

First Peoples Child & Family Review

An Interdisciplinary Journal Honoring the Voices, Perspectives and Knowledges of First Peoples through Research, Critical Analyses, Stories, Standpoints and Media Reviews

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Foreword

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Introduction to The Call to Action

In 2009, The Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research (The Centre) supported a rigorous systematic review to identify promising practices to improve health outcomes for First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities. The full report, “Healthy Moms, Babies and Children: Improving the Health of Aboriginal Populations in Canada” is available at www.research4children.com.

An analysis of the most recent evidence indicated that investments could be made in five areas to improve the well being of Aboriginal peoples. The Call to Action blends the research and rationale to recommend investments

- Preconception and Sexual Health
- Midwifery and other Birthing Support Models
- Parenting
- Child and Youth Leadership and Empowerment
- Community and School-Based Lifestyle Strategies

In consultation with The Centre’s Aboriginal Advisory Committee, the Call to Action was developed with the intention that it be used for advocacy, program planning, policy development and future research. You are invited to share

your response to the Call to Action through an online survey available at <http://www.research4children.com/admin/contentx/default.cfm?PageId=88864>.

This is the second issue honoring the partnership between The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada and The Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research (The Centre). The Centre is a not-for-profit, charitable organization that is primarily funded by the Alberta Ministry of Children and Youth Services and operates arms-length from government. Our mission is to collaboratively develop, support and integrate evidence across sectors and disciplines to provide a strong foundation for identifying and promoting effective public policy and service delivery to improve the well-being of children, families, and communities.

For more information about The Centre please visit our website at www.research4children.com.

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Editorial

Exploring Complexities in the Research Involving First Peoples Children, Families and Communities

Marlyn Bennett

The lives of First Peoples peoples in Canada are complex. The issues facing individuals who advocate, work and do research with and for Aboriginal populations are complex as well. This issue of the First Peoples Child & Family Review journal looks at a number of the complicated issues facing First Peoples communities and those that work and do research for and with First Peoples peoples. This issue of the journal is comprised of 8 submissions. The first submission is a poem on new beginnings while the following articles focus on a range of issues relating to the challenges of working in urban Aboriginal communities where poverty is ever present. Important to identity development is the need for culturally restorative measures that are more appropriate when working with Aboriginal children and youth who are transitioning out of care toward adulthood. Equally complicated is working in northern communities where the government continues to rely upon social workers from the South to work with Inuit families. Included among the submissions is an article exploring the institutional aspects of residential schools and how these earlier experiences contribute to the overrepresentation of First Peoples people in the prison and other institutional systems and reflect the social statistics that define the Aboriginal experience in Canada. A focus on bullying and whether children can individually assent to research is also presented in this issue. Bullying is a complex problem for many children, especially aboriginal children, and the solutions for dealing with it are compounded when the bullying happens among children of the same race. More and more researchers want to do research with children however there are ethical considerations around conducting research that involves children. The articles upon which these

complex issues highlight are each summarized briefly below.

Challenges faced by staff working with Aboriginal people residing in urban areas that are characterized by high levels of poverty are rarely addressed in the literature. Jason Brown and Cheryl Fraehlich's article, *Aboriginal family services agencies in high poverty urban neighborhoods: Challenges experienced by local staff* (pp. 10-27) starts off this issue of the journal by examining unique challenges facing three Aboriginal family services agencies operating in the downtown core of one Canadian city which deals with such realities on a day-to-day basis. To get at the heart of understanding these challenges Brown and Fraehlich asked a simple question of 44 individuals employed by these urban agencies. The question was, "what are the challenges of working in your community? Using participatory methods, the authors used the assistance of the participants in analyzing the responses. The participants' responses were grouped into twelve clusters on the challenges of working in the community. The participant's responses included: the lack of privacy, the depth of need, how their work affects them personally, maintaining healthy boundaries, knowing how best to be helpful, addressing structural issues, meeting various needs, dealing with substance-related problems, gang activity, negative outside influences, working with government and working with limited funding. Each of these clustered responses is described and analyzed using bridging indices and comparisons to the available literature. We learn Aboriginal communities are in desperate need of a full range of family services to address real community and family healing but typically face funding discrepancies and inequitable political and social treatment.

In addition to these inequalities, the challenges facing employees working in poor urban areas typically include poor housing, few educational and employment opportunities as well as social segregation. These challenges in turn lead to stress and burnout by staff because the funding provided does not adequately assist in treating the symptoms of crime, substance use and/or the structural inequality, which typically arise, from oppression and the disadvantaged position of Aboriginal people generally in Canadian society. Challenges experienced by Aboriginal employees working with Aboriginal families in an urban context are rarely addressed in the literature and the authors advocate for further exploration of these issues as well as the need to change the inequitable funding arrangements that continue to disadvantage urban Aboriginal families and the staff vesting in working with them.

