your few choices, at least at the time the project was being carried out, was to collect your children and fly to the nearest urban centre with a shelter for abused women. When the inevitable time comes for you to move out of that shelter, little ground has been gained and quite possibly you have lost your housing.

In another situation, requests were made to help grown children find their own places to live because the family home was too small. In still another, the plan called for the health department to make an inspection in the hope that they would condemn the house and make monies available to find something else. On one occasion child welfare workers visited a mother and her baby in a home with no heating where snow was coming in the door and window and found her wrapped up in blankets trying to keep warm. They had no where to offer her to go and the rest of the family who lived there were off hunting.

At one conference in Nain, a grandmother apologized to the family for not being able to help but she herself was living each day wherever she could find shelter from house to house. One of the professionals who facilitated a conference in Nain said of the sleeping arrangements in the family's house: "They are stacked up like cord-wood behind the wood stove to keep warm at night."

7.5.4.6 Equipment Purchases

Perhaps the most controversial requests in the plans were for purchases of equipment. These came up in 15 plans (5 at each site) and included for example a washer and dryer, a second-hand car, a bed, a Nintendo set, a deep-freeze, a stove, a VCR, and children's protective safety devices (e.g., to block a stair-well from a child). We say these were controversial because while they invariably made sense to the family members and

the professionals who attended the conferences, it was often people who had not attended a conference who declared, for example, "So if I beat my kid, you'll buy me a car." What was revealed in the types of purchases, reinforced the view that family members saw the stress on their relatives as being a main contributor to the abuse and rationalized these plans on the basis of stress reduction.

The used car was suggested by a family who discovered how much was being spent by the Department of Social Services for a developmentally delayed couple (capable of driving) to transport their developmentally delayed children from a community that is not easily accessible to special schools and frequent medical appointments. The family had been presented information that the children did not get to school and were frequently late or did not show up for needed regular medical attention in the nearest city with a children's hospital. Relatives, who happened to be mechanics, reasoned that the government would save a great deal of money (for taxpayers) if they purchased a used car. The relatives agreed to do all the servicing and maintenance.

One bed was for a periodically enuretic 4 year old to facilitate her comfortably beginning to have regular visits at her mother's from a foster home. The aunts and grandmother thought that the child's gains in mastering her enuresis would be easier to hold on to if she had her own bed, as she did at the foster home, at her mother's rather than them having to sleep together.

A cooking range and electrical hook-up were requested for a single mother who relied on a coleman stove since she had no electricity or water hook-ups in her house. The family thought this would lessen the burdens associated with her feeding her youngsters prior to their leaving for school. A freezer was for another single mother who could not hunt or fish for herself to permit her extended family to bring her part of their kill or catch when they returned to the community each time.

A Nintendo machine was purchased by Social Services when it was realized that this would ease the boy's return to his parent. The foster parents noted that he would have a difficult time leaving their home since he was so enamoured of the game which belonged to the foster parent's own child.

7.5.4.7 Recreation/Leisure

A surprising number of conferences recommended that the families in question be given supports so they could have regular recreational activities. This took a number of forms. Recreation included annual holidays and weekly outings for the family, leisure time and activities for parent couples and for solo parents away from their children, and peer activities for children. Even more surprising, to the researchers, was how quickly plans for these activities were supported by the referring workers even when these requests involved the need for transportation and other monies to carry out the activity. Evidently, the view that the abuse was in some way related to the stress the family members were under was shared by the family members outside of the household and by the professionals. The

antidote of supporting all family members to widen their social networks in activities outside of the household seemed an obvious one to the families.

7.5.4.8 Family Reunification

In 13 of the 32 families (5 in Nain, 5 on the Port au Port, and 3 in St. John's) no child had been removed from the parental homes. In the remaining 19 families, that is three-fifths of the families, a child or children had been removed for reasons of safety. It is noteworthy that in 16 of these 19 families, plans were developed to reunite children with parents or kin. The aim was to return a child or children from foster care with non-family to parents in 9 plans (2 in Nain, 4 on the Port au Port, and 3 in St. John's), to return child(ren) from non-family to kin in 7 plans (4 in Nain and 3 in St. John's), and to return children from kin to a parent in 1 plan (in St. John's).

Strategic in their plans, families recognized that non-relative foster care could be used as a stage toward reunifying their young relatives with kin. Ten families urged that a child(ren) stay in care (7 with strangers and the other 3 families had children both with kin and in non-kin placements) where they had been placed prior to the conference. In 6 of these situations, the family recommended this as a further or specific, short-term measure toward the ultimate return of the child(ren) to kin or to a parent. In 3 of these situations, return was not a likely goal at least in the short run but was stated as part of a wider set of preferences as is discussed in the following section. In one situation a teen refused to return to extended family despite their wish that she would.

7.5.4.9 Family Preservation

Closely related to the notion of family reunification was the goal of family preservation, i.e., those cases where the goals of the plan were clearly aimed at *preventing* the placement of a child or children who were living with a parent or parents. While it could be said that this goal was implicit especially in those families where a child(ren) was returned home, 9 plans (3 in Nain, 3 on the Port au Port, and 3 in St. John's) specifically mentioned this goal in situations where the apprehension of a child by the child welfare authorities was imminent or would become highly likely if something was not done.

Extended family, although they would have preferred that their young relatives could reside with their biological parents or with other family, did not place family reunification above the welfare of children. This was an especially painful consideration for families in Nain where foster homes were few and sometimes entire families were unable to take their kin. All families in Nain, in which placement of children had been made, were clear about the order of their preferences: first choice was for the children to be with their parents; if this was not possible, they opted for placement with extended family in Nain or another Inuit community; this was followed by placement with an Inuit family; and the last consideration was placement with a white family. In this last case, they insisted upon the fostering family giving the children free access to their family and allowing the children to be taught about Inuit culture. In one instance, family elders determined, against the initial wishes of

younger adults in the family, that the child should remain in a non-Inuit foster home since they believed the child's mother should quit drinking before her daughter was returned to her. They averred it would be more damaging to the girl to move to kin homes and then move again later rather than staying in the non-Inuit home to which the child had become so attached. At a reconvened conference, they praised the white foster parent for letting the child have access to the mother. At another project site, rather than removing the children, the family told the father they thought he should live somewhere else until he was treated for his substance abuse problem. He agreed with this plan. The family also worked out a detailed plan of how to deal with the possibility that this man might show up at the house intoxicated.

7.5.4.10 Inclusive Foster Care

The goal of increasing the involvement of parents, extended family, or both in the life of the children was identified in 8 plans. These were situations where children remained in care temporarily or where care arrangements were long term or permanent.
As evident from the examples below, sometimes 2 or more of the 3 categories of family reunification, family preservation and inclusive foster care overlapped.

In one example, a boy who had been in 13 foster placements leading up to the conference had a plan developed which helped him to stabilize in placement for the first time. The family group requested that he have a planned, brief stay in a therapeutic foster home before moving on to a permanent foster home; that he be referred for testing for attention deficit disorder; and that visitation be arranged between him and various family members and relatives. The need to place his younger siblings in out-of-home care was averted through increasing supports for the mother. In another situation where a mother had repeatedly told child welfare to place one of her children for adoption, the extended family asked that she be placed instead in a foster home until she turns 18 years of age when she could return to family or kin if she so chose. They further asked that the foster home be culturally appropriate and in her home community where she could have continuous access to her biological family. No families advocated for a permanent split between their family member and their blood relatives favouring instead that the door be kept open to children who might want to have access to their relatives now or later.

7.5.4.11 Increased Parental Access

While the by-product of most of the plans was to raise or regulate parental and other family contact, several situations dealt specifically with the issues around a previously excluded parent wanting to gain more access. Nine families (1 in Nain, 5 on the Port au Port, and 3 in St. John's) dealt specifically in the plan with increasing access between children living with one parent or in one unusual case gaining access to a child through a foster parent and the other parent. In all these cases, the extended family urged the biological parents to reduce the warfare between them and facilitate the access. In most of these cases, the families understood the kind of problems that had hindered access in the past and worked out very specific plans for when children would visit, for how long, how they would be transported and who would pay for what.

7.5.4.12 Food Purchases

At 8 conferences, issues around the purchase of food were included in the plans. Six plans in Nain called for immediate measures to be taken to purchase food for single mothers and children. Adults and children in these homes had been begging for food at particular homes in the community known to give their left-overs from their own family meals. In four of these Nain plans as well as two others from St. John's, specific steps were included to anticipate ongoing issues around food provision within the home. All the ongoing plans were centred around money management problems and not having enough funds at predictable times to buy food.

7.5.4.13 Paying Debts and Preventing Future Expenses

At 5 conferences (4 different families), monies were requested to pay old bills. Three of these debts were for unpaid electricity bills to get the power turned back on, 1 was to pay a back bill for groceries, 2 were to pay back phone bills and re-installation costs, and 2 were to install toll bars to be placed on phones to prevent future long-distance calls. Paying back bills for electricity was rationalized by families to provide immediate protection for the children in homes with no heat during the winter. Looking ahead at upcoming costs, 2 plans called for wood to be purchased to heat homes where wood-burning stoves were the only sources of heat and 2 others requested help so that family members could gather wood.

7.5.4.14 School Related Plans

Families requested tutoring for a school-age child in 7 plans (5 on the Port au Port and 2 in St. John's), changes of school in 3 plans (2 in St. John's and 1 on the Port au Port), and help for a parent to attend school in one (in St. John's). Two plans in Nain dealt with strategies to get children to attend school.

7.5.4.15 Emancipation of Adult Children

Four families (3 in Nain and 1 on the Port au Port) dealt specifically with issues around emancipation of adult children. In Nain, 1 of the plans addressed the need for grown children to be on their own and out of crowded living circumstances and 2 dealt with the need for a mother to be on her own away from either an abusive father or boyfriend. But grandparents fears for their single-parent daughters moving out with the grandchildren were not unfounded as was mentioned under the topic of housing earlier. A Port au Port family dealt with the need for a young person moving from teens into adulthood to leave the nest.

7.5.4.16 Mediating Relationship with Social Services

Three families in Nain requested help from an intermediary in relating with the Department of Social Services including child welfare. For example, 1 family asked for a person who spoke Inuktitut to be present at all visits of the Social Services worker to their relative's home. Family members believed that many of the problems were misunderstandings based on language. These figures do not include the number of times where plans identified someone in the family to be the person who would call child welfare if it was not delivering on some agreed upon part of a plan.

COSTS

8.0 Introduction

It was not a stated goal of the project to demonstrate that Family Group Decision Making was less, or more, costly than any other intervention into situations involving family violence. The project set out to examine the efficacy of including the extended family as a *bona fide* decision making partner in putting a stop to present and future family violence. The goals of family reunification, family preservation or even increasing the involvement of kin with children when surrogate parenting is involved were all subordinate to the goal of working toward the safety of abused persons. The rationale for continuing to explore ways to halt violence is found simply in the fact that no entirely satisfactory models presently exist. This is an important consideration in choosing what to do with one's money where discussions too often focus on inputs, e.g.., what is being done, as opposed to final outputs, i.e., what outcomes one wishes to obtain with available resources. Hence, this chapter reviews the financial inputs and examines the preliminary {costs for achieving desired}outcomes. The reader is reminded that longer range outcomes for the children and families in this project is the subject of research undertaken separately and funded by Human Resource Development, National Welfare Grants and focuses on one-year follow-ups.

8.1 Sources of Financial Support

While smaller contributions of money and other tangible supports were donated by a variety of organizations (see Acknowledgments), the main contributors to the project were the Canadian Federal Government, the province of Newfoundland & Labrador, Memorial University of Newfoundland, and the Labrador Inuit Health Commission. The Federal Government provided salaries for the three coordinators and three researchers and gave grants to underwrite the costs of the research. The provincial Department of Social Services agreed from the start to pay, within guidelines set for the project, the costs associated with travel for family members to get to the conferences, the costs associated with carrying out the plans developed by families, including a detailed accounting of these costs for the final report, space for the coordinators and researchers and office supplies in Port au Port and St. John's (see Chapter 1). Correctional Services of Canada, a federal body that provides parole services among other things, adopted late in the life of the project the same guidelines as the province in referring families and underwriting the costs of outcomes. Memorial University of Newfoundland provided sabbaticals, space, and student research assistants for the principal investigators. The Labrador Inuit Health Commission, who co-sponsored the project in Nain, also supplied services to family members whose plans called for services regularly provided by LIHC and in some cases resourced specific requests which were not among their regular offerings.

