

# EVALUATION OF FIRST NATIONS INDIVIDUALS AFFAIRS

## Evaluation Temporal/Financial Coverage:

- 2014-15 to 2018-19.
- The total materiality over the scope of the evaluation is approximately \$189 million.
- This evaluation focused solely on First Nations communities, as the Individual Affairs program does not implicate Inuit or Métis populations.

## Evaluation Assessed the Following Domains:

- Relevance
- Effectiveness (Program Delivery)
- Efficiency
- Service Transfer
- Best Practices
- Covid-19 Impacts

## Evaluation Involved 4 Service Offerings/ Sub-Programs:

- 1 Registration and Secure Certificate of Indian Status
- 2 Trust Moneys
- 3 Estates
- 4 Treaty Annuities

### Relevance

- The Evaluation found that there is a continued need for the Individual Affairs program and its constituent service offerings since the branch delivers services that are legislative and/or treaty obligations of Canada.
- Beyond the legislative and treaty obligations of the service offerings, registration was underscored as the “gateway to the department” and the “foundation to everything” by key informants.

### Efficiency

- The Indian Registration System and the Estates Reporting System are outdated and are not meeting the needs of clients and end-users.
- From a project management perspective, the inability to generate reliable data and the inconsistencies of Regional Offices usage of the systems have further contributed to this backlog.
- Organizational structures, staffing levels and processes of the registration program are outdated, inconsistent and do not favour efficient service delivery for clients.

### Service Transfer

- Any transfer of Individual Affairs related services to First Nations communities, is fundamentally complicated by the fact that these services are a statutory obligation under the *Indian Act*, which implies Ministerial accountability.
- The Individual Affairs Branch & Department can work towards eventual service devolution by providing IRAs with increased access to support with the Registration, Secure Certificate of Indian Status, and estates service offerings.

### Effectiveness (Program Delivery)

- ISC Respondents and partner organizations across the regions emphasized that accessing registration and card issuance and Treaty Annuity payments in urban areas remains a barrier.
- There are currently 16 kiosks that offer services off-reserve, respondents emphasized that difficulties in accessing services in urban centres remains an accessibility barrier for cities without a kiosk.
- Access to service offering specific training varies across regions and service offerings.
- Some regions have taken to developing in-house training materials to better support current employees and with on-boarding new employees.

### Best Practices

- The Correctional Services Canada Partnership
- The Alberta Model
- Estates Colour Coded Forms
- Manitoba’s Online Database System

### Covid-19 Impacts

#### Challenges:

- Closure of band offices to members of the public as Individual Affairs services were not deemed essential.
- As a result of the switch to working from home, many registrations were unable to proceed due to the fact that the process requires a physical scan to upload into the IRS system.

#### Positive Impacts:

- National and regional offices collaborated and adapted to the new Covid-19 realities to continue to provide uninterrupted services to First Nations.

# MANAGEMENT RESPONSE AND ACTION PLAN (MRAP)

**Recommendation #1:** Work with First Nations partners to create a training program, or programs, for Indian Registration Administrators (IRAs), in which they receive increased access to the Indian Registration System and are eventually able to complete simple registrations on-reserve. Increased responsibility should come with a renewed compensation model and also expand their knowledge of the Estates service offering to be a point of contact in community.

**Action:** Updates will be made to the National Training Module to include a progressive approach to build IRA capacity in registration activities & status card issuance. **(Date:** Q2 2022-23)

**Action:** Establish a working group to guide the development of an expanded role for IRA's in estates administration. **(Date:** Q3 2022-2023)

**Action:** Options for a renewed compensation model will be developed, with input from IRA's and regional offices, and informed by best practices from other Departmental and Government of Canada funding authorities. **(Date:** Q4 2022-23)

**Recommendation #3:** Develop performance measurement tools that measure the Branch's ability to meet client service standards for the service offerings.