Developing a culturally restorative approach to Aboriginal child and youth development: Transitions to adulthood, by Estelle Simard and Shannon Blight (pp. 28-55) extolls on the importance of culturally restorative practices as a developmental tool that can assist children and youth in care in developing and recapturing their rightful identities as Aboriginal adults. Culturally restorative practice, as explained by Simard and Blight, is based on work by the Weechi-It-Te-Win Family Services that build upon the sacredness of cultural teachings by careful reflecting on the family and the community's natural protection networks. The paper reviews the literature on culturally relevant interventions and approaches to service provision that are geared toward development achievements for Aboriginal youth. The themes of Aboriginal development within the context of Aboriginal worldviews, cultural structures, cultural attachment, identity development, the sacredness of relationships and most importantly developmental achievements are explored.

A brief review of the genesis behind the development of residential schools is provided by Julia Rand's in *Residential schools: Creating and continuing institutionalization among Aboriginal peoples in Canada* (pp. 56-65). While the coverage of this phenomena is not new, it helps readers to consider the ideology behind why these schools developed they way they did. Rand demonstrates the association between First peoples' experiences in residential school and subsequent institutionalization of Aboriginal people in other Canadian systems beyond the residential school era. In trying to understand why Aboriginal people are overrepresented across

many institutionalized systems, Rand analyzed the notion of Total Institutions developed by Erving Goffman (a Canadian-born sociologist and writer). The objective of the Total Institutions is to destroy a person's ability to fully achieve selfhood and exercise autonomy over their life and their cultural identity. Residential schools utilized this approach by first stripping children of their identity, clothing, and possessions and then by subjecting them to extreme cleansing, disinfecting, and haircuts and issuing identifications numbers rather than addressing them by the names given to them by their families. Secondly, the child's social and cultural structures inside and outside of residential schools were altered significantly through segregation from both sibling members inside and families and communities outside the school. The Total Institutional approach produced individuals who experienced a complete loss of identity in themselves. This also resulted in lost relationships with family outside residential schools and diminished perceptions about their own abilities to exercise personal agency over their actions important for decision-making. Ultimately, Rand posits, that, such an approach made it difficult for many children to function effectively outside of this authoritarian environment. As a result, many Aboriginal people have gravitated toward similar environments upon leaving residential care. This tendency to gravitate toward the familiar provides one explanation as to why residential schools survivors might be found in disproportionate numbers in various types of institutions (i.e. such as correctional institutions) including overrepresentation in the statistics related to family violence, battered women's shelters, and the child welfare system.

In *Stuck in the ways of the south: How meritocracy, bureaucracy, and a one-size-fits-all approach to child welfare fails Nunavut's children* (pp. 66-82), Patricia Johnston examines the efficacy in the way the Nunavut government is meeting responsibilities in servicing and protecting Inuit children, youth and families in the north. The author wrote this article in response to public opinion that played out in the media regarding problem areas identified by the Auditor General in an evaluation report regarding child, youth and family services in Nunavut and the need to address staffing shortages in the social work field. In particular, Johnston questions the government's approach of consistently relying upon the hiring of Quallunaat (non-Inuit) social workers that are educated in southern universities who then, in turn, enforce southern values and expectations on Inuit children and families. Furthermore, Johnston contends that modeling

a northern child welfare system premised on southern values and education continues to maintain a colonial structure that has been in place for too long. Inuit people were characterized as having neither the education nor the merit for holding executive and/or senior management positions within government, particularly as it relates to child welfare services despite the Nunavut government's target of employing 53% Inuit by 2012. The lack of Inuit social workers reflects "new racism" within the Government of Nunavut because it continually places high value on the principles of individual achievement and meritocracy. This approach, Johnston says, continues to protect white privilege and leaves minority groups disadvantaged and employed in subordinate positions. She notes that education in the north remains mainstream despite the fact that it incorporates First Nations context into the curriculum however this context does not fit cross-culturally in an Inuit context. Through interviews with Quallunaat and Inuit social workers in the territory, Johnston demonstrates how the Government of Nunavut has failed to protect Inuit children and in the process has continued to marginalize Inuit people who are overlooked and viewed as incapable of holding positions related to directors, managers and supervisors. The overall result is a child welfare system that lacks cultural relevance to the Inuit.

The next article moves to bullying issues among children and youth in Australia. Written by Juli Coffin, "Make them stop it": *What Aboriginal children and youth in Australia are saying about bullying* (pp. 83-98), explores and summarizes a three year research program that contextualizes bullying in an Aboriginal cultural environment. Research was conducted among 140 children and youth from three locations within the Yamaji region of western Australia. The author worked with an Aboriginal steering group to conduct and pilot an interview guide and utilized Aboriginal research assistants to conduct interviews and focus groups with children and youth. The responses were analyzed and shared with the schools and communities in these three regions. The results shed light on the frequency, language and feelings associated with bullying. What, why, where does bullying occur and who do children and youth go to when they want to tell someone about bullying and more importantly what children and youth want done about bullying. One major unique finding that resulted from this study centers on the intra- rather than inter-racial aspects of bullying. Aboriginal children and youth tend to be bullied by other Aboriginal children and youth and

that this type of bullying tends to hurt more than inter-racial bullying. The children shared that they felt particularly threatened inter-racially when they entered another Aboriginal community or school. Better clothing and or scholarly accolades were cited as some of the factors that have led to jealousy, which is often expressed through aggression and bullying. Addressing this type of bullying will require commitment to building strong/positive racial identity among children and youth about their Aboriginality and addressing the factors around inequality that exist among and between some of the Aboriginal communities.