Whenever possible, the project turned to existing services already provided by the government (e.g., housing, and dedicated counseling and therapy services) as opposed to fee for service. The waiting lists for dedicated services, plus the general restructuring of

services occurring in the province during the time the project was carried out that reduced the availability of some dedicated services, pushed referrals towards private counselors and therapists especially in St. John's.

The costs for the coordinators' and researchers' salaries were fixed by established salary scales and would therefore vary although the university did cooperate with us in paying each of the researchers and coordinators the same salary rather than differentiate on the basis of education. This was done in recognition of the importance that local and cultural knowledge play in job performance. We regarded these assets as being on par with academic credentials.

8.2 Pre-determining Cost Guidelines

From the outset, the provincial Department of Social Services said that there would be no new monies allocated for the project--the demonstration had to be accomplished within existing monies. Early negotiations around establishing budget guidelines for the project were fraught with uncertainty due to the inexperience in the province with this model; however, it needs to be recognized that during the same period of time in New Zealand that managers, practitioners, and researchers were describing ceilings being imposed by regional managers despite their appearing to be contrary to the stated principles in their legislation While there was no shortage of opinions, few facts were available about actual costs of travel for families and plans except for some from New Zealand, a country that did not lend itself to easy comparison with Newfoundland & Labrador.

At the outset of the project, predictions about costs were divergent, often dire, and in hind sight frequently erroneous. Some felt that travel costs in Nain would be lowest since most people remain in that community. This proved to be wrong. Worries were expressed that the project administrators wanted every relative to come from around North America and perhaps even England and Ireland. In a stereotypic depiction of Newfoundlanders as being a particularly welfare-dependent people, a view often expressed was that family members would immediately recognize a potential for exploitation in the model and use the occasion to have a "family reunion". These people felt that families needed to be given strict guidelines as to what they could ask for and what they could not in order to avoid the possibility that they would ask for unreasonable things and then be disappointed or angry when they were told "no". Others felt the opposite. They wanted to discover what families would say was needed to halt the problem without imposing any of structures in thinking especially those which had already proven unsatisfactory when imposed by non-family members.

The budget guidelines established by the Department of Social Services were revolutionary for them in some ways. The amounts themselves were reasonable but the fact that the Department openly published the guidelines and the commitment in writing for their staff and managers to provide quick turnaround on decision making was new. Having a letter from senior managers in the Department was essential to the coordinators in

overcoming the cynicism they encountered from people, including the Department's own staff, about building up the hope of family members. The timing of the beginning of the project corresponded with a major internal effort on the part of the Department to overcome a long-standing image that they were uncooperative and unwilling to enter into plans in which they would be held mutually accountable. The stance of all three coordinators was expressed by one as "It's in writing from the top of the Department. What else can we do except push ahead?" While the availability of this letter was essential, it ultimately exposed a problem in the way the project was managed.

By having the project managed from the university, the Department did not commit its staff to the same immersion and training that it has with ventures managed within (e.g., risk assessment training). It was left to the 'outsiders' to work with the problems, often after the fact, if something went wrong. When few workers in St. John's came to the training with the New Zealand trainers, there was little anyone could do about it despite the fact that managers had asked them, in writing, to attend. A similar situation existed with the police in St. John's. A different crop of uniformed officers showed up for each session of the training. The only officers that the managers could get to reliably show up were those who were on shift at the moment. Longer-range efforts to implement the model would want to have each of these groups put some financial investment into the training to increase compliance. As it was, two senior managers in Social Services declared that they were quite happy to have the project administered outside and let someone else experience the frustrations of service delivery.

Besides the declaration that no new monies would be allocated to the project, the project deliberately sought to attract the most "difficult" cases child welfare workers could find. It was assumed that for many of the families who fit into this category that the Department would already be allocating large sums of money, hence, the worst thing that could happen from a dollar perspective was more than likely already happening: children in and out of care in child welfare and/or headed for the type of behaviour problems associated with long-term care or custody as adolescents, intergenerational abuse confounding itself as children themselves became parents and reproduced the abuse and neglect, with no end in sight to the abuses within the family.

8.3 A Basis For Comparison

It will come as no surprise to most readers that producing a bottom line of the costs associated with the use of this model is not a straight-forward exercise. First, few bases of comparison are available. The project aimed, during a time-limited demonstration to produce certain outcomes, to be described in the final report on the project, with families for many of whom change is the norm. Children in the family have been, and in some will continue to experience, episodes of care outside their homes. What may look like a cost saving at one moment when a child returns home, may look 6 months later if the child returns to care, as a cost increase. A decision by an extended family to recommend that a child be permanently placed with non-family since they themselves are incapable of caring adequately for that child may look at one level to advocates of nuclear family preservation

like a very expensive decision to pay out-of-home rates for care for many years. What price can be attached to the stability and security in the child's life if that placement achieves permanency? What is it worth in dollar terms for the parents, aunts and uncles of an ex-nuptial father who has always rejected any involvement with a child to declare, in the presence of their relatives, their willingness to acknowledge that child as family, and for the child to know of their sentiments? Yet, these are the types of things that figure centrally when the extended family is brought front and center. Moreover, existing services do not produce evidence of outcomes with other families as a basis for comparison. Like other services, they report annually on inputs (e.g., how may reports of abuse, how many apprehensions, the total dollar cost) but never on what is actually being purchased for the dollars spent. Anything 'new' that comes along is typically asked to demonstrate whether "it works" in relation to the movable base lines of existing services.

Secondly, while global figures about the numbers of young people placed in and removed from foster care, and the total costs to the province for these services are available annually, very little is known about the nature of expenditures beyond that. Workers in local offices around the province, including the three research sites, authorize monies in global categories. No detailed accounting is done centrally for a particular child or family. Although a special account number was set up at the beginning of the project to which workers were instructed to assign all costs associated with project families, this method of cost accounting proved to be flawed. When departmental officials presented the total figure expended under this account to project administrators/principal investigators, we knew it was too low. At that stage, the figure could not even be broken down by site.

After asking for a more detailed accounting, the Assistant Director of Child Welfare sent out to the three district offices involved in the project a questionnaire asking that an examination of each file be carried out in order to identify and account for all expenses for the family before and after the project. It was then discovered why the overall dollar figure initially presented had been so low. If a child was in foster care before their family came to the project, the costs for that care were already assigned to the original, appropriate code. If the children remained in care after the conference, the worker simply let it ride in the same account rather than shift to show that it was a project expenditure. If the children returned home, the code was transferred to the account for the project meaning that on first appearances what showed up as an expenditure related to the project was, in fact, a reflection of those expenditures the province was most interested in: a savings in foster care dollars. Further, if a family came directly from intake to the project, the expenditures showed up on the project with no criteria for what might have been expended if the family had not come to the project. No meaningful average cost for a family or a particular child involved with child welfare could be calculated unless the child had been in foster care since no tracking by family or child could be done at the time. Of historical note is the fact that during this same period of time the planned computerized tracking system, which had long been desired in order to make these kinds of comparisons possible and which had been long on the designing board, was cancelled by the province owing to the higher than expected projected costs of setting it up.

Getting the information from the individual files proved to be a lengthy and frustrating exercise for all involved. Worker turn-over especially at the St. John's office meant that someone unfamiliar with the case had to be assigned to do the job. Because of the global use of categories, it was impossible to tell for what some expenditures were let alone make an estimate of whether these costs were ones that would likely have been incurred for the family whether they had a family group conference or not. After nearly 4 months of departmental personnel working under the blessing of their own senior managers, pre-family group conference figures for all but four families in St. John's were produced under two global headings: Foster Care and Other Services separately for the fiscal years 1994/95 and 1995/96. This was repeated for all costs for the families after the conference except that a third category called Purchases was included for the after the project calculations under which was located equipment purchases (washer & dryer, stove, etc.). Under Foster Care was included the monthly rate being paid for the child which varies depending on the age and special needs of that child. Under Other Services was included everything else except for the purchases of equipment requested at a conference. The creation of the Purchases category for the after the conference costs is somewhat misleading in that the Department frequently purchases washers, dryers and other equipment of this nature for families, but these would be included under Other Services for families before a conference if any were made.

The figures were calculated on the basis of how long the family had been involved with the project *at the time the figures were extrapolated*. Hence, if a family had been involved with the project for 6 months at the time the file was examined, then the costs for that family were examined for six months prior to the conference to give a basis for comparison. The submissions by the local workers then gave a figure in each of these categories for the family prior to the conference and in each after the conference. By examining their notes and our own plans we were able to reconcile the nature of most of the costs. At the request of the principal investigators, a final examination was made in late August-early September 1995 to separate out the costs of travel to the conferences from the Other Services category since these costs had been so controversial.

One thing was certain, travel costs for family members to attend conferences was a new idea and, therefore, a new expense. It was not unknown for government agencies to pay the costs of sending children and young people to placements or to retrieve them back from some distance, or even for adult corrections officials to pay the costs of travel for convicted persons to and from places of incarceration both in and out of the province. The notion of paying for families to be brought together, however, created dissonance, even for officials who thought it was based on a solid principle. The equipment purchases created dissonance for some managers and office staff, not because these types of purchases are unusual but because of the increased visibility that being part of the project gave to families. This is encouraging in a way since the increased visibility put the abuse out in open in the extended family; at the same time, it opened for kibitzing the family's plan. Would that the professionals' plans be put so openly for consideration by families in the province.

The only comparisons that were provided by the Department of Social Services are contained in the following table (Table 8.1) which summarizes the monthly costs for foster family care, group home placement and kinship care (child welfare allowance):

Table 8.1
Comparative Costs of Types of Care in Newfoundland and Labrador

Type of Care	Cost (1994/95)
Foster Family Care	Range: $452.00 to $1,083 per month[a]
Group Home Placement	Approximately: $5,750 per month[b]
Kinship Care (Child Welfare Allowance)	Range: $121 to $178 per month[c]

[a]The amount varies depending on the age of the child and the specialized needs of the child.
[b]This amount can vary slightly depending in which group the child or young person is placed.
[c]These amounts can be paid to a relative for taking the child depending on specialized needs.

8.4 Costs of Holding the Conferences

Two general costs were associated with holding a conference. Travel for family members as well as the related costs of child care, meals and accommodations was a new budget item for the government groups that participated in the project. A second general type of expense was associated with providing lunches and rental of space to hold the meeting when these were necessary.

8.4.1 Travel, Accommodations and Related Costs

With numerous concerns raised during the planning stage for the project about the costs of travel to conferences by family members, we examined closely the expenditures for bringing family together. We included in our scrutiny the 37 conferences which were held as well as one additional conference that was called off a week prior to the scheduled date (see Chapter 3) but for which travel monies had already been expended. Twenty-five of the 37 conferences required assistance for one or more members to attend the conference. The total costs associated with their attendance was $29,341.42 (Canadian), a figure which departmental managers said that they viewed as relatively moderate in price. This included costs of travel, accommodations and child care and, in one case, the cost of hiring someone to mind the family store. When air travel was involved, the coordinators scheduled the conference around the purchase of economy fares

The provision of travel in most cases turned out to have been essential to the conference. Not every family required support, and not every member in each family required support. Some family members brought themselves from great distances at their

own costs because they did not want to be perceived as accepting 'welfare' help. Persons facilitating conferences should clearly let family members know that help is available *if it is required* but should not imply that this is a universal cost in every instance. Care was exercised to take advantage of seat sales and advance bookings when plane travel was involved. Misunderstandings between an air carrier and persons making bookings to bring family to conferences occurred not once but twice resulting in flights costing double what they were expected to cost (round trip price was quoted but actually price was for two trips each time since the charter flight did not stay in Nain to take the family members back but instead returned to get them). Still the costs of travel to conferences was highest in Nain, and this was directly related to the fact that some family members who had moved from that community were typically "doing better" than the family members who had remained.

The costs of providing meals, coffee and snacks at the conferences were paid for by the project. For purposes of comparison, Table 8.2 summarizes both the costs to the Department of Social Services (DOSS), including travel, and to the Family Group Decision Making Project for holding the conferences. The project costs were kept relatively low and did not exceed $3000. Lunches were made available to families in St. John's and on the Port au Port Peninsula but not in Nain were everyone in town, according to local project personnel, goes home for their noon meal and people preferred not to stay at the meeting place. These figures do not include the costs to Parole of transporting an inmate to a conference, which were unavailable but were said to be "negligible" by one parole representative and the related costs of holding the conferences carried by the project.

