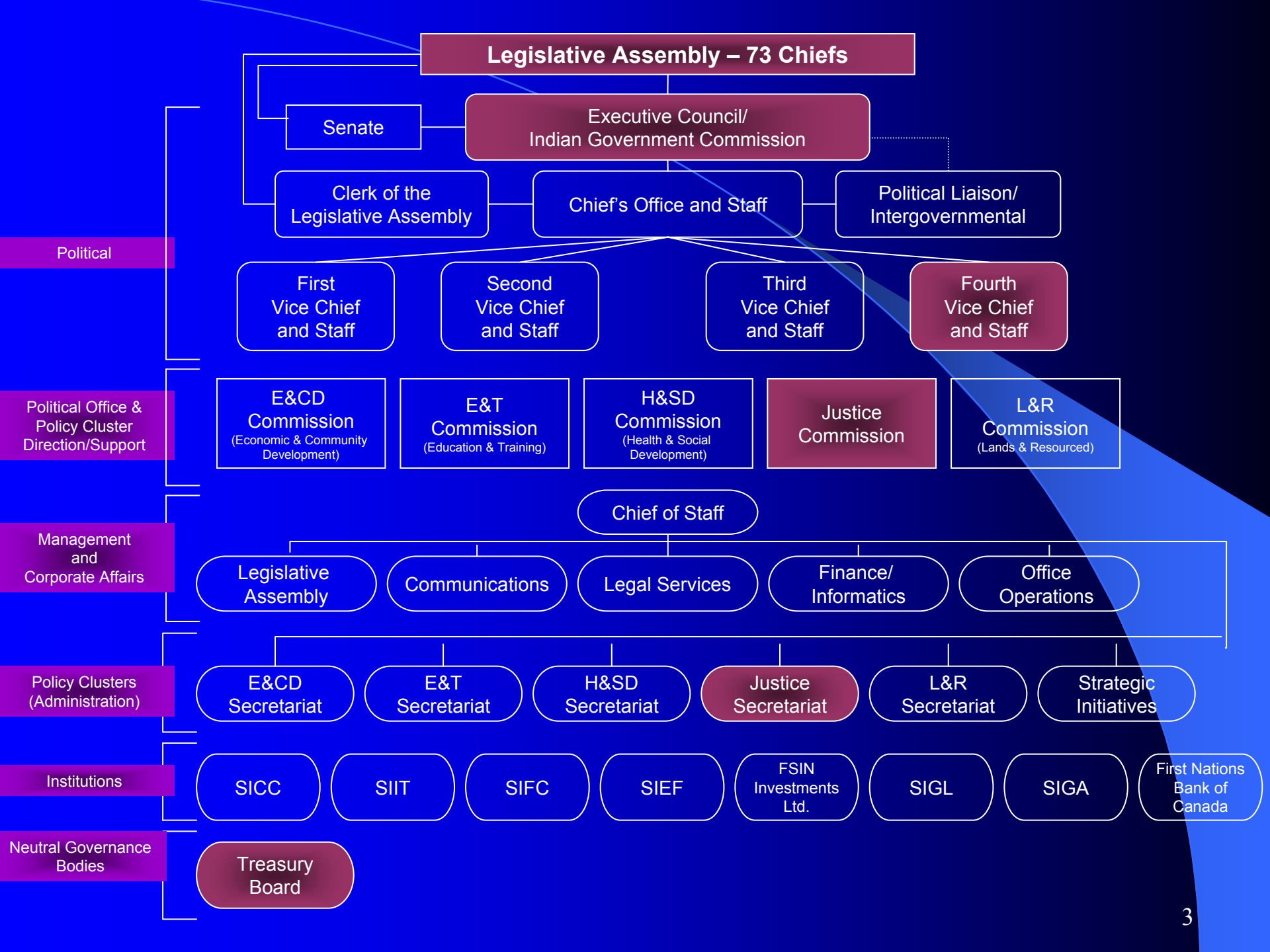


Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations – Special Investigations Unit

CACOLE Conference 2002

FSIN Overview

- Formed in 1946 as the Union of Saskatchewan Indians.
- In 1958, the Union re-organized to become the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians (FSI); renamed as the FSIN in 1982.
- Primary objective is the promotion, protection, and implementation of Treaty Rights.



Vetting and Decision-Making Process



Special Investigations Unit

Origins and Overview

Origins

- **January 2000** – 2 frozen bodies of First Nations men found on outskirts of Saskatoon.
- **February 2000** – Darrel Night, a First Nations man, went public with revelation that 2 Saskatoon PS officers had dropped him off recently in the same area on a -25°C evening.
- FSIN Justice established a Helpline to receive calls of similar incidents involving police. Overwhelmed with calls, the Helpline was shut down shortly thereafter.

Origins cont'd

- Sask Justice ordered formation of a Task Force made up of RCMP members.
- FSIN Justice Commission met with the Task Force; the chiefs told the RCMP directly that *they did not trust them to do a proper investigation*.
- Justice Commission chiefs directed FSIN Justice to hire outside investigators.

Origins cont'd

- **March 2000** - FSIN Chief Perry Bellegarde and Vice-Chief Lawrence Joseph met with 2 private investigators about these cases. The investigators officially began their work in April 2000.
- At the same time, the Helpline was re-activated, and the investigators began responding to calls received.
- Saskatchewan chiefs collectively provided start-up funding for SIU: \$298,000.