"Why do I need to sign it? Issues in carrying out child assent in school-based prevention research within a First Nation community (pp. 99-113), by Lola Baydala, Sherry Letendre and Lia Ruttan, Stephanie Worrell, Fay Fletcher, Liz Letendre and Tanja Schramm, focuses on unique ethical challenges around the involvement of First Nations children in research initiatives. Research for a community-based evaluation of a cultural program (Nimi Icinohabi) delivered to young children and youth in grades 3, 4, 7 and 8 was conducted in the Alexis Nakota Sioux community in western Canada. At issue is the ethical rules around child assent which are based on western notions of what is ethical however it was determined that culturally, from an Aboriginal perspective, the ethical rules around child assent were viewed as particularly inappropriate within the community in which this research took place. The challenges relate to obtaining the free and informed consent of parents and guardians in order to involve children in research. Informed consent in research with children involves two parts: parental consent and child assent. The authors explain that parental consent refers to a parent or guardian's informed consent to allow the researcher to ask the child if they agree to participate in research; their agreement is called child assent. Baydala and her colleagues further note that in cases where consent is received from the parent or guardian but the child does not give assent, the child's wishes are respected and research is or is not carried out based on the individual child's wishes. It was noted that asking children to make a decision that rightfully belonged with the whole community to decide was not appropriate. The Elders in this community viewed child assent as giving children adult responsibilities before they are ready to take them on. The western practice of obtaining child assent was viewed as role reversal that can jeopardize families and contribute to increased child welfare involvement, and ultimately affects the family's

kinship responsibility, respect and well-being. It was found that child assent procedures based on western ethics emphasizes individualism which conflicts with community norms that center on the community's collective responsibility for children. This was seen as disrespectful of the collective norms of the community. The elders note that such practices put children and youth in culturally unsafe positions and goes against the grain of the community's ethics. Community norms are in place to protect children. The decision was that ethical processes premised on western ideology should not continue to contribute to the undermining of community and cultural norms. To do so is to replicate and reinforce colonial systems that have done great harm to Aboriginal families in the past.

We end the journal by looking at issues that impact on Aboriginal youth in care. *Cannabis use among Aboriginal youth in the non-Aboriginal protection services system* (pp. 114-125) explored the risky behaviour between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth in care in the Province of Ontario. Youth participants between the ages of 14 and 17 were randomly drawn from three child protection agencies. This particular age group was targeted primarily because the researchers could maximize the measurement of adolescent health risk behaviours associated with substance use. The researchers indicate that the youth who identify as Aboriginal did not differ from non-Aboriginal youth, on their report of lifetime specific child maltreatment types, nor on their exposure to intimate partner violence. Aboriginal youth also scored similarly with non-Aboriginal

youth on the physical abuse subscale; the sexual abuse scale; the emotional neglect scale as well as the physical neglect scale. However the study reveals the importance of building strong relationships between youth and caregivers. The data reveals that Aboriginal youth who report negative identification with their caseworker were five times as likely to use cannabis in the past 12 months compared to Aboriginal youth who reported a more positive relationship with their caseworkers. Having a positive relationship with your caseworker is identified as being a protective factor in regarding to abstaining from cannabis use among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth in the child welfare system. The implications of this study center on considering caseworkers as potential attachment figures that might be helpful in stemming the use of cannabis among Aboriginal youth and salient to understanding the outcomes of Aboriginal youth.

Of course the answers to the issues and questioned identified in each of these articles are not easy but the articles evidence that there are solutions to these complex issues. They are rooted in cultural approaches that are restorative and protective in purpose. These ways of being recognize the importance of relationship building within our communities and among our allies and the importance of identity in building individuals who take strength from their cultural roots and First Peoples' identity. These articles do not answer all the complexities facing First Peoples families and communities but they bring us closer to examining the past and current realities for answers about what is possible for the future.

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A New Beginning

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My heart hangs on a willow in the East
exposed to the scrutiny of the four winds
revealing my grief to the four directions
While I sit, heartless,
in the arms of my lover
and weep.

My heart dangles up high
Red in the wind, twisting, turning
to the morning, noon, and night.
Grandmothers gather 'round to inspect and nod,
clucking knowingly.
Their love is a prayer
not a release.

My heart is a stone that swings in a willow
turning in the four winds
crying out in the cold and dark
weeping the pain and grief of a lifetime
saving me from a cruel and untimely death
that resembles a life of loss.

My heart is a stone,
A pebble in a red cloth bag
Bobbing high in a willow
Slowly turning to the 4 directions
in the light and the dark
A cold, frightened warrior
that pebble, that is my heart.

My heart was a stone
which I placed high in a willow
on the 2nd last day of a long and short journey.
That cold, frightened warrior,
she died peacefully in the night.

Today I shall reclaim her body
for a tender return to Mother Earth.

Sealing a prayer and an offering
for a new beginning and another life.