Table 8.2
Total Costs Associated with Holding the Conference by Site

LOCATION	COSTS TO DOSS	COSTS TO PROJECT	TOTAL
Nain	$14,045.77	$ 65.00	$14,110.77
Port au Port	$7,580.58	$1,534.79	$ 9,115.37
St. John's	$ 7,715.07	$1,370.43	$9,085.50
Total	$29,341.42	$2,970.22	$32,311.64

The following three tables show the costs of holding the individual conferences by site. As seen in Table 8.3, conference costs in Nain varied widely from a low of zero to a high of $4,500. The latter cost was directly related to a misunderstanding among the Department of Social Services, the site coordinator, and the airline company about the costs of a charter. The costs for a conference largely depended on whether or not travel was required, and if so, whether of not travel was required between two relatively difficult places to access by regular flight schedules. At the other two sites, all conferences involved costs to at least DOSS and ranged from a low of $68 to a high of $2,767.39 where

out of province travel was requested.

Table 8.3
Costs of Holding Individual Conferences in Nain

CONFERENCE #	COST TO DOSS	COST TO PROJECT	TOTAL
01 A/B/C	$ 4,500.00	none	$4,500.00
02 A	none	none	none
03 A	$ 1,866.07	none	$ 1,866.07
04 A/B	none	none	none
05 A	none	none	none
06 A	$ 608.00	none	$ 608.00
07 A	none	$ 25.00	$ 25.00
08 A	none	none	none
09 A	$ 1,441.86	$ 19.00	$1,460.86
10 A	$ 2,814.92	$ 21.00	$2,835.92
11 A	$ 2,814.92	none	$2,814.92
Total	$14,045.77	$ 65.00	$14,110.77

Table 8.4
Costs of Holding Individual Conferences in Port au Port

CONFERENCE #	COST TO DOSS	COST TO PROJECT	TOTAL
01A	no cost	$ 158.00	$ 158.00
01B	$ 140.00	$ 231.00	$ 371.00
02A	$ 767.95	no cost	$ 767.95
03A	$ 745.25	no cost	$ 745.25
04A	$ 125.50	$ 154.44	$ 279.99
05A	$ 544.25	no cost	$ 544.25
06A	$ 455.43	$ 260.54	$ 715.97
06B	$ 517.09	$ 120.02	$ 637.11
07A	$ 29.00	$ 68.59	$ 97.59
08A	$2,581.00	$ 186.30	$2,767.30
09A	$1,339.11	$ 160.90	$1,500.01
10A	$ 336.00	$ 195.00	$ 531.00
TOTAL	$7,580.58	$1,534.79	$9,115.37

Table 8.5
Costs of Holding Individual Conferences in St. John's

CONFERENCE #	COST TO DOSS	COST TO PROJECT	TOTAL
01A	$ 109.49	$ 168.37	$277.86
02A	$ 2,420.00	$ 131.55	$2,551.55
03A	$ 68.00	none	$68.00
04A	$ 79.10	$ 30.00	$109.10
05A	$ 363.07	$ 255.19	$618.26
06A	$ 1,917.53	$ 145.38	$2,062.91
07A	$ 1,781.37	$ 25.67	$1,807.04
08A	$ 106.75	$212.59	$319.34
09A	$ 55.88	$ 124.38	$180.26
10A	$ 608.73	$ 87.34	$696.07
11A	$ 175.15	$ 83.23	$258.38
12A	$ 30.00	$ 106.73	$136.73
TOTAL	$ 7,715.07	$1,370.43	$9,085.50

8.5 Funding the Plans

In order to provide another basis for comparison, the costs for services to families incurred by Social Services were analyzed by family using a formula which examined the costs both before and after the conference for the same period of time. For example, the costs for one family were examined for 6 weeks after the conference and 6 weeks prior to the conference and compared.

8.5.1 Largest Costs on the Front End

While in some families costs increased in the short term, in others they were reduced or remained about the same. This is especially noteworthy since it was expected that the heaviest cost of putting a plan into place would be on the front-end, such as for equipment costs which would be one-time expenditures. Common reasons for cost increases were that a family wanted a child to stay in foster care while preparatory work was being carried for the child to return home (e.g., travel for visiting the children).

Common reasons for cost reductions right after the conference were transferring the child from a foster home to kin or parental care or canceling services which were being offered beforehand or replacing them at no or less cost.

8.5.1.1 Immediate Changes in Costs

Table 8.6
Direction of Immediate Costing After Conference for Social Services Referrals

CHANGE IN COSTS	NUMBER OF CONFERENCES			
	NAIN	PORT AU PORT	ST. JOHN'S	TOTAL
Increased	4	2	3	9
Remained same	3	1	0	4
Reduced	1	3	3	7
New case[a]	2	3	1	6

Note. One case in Nain was not included in the table because it was a probation referral and five in St. John's are not included because accurate information could not be obtained.
[a]Some cases classified as new in this table had prior involvement with child welfare but the involvement was either significantly prior to the current episode that comparisons are spurious or the case had been closed and re-opened.

As seen in Table 8.6 above, in nine cases the costs being incurred by the child welfare division immediately increased after the family group conference. This was directly related to adding on things (e.g., outings with the child) which the family wanted that were above what was already happening before the conference.

Four plans resulted in no change in costs, e.g., no monies were being spent on the family before and non were spent after, or a family did not suggest any changes to an existing plan that cost any more monies. The following example shows an increase in costs related only to travel, but a long-range decrease related to the return of the child to kin:

- Costs for 10 months prior to conference. Group care costs $42,000, transportation out of the province $1,042.00 and counseling $900.00 totaling $43,942.99. Total costs for travel to conference: $1.781.37. Costs projected for 10 months after conference: $42,000 for group care, and counseling totaling $900.00. Instead, child went to relative out of province.

In 7 cases the costs were immediately reduced after the conference. The following example shows an immediate reduction in costs to the Department of over $5,000 a month for 8 months, even though the child was back in care as of the writing of this report for reasons other than those that precipitated the referral:

- Costs prior to conference: $9,540.35 ($5,750 per month for group home costs @ 6 weeks and costs of counseling, supervised visits, recreation and respite). Costs of travel to conference: $2,420.00. Costs after conference projected for 4 months: $10,975.50 ($2,350.0 for counseling, respite, recreation and damages and $5,750 per month group home costs for 6 weeks). Young person then moved home and remained there for just under a year. Now in emergency care.

Six cases were new to the Department of Social Services Child Welfare Division so there was no basis for this kind of comparison.

- New case to child welfare. Costs of travel to conference: $55.88. Costs utilized after conference: $440.00 counseling, $174.75 outings, $213.46 transportation to counseling. Children not apprehended.

8.5.1.2 Changes in Children's Caregivers

Given that the highest single cost in the families was for out-of-home care, a status check was carried out at the time of the writing of this report in order to obtain a picture of where the children, who were the subjects of the conferences, were living. The information was provided by the Department of Social Services Division of Child Welfare instead of from the research follow-up interviews in order to give the most current picture of on-going costs associated with outcomes. The information is used here to clarify the on-going cost picture and not to give anything definitive about outcomes for the children and families involved.

Table 8.8 below {What you called Table S.12--Where is it, Gale?) shows, at the time of writing this report, the status of the project families with respect to the residence of the child(ren) who were the subject(s) of the conference. The table depicts the placement of the children by family, hence the numbers do not always total the exact number of families who had a conference. For example, in St. John's a family kept one child in a foster placement and prevented others in the family from being placed.

Table 8.7
Status of Project Families at Time of Report

ACTIVITY	NAIN	PORT AU PORT	ST. JOHN'S	TOTAL
A child moves to parent	2	6	4	12
A child moves to kin from parent or foster care	4	0	4	8
A child remains in non-family care	4	2	3	9
Apprehension of a child is prevented	3	6	5	14
Conference cancelled	0	1	0	1
No children involved	1	0	0	1

Our conclusion, supported by the Department of Social Services and Division of Child Welfare managers, is that the model can be carried out well within existing monies particularly because families typically want their children to be living with or involved with family. The real costs, however, will only be understood in light of the longer range benefits for the children and families. The highest costs associated with a family group conference are those which come immediately after the plan is approved. The highest shifts in spending were as one would expect when a child was moved from one living situation to another with group home being the most expensive form of care any child referred to the project was living in at approximately $5,000 per month. It is not possible to say that these children and young people would have stayed in care, been apprehended or otherwise moved if there had been no conference; although in some cases moving home would have appeared quite unlikely without the additional monitoring provided for in the plan.

From this review of child status at the time of the report, it is clear that much movement of the children has taken place. Some moves were planned, others not. In some cases, children who were meant to go to foster care, went home instead. In others, a child who was meant to live with a relative went to live with another relative. Two things

should be noted from this pattern. First, the situations in these families are not static. Most cases remain active with ongoing needs for service and support. Second, any cost analysis will be limited in value unless it takes into consideration a benefit analysis in the longer range. In some families, children were immediately moved home from foster care, giving the appearance of cost savings, only to be apprehended again. Conversely, some plans have clearly realized a reduction in cost to the government through stable placements for the children. Caution needs to be exercised both in the direction of over-promoting the model as a so-called family-centered model wherein cost savings can be placed over the safety of children and other family members and in the tendency to label as wasteful the inclusion of the family in the decision process thereby justifying a return to excluding them immediately when matters do no go as expected.

8.5.2 Costs of Equipment Requested in the Plans

Equipment purchases were recommended to the Department of Social Services by families at 15 conferences. These purchases included such things as beds, washers & dryers, an electric range, a deep freeze, a second-hand car, and a Nintendo set, and a VCR. Only the latter three were items that had never before been purchased by child welfare personnel for a child or family. As expressed in one family plan:

- The need for reconnecting the 'power supply'. . . . as well as getting a proper cooking stove. Family members felt that this was integral to looking after the well-being of the children.

As seen in Table 8.9, the total cost of these purchases to the Department was $5,153 (Canadian). When examined by site, St. John's had the greatest amount expended on equipment, next was Nain followed closely by the Port au Port site.

Table 8.9
Total Expenditures on Equipment by Site

PURCHASES	NAIN (n = 5)	PORT AU PORT (n = 5)	ST. JOHN'S (n = 5)	TOTAL (N = 15)
Amount	$1,195.00	$ 936.00	$3,022.00	$5,153.00

8.7 Summary

The most important things about financial costs to the Department of Social Services are that the majority of cases were ones that the Department was already spending a lot of money on and that the participation of the province was successfully accomplished with **no new monies** allocated for the project. The only budget lines that the Department had never previously allocated monies for were travel costs associated with bringing families

together and the coordinators' salaries. In this project, monies for the coordinators' salaries were provided by the federal government so these costs would have to be calculated into the equation by any group contemplating carrying out this model. In the host province, however, this expense could be handled by moving a portion of funding for current workers into hiring a coordinator in a designated area. The result would not be doing more business but doing it in a different way.

What we can not say at this time is how closely the costs of using this model compare with those for existing interventions. This is because the figures provided by the Department of Social Services, Division of Child Welfare were insufficiently aggregated to offer a reliable comparison to their other services and in some cases only global figures were available, e.g., total costs of foster care before and after the conference. The problem with determining more accurate costs was directly related to the absence of any centralized mechanism for tracking families, children and costs in the provincial child welfare system. The analysis for this report had to be carried out on a case-by-case basis with staff in the district offices summarizing the expenses from the individual files.

The costs incurred by Correctional Services of Canada were negligible involving only their worker's time and a small amount for travel for one family. The services which families wanted for their parolee members were already available, e.g., a community-based residential center or attendance at a batterer's group.

We give the last word on costs to senior administrators in our two referring agences:

"When this thing started we were all anxious about what the costs would be. I can't believe how little we have spent on the project families. It's a lot less than any of us thought." — Senior Manager, Division of Child Welfare

"We can say with a high level of confidence that the conferences in which our staff and clients participated were extremely cost effective...[and]...the benefits derived for both staff as well as our clients were numerous." — District Director, Correctional Services of Canada

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.0 Introduction

The purpose of this report was to document the extent to which the project operated in line with its stated goals and objectives and to summarize our findings to date on a number of questions relevant to the use of Family Group Conferences in situations involving abuse within families. Overall, the Implementation Review was concerned with the extent to which the model of Family Group Decision Making could be carried out in a manner that:

(1) responds flexibly to the conditions and cultures of various provincial regions (Inuit, rural, and urban); and

(2) builds family, community, and government partnerships that offer family members support, protections, and opportunities for participating in decision making and carrying out these plans.