Mandate

- To provide First Nations members who have been mistreated by law enforcement officers with a complainant-friendly alternative to mainstream offices of public complaints;
- To ensure that complaints are investigated thoroughly and that complainants are apprised accordingly; and
- To provide complainants with such protection from retaliation or other discomfort as they require.

Guiding Principle

- ***Each complainant owns his or her experience, and has a right to determine how information is forwarded. No steps will be taken without authorization of the complainant.***

Establishing credibility...

- **with First Nations:**

- Aboriginal status of SIU staff
- backgrounds of investigators
- utilization of local persons for introductions and assistance with cultural sensitivities and language barriers

- **with police forces & gov't agencies:**

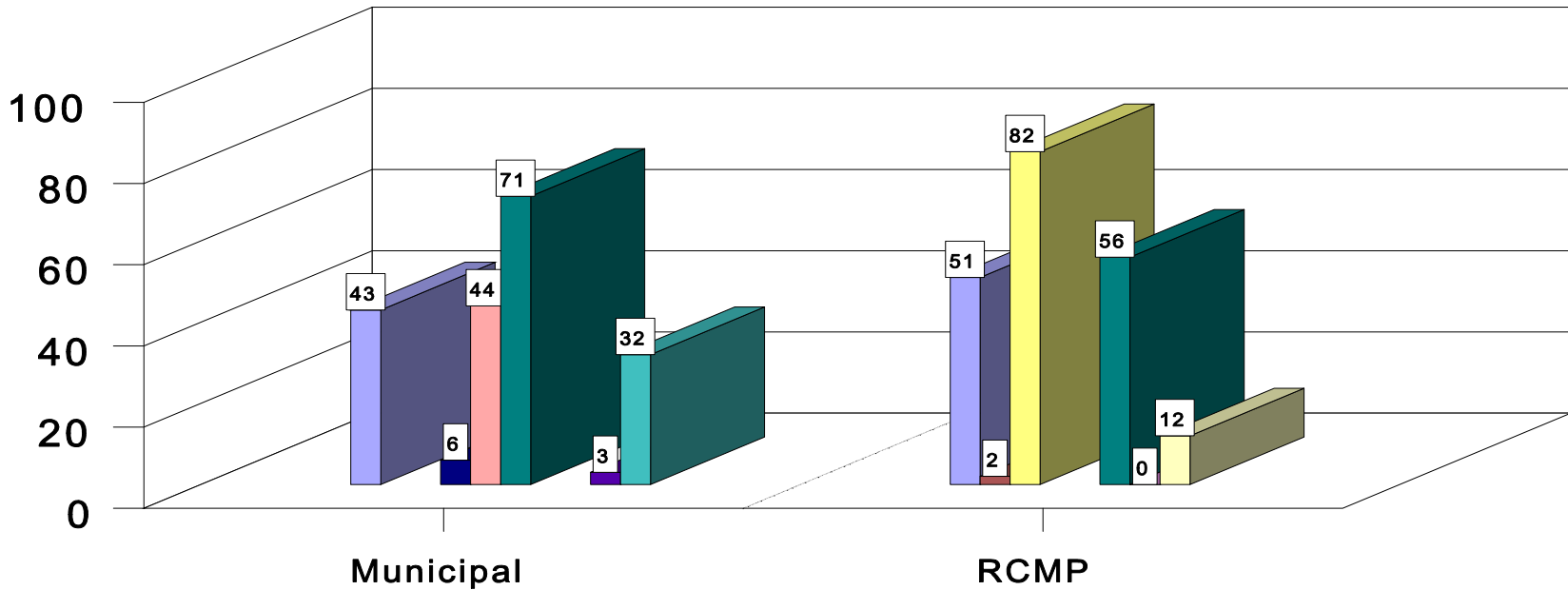
- RCMP policing experience of Senior Investigator
- his police contacts/network

Operational Approach

- Ensure complainants understand available avenues of due process
- Can be accessed after hours, when necessary
- Travel *to* the prospective complainant, in town and elsewhere in province
- Use local people for translation, protocols
- Provide comfortable environment for disclosing complaint
- Act as liaison between police & complainant

FSIN Special Investigations Unit

Statistics Report as of September 4, 2002



- | | | |
|---|---------------------------|------------|
|  | Still Under Investigation | FSIN |
|  | Still Under Investigation | P.C.C. |
|  | Still Under Investigation | RCMP |
|  | Still Under Investigation | Task Force |
|  | Still Under Investigation | Treble |
|  | Concluded | FSIN |
|  | Concluded | P.C.C. |
|  | Concluded | RCMP |
|  | Concluded | Task Force |
|  | Concluded | Treble |

Challenges

- Under-resourcing, financial and human
- Unable to access completely files under investigation
- Mobility/migration of some complainants
- Skepticism & apprehension of complainants based on perceptions and experiences
- Maintaining trust of police liaisons, unions
- Demands of First Nations leaders to be updated on confidential files

Indicators of Success

- Established trust and credibility—First Nations people have faith in SIU
- General co-operation of police
- Established working relationship with senior police officials
- Anecdotes of better police response
- Empowerment of First Nations citizens—know they will be believed, are willing to affirm their rights with police

Indicators of Success cont'd

- Coroner's inquests improved for Aboriginal peoples:
 - equal jury representation
 - more prudent investigation
 - fees for families' legal representation
- SIU's work led to creation of justice inquiry process in province
- justice inquiry Commissioners have confidence to work officially with SIU
- Positive media response

Long-term Goals

- Establish permanent complainant-friendly process for First Nations/Aboriginal peoples
- This process would have to involve civilians directly in investigations
- All police agencies should fall under one umbrella internal complaints process