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Aboriginal Family Services Agencies in High Poverty Urban Neighborhoods: Challenges Experienced by Local Staff

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Introduction

The purpose of the study is to describe the challenges of working in the community from the perspective of staff hired locally by culturally-based Aboriginal organizations in high-poverty urban neighborhoods. This study was guided by principles of participatory research. The research was developed and implemented under the direction of an advisory group consisting of representatives from local Aboriginal family services agencies and the local community as well as university researchers and students. An interview schedule and participant recruitment plan was developed collaboratively within the advisory group. The advisory group decided to select Aboriginal family services agencies that were: located in the local geographic community, provided family services to residents of the local

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to describe the challenges of working in the community from the perspective of staff hired locally by culturally-based Aboriginal organizations in high-poverty urban neighborhoods. Locally staffed and culturally based Aboriginal family service agencies operating communities with high levels of poverty have emerged in large cities. Efforts of these agencies are consistent with community economic development practice aiming to improve local quality of life and skill development and promote economic capacity. There has been little research to date exploring the challenges faced by staff working in these organizations. Participants were residents of the local geographic community and staff of one of three Aboriginal family services agencies in a large Canadian city. They were asked "What are the challenges of working in your own community?" and their responses were analyzed using concept mapping methodology. Twelve concepts emerged from the analysis including: lack of privacy, being personally affected outside of work, keeping healthy boundaries, and knowing how to help. In addition participants described the high local need and meeting the range of needs given limited funding and influence of government on operations. As well, participants identified dealing with broader structural issues, such as substance abuse and gang problems. The results indicate that staff in Aboriginal family services agencies in high poverty communities experience living in the same community as service recipients, management of personal relationships with them, diversity of need within their service area, as well as potential for traumatic experiences as particularly challenging. Staff preparation, training and support for these issues are important for funders and administrators to attend to.

Keywords: community development; stress and burnout; Aboriginal; human services

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community, and had a commitment to hiring from geographic and cultural community. Because of their experience and success in hiring from the local community, the three largest local employers were approached.

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The Canadian Constitution Act refers to First Nations, Métis and Inuit as Aboriginal peoples (Government of Canada, 1982). According to the latest census data the Aboriginal population accounts for approximately 1.2 million or 4% of the national population (Statistics Canada, 2010). The Aboriginal population has been growing at a rate six times greater than the Canadian population. While there are significant differences among the Aboriginal population in relation to community size, geographic location, colonial impacts, languages, cultures, traditions, governance and wealth, there are also significant differences between Aboriginal peoples and the non-Aboriginal population of Canada. These differences stem from the historical and ongoing impact of colonization (Wotherspoon & Satzewich, 2000).

In the late 1500s and early 1600s the first English and French immigrants settled in Atlantic Canada and initiating many changes to the conditions and ways of life among Aboriginal peoples. The First People's use of the land was fundamentally changed through forced imposition of a reserve system that confined people to parcels of land, making hunting and gathering of food difficult and resulting in starvation (Dickason, 1998). Traditional spiritual practices were made illegal and suppressed (Indian and Northern Affairs, 1996; Paul, 2006; Long & Dickason, 1998). A colonial education system was put in place to teach the indigenous children that their ways of life were inferior to the European ways (Stout & Kipling, 2003). Beginning in the late 1950s, large-scale apprehensions of Aboriginal children by child protection authorities were undertaken, often removing them from their families and communities permanently (Blackstock & Bennett, 2003). The multiple, cumulative effects of these efforts across generations have been described as historical trauma (Connors & Maidman, 1999; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004).

There has been a migratory trend among Aboriginal peoples from reserve communities to urban areas (O'Donnell & Tait, 2003). In the Canadian prairies, where the highest proportions of Aboriginal peoples reside, there has been a significant influx of Aboriginal peoples to urban areas (Statistics Canada, 2008). However, there are few employment opportunities. As a result, the populations tend to be concentrated in downtown core areas, characterized by the poorest housing stock and highest levels of family poverty (Loewen, Silver, August, Bruning, Mackenzie, & Meyerson, 2005). While income levels and formal education rates are lower in these communities than in other parts of the city, unemployment and crime rates are higher (Mendelson, 2004). Residential overcrowding is commonplace (Hallet, 2006).

A major contributor to many of the social issues faced by Aboriginal peoples residing in inner cities is the relatively low economic wellbeing that characterizes these communities. In Winnipeg's inner city, 28% of households rely on income from social assistance, compared to 11% of all Winnipeg households (Carter, 2004). Moreover, relatively high external ownership of housing by private absentee landlords or government draws money out of the community (Bopp & Bopp, 2001, *Four Worlds*, 1989). In Manitoba, approximately half of the urban Aboriginal population rents housing (49%) compared to approximately one quarter (28.5%) of the total provincial population (Statistics Canada, 2011a & 2011b). In response, local organizations have developed practices to hire, train and promote from within the community in order to enhance growth in local non-profit and for-profit economic capital and retention (Wuttunee, 2004). Most importantly, the practice of hiring within the community goes beyond economic capital and retention. By hiring Aboriginal workers, agencies affirm Aboriginal worldviews and provide culturally-

relevant services. In addition to local business development by local residents, non-government organizations also lead by local residents have developed strong networks of services.