Throughout the planning and implementation of the project, a number of questions about the model in relation to its use in situations of family violence emerged. In this chapter we have recapitulated the goals and objectives of the project as they were expressed in those questions and framed summaries of the findings and recommendations as answers to those questions.

9.1 Was the Demonstration Project an Adequate Test of the Use of the Model in Situations of Family Violence?

In terms of the variety of sites in which the model was tested, and the number and characteristics of families who had conferences at each site, we think the answer to this question is yes. The project was carried out in geographically and culturally distinct parts of the province and was applied to families in which there was a range of types of abuse (sexual, physical, emotional, and social) and in which abuse within the family was being perpetrated by and committed against children, adults, or a combination of both. In St. John's and on the Port au Port Peninsula, we believe that while the one-year period was brief, it did provide time to adapt the model to the local context. Nain, however, raises questions in terms of the length of time needed to ensure that the model was adapted to an Inuit community undergoing extensive change.

The levels of turmoil being experienced by the Inuit in the process of cultural assimilation is so high, the process of introspection in referred families so painful, and trust in the Department of Social Services so low that a longer period of time was needed to discover how best to shape and sustain the involvement of the family-community partnership in that community. While the results of the evaluation are clear that the model is preferable to the present way that child welfare works in the community, two problems remained to be solved. First, the coordinator in Nain needed a smaller group than the whole of the advisory to act as a panel, i.e., a way to discuss the particular families in

confidence. The advisory committee as a whole did not serve that purpose. It proved to be too difficult for the coordinator to keep the agenda of a meeting focused on accomplishing a specific purpose such as receiving advice about a particular family. Furthermore, the way in which plans were authorized by the Department of Social Services was unsatisfactory in some cases thereby contributing to alienation between the Department and the Inuit families. The model calls for a rapid and clear response on the part of authorizing officials to tell the families whether the plan is satisfactory from a protection point of view and whether or not the plans would be resourced. Further use of the model in Nain would necessitate change. A new structure would have to be developed for negotiating and authorizing the plans or the existing approach would require that either management representatives attend the end of each conference or community workers be authorized to speak for the Department.

9.2 Were There Differences In The Ways The Model Worked At The Various Sites Chosen For The Demonstration Project?

Yes. There were important cultural, economic and geographic differences affecting practices at each site, and there were important differences in the way government services participated. Some differences could also be traced to the individual coordinators. For instance, the context led to a focus on the Port au Port Peninsula to maintaining confidentiality in small, tightly knit communities, in St. John's to examining procedures from a more legalistic perspective, and in Nain to asserting Inuit autonomy.

The three sites varied considerably in terms of the availability of relevant programs and services and in the availability of people with appropriate training and previous experience to deliver these services. St. John's had the broadest range of services and the greatest numbers of professionally trained workers, but was experiencing government cut-backs in funding and the termination of programs and waiting lists for counselling were often quite long. Although the Port au Port Peninsula had few local services, residents had access by car to programs in Stephenville a regional centre. Moreover, going to Stephenville helped to assuage fears around confidentiality.

The overall level of stress affecting the community of Nain and the consequences this had for community members to engage in sustained voluntary activity was considerable. Coupled with the differences in patterns of co-existence between the Inuit, Settlers and white government officials, the assumptions behind the model of partnership were most taxed in that community. The Department of Social Services efforts to provide services in both languages were insufficient. Although its hiring of community workers (that is workers who had the advantage of understaning the local culture but did not have social work credentials) was commendable, translation services needed to have been provided for those workers who did not speak Inuktitut in order for them to work effectively with many families. On the Port au Port Peninsula, translation services for Social Services workers appeared to be less of an issue because most residents were either bilingual or spoke only English. Reclaiming language, though, had become a significant issue for these communities; and they were in the midst of developing educational and social programming advancing their language and heritage and, in this manner, reaffirming their cultural identity.

In St. John's, the selection of information givers and options that could be presented to families gave them a heightened sense of choice. On the Port au Port Peninsula while local presenters were often limited, they could be imported from Stephenville. In Nain, although at one level it was often said that its residents had become dependent on Social Services, it was revealed through the conferences that the lack of services in the community put extremely high burdens on the families. The Inuit families were caught in the bind of having only their own resources to fall back on or alternatively to surrender to the solutions offered by the government. Efforts to develop culturally appropriate solutions to problems by the LIHC were encouraging but were insufficiently resourced. No serious efforts had been sustained in the community to give the Inuit a say over matters relating to child welfare and policing.

While it was often repeated in St. John's that the same people were always called upon for voluntary activity when something needed to be done, this was a obvious predicament on the Port au Port Peninsula and appeared to be even more intensified in Nain. Through necessity, the people who could and would volunteer in Nain were so constantly taxed that it left the community consequently stretched to the limits at all times. Most of the people on the project advisory committee were the same ones upon whom virtually all voluntary activities in the community depended. Planning meetings was a major undertaking. Keeping people involved in the meeting across language lines was an equally monumental task.

Our conclusion is that the appeal of the model crosses cultural, racial and geographic lines: in the three quite diverse project sites we learned that when initially called upon and given support to keep a family member from harm, most family members responded positively within their identity as family and contributed to a united effort in which the preservation of norms associated with family identity and the well-being of members were paramount. Whether these same family members will sustain their efforts and/or whether family members who would not initially respond will later become involved, remains to be seen.

9.3 What Are The Main Short-range Results And The Hypothesized Longer-range Outcomes For The Families And In Particular For The Abused Persons?

The main short-term result of using the model was an immediate mobilization of activity within and around the family in direct relation to bringing the abuse out in the open with everyone present in the room. Whether this mobilization is sustained and whether it is ultimately positive for the abused persons and their families,remains to be seen both in the follow-up with these particular families but also in studying changes in the policing and service provision patterns in places where the model is implemented over time. We would expect that the effect of using the model over time on organizations and professionals would result in a substantial shift of emphasis toward services being driven by values and needs in a context of increased accountability to consumers and local groups.

9.4 Is This Model Adaptable Across Cultural, Governmental and Professional Boundaries?

The model can be implemented with high sensitivity to context; however, as one would expect, this requires high involvement of local people in adapting it for their use. The appeal of the model is wide and one should expect both the short and long-range outcomes to be shaped by cultural and regional adaptation.

Implementing the model with child welfare required a less radical re-organization or overhaul of the structure of their services than was expected; it required more of an attitude shift to "think family." Some workers have begun to hold their own family group meetings with extended family, and we think this is a positive development. At the same time, it recognized that the inclusion of family and other professionals in decision making is quite threatening to those personnel who are concerned about losing control.

It is essential that participating personnel collaborate but not give up their roles. The model is not "family" centred so much as it is intended to be "safety" centred. Child protection workers need to remain "child centred" in their thinking about the protection of the child; and police and parole need to remain focused on the protection of the community. The various roles are not incompatible and do not require that violence against family members be de-criminalized or the legal process subverted.

9.5 What Are The Relative Costs Of Using This Model Vis à Vis Its Benefits?

One of the main implications in financing this model is in making the switch to "thinking partnerships" and sharing in the allocation of resources around a common plan as opposed to thinking in linear or single-response terms to policing or protection concerns. The families' plans were needs driven. This means that families often asked for services to be provided that government departments typically did not provide if they could not foresee a direct benefit to their client (e.g., an individual child as in the case of child welfare). Nor did the families' plans respect the divisions between government departments. For example, If the family did not want the abuser to live at home until he had done something constructive about his anger and addictions, the families assumed that the correctional agency and the child welfare division could work cooperatively together. If a family believed that the only way to solve their problems was to tackle them on an intergenerational basis, they assumed that the various organizations involved with their members would and could cooperate with their efforts.

This was not always so. Particularly agencies with mandates aimed specifically at one class of client had the greatest challenge to cooperating with others. For example, a correctional agency might be able to provide service or support access to certain services for the offender, but its rules of confidentiality and methods of pre-purchasing blocks of service might initially work to keep its workers from sharing information with the family and leave them with no way to support the family's plan if the plan did not request the kind of services already purchased. This created some tension when several agencies had a family in common with managers of one asking why they should pay for the family's whole plan when other agencies were involved. This type of cooperation ultimately became possible between child welfare and parole with good effect. Parole identified that

community safety was enhanced not only by supervising or assisting offenders but by paying attention to the needs and insights of their families.

Other agency managers said they thought empowering families was a good idea, but never responded to any initiatives to explore how they might get involved. One expressed the sentiment that their officers would "lose something" if they contributed to a family's plan rather than continuing to purchase a visible block of service for their particular clientele. Even in the organizations where the approval for the allocation of resources had come from senior levels, initial work needed to be done with supervisors and practitioners to get them to make referrals, work cooperatively, and commit resources. Not all managers liked the model in the end. One observed that the model made it possible for families to "steal the Department [of Social Services] blind" and pointed out "If you give something to one family, then they will all want it."

9.6 What Are Our Main Concerns About The Use Of This Model In Situations Of Family Abuse?

We remain sceptical about the use of any approach to child welfare, including the use of this model, in which there is no legally mandated authority involved who can insist that adult members of the family be kept safe. There are two important parts to this caveat. First, in the Canadian and specifically the Newfoundland & Labrador legal context the family needs some authoritative support or legal sanction to make its plan stick. If participation in the model is entirely voluntary, abusers may decide at the last minute that they do not like the way things are going and refuse to participate. Our experience with one mother, who pulled her family out of the conference when it became apparent that her previously undisclosed abuse of the children was going to be brought up by her relatives, highlighted the need to be able to proceed. This case led to the project moving from voluntary referrals in which the family representative (usually the parent with guardianship) signed a consent form to direct referrals by the referring agency with individual family members deciding whether or not they personally chose to participate without granting any one family member veto power over holding the conference. In all cases, the coordinators consulted closely with survivors and non-abusing parents about whether or not to proceed with the conference.

Second, the mandated authority or authorities need to be in a position to insist that all family members are kept safe, especially since it is increasingly recognized that child and adult abuse ofen occur together (Bowker, Arbitell, & McFerron, 1988; McKay, 1994; Stark & Flitcraft, 1988). If only child welfare is involved, there is a risk that some abusers will simply shift the abuse to an adult in the family or increase the intensity of existing abuse against an adult member. In cases where abuse is already being directed toward an adult and the conference does not focus on that abuse, any plan to keep the children safe is flawed from the start. In our view, the safety and well-being of any family member is important in itself; and even from a narrowly defined child welfare perspective, stopping violence against adults is crucial. Unless it is prevented, children are usually its main witnesses, an experience that is intensely painful for them at the time and can (though not necessarily) lead to life-long problems (Jaffe, Wolfe, & Wilson, 1990) and carry across

generations (Rodgers, 1994). In addition, since domestic violence is mostly commonly committed against women, not men (Trevethan & Tashever, 1992), and since women are usually the primary caregivers for the children, their capacity to care for and safeguard their children is placed at risk (Callahan, 1993; Swift, 1991). To protect both children and adults in their own right, either a partnership of legally mandated authorities needs to be involved in order to bridge the gap between laws governing child abuse and assault on another family member or all other ways must be explored for child welfare to insist that all abuse in a family where there is a child constitutes abuse of that child. We favour the former idea because it brings all the abuse to the forefront as a direct concern for the safety of that person and not just as an indirect concern for the safety of the children.

An additional concern about the model is that it assumes that referring agencies see as part of their role to provide relevant services directly and/or assist potential recipients in gaining access to relevant services. We are talking here of services that go beyond serving the immediate protection or control requirements to providing resources so that families have the needed support and resources to carry out decisions that have otherwise been approved.

Finally, the model calls for a coordinated approach to policy and practice in situations of family violence across the justice, social service, education and health systems. The model does not replace the need for other services; in fact, it may highlight their absence when family members have identified a service that professionals have been advocating to have available. The model does not point to the fact that one response (e.g., arrest) is better or worse than another response in family violence situations. It does, however, say that whatever response is used should be sensitive to the views of the extended family and other important aspects of the context in which that response is employed. The family group conference is, in our view, a valid way to bring these various perspectives together in the service of a common plan.

