

First Nation Dog Control Infrastructure Introduction

*First Nation
Veterinary Infrastructure Program*

November 23, 2005
(Updated May 1, 2009)

CAID

Preface:

First Nation Dog Control Infrastructure Introduction was written as an introduction to dog control workshops in a First Nation veterinary infrastructure program for the Anishinaabe Nation in Treaty #3.

Dr R. G. Herbert

Shared With:

- Anishinaabe Nation in Treaty #3

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Introduction:

Most modern dogs in Canada are not indigenous to Canada. Northern European dogs arrived with the Vikings somewhere between the 900-1200's. These dogs were limited mostly to Hudson's Bay and its river derivatives, Baffin Island, and Newfoundland-Labrador. The more complete introduction of modern dogs occurred when Europeans settled in Canada.

There is some, but very little, evidence of dogs, in Canada before their European introduction. Canada currently has wolves, coyotes, and foxes, but no wild dog packs. First Nation teachings indicate there were dogs in First Nation communities before European introduction but these dogs were discouraged by colonists and have disappeared. The circumpolar Inuit brought dogs with them when they settled Canada's arctic and some of these Northern dogs remain today.

The fact that most of today's dogs are not indigenous to Canada explains why there are cultural difficulties in many First Nation communities regarding the disposition of dogs. Elder teachings that successfully guide communities with wildlife issues are generally ineffective with genetically-altered, European-descended dogs. These dogs were literally man-made for very specific European roles. Because of this, dog control in First Nation communities is a man-made (settler) problem.

What is Missing?

The question is not "if" we need dog control in Northwestern Ontario First Nation communities, but how do we set up a permanent solution within the reserve community setting. The process to develop a solution for dog control can be simplified to the acquisition of knowledge to generate choices that can be used in a community. First though, let us rename dog control and call it dog management. Dog management is a much more accurate description of what we need.

The goal of dog management is to maintain a healthy, safe, vibrant community. This is accomplished through an understanding of issues and choices, developing an action plan, and then implementing the action plan. Action plan solutions for dog management are implemented through public education, veterinary, regulatory, and enforcement services.

Understanding issues and choices in dog management in non-native communities is dependent on public education services performed mostly by the humane society. Unfortunately, humane society services are provincial and so do not exist for federal Northwestern Ontario First Nation communities. While humane societies do not exist for Ontario's First Nation communities, they do exist in Ontario. The Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) quotes statistics that one pregnant female dog can give rise to 69,000 dogs within 6 years. (They also give statistics that one pregnant cat can give 420,000 cats within 7 years.) There is no way a community can win the dog management battle against these odds without an action plan. The action plan 100 years of humane society work has produced is simple; spay and neuter all dogs not used for breeding, find a home for stray dogs, humanely euthanise unwanted dogs, and teach people how to manage their dogs. In this non-native action plan both the dog population and the community's dog pack aggression problems are solved.

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There are four fundamental services in the OSPCA's dog management infrastructure. They are public education (teaching, dog rescue and adoption), veterinary (spay/neuter, euthanasia), bylaw (municipal, provincial, and federal legislation), and bylaw enforcement services (police/animal officers, dog pounds, and the judicial system). Please note: These are non-native solutions based on Euro-Canadian culture. First Nations need to develop their own action plan for their own dog management infrastructure. A First Nation dog management infrastructure will also need fundamental services to implement a First Nation action plan.

Source of the Solution:

Non-native institutions and organizations imposing non-native solutions on nation communities using a charity-OSPCA format will NEVER provide permanent solutions. The real solution lies in developing a respectful, traditional First Nation dog management infrastructure that will be owned/operated by nation communities. The foundation of this cultural respect lies in first obtaining guidance from First Nation Elders. Solutions can then be discovered with a bidirectional sharing of First Nation tradition, needs, and resources with professional knowledge, expertise, and resources. This sharing, or consultation, will define roles for dogs within nation communities, needed community services for dogs to function in those roles, and it will define available resources from which to build nation community dog management infrastructure services. Essentially, meaningful consultation will provide the action plan, or framework, for First Nation dog management infrastructure. With a defined action plan, First Nations can then build services and programs needed to fulfill their dog management infrastructure.