Researchers from the United States and abroad focusing on family services staff have identified several factors that contribute to stress and burnout. Organizational factors that contribute to stress include a lack of coworker and administrative support (Ducharme, Knudsen, & Roman, 2008; Ito, Kurita, & Shiiya, 1999). Organizational politics and climate of the workplace are also associated with perceived stress (Huang, Chuang, & Lin 2003; Hassell & Brandl, 2009; Kop, Euwema, & Schaufeli, 1999) and to decreased effectiveness of helping relationships (Maslach, 2003). Oppression from discrimination contributes to low staff engagement (Alleyne, 2004; Bowleg, Brooks, & Ritz, 2008; Freaney & Tiernan, 2006). Job factors that contribute to stress and burnout include the availability of resources available to do the job (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). These resources include time (Kowalski et al., 2010), safety (Armstrong & Griffin, 2004), role clarity (Colligan & Higgins, 2005), role consistency (Vakola & Nikolaou, 2005) and perceived role effectiveness (Lloyd & King, 2001). Staff compensation also plays a role in stress and burnout (Hegney, Eley, Plank, Buikstra, & Parker, 2006).

In addition to organizational and job factors, characteristics of family services staff in the United States and abroad have been found to coincide with elevated rates of stress and burnout. Personality characteristics such as introversion (Burgess, Irvine, & Wallymahmed, 2010) and pessimism (Avey, Luthans, & Jensen, 2009) are associated with stressful job expectations (Alarcon, Eschleman, & Bowling, 2009; Bamber & McMahon, 2008). Vulnerability to emotional pressure (Bussing & Glaser, 1999) and mental strain (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Ebbinghaus, 2002), poor coping skills (Soler et al., 2008), and perceived control over stressors (Muncer, Taylor, Green, & McManus, 2001), also influence stress, burnout and a sense of agency in the workplace (Troup & Dewe, 2002). Finally, the challenges

associated with balancing work and family life, family commitments and stressful incidents in one's personal life contribute to employee stress and burnout (Behson, 2002; Csiernik, Smith, Dewar, Dromgole, & O'Neill, 2010; Golub, Weiss, Ramesh, Ossoff, & Johns, 2007).

While the international literature has identified a number of factors associated with stress and burnout among family service staff, and in particular the experiences of those who work in the areas of substance misuse (National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare, 2011; Oyefeso, Clancy, & Farmer, 2008), the most relevant work has been done by researchers in Canada and especially Aboriginal practitioners who have direct experience working in their own communities. Several Canadian researchers (Regeher & Clancy, 2010; Burgess, Regeher, & Roberts, 2009) describe challenges faced by family service workers. Of particular note is research on factors associated with psychological stress among community members following critical incidents, including issues of intentionality, predictability, timing, nature of threat, location, timeliness and sustainability of outside resources (Reghr, Roberts, & Bober, 2008). Local practitioners are personally affected by critical incidents as residents and professionally as service providers to other residents requiring a dual orientation to both individual and community-based intervention and support (Regher & Bober, 2005).

Aboriginal researchers in Canada have also explored the experiences of family service staff hired locally to serve residents within their communities. Reid (2005) described several challenges experienced by First Nations women working in First Nation communities. In relation to the stress of delegated authority and dual-accountability "The women believe that it is a daily challenge in their work to attempt to "walk between two worlds," "get their own worldviews," and have their "cultural child care practices" validated and incorporated into their programs" (p. 4). Participants also described their experience with unrealistic expectations and dual roles including "the lack of boundaries

and expectations that the community members have toward them; being women with their work impacting their children; and the risks involved in the work.” (p. 5). The emotional costs and benefits of intense relationships were also highlighted:

“The women felt that knowing their clients could be a “strength” or “cause potential conflicts” in their work. One participant stated, “We are seen as community members first and social workers second, so the impacts on our health is higher.” (p. 5). The demanding nature of the work also had an impact on their health: “The women suggested that the stress, unrealistic demands and pressures from both themselves and all of the people involved in their work and lives contribute to some of the “chronic health issues.” (p. 5).

Individual, collective and community-based ways to restore health and balance have been reported (Reid, 2005). Individual ways included boundaries, self-awareness and self-care, as well as exercise, sleep and nutrition, space to debrief with others and spiritual practices. Collective strategies included talking with other workers about challenges and ways to maintain balance, mentorship within the workplace and ongoing dialogue at all levels. In addition, self-determination and self-governance, local provision of locally defined culture-based services, local leadership and culturally-based education for those doing this work were needed.

It was noted that “The women agreed that the agencies needed “equitable” and “sufficient funding.” (p. 6). The need for adequate and consistent funding was also reflected in the FASD Training Study (First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada and Paukuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2006), on disability-related issues in each community.

Method

The advisory group for the study included representatives from local Aboriginal family services agencies, local residents and university researchers and students. The local, Aboriginal

members of the advisory group identified all of the research questions. The advisory group had preexisting connections with the leadership in Aboriginal family services agencies located in the local geographic community who provided family services to residents of the local community and had a commitment to hiring from geographic and cultural community. Because of their experience and success in hiring from the local community, these three largest local employers were approached and agreed to advertise the study to their staff.

The steps taken for data collection and analysis were consistent with those described by Trochim (1989). Trochim’s concept mapping approach was originally applied in the field of program development and evaluation, but has also been used frequently in health and family services (e.g. Trochim & Kane, 2005). The main advantage of the approach is involvement of participants in both the identification of important issues and the organization or interpretation of the issues raised by all participants. Concept mapping offers each participant the same degree of participation in the analysis of meaning from interview data. There are four steps to this approach. In step one, participants and a focal question were identified. In step two, staff who provided responses to the focal question and expressed interest in further participation were provided with a complete list of all responses across participants and asked to group the responses together into themes. Step three applied the use of multidimensional scaling and cluster analysis procedures applied to the grouped data to identify common groupings across participants. In the fourth step, these common groupings formed the basis for the final concept map.

Step One

The three agencies that participated in the study were the largest and longest serving Aboriginal family services agencies in the same service area within a large Canadian city’s downtown core. The agencies had made a formal

commitment to hire locally from the cultural and geographic community. Advertisements were placed throughout the agencies informing potential participants about the study, and those who were interested contacted researchers directly to arrange an individual face-to-face interview. All participants were, at the time of interview, paid staff or volunteers with the agency, and interviews were conducted during the fall months.

As part of the interview participants were asked the question “What are the challenges of working in your community?” Interviews continued until saturation was reached. Saturation was defined as five consecutive interviews with no novel responses obtained and was reached after interviews with 44 individuals. The participants had been employees of the agencies from 1 to 21 years, and on average, for 5 years at the time of interview. The age range of participants was 16 – 67 years, with an average age of 41 years. Approximately three quarters (31/44) were female. During their employment with the current agencies, participants together had held 108 different positions. Current positions included part- and full-time secretarial, community development, casework, teaching, and program delivery, janitorial as well as managerial and financial positions working with children, youth, adults and Elders of the community.

Step Two

The total number of responses provided by participants was 154. These responses were edited for clarity and redundant responses were removed leaving 91 responses for the analysis. Participants had been asked at the conclusion of the interview if each was interested in participating in the grouping task at a later time. A list of interested individuals was maintained and all were contacted regarding the date, time and location of four meetings held in the area where participants would receive complete lists of responses to the question and be asked to group them together in any way that made sense to them. Each was asked to group all responses.

The only guideline was to have a results that was more than 1 group (all responses in one pile) and less than 91 groups (no grouping of responses). The majority of participants had between 10 and 15 groups that included all responses. A total of 16 participants attended one of the meetings and grouped responses together.

Step Three

Two statistical procedures were applied to the grouped data. These procedures included multidimensional scaling, which placed responses on a visual “map” with distances between items representing the frequency with which each was grouped together by participants with others. Cluster analysis organized the results of multidimensional scaling conceptually by starting with each response being treated as its own cluster and ending with a decision by researchers regarding the most appropriate number of concepts for the data. The Concept System (Trochim, 1987) was used to perform the analysis and construct the concept map.

Step Four

In step four, researchers made the decision regarding the number of clusters for the final concept map. The researchers took into account the statistical and conceptual properties of the responses within different cluster solutions generated by the analysis. Statistical data from the bridging index, a value between 0.00 and 1.00 calculated for each response through the multidimensional scaling procedure, reflected the frequency with which that response was grouped together with others nearby on the map. The highest values, or those above 0.75 indicated that a particular response was grouped often with responses far from it on the map, while low value below 0.25 indicated that the response was grouped often with those near to it on the map. The average bridging index for a cluster reflects the degree to which the responses within it were grouped with responses outside of the cluster. Conceptual similarity of responses within each

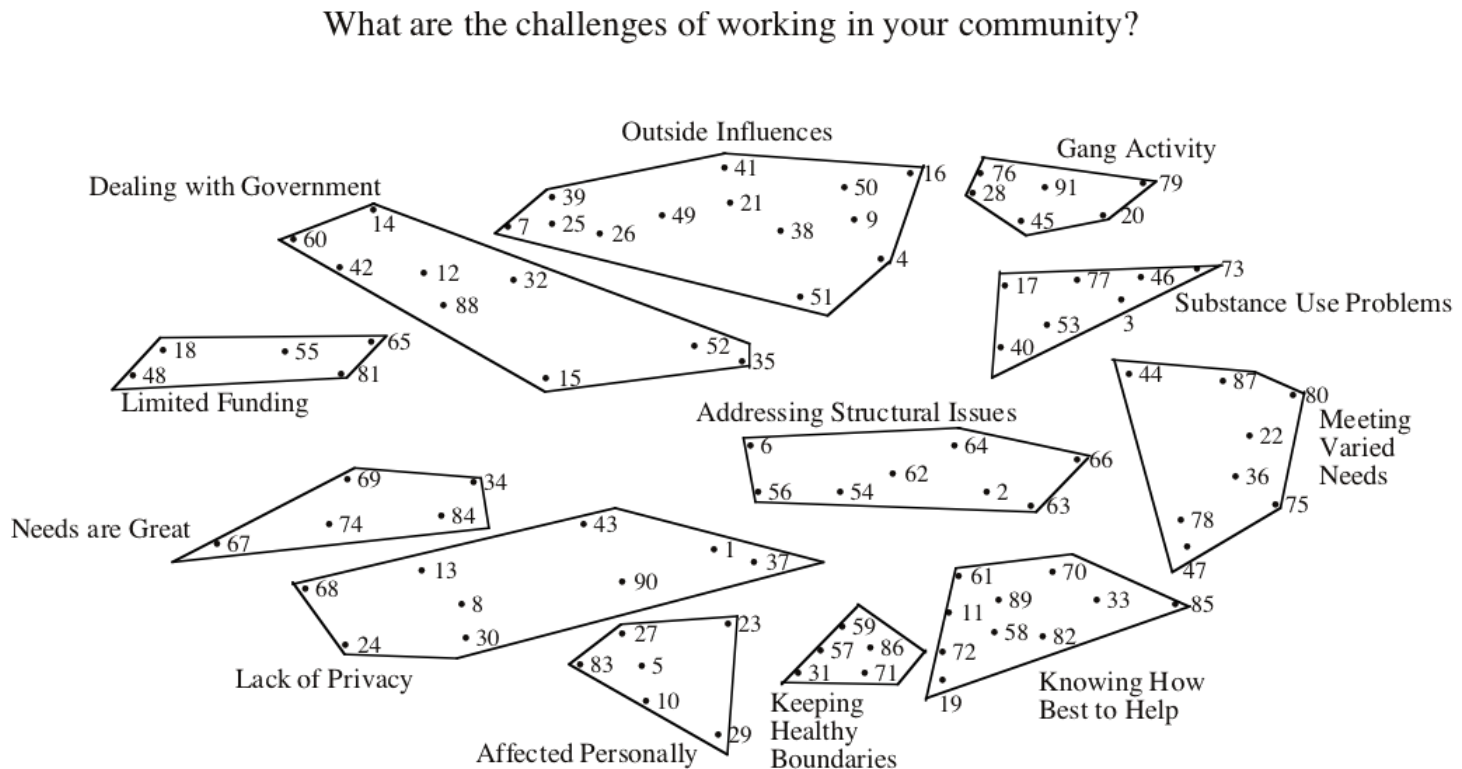
cluster was also evaluated by the researchers, who considered maps with 18, 16, 14, 11, 9 and 7 clusters before deciding that the 12-cluster solution fit the data best. Labels for the clusters were based on the contents of each. In some cases, participants provided labels during the grouping procedure that held for those in the final map. These were used whenever possible.

Participants reported that the challenges of working in their own community were: the lack of privacy, the depth of need, how their work affects them personally, maintaining healthy boundaries, knowing how best to be helpful, addressing structural issues, meeting various needs, dealing with substance-related problems, gang activity, negative outside influences, working with government and working with limited funding. Bridging indices above 0.75, reflecting a lack of consistency in grouping by participants, are noted by an asterisk (*) and should be interpreted with caution.

Results

The concept map appears in Figure 1. Each number, identified by a point on the map, corresponds to a numbered response in Table 1. Participants grouped the 90 responses.