9.7 Key Elements of the Model

9.7.1 Getting Started

The project took considerable time and effort to launch provincially and at each of the sites. The work of knitting together the relationships at the community and government levels of all persons who have a stake in doing something about family violence is essential. In this project, the Department of Social Services through the Division of Child Welfare took the initiative from the beginning. The effort put into developments at this level paid off, and we are strong in the view that a high level of acceptance and ownership of the model was evidenced and will continue. This means seating some people at the same table who may have quite differing points of view, giving ample opportunity for them to have a say and for them to see for themselves that their concerns are taken seriously in the adaptation of the model. Key persons in the present project were given a written statement of the philosophy and underlying values about the model and about our views on violence. They were then given opportunity to challenge the implications of these statements and to

add their own refinements until the process resulted in a consensually agreed upon document reflecting the philosophy of the project.

9.7.2 Forming Partnerships

The key to sustained involvement of extended family is the negotiated adaptive fit to culture, community and family. This means that partnerships must be formed at the broad law making and policy setting level of government but also at the local level among legally mandated authorities, community leaders and representatives of all groups who have a stake in stopping family violence. In our project, we worked to establish a climate of openness with all involved organizations and persons especially with the Division of Child Welfare. This made it possible to solve, or at least flag, most problems on both sides, before anyone had time to pour fuel on them.

As mentioned, the collaborative model, while vital to the success of the project, kept the coordinators putting much time into maintaining the local infrastructure. Additionally, the absence of dedicated administrative and secretarial supports in local offices kept them busy doing a lot of this work themselves. A permanent project would need direct access to services of this kind.

The goal of having all authorities involved in stopping family violence only partially materialized. The conferences were able to address issues of child abuse and neglect but, in cases of adult abuse, particularly against mothers, where correctional services were not involved, the findings are more mixed. At the same time, the process clearly mobilized relationships between and among formal and informal helpers in the family's network that were previously either not working or working counter-productively. This mobilization of activity around a consensually validated plan introduced a level of accountability that was unfamiliar to and resisted by some professionals. It was incumbent upon coordinators to ensure that a mechanism was put into the plan through which professionals could be challenged when they did not follow through on agreed plans. Some families were uncomfortable doing this and requested the coordinator to act as their advocate. Thus far, families have been quick to carry out agreed to activities in the short run.

9.7.3 Selection of Coordinators

We are of the view that the selection of the coordinator is a key ingredient to the success of using this model. We hired coordinators, and researchers, who came from the communities or regions in which the project was being tested and who had a demonstrated record of work in the anti-violence field or related work. We maintain the view that the coordinator should not be a government employee or provisions should be made for them to work at arms length. While our belief that the coordinator (and researcher) need to be from the community they work in, and speak local dialects and have their own family ties in the area, we now see the advantage, especially in the two rural sites, of choosing people who have either been away from the community for awhile at some point in their adult lives or have sufficiently broken free of destructive influences in their own lives to comfortably take stands against violence. They need to be out of danger of reprisal and in situations

where they are perceived as credible role models. The old saying that its often the people closest to us who oppose changes we want to make can be magnified in small communities where family, friends and influential people can erode the willpower of their own loved ones on a daily basis. Especially in smaller communities, the coordinators and researchers need strong supports around them in order to maintain a credible stance against people who would undermine their work. One of the negative effects of using this model in a demonstration project was related to the time pressures set up by the funding to get staff hired and get conferences underway. This can work against recruiting and keeping the best people. Well before a demonstration project is completed, staff are looking ahead to their employment futures.

9.7.4 Training & Ongoing Consultation

It was necessary to overcome attitudinal obstacles to involving extended family especially those from the side of an absconding or ex-nuptial parent. Child protection workers and our own coordinators were at first unsure about contacting the parents and siblings of this latter group. The discovery that some of these relatives had yearned to have relationships with the children in question but did not know how to initiate such contact was a positive revelation.

Initial and ongoing training and consultation with child welfare workers were essential and very difficult to accomplish especially in St. John's. Much of the training was done “on the run” through brief presentations at the social workers’ regular meetings, through formal case conferences and informal case discussions since getting child protection workers to attend formal training, especially in St. John's, was a daunting task. This was, in part, due to the status of the project as a "demonstration" but also in the wider scheme of things was viewed by workers as a lower priority than other educational offering sponsored by their own Department. Educating them included a great deal of marketing of the model aimed at keeping workers’ attention focused on the availability of this option and on the procedures for using it.

This was somewhat easier in Nain and on the Port au Port Peninsula where the numbers of workers at the local office was smaller and the turnover of workers somewhat less considerable. In St. John's one case had three different child welfare workers from the time the referral was made to the project to the time of the actual conference.

The model challenges the "expert" stance of some professional groups. The present emphasis on highly specialized clinical treatment in the education of social workers will need a parallel emphasis promoting the use of participatory and community oriented practice amongst front-line and supervisory staff. A good model to follow comes from the field of developmental disability where workers facilitate and coordinate the carrying out of service plans.

9.7.5 Referrals

While less the case in the two rural sites, in St. John's the most difficult families were not at first referred to the project with workers saying that they were too busy to take the time to make the referral. Workers were not approaching some parents whom they felt certain would be resistant to any suggestion coming from child welfare. Indeed, a number of families who were approached refused referral from child welfare workers, especially in Nain, but some of these same families accepted referral when approached by persons outside the child protection services.

Hence, some of the most troubled families came into the project late in its life. In retrospect, we would not have emphasised taking into the project the most difficult families, at least not so close to its termination. This is directly related to the time deadlines associated with a demonstration project and the difficulties of seeing some families' plans through when family group decision making is no longer shepherded along by a site coordinator. Pressures in the Department of Social Services and worker turn-over have made it difficult to ensure follow through especially with the most needy families.

9.7.6 Preparations

The work of the coordinator in preparing the family members and resource persons for the conference, as far as using the model in situations of family violence is concerned, is key to the success of the meeting itself. The model does not call for a number of estranged family members to be "dumped" into a room together and left to fight or mourn it out. If the families are to be thrown together without good preparation, including anticipating safety requirements, by all means the model may be inappropriate for them in the same way that throwing any group together without giving them preparation often leads to negative results. We would be reluctant to seek short-cuts,nor do we see leaving a coordinator in the conference room as a way of overcoming insufficient preparations. We want to emphasize that this view is derived from our experience using the model in situations of family violence. We think that comparing this finding with results in other situations (e.g., young offenders) leads to false comparisons. It is precisely the fact that the violence is internal to the family group that necessitates the addiltional caution. The presence during the conference deliberations of the coordinator or other professional persons, especially trained therapists, results in the professionals taking over the process overtly or covertly.

The conferences took on average 3 to 4 weeks of preparation time; slightly longer in Nain. Both these time frames were consistent with the findings of the study by Paterson and Harvey (1991) in New Zealand. Inuit family members took longer to locate since some members made frequent trips out of the community to hunt and fish. Too, their orientation to the use of time grew out of their close connection to the time of year, the weather and the types of activities in which they were engaged. An "appointment" to speak to someone could quickly become subordinated to more immediate concerns without notification, e.g., a herd of caribou was spotted some miles from town and no males in the community who

owned a ski-doo and a rifle could be found for the day. The following year the herd stayed close to town most of the winter and so did most of the men. Inuit families preferred to meet for shorter periods of time over more than one meeting rather than try to accomplish their decisions all at once. They preferred to think and discuss things overnight at least.

We are unsure what comparison to make in terms of preparation time. Clearly a coordinator is able to be involved preparing two families at time for a conference, but we are unsure what would be "too long" given that these families represent the most difficult situations that the child welfare workers refer. We think that 3 to 4 weeks of planning does not represent much in the lives of families if a strategically developed plan comes out that could stop the abuse. One difference between our project and the use of the model in New Zealand iis that our coordinator did all the preparation and planning for the conference. This included all contacts with family, friends and professionals and handling all their own administrative work (e.g., mailing out letters and announcements). The social workers had little involvement in these preparations.

In cases of family violence, we do not see many ways that this preparation time could be shortened. With additional administrative supports (e.g., a secretary), coordinators could have been somewhat more efficient, thereby increasing the numbers of conferences completed but the preparation time would probably not be substantially reduced. The idea of hastily putting in the same room family members who share histories of severe abuse would be to court disaster. Perhaps the time and preparations could be reduced in families where the violence is clearly a first or second time event precipitated by a specific trigger, but as we discovered it is very difficult to predict what will surface with families. Typically, the professionals involved in referring to the project had only surface knowledge of the level and extent of the abuse in the families, and in particular they were uninformed about the sexual abuse which had transpired.

9.7.7 Information Giving

The information giving stage of the conference rightfully deserves to be considered an intervention. It is perhaps the single most forceful intervention made throughout the process. This stage is carefully conceptualized and crafted to bring the facts of the abuse out in the open so that they can be dealt with, no longer as speculations about things that might have happened, whispered about in communities or exchanged as commodities between family members, but as the central item on the agenda for the meeting.

Though frequently painful, the effect of this stage was almost always positive for both the families and the mandated authorities who attended the conferences. When it was not positive, this could be traced to the feelings of family members that the presenter was either not respectful in the way they communicated with the family, or with a particular member, or they went into more detail than was necessary to get the point across. Once a family member took exception to the use of specific language in a presentor's report, but everyone else felt it was effective and that the member taking exception was attempting to minimize the issue.

The person organizing and facilitating the conference needs to stay clear of the role of information provider and make sure they bring in people who can do it. Information givers are unable to be value neutral in their presentations. If the coordinator gets into giving this kind of statement or advice, family members will perceive them as taking over; a perception that is quite likely to be accurately derived.

9.7.8 Prepared Statements

The more clearly and concisely the statement of purpose for the conference is articulated to the family members during the preparation phase and again to the whole family on the day of the conference, the better able the family is to get down to their tasks and formulate a relevant plan. By extension, the more clear and respectful the authorities and resource persons who present their concerns and suggestions, the better the chances are that the family can hold itself to the task of coming up with a sound plan and holding to it after. The emphasis is not on telling them what to do, but instead on giving them the needed information from which to work. We urge coordinators to prepare and rehearse a statement of purpose for each conference that delineates the central reason why the family has been invited to come together. We also urge coordinators to prepare the other professionals who will be attending to give this same kind of care to the words they will use with a family. This same principle extends to the family members who are making personal statements and especially in our experience to men and teenagers who often are unable to express themselves without forethought about what they want to say. There is no substitute to having a well thought out, written statement handy.

9.7.9 Private Deliberations

Only one family did not come up with a plan. Over the course of two private deliberative sessions, that family talked themselves in a complete circle from initially agreeing with the facts of the abuse as presented to denying everything. That experience confirmed a potential worst fear about how families might subordinate the abuse to other concerns. We believe that the views of the children [who were not present] and the abused wife/mother [who had as her support person her allegedly abusive husband] were insufficiently represented in this case. The husband/father successfully intimidated the family into denying the abuse.

This was not the only conference where this dynamic surfaced yet in the other ones it was prevented from subverting the aims of the conference. In some cases, the mandated authorities sufficiently exerted pressure on the abuser or emphasized the protective issues for the survivors. In other instances, the presence of support persons prevented a turn around of the issues. This raises the question about the involvement of non-family support persons in the private family deliberation time. In the application of the model in this project, the support people stayed in the room and as necessary spoke for or comforted the abused person or tempered the communications of the abusers.

9.7.10 Written Plans and Their Authorization

The more comprehensive yet clear, concrete and concise the written plan from the conference is, the more likely it can be used as a medium for family members and professional helpers to hold one another accountable afterwards. We view this as an essential ingredient for the success of the model. We have emphasised that the coordinator should leave the family alone for their private deliberation time unless there are obvious reasons that they should not leave the room, e.g., someone in the room threatening someone else. The coordinator checks back with the family from time to time and comes in at the end to assist the family in writing down their plan. This is a very active stage for the coordinator with most families requiring much skill in assisting them to make clear statements and to identify when and how and by whom the monitoring will be done.

9.7.11 The Roles of Mandated Authorities

The fact that a conference is at some stage of preparation or is being held does not change the roles of child welfare, the police or anyone else except for the fact that these people are asked to continue to make room for the consensus of the family if and when one can be achieved through the process. None of the involved authorities are asked to relegate their roles to the process. They are simply asked to make room for the family to arrive at a consensus about what to do.