Unfortunately, we can not write a framework model here that has not yet been developed and ratified by Elders. So, we will continue with this very brief discussion on some of the modern services available to non-native communities that will need to be adapted for nation community use. Non-native dog management infrastructure is based on four types of services; veterinary, by-law, enforcement, and public education services.

Veterinary Service:

Veterinary services are facilitated through a pre-existing veterinary infrastructure. All animals on the planet can be categorized into farm, companion (pet or working pet-type animals), or wild animals (nuisance, harvested, or protected). The veterinary infrastructure for animals in any of these three categories has been developed solely on the basis of providing for human needs. (For example: To have safe disease-free meat we keep the cattle healthy.) In this manner, veterinarians indirectly care for people and communities by treating animals. Veterinary services are about a healthy, safe, vibrant community. Unfortunately, there is no pre-existing veterinary infrastructure within Northwestern Ontario First Nation communities through which to provide needed veterinary services.

Veterinary services are considered a fundamental community infrastructure in the developed world.

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Maintaining a quality disease-free meat supply, disease prevention, companion¹ animal population control, nuisance wildlife control, farm animal production, and the prevention of animal suffering are what make veterinary services essential in today's society. Northern Ontario's First Nation communities have little or no access to veterinary infrastructure services. In fact, veterinary-related regulations essentially prevent First Nation access to veterinary services on reserves. A First Nation veterinary infrastructure was not visualized by Canada as a vital aspect of community health for First Nations. We now know that it is vital!

Returning to the dog management issue, First Nations have a right to access necessary services to provide a healthy and safe community for their members. Spay/neuter, rabies vaccination, and parasite control veterinary services currently do not exist for First Nation Reserves. However, veterinarians can provide some degree of interim basic mobile veterinary services to First Nation communities utilizing legislatively-restrictive non-native veterinary infrastructure. Unfortunately, without going through the development of a First Nation dog management infrastructure, these interim measures will not provide permanent solutions.

Temp-laws (by-laws):

First Nations will need a set of guidelines that ensure their citizens are not left at a disadvantage due to aggressive or nuisance dogs; and, that ensure dog owners take responsibility for their animal ownership. In non-native communities and under the *Indian Act*, these guidelines are referred to as dog control bylaws.

The word "bylaw" has many negative overtones for nation communities and citizens. However, a dog control bylaw can be based on oral law and tradition as taught by Elders. In essence, a dog control bylaw can be a written temporal interpretation of traditional oral law. For the sake of discussion, let us use the word "temp-law" in place of bylaw (for temporal law). So, now we can talk about First Nation dog management temp-laws. If nation citizens can not respect other community members or care for their dogs in a manner which meets standards taught by Elders, a set of temporal guidelines must be written and enforced to maintain the health and safety of the community.

Written dog management temp-laws and their enforcement services are important in First Nation dog management. However, they can not work on their own. They need modern First Nation public education and veterinary services to complete the circle for functioning First Nation dog management infrastructure.

Conclusion:

We have an obligation to manage dogs to keep communities safe. Public education, veterinary, temp-law, and enforcement services are tools to meet those obligations. Vaccination, parasite control, and surgical sterilization (spay/neuter) do not hurt or change a dog; and, modern dogs can not survive in the wilderness, they can not control their own population as wolves do, and they are not part of the

¹ Companion animals are traditionally considered to be dogs and cats.

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natural food chain. Modern dogs need us to care for them. We have an obligation to keep dogs safe.

Dog management temp-laws and services are not cruel or oppressive. They simply help communities stay safe and healthy. With a culturally-based First Nation action plan for dog management infrastructure, First Nations can begin to make their communities safe for both citizens and dogs.

With a thorough understanding of the traditional law, issues and choices, solutions for dog management are within reach.