Figure 1: Concept Map of 90 Responses



Aboriginal Family Services Agencies in High Poverty Urban Neighbourhoods

Table 1: Responses and Bridging Indices for Concept Map

Cluster Items and Bridging Values for Concept Map

Cluster and Response		Bridging Index	Cluster and Response		Bridging Index
Cluster #1 - Lack of Privacy		0.40	44.	language barriers	0.37
1.	a lot of people need help	0.11	78.	walking on a tightrope	0.38
37.	see somebody I know in the wrong place at the wrong time	0.19	47.	my family gets into trouble and I get implicated	0.51
90.	you want to be there to help anyone	0.26	36.	I lost a lot of friends	0.59
43.	lack of personal identity	0.31	22.	emotional pain	0.61
8.	being a healthy role model	0.38	80.	get scared for the kids	0.67
13.	concern about staff safety	0.43	75.	try to get them involved other programs	0.69
30.	getting others to work together	0.50	87.	working with the children who have experienced serious issues	0.73
68.	sometimes I don't have money to give	0.65	Cluster #8 - Substance Use Problems		0.25
*24	everybody knows your business	.77	77.	violence	0.18
Cluster #2 - Needs are Great		0.65	17.	dealing with crack heads	0.19
34.	healing that needs to be done with little resources	0.43	40.	isolation	0.23
84.	when they get denied services	0.47	46.	crack houses	0.27
69.	sometimes parents get angry easily	0.66	3.	abuse	0.28
74.	try to accommodate all different nationalities/cultures	0.72	53.	parents losing kids to the system	0.28
*67.	sometimes I don't have bus tickets	0.97	73.	there are children 13 years old doing prostitution	0.30
Cluster #3 - Affected Personally		0.19	Cluster #9 - Gang Activity		0.07
23.	engaging people and keeping them engaged	0.07	76.	turf things with gangs	0.00
29.	getting attached	0.11	28.	get gangs off the streets	0.02
5.	am I a friend or a staff member?	0.21	91.	young gang members	0.03
10.	can't forget the tragedies that people have discussed with me	0.22	45.	light broken where there are prostitutes	0.05
27.	finding balance but still needing to address the issues	0.22	20.	drug issues	0.10
83.	when something bad happens I feel it personally	.30	79.	watch kids group up sell drugs and get into gangs	0.19
Cluster #4 - Keeping Healthy Boundaries		0.08	Cluster #10 - Outside Influences		0.18
59.	people think I had something to do with them not getting service	0.03	50.	not enough police	0.03
71.	you get caught in the middle of a situation	0.06	16.	crime	0.07
57.	people tell me things but don't want anyone else to know	0.09	21.	emergency call response time is slow	0.08
31.	getting people to trust	0.10	4.	alcohol problem because bars so close	0.10
86	work-home boundary issues cause conflict with my family	0.10	38.	if we were white, the police would come faster	0.10
Cluster #5 - Knowing How Best to Help		0.19	51.	not enough recognition that communities have own solutions	0.12
58.	people think I can get them ahead in society	0.07	49.	no new parks for more than 30 years	0.13
11.	can't help them other than being a friend	0.09	9.	business-suit people who take advantage of the children (johns)	0.16
61.	seeing people struggle and I can't really help them	0.11	25.	family bonds that were destroyed by Residential Schools	0.18
19.	don't want to come off as a Mrs. Know It All	0.12	26.	fetal alcohol spectrum disorder	0.32
72.	tempted to intervene in situations I see after work hours	0.12	41.	kids not going to school	0.33
89.	you never know exactly how you can help somebody	0.13	7.	attention deficit disorder	0.35
82.	when I don't have answers	0.21	39.	inner-city communities get taken advantage of	0.37
70.	there is tension	0.26	Cluster #11 - Dealing with Government		0.45
33.	hard to help because they're used to doing it on their own	0.29	35.	family involved in stuff that isn't good	0.20
85.	when you get to know people it is hard to know where to draw the line	0.46	32.	government does not look at nurturing the community	0.21
Cluster #6 - Addressing Structural Issues		0.15	52.	painful amount of poverty	0.23
56.	people not used to getting help	0.04	15.	confronting the issues that happen in the community	0.27
54.	people all have different wants and needs	0.07	12.	city hall does not care about people here	0.35
62.	seeing the broader scope	0.12	14.	conflicting government systems	0.47
64.	social issues are challenging	0.14	88.	working with the foster parents to help them keep the kids safe	0.47
2.	a problem if you're White	0.15	*42.	lack of parenting skills	0.86
6.	attendance	0.15	*60.	seeing kids apprehended	0.96
63.	seems hopeless when you are trying to get a head start	0.19	Cluster #12 - Limited Funding		0.79
66.	some people not supportive when family members need help	0.36	81.	we're overcharged and under serviced	0.60
Cluster #7 - Addressing Structural Issues		0.57	65.	some go back to the reserve	0.61
			*18.	dollars attached to programs	0.83
			*55.	people are like crabs in bucket	0.90
			*48.	having strong financial manager	1.00

Discussion

In the following section the results of the study are described and compared to the available literature.

Cluster #1 – Lack of Privacy

This cluster had an average bridging index value of 0.40, which was the 5th highest of the 12 clusters. One response, “everybody knows your business”, had a bridging value of 0.77 meaning that it was often grouped together with responses in other clusters and was not consistently grouped with the other responses in this cluster by participants. It is therefore an unreliable indicator of “Lack of Privacy” than the other responses in this cluster.

Participants described a lack of privacy as a challenge that they experienced. Because the community is small, participants felt a “lack of personal identity” at times and suggested that “*everybody knows your business”. Knowledge of one another can make “getting others to work together” a challenge. Knowing that “a lot of people need help” and because “you want to be there to help anyone” there is pressure to help outside of work. This pressure to help may involve requests for money, but “sometimes I don’t have money to give”. As well, there is pressure of “being a healthy role model” in the community, and the risk to “see somebody I know in the wrong place at the wrong time”. With that, comes “concern about staff safety” outside of work.

Experiences of participants reflected in this concept are both similar to and different from the literature. The issue of safety at work has been raised as a job-related challenge in other studies (Armstrong & Griffin, 2004). However, the size and intimate nature of the community that was noted by participants in the study has not been described in the literature.

Cluster #2 – Needs are Great

This cluster had an average bridging index value of 0.65, which was the 2nd highest of the 12

clusters. One response, “sometimes I don’t have bus tickets”, had a bridging value of 0.97 meaning that it was grouped together with responses in other clusters and was rarely grouped with the other responses in this cluster by participants. It is therefore an unreliable indicator of “Needs are Great” than the other responses in this cluster.

There was a range of needs in the community and lack of resources to meet them within any one agency. It was a challenge to “try to accommodate all different nationalities/cultures” among residents and to help them do the “healing that needs to be done with little resources”. People come to the agency for help and because of limited agency resources, staff may not be able to help in all ways needed or requested. For example, “*sometimes I don’t have bus tickets” to give out. Understandably, “sometimes parents get angry easily” “when they get denied services”.

Limited resources within the agency have been identified in several studies on workplace stress and burnout among individuals in the family services (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). This is consistent with the experiences identified by participants in the present study. It is important to note that limited funding of