9.7.12 Confidentiality

The model raises challenges to underlying assumptions about confidentiality and professional expertise. Given our experience so far, confidentiality would seem to have served in some instances to foster silence around abuse. The planning and carrying out of the conferences stimulates interaction between and among family members, friends and the involved professionals; hence, more people know the facts and more people have the same version of the facts. In this way, the model directly attacks those processes in families through which the members co-create a conspiracy to remain silent and in so doing effectively brings the abuse out in the open. Speculation about what happened to the abused person no longer takes place within the families and sympathy for the abused persons is increased.

The concerns about confidentiality were greatest in families on the Port au Port Peninsula where the families live in somewhat dense social networks of kin and the interaction with one another is frequent and highly subject to regulation by an abuser. The other groups most concerned about confidentiality were the police and correctional officers though the concerns of individual officers dissipated with experience in the conferences. The concerns of police were that they would be put in a position during the information giving to disclose information that might hinder a future investigation. Parole officers were unsure of the legal implications of telling family members anything that had been gathered in the confidence of their professional relationship with the offender. Neither concern materialized at the conference. During an unavoidable absence of one police officer

associated with the project, another officer from the detachment did not show up at a conference to which he had been invited because he was friends with the family and feared offending them if he told the facts of the family's involvement with the police. Instead he wrote a note saying that the person was basically a good person and would be better if they stopped drinking.

9.7.13 The Right People

When concerns were raised about a conference, they were most likely to be about whether the right people were at the conference and whether the right people were making the decisions. When a key person was missing, it was an obvious omission and all participants at a conference would reflect that concern. In the cases where this happened, the missing person was most often a biological father but in one case the mother was not there because the father had intimidated her into not coming. Men presented particular problems for getting them to the conference, and this was not always in situations where they were the identified abuser. We are careful to say 'identified' abuser because the behaviour of some men when they did not want to come to a conference could easily have been construed as emotional abuse. In one instance a father boycotted a conference in the face of his child's wish for him to come because he blamed her for the abuse she had received from someone else. It was hard for some family members *not* to interpret the absence of a key person at the conference as being hurtful to them, but the conference itself almost always mitigated the absent person's attempt to injure them. In one clear example where a father refused to come, all 7 people who filled out the FGC Evaluation Form said that the right people were *not* at the conference, but they were virtually unanimous (one person did not like the venue) in their satisfaction with every other aspect of the conference including the plan. The father's boycott lost its effect once the conference got started--yet, everyone felt he should have come.

9.8 Evaluation

The question of evaluation is not a simple question of success or failure. Most attempts to depict a conference and its aftermath in this way fail to take into account the complexity of the situations with which these families are faced. We urge that people who undertake to use family group decision making settle on multiple measures and indicators for evaluation purposes that are selected with great respect to the context in which the model is to be employed. A collaborative action approach to research facilitates this contextualizing of the research while promoting the partnerships for carrying it out. We recommend using both quantitative and qualitative measures while bearing in mind that none provide an ultimate test of a person's safety or well-being in the short or long-range view. Measures of reported satisfaction of family members with the process and the outcome should certainly be used as long as there is an understanding that some people, particularly those who have been abusive, may not be satisfied with plans to curb their abuse and bring their activities out in the open. In terms of understanding the process of family group decision making, the most fruitful strategies were having the coordinators prepare reflective notes on their preparations for the conferences as well as the

conferences and their follow-up activities and having the researchers observe the conferences and complete recordings and reflections on them.

9.9 Policy Implications

Overall, the conferences were implemented much as they were envisioned with some modifications at each site. One exception is that the goal of interdisciplinary agency cooperation in pooling of tangible resources for travel to bring the families together and to support outcomes was not fully realized. The Department of Social Services carried final responsibility for these matters for most of the project although late in the project Correctional Services of Canada fulfilled its original commitment to become a full partner by negotiating funds to underwrite referrals in their own right.

The longer range implications of bringing the extended family centre stage are worth considering especially in families where intergenerational abuse is evident. In time, the same extended family members would find themselves invited to more than one conference. The effect of fully integrating this model into the service provision of a community would hopefully be an ever-increasing challenge to those who abuse their family members. It is also worth noting that including the extended family in making decisions about a child's life has the potential to provide a constant throughout the child's development, a benefit that cannot be duplicated even in situations of adoption. Estimating the overall costs and benefits of this approach is difficult to undertake until it has been in effect for a decade.

As brought into sharp relief near the end of the project after all the plans had been set in place, the model assumes that the referring agencies actually want to solve the problems associated with the causes of the violence in the families beyond investigation and assessment. While this may seem obvious on the surface, it is not until the moment that resources need to be committed or monitoring mechanisms need to activate a meeting or follow-up that this assumption is drawn into light. Consider the following example of a woman referred for a conference shortly after she had been released from a period of psychiatric hospitalization which followed a one-year involvement in an abusive relationship with a man other than the father of her children. Most everyone at the conference predicted that it was quite likely that she would repeat the pattern of bringing an abusive male into her life and end up beat down again. The plan was aimed at intervening before things got as bad as they had on previous occasions. The interview took place at the time of a one-year follow-up with the researcher:

> I couldn't believe it. At the 6-month follow-up she was on top of the world, doing just great. Shortly after she got a new boyfriend. He would drive her to her group meetings and her counselling sessions while berating her for talking to all these "man-hating" women. She finally ended up in the psychiatric hospital for a week and her mother took the kids. Buddy [colloquial name in Newfoundland for a man] left. She's home now and she has her kids but she's a mess. She is isolated and wants someone to talk to but she does not want to go back to the counsellor or the group. Doesn't [at

> that time] want to be a part of the research but wants me to come and just sit and talk to her. Child welfare closed her case! She kept saying she thought someone from child welfare was going to call her up or come and visit her but she never heard a word after the worker who had been at the conference transferred to a new job. The new worker just closed the case without so much as asking anything.

In one sense the plan "worked." The grandmother took the children while she sought refuge in psychiatric care, but since it was a different psychiatric facility than she had been in previously, there was no awareness of the plan. She had stopped going to her individual and group counselling, which she certainly had a right to do, but it was clearly in response to another abuser isolating her. At the critical moment when she could no longer "take the abuse" and she feared for her children, the grandmother took them. We asked the question what else could the plan have called for without becoming intrusive into the woman's rights if there were no risks evident to her children. The woman's repeated statement keeps coming back: "I thought the child welfare worker would call or drop in but there wasn't a word."

Given the repeated experiences of this kind in situations of worker turnover, we have concluded that it probably is too much to expect of child welfare, as it is presently constituted, to expect this kind of continuity. The workers are essentially investigative and protective workers who respond to complaints of abuse. While the case conferences provided sufficient stimulus to engage these personnel, i.e., most workers who participated in a conference maintained a close affiliation with the family and the plan afterwards, relief workers and new workers assigned to the cases did not all orient themselves to the assurances in the files and organize their work around previously made commitments of their employer and their colleagues. We are tempted to point to the lack of a centrally organized system of case tracking and monitoring in the child welfare division, but this would probably not entirely explain the problem. Being involved in an ongoing way with a family placed some of the workers in a conflict between their duties as investigators and their duties as helpers. Some of the workers could not bridge this gap. Future research with the model should look carefully at the characteristics of those workers who are comfortable with collaborative decision making approaches and those who are not.

9.9.1 Conferences as Alternatives to Sentencing

We do not see using the model in cases of domestic violence as an alternative measure to going to court. The objective of family group decision making is not to circumvent legal action but rather to protect victims and to give the family group a voice in developing a plan which in some cases could be used by the judge at the time of sentencing. Decriminalizing domestic violence is especially problematic in small, rural communities where protective services are either non-existent or where there are strong cultural prohibitions against using them. The sanctions should be imposed if the identified perpetrator commits any further acts of violence against *any family member* and not just the individuals identified at the time of the conference, as in the case of a perpetrator who is no longer physically abusing a child but has now turned the abuse on a spouse. Such action

is necessary in order to protect all family members. This very issue remains a concern in one of our project families. There was a long history of spousal abuse and child abuse by the husband-father in the family. After years of receiving abuse, the wife-mother became an alcoholic, started neglecting the children and then became an active abuser herself. While the history in no way exonerates her for the abuse and neglect she perpetrated on her children, it does provide a familiar context for the abuse along with the fact that she lives in a community where protection for women in her situation is non-existent and calling the police can result in being shunned and subjected to further abuse within the community.

9.9.2 Costs of Conferencing

At the time of collecting the cost figures, the Family Group Decision Making model had been accomplished at no more expense by the Department of Social Services, Division of Child Welfare, than what they normally provide in resources. The heaviest costs, i.e., those that are relevant to the decisions needing to be made at the time of the conference, are up front so have been included in the cost analysis made to date. Future costs will be examined carefully as part of the final follow up of families. The biggest shift in spending, we found, was from foster care to those associated with in-home or relative care of children. The model, we surmise, can be more smoothly implemented and sustained in places where there is an already established system of regular and thorough case reviews and a systematic approach to carrying out plans that works across worker turnover and case transfer.

9.10 Results: What Has Been Learned?

9.10.1 Findings at the Sponsoring/Referring Organization Level

- On-going success requires that family group conferences be acknowledged in legislation;
- The model takes considerable time, preparation and coordination to implement;
- Local advisory involvement is essential in the planning and start-up phase;
- It is best administered by a well-established community organization that can adapt the model to the local culture and conditions;
- The model does not substitute for existing roles of mandated authorities;
- The model is no more costly in financial terms than existing interventions in the host province and in many instances cost reductions are realized;
- The model, when used in situations of family violence, requires a partnership between mandated authorities, families, communities and agencies in a position to help: it is not an attempt to de-criminalize family violence.

9.10.2 Findings at Community Level

- The need for ongoing consultation and training is essential. Consultation to the coordinator by a panel of local people who know the families and who are

knowledgeable in the area of culture and family violence is a key part of this training and consultation;

- Participation educates community members about the abuse that has been happening in particular families and builds awareness of ways for identifying and stopping family violence;
- The conference mobilizes communities resources to wrap around the family rather than slotting the family into pre-existing categories of service;
- The conference serves to build connections among community services and between them and government agencies and individual families.

9.10.3 Findings at the Family Group Conference Level

- The majority of invited family members come to the conference;
- The model brings multiple forms of abuse in the family and intergenerational patterns into the open;
- Most families come up with a satisfactory plan. This includes families where serious, chronic social problems have been experienced by family members;
- The model does not place abused persons at greater risk of abuse than other interventions. Violence does not break out at the conferences even during the family's private deliberation time;
- Abused persons speak up at the conference if they are adequately prepared for the conference and are accompanied by support persons and if they perceive it to be safe to speak up. Especially teens and male abusers should be encouraged to write down their thoughts and feelings before the conference;
- Families do not always want abused persons to live with their abusers and many families are not taken in by promises from the abuser to change for the better overnight;
- The results of the conference are an immediate mobilization of relationships within the family and around it from the professional network.

9.10.4 Potential Long-Range Advantages of Using the Model for the Family

- The true facts of the abuse are more likely to be revealed when those present at the conference know the perpetrator;
- The inclusion of extended family members may surface a greater number of options to choose from in terms of solving the problem in both the short and long range;
- As a united group, the family group may have more clout in negotiating with authorities during and after the conference;
- Re-connection with relatives may generate a sense of family affiliation and identity for individuals who might otherwise have remained estranged from their family;
- Family may have life-long investment in the outcomes with its members, especially children, that does not run out when the children become adults.

9.10.5 Potential Long-Range Disadvantages of Using the Model for the Family

- The abuse may continue in cases where the child is not removed or the couple remains together;
- The abused person may continue to be captive to the "conspiracy of silence" around future or undisclosed levels of kinds of abuse;
- Family members may not follow-through with what they say they will do;
- Some family members may be too intimidated to speak up because certain people are present at the conference;
- The process of arriving at decisions during the family private time may lack fairness in the eyes of some members who may secretly prefer for the authorities to take action.

9.11 Key Ingredients in Using the Model

9.11.1 At the Sponsoring/Referring Organization Level

- Government/non-government partnership that includes mandated authorities, interest groups and informal, acknowledged leaders;
- Clearly and consensually articulated statement of philosophy about family violence and its eradication in relation to the use of the model;
- Legislation and/or clear policy providing for the use of the model including the rights and obligations of involved parties;
- Commitment to the development of consumer and accountability oriented services and supports by sponsoring agencies;
- Existence of a system of thorough and regular case reviews for all cases;
- Emphasis on extended family involvement in preservation, reunification and inclusion efforts;
- Development of locally available and culturally relevant therapy, counselling and family violence related services including in-home supports;
- Making referrals only after serious care and protection concerns have been determined so that the family group are not left to figure out if a problem really exists;
- Creation of flexible and unambiguous funding arrangements that support timely approval of plans.

9.11.2 At the Community Level

- Local ownership through involvement of key government and non-government, formal and informal leaders in joint planning and evaluation;
- Education of the community on how conferencing works;
- Carefully selected panel to advise coordinator on individual families;
- Alignment of the coordinator with a non-government, well-established organization;
- Selection of a coordinator with in-depth knowledge of local community, including language and dialects;

- In situations where families want a conference, working with them to have their cases referred by a sponsoring agency.

9.11.3 At the Family Group Conference Level

- Careful preparations of all who participate in the conference;
- Casting a wide net within the extended family for key members to attend or be represented at the conference;
- Using exclusions sparingly and with great care;
- Opening the conference in culturally appropriate ways and giving a clear statement of purpose for the meeting;
- Fostering the family's ownership of the plan by respecting the privacy of their deliberations;
- Writing the plans in plain language with contingencies spelled out;
- A quick and clear response by the referring worker to the family plans in terms of their adequacy and needed resources.

9.12 Conclusions

We do not want to leave the impression that family group conferences will come anywhere close to the final answer on what to do about family violence. At the same time, we want to make clear that we find no good reason to marginalize the extended family and other key members of the abused person's support network from the decision-making process. To the contrary, we find compelling moral reasons for including them. The question of whether or not family group decision making is preferable to other options depends on a number of factors:

1) What outcomes for the abused persons are discovered and with what these outcomes are to be compared affects the answer. There are scant findings available regarding the results of existing interventions. Typically, the only programs that produce findings for comparison are demonstration projects. The bulk of public funds are used to support programs and services that rarely have to account for the results of what they do.

2) The conditions under which family group conferences are carried out make a difference. No model that is implemented by inadequately trained and supervised staff, with ill-defined program descriptions and objectives, or under other conditions that would subvert the strength and integrity of the application of the model over time, can be expected to produce the same results as one where these conditions are met.

3) Evaluations need to account for both inputs and outputs. It is no good simply discussing the immediate cost without looking at the product that is being purchased for the money. Quality outcomes, like other quality products, may cost more in the

short run. Paying for family members to come together is a new cost category in most places. Having your parents and grandparents and brothers and sisters there to back you up, when you need it, is an outcome that is central to the maintenance of society as we value it.

4) Not all families want or need preservation, reunification or even inclusion. For some, the disintegration of their identities and genealogies is so complete that it cannot be aided by any kind of realignment of its members. But this is a decision that should not be taken frequently and certainly should not be taken without the involvement of the affected persons. Children have a way of asserting their own curiosity about their roots when they get older, and family ties are pretty thick. The discovery of a concerned, even distant, relative who is willing to call one 'family' typically evokes profound emotions about belonging. Even in situations where the new-found tie is not maintained by choice, as is the case between some adopted children and their re-discovered biological parent, the reunion has been shown to have provided something about the person's 'place' in the world that is thought to be ultimately beneficial.

5) Having serious problems does not necessarily mean that you do not know what should be done about the problems. Ask alcoholics what another family member should do about his or her drinking problem and chances are they have very good ideas. Typically, the problem is in the alcoholics' delivering the help and not in their knowing what should be done. Our experience is that most families have some relatives and/or friends who can provide advice and assistance. Often, well before the conference was called, these individuals have known about the problem and have wanted change.

To conclude, empowerment in this model means being treated with respect and given a say over important matters while at the same time having the necessary protection and resources made available to carry out decisions. There appears to be two main threats to the success of this model. Both are similar to the problems inherent in other approaches which have grown out of the recent emphasis on partnerships and community empowerment. First, there are no guarantees that the resources will be made available to the families. We could witness developments similar to those which occurred in some places during the deinstitutionalization movement: you're on your own. Indeed, during these times when policy is being developed by a partnership between economic rationalists and grassroots activists, this threat is very real. Second, authorities cannot relegate their roles to protect people who are the targets of abuse. Protective services for children and adults have a vital role to play in this model, and they cannot simply unload that responsibility onto families. In some situations, we have seen evidence that social workers are willing to take anything the family says as gospel. We believe that this lack of authenticity with the family could put some members at risk.

Families cannot be expected to solve all the problems as the result of a single meeting. We have seen examples where a social work supervisor pronounced the conference as a complete waste of time because a teen refused to cooperate with the

family's plan immediately after the conference. We think that the conference should be viewed as the beginning of a process and that participants need to learn from their experiences. Perhaps they should be allowed to have as many chances as the professionals have had before the conference was scheduled. There remains a fair degree of scepticism by community and family members toward senior bureaucrats who use the word empowerment and toward social workers who now are in the position to insist on standards that they could not achieve when government was providing the service.

The family group conference is not a panacea, but it is a way of revitalizing the sense of togetherness necessary for finding effective and long-term solutions to stop family violence. By bringing the group together around a family, the conference stitches together the commitment of family for its own, the support of community for its members, and the protections of government for its citizens.

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APPENDIX A

REPORT TO FAMILY GROUP DECISION MAKING PROJECT

INCEPTION PHASE, NAIN, LABRADOR, JULY/NOVEMBER 1993

BY

Sharon Taylor and Tony Williamson

Background of Consultants:

Tony Williamson is Director of the Don Snowden Centre for Development Support Communications at Memorial University of Newfoundland. He has 30 years of experience in northern research and community development with aboriginal people in Alaska, Northern Canada and Greenland. He was founding Director of Memorial University's Labrador Institute of Northern Studies, and lived in coastal Labrador for 15 years, including two years in Nain. He has spent the last 8 years in International Development work, in participatory development projects employing the "Fogo Process" in south and southeast Asia.

Sharon Taylor is Assistant Professor at Memorial University's School of Social Work. She has been involved in gender and development and community based economic development in Newfoundland and Labrador for 20 years. She has been involved in International Development for the past 6 years, in southeast asia. She is Vice President of Canada World Youth and recently Chaired a Conference for South East Asian Ministers of Education on Women and Development. She is an associate of the Participatory Development Project of the East West Centre in Honolulu and was recently appointed to the Board of INHURED International in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Objectives of Inception Phase:

The consultants met with the project directors to determine the objectives of the inception phase which were augmented following community meetings in Nain. The objectives were:

- to strengthen the base of community work, already occurring in Nain, in the area of family violence.

- involve as many sectors in the community as possible in identifying the roots of family violence, its history in the community and in identifying existing strategies for change.

- to assist, where necessary, in identifying the vision and goals of community groups and families in preventing and healing family violence.

- to form a planning committee which would determine the viability of the Family Group Decision Making Project and to determine whether the project fits with existing community strategies to end family violence.

- to locate the project within existing structures of the community and to create culturally appropriate mechanisms for administering the project.

- to explore with the community at large and the planning committee ways to adapt the Family Group Decision Making model to the cultural context.

- to introduce participatory video as a catalyst in community analysis of family violence, to validate existing community strategies, to enhance the empowerment of women and to provide a vehicle for the dissemination of information about the Family Group Decision Making project.

Participatory Video Methodology:

- The **Fogo Process,** so called because it started on the island of Fogo, off the northeast coast of Newfoundland, in the late 1960's, was a joint effort between Memorial University of Newfoundland and the National Film Board of Canada. It involves the use of video (originally 16mm film) as a catalyst for change in social development. It is not the production of traditional documentaries or instructional material. It is a participatory process in which facilitators and community share in both the production and utilization of videos. Often change in attitudes and growth take place during this process. The video product itself is subordinate to the process. In the hands of a development worker, facilitator, or animater, the process is simply an innovative tool used in conjunction with other participatory and non formal methods of learning. In order to maintain trust and avoid manipulation, the people in the videos see themselves before anyone else and have the right to edit or delete any material they wish. They are the subjects and it is their perceptions which matter, not those of the facilitator or videographer. Ideally, the people do both the camera work and editing, but where this cannot be done, approval screenings and editing rights still prevail. It is also important in the process to allow people to reflect holistically on their lives; the strengths, joys, memories and celebrations, as well as on problems or specific issues. When sensitively adhered to, this process has provided a mirror which, through viewing of the videos and active discussion and analysis of them, assists in community building, self-confidence, consensus and conflict resolution. Experience has shown that it is particularly effective with people who are isolated or marginalized and who are not normally included in the decision making process.

Activities:

- Provided background on Nain relevant to the project and identified contacts for individuals and organizations.

- Consultation regarding the hiring of the project coordinator for Nain.

- Preliminary meetings with the project co-directors to advise on selection and purchase of video equipment.

- Briefing for project co-directors on origins and application of the Fogo Process.

- Thirty home visits to elders, leaders, women, youth, physically challenged and other community members to discuss the roots of family violence, to learn about existing community strategies and to introduce the project.

- Meetings with 15 community and Inuit regional organizations as well as government agencies and institutions to discuss current problems related to family violence, their responses to these problems, and to introduce the project. Some of the groups involved with family violence issues included:

  Child Welfare committee: Miriam Fox, Maggie Webb, David Harris, Sam Anderson, RCMP, Sid Dicker, 2 child welfare workers. The child welfare committee was instituted by DOSS [Department of Social Services] in consultation with community members. This committee advises on issues related to families, assist in making decisions with family members and staff from DOSS and LIHC. The committee is composed of community elders, DOSS staff, LIHC staff and includes members of the family experiencing problems. Committee members sign an oath of confidentiality .

  Alternative Measures Program: Members include Gail Hall, Sue Webb, Sara Webb, Michelle Kenny, Rosie Brown, Miriam Brown, Christine Baikie, representation from DOSS and the RCMP. This committee has been deemed successful within the community as the incidence of violent acts by young people appears to have diminished considerably over the last year.

  Networking Committee: Chair: Richard Leo. The purpose of this committee is to provide continuity among the various community committees.

  Community Leaders Dialogue: Convened by the Town Council of Nain 1992, community leaders and youth have engaged in an ongoing forum to identify social problems and to develop strategies to resolve them.

  Inspiring Youth Committee: Chair: Sean Lyall. The purpose of this committee is to provide opportunities for youth to explore their own issues and to create alternate activities.

  Torngâsok Cultural Centre: Director: Gary Baikie. This centre has introduced an immersion program for youth and young adults to learn Inuktitut, Inuit life skills and traditional activities.

- Briefing sessions with the Planning Committee, the Nain Women's Group, the Elders and the project coordinator on the Fogo Process.

- Conducted video practice sessions with members of the Nain Women's Group, Single Mothers Group, high school and primary school students and with the coordinator for the project.

- Discussed the Project with the staff of the Okalakatiget Communications Society re assistance with equipment maintenance and teaching of camera operators in the project.

- Assisted the Nain Women's Group in conceptualizing and developing a video on women's ways of healing and sustaining community.

- Assisted grade six students in creating a video on the things they like about Nain and worked with grade twelve students to plan a video on the contributions of young people to the maintenance of community.

- Assisted the Single Mothers Group in developing a video on the life of a single mother in Nain.

- Video interview on the origin of the Nain Women's Group with its founding members.

Major Accomplishments:

- Assisted in the development of goals and objectives of the planning committee.

- Assisted the planning committee in locating the Family Group Decision Making Project within the Labrador Inuit Health Commission.

- Heightened the awareness within Nain of the objectives and procedures of the project

- Assisted in forming the Single Mother's Group

- Assisted the planning committee in finding representation from diverse sectors within the community for the establishment of the project's advisory committee.

- Assisted the planning committee in an analysis of the appropriateness of the Family Group Decision Making Project for Nain.

- Developed activities which engaged diverse sectors of the community in discussions related to family violence and the Family Group Decision Making Project.

- Trained 20 persons in participatory video and assisted the initiation of 6 video productions related to exploring the sources of family violence through such topics as community history, women and youth contribution to community, issues of single parents and the historical role of women elders.

Community Concerns Related to the Project:

- Nain is composed of several "communities" which need to be recognized and represented throughout the project.

- Heavy demands on leadership in Nain. Many leaders have overlapping and exhausting responsibilities. A plethora of committees, already strains the resources of Nain. Community members suggested that the project recruit individuals who are not already overcommitted to existing committees.

- The limited resources which are available to families experiencing family violence are mostly from DOSS, and most of that budget is already designated for particular activities such as tutors, homemakers and family violence prevention. The DOSS budget is very limited and has little flexibility for contingencies.

- Professionals and community members indicated that they were tired of short term demonstration projects which ultimately provided resources to people from outside of the community and to the dominant culture. They indicated that Nain was frequently chosen as a site for short term projects and the people living there often had to live with the problems which such projects generate. There are many forms of betrayal indicated one concerned community member and Nain has had more than its share. In this context, both professionals and community residents emphasized the desire for the Family Group Decision Making Project to be long term and sustainable.

- Residents indicated that constructive problem solving is ongoing in the community. "People are working out of their strength", stated David Harris, the Head Elder of Nain. They are concerned about how Nain is perceived outside of the community and how it is presented by outsiders to the rest of the world. Some perceive that the media often escalates the problems of communities, and projects like this can focus attention on the problems that a community have in order to obtain funding. The media often ignores the strengths.

- Many of the professionals and community members were concerned about the lack of resources available to the project for resourcing the family plans. They noted that they were afraid that the project could set up another cycle of servicing clients. For example, clients could be referred to the Family Group Decision Making Project by the Department of Social Services, and the family plan would identify counselling services from DOSS, which would result in families ending up back at Social Services.

- The initial lack of funds available for translation purposes created concern about the commitment of the project to being culturally appropriate.

Summary:

Although residents of Nain expressed concern about sufficient human and financial resources and the sustainability of the Family Group Decision Making Project, those members of the community who were sufficiently informed about the project, endorsed it and collaborated fully with the consultants in meeting the objectives outlined above. Cautious hope was expressed that the project

would contribute to the communities efforts to deal with the issue of family violence. The introduction of participatory video to facilitate self-analysis and problem solving, quickly engaged the participation of individuals and groups, who displayed creativity and enthusiasm in their initial attempts to use video in interviews and group discussions.

Recommendations:

We recommend a return visit by the consultants before the end of year one, to provide further assistance in the use of participatory video and in the self-evaluation process of the planning and advisory committees.

APPENDIX B
INTERIM DISPOSITIONS OF INDIVIDUAL CASES

What follows is a brief summary of the costs involved and the disposition of each case at the time of writing the report. This is offered in the absence of a uniform cost analysis using figures that could be easily aggregated. The figures for Nain do not include the costs of long distance phone calls which were paid for bye the project. The costs of long distance calls were carried by the Department of Social Services at the other two sites and are included in the figures. Also, very small costs for coffee and related supplies were absorbed by the project in Nain and these costs are not reflected in the following. We believe that the individual cases tell a story of their own.

01
Costs for 8 months prior to conference: $56,335.25 included foster care at $21,484.00 and daycare, counseling and babysitting. Travel to conference: $4,500.00. No costs to project. Costs for 8 months after conference: $56,480.25 at $21,484.00 and day care, babysitting and one time costs of freezer and washer. Instead, all 5 children were moved home with the single parent. At time of final report, all 5 children had been apprehended again.

02
Costs for 8 months prior to and projected after: $12,890.40 for 3 children in foster care. Travel costs to conference: none. No costs to Project. Two children now home with mother and one remains in foster care.

03
Costs prior to conference: none. Travel costs to conference: $1866.07. No costs to Project. Costs after conference: $2,884.22. Case inactive.

04
Costs prior to conference for 11 months: $4,442.90 for child welfare allowance for 5 children and daycare. Travel costs to conference: none. No costs to Project. Costs projected for 11 months after conference: $5,684.16 includes $3,932.50 child welfare allowance, $625.90 for day care, $395.76 for back electricity bill and $730.00 for purchase of electric range. Instead of kin care, all children stayed at home with parents. All now in kin or foster care.

05
Costs calculated for 212 days prior to conference: $12,062.80 for daycare. Travel costs to conference: none. No costs to project. Costs projected for 212 days after conference: $14,062.80 includes $12,062.80 for daycare and $2000 to pay back electricity bill. All children have remained at home.

06
Costs for 6 months prior to conference: $2,136.00 for child welfare allowance for 2 children (kin care). Travel costs to conference: $608.00. No costs to Project. Costs

projected for 6 months after conference, $6,881.00 includes $2,136.00 child welfare allowance babysitting, food, gasoline, treatment/counseling, travel. Two children in kin care. One in group care. Plan never implemented.

07
Costs for 10 months prior to conference: $10,742.00 for foster care. Travel costs to conference: none. Costs to Project: $25.00. Costs projected for 10 months after conference: $10,742 foster care costs. Two children at home with parents one remains in group care.

08
No children involved. No travel costs and no costs to Project.

09
Costs prior to and after conference: none. Travel costs to conference $1,441.86. Costs to project: $19.00. Children remain at home.

10
Costs prior to conference: periodic kin care for two children. Travel costs to conference: $2,814.92. Costs to Project: $21.00 Costs projected after conference: none. No plan developed. Children again in kin care.

11
Costs for 9 months prior to conference: $9,667.80 for 2 children in relative care placements. Travel costs to conference: $2,814.92. Costs to project none. Two children remain in relative care placements on voluntary arrangements.

12
One kinship foster home stay for one of the children prior to conference. Total costs of travel to 2 conferences to DOSS: $140. Costs of holding the two conferences to the Project: $389.00. Costs projected for 12 months: Total $5,140.68 ($176.31 per month for tutoring; $100 per month for transportation; social reunification costs $152 per month; counseling provided at no cost by available mental health service.) Child at home with parent for past year. Further placement prevented.

13
Costs prior to conference; $2,784 child welfare allowance for 2 children to stay in relative placement for 12 months. Total costs to DOSS of holding conference: $767.95. No costs to project. Costs after conference: family assist with furnishings, child welfare pay for transport, back bills and family support services totaling $2,602.20. Two children at home with mother except for a one-week stay with grandmother during which parental involvement increased.

14
Conference canceled the night before it was to be carried out. No data on pre and post costs. Total costs to DOSS of conference travel: $745.25. No costs to project.

15
Cost prior to conference: $812 child welfare allowance to relative. Total costs of travel for family members: $125.50. Costs to Project: $154.44. Costs after conference: $275 clothing for child. Child returned to one parent with increased access to the other.

16
Children stayed with mother but increased access to both patents. Further placement prevented. Total cost of travel to conference: $544.25. No costs to project. Back bills paid, counseling, recreation costs, family support services. Total cost: $2,240.50. Case later closed to Department.

17
Children had been in care approximately 1 year prior to conference for 12 months at approximately $1000 per month per child plus family support worker services at $90 per month for 12 mos. Total prior costs: approximately $25,080.00. Total travel costs for two conferences (initial and a reconvened one): $972.52. Costs to project $380.56. Conference prevented children from being taken back into care. Total projected costs for 12 months after conference: $2,197.00 for assistance in starting up own home, transportation to counseling, allowance for children. Case involved prevention of further placement, increased parental access and return to one biological parent.

18
Two children previously in foster car at approximately $1700 total per month. Total travel costs to conference: $29.00. Costs to project: $68.59. Conference served to bring clarity to son's medical/psychological assessment. Family break-up after conference. Parents establish separate residences. One parent identified as abusive who had previously not been identified. Prevention of placement made possible by plan. Costs after conference: $90.00 for 3 mos allowance to son.

19
Costs prior to conference: 4 days foster care & medical expenses totaling $181.00. Costs of travel to conference: $2,581.00. Costs to Project: $186.30. Costs after conference: transportation $525.00 and tutoring prorated over 6 months $1,173.00.

20
Costs for 11 months prior to conference: $36,622.30 (Foster care 11 months $19,462 and other services $17,160.00). Total travel costs: $1,339.11. Costs to project: $160.90. Post-conference costs projected for 11 months after conference: $26,467.30 (same as above with slight reallocation to facilitate involvement of parent and extended family with children in care). Oldest child emancipated from household.

21
Costs prior to conference: nil/new case to child welfare. Total costs of travel to conference: $336.00. Costs to project: $195.00. Costs projected for 12 months after conference total $2,557.00 for family recreation and transportation, babysitting, respite services, purchase of back debts and purchase of VCR. Attendance at AA, relationship

counseling and support group for mother provided by existing services. Family split up after conference and now back together. Prevention of child placement.

22
Costs for 12 months prior to conference: $29,769.60 which included $16,275.60 for foster care for 3 children and $12,600.00 for costs of behavior management specialist, parenting program and day care. Travel costs to conference: $109.49. Costs to Project: $168.37. Costs projected for 12 months after conference: $1,147.00 for washer, dryer & bed; monthly visits with grandparents $50.00 a month; $245.00 transportation to case conferences; counseling $330 for combination child care/registration/counseling. One child returned to parent from kin care and placement prevented for second child.

23
Costs prior to conference: $9,540.35 ($5,750 per month for group home costs @ 6 weeks and costs of counseling, supervised visits, recreation and respite). Costs of travel to conference: $2420.00. Costs to Project: $131.55. Costs after conference projected for 4 months: $10.975.50 ($2,350.50 for counseling, respites, recreation and damages and $5.750 per month group home costs for 6 weeks). Young person then moved home and remained there for just under a year. In emergency care at the time report published for reasons other than original placement and not involving family violence.

24
Costs prior to conference: Foster car for 12 months for 2 children $8,680.32. Costs for travel to conference: $68.00. No costs to project. Costs projected for 12 months after conference: $8,414.00 includes $1500 for vehicle, and expenses for safety items in home, child safety course, swimming lessons for kids, additional transportation and day care costs. Children remain at home.

25
Costs prior to conference for 11 months: $30,087 includes foster care of $19,406, day care, support staff and transportation of children to school. Costs of travel to conference: $79.10. Costs to project: $30.00. Costs projected for 11 months after conference: $33,875 includes $19.406 foster care, family visits, babysitting, transportation to school, day care, pest control costs, purchase of washer. Two children remain in foster care.

26
Costs prior to conference: unknown (included foster care for two children, transportation for visits, and related services). Costs of travel to conference: $363.07 (transportation, babysitting, someone to run business in absence of owner, professional, consultant services). Costs to project: $255.19. Costs projected after conference $3,820.35 (outings, long distance phone calls, transportation to school, tutoring, daycare, transportation for visits. One child permanent ward, one voluntary ward, 2 children prevented from being placed.

27
Costs prior to conference: nil/new case to child welfare. Total travel costs for conference: $1917.53. Costs to Project: $145.38. Costs projected for 8 months after conference: $5,206.40 for counseling, bus pass, respite services, transportation to special school and transportation to counseling. Prevented placement.

28
Costs for 10 months prior to conference: Group care costs $42,000, transportation out of province $1,042.00 and counseling $900.00 totaling $43,942.00. Total costs for travel to conference: $1,781.37. Costs to Project $25.67. Costs projected for 10 months after conference: $42,000 for group care, transport relative to conference $1761.12, child care for relative to attend conference $20.00, and counseling $900.00 totaling $44,681.12. Instead, child went to relative placement out of province.

29
Costs for 11 months prior to conference: $8,250.00 (foster care and transportation). Costs of travel to conference: $106.75. Costs to Project $212.59. Costs projected for 11 months after conference: $5,713.00 (relative placement costs, homemaker service, recreation, transportation and babysitting and purchase of bed). Instead, child has returned to live with parent. Three other children who were not the subjects of the conference have since been apprehended.

30
New case to child welfare. Costs of travel to conference: $55.88. Costs to Project: $124.38. Costs utilized after conference: $440.00 counseling, $174.75 outings, $213.46 transportation to counseling. Children not apprehended.

31
Costs prior to conference: $3,214.24 (22 days foster care, tutoring and transportation). Costs of travel to conference: $608.73. Costs to Project $87.34. Costs after conference: Total unknown (transportation out of province to relative placement [$283.13]; parenting coach and tutor [$364.00]. Child in kin care placement.

32
Costs prior to conference: rated for relative (kin) placement through several non-ward agreements over period of years. Costs of travel to conference: $175.15. Costs to Project: $83.23. Costs after conference: rated of relative (kin) placement. Placement has since broken down. Child now in foster care at $1,077 per month.

33
Costs prior to conference: regular parole supervision travel to conference: $30.00. Cost to Project: $106.73. Projected costs: no increase. Placement of children made unnecessary.