**Action:** Updating the information on the website. This work will be guided by user experience testing and will be done in collaboration with the ISC communications team. **(Date:** FY 2022-23)

**Action:** Working with the IMB on a review and options analysis to enhance client service via the department's Public Enquiry Contact Centre. **(Date:** Q2 2022-23)

**Action:** Implementing GCNotify, to allow the program to send text/emails to applicants to highlight errors or issues where information is incomplete. **(Date:** Q3 2022-23)

**Action:** Further develop an advanced and customized dashboard based on Estate case loads and activities nationally and regionally. **(Date:** Q4 2021-22)

**Action:** Through the replacement of the Treaty Payment System, integrate performance measurement reporting and dashboards for payments and events both on and off reserve. **(Date:** Q4 2022-23)

**Action:** Develop and implement tools and/or system enhancements to facilitate and measure on going and recurring band trust account transactions under various legislative authorities. **(Date:** Q4 2022-23)



**Recommendation #2:** Building on on-going data management and data system efforts, and with IM/IT support, work with the Chief Data Officer (CDO) and Chief Information Officer (CIO) to develop a clear data system strategy plan to address the systems issues in the program. This should include: focus on preserving data integrity, clear guidance on consistent utilization of systems, flexibility in user access levels, ensuring systems are GBA Plus compliant from a data collection perspective and safe storage of Individual Affairs data and data systems.

**Action:** The Digital Application Solution that is in development will modernize the way the program receives and processes applications. **(Date:** Q4 2023-24)

**Action:** The Treaty Payment System is being replaced to meet the current and future needs of the program and improve service delivery, leveraging authoritative source data where available to ensure data integrity and duplication of effort. **(Date:** Q4 2022-23)

**Action:** IAB is developing data sharing agreements to facilitate opportunities to bundle additional services to First Nations and individuals that approach ISC for a specific service. **(Date:** Q1 2022-23)

**Action:** IAB is digitizing historical band trust account records (1838-1983) and making the records available to the respective First Nations electronically. **(Date:** Q3 2022-23)

**Action:** IAB has developed and is deploying a solution to service desks (kiosks, Regions, Headquarters, Public Enquiries Call Centre) to allow at a glance, all authoritative data relating to an individual. **(Date:** Q1 2022-23)

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**Recommendation #4:** Provide more clarity and precision to ISC Living Estate administrators by updating training and guidance materials to better support administrators on the management of property and financial affairs of dependent adults.

**Action:** Undertake a cost and benefit analysis in order to develop a recommendation for continuing to administer living estates by ISC officials or to pursue a model whereby ISC transfers responsibility and funding to provincial or territorial public trustees and guardians. (Date: Q3 2022-23)

**Action:** In the short term, ISC will survey regions to determine key operational needs and develop and implement a plan accordingly. (Date: Q2 2022-23)

**Recommendation #5:** Create a renewed National Workload Management system for Registration and explore options for addressing registration backlog by developing a consistent strategic national approach. This would require updated tools to allow for digital processing of documents.

**Action:** The Digital Applications Solution will allow for applications to be received directly in the system which will result in a national queue for Registration and SCIS applications. (Date: Q4 2023-24)

**Action:** Develop and implement measures to improve tracking of new workload and processing times of current applications. (Date: Q4 2023-24)

**Action:** Create a process to monitor, realign and triage work as appropriate across HQ and regions with a goal that the oldest file in the queue is no more than one year old. (Date: Q4 2023-24)

**Action:** Develop tools, training and protocols to shift workloads to regions where capacity permits. (Date: Q4 2023-24)



**Recommendation #6:** Work with Regions, IM/IT supports, Human Resources and the Chief Finances Results Delivery Office to undertake and lead an organizational capacity assessment across the service offerings, specifically focusing on human resource capacity.

**Action:** The program will undertake a systematic assessment of its operational and organizational capacity across all regions and HQ. The assessment will also include a review and analysis of the Department's Public Enquiries Call Centre (PECC) to inform service enhancements to the current model. (Date: Q4 of 2022-23)

**Recommendation #7:** Bring services closer to urban clients by expanding access to client services in urban areas. This includes, but is not limited to, digitizing access to service, urban treaty annuity payment events, and expansion of trusted source partnerships.

**Action:** Engage relevant areas of the department who fund urban population to explore expanded service models for IAB service offerings, leveraging existing resources and networks. (Date: Q4 2022-23)

**Action:** Develop options for an expansion of the IRA model or a corresponding service offerings in a different model off reserve. (Date: Q4 2022-23)

**Action:** Digitizing the treaty payment form to allow for on-line/digital submission. (Date: Q3 2022-23)

**Action:** Continuing to expand the range of offerings at ISC service kiosks to allow treaty pay issuance and minors account pay outs. (Date: Q4 2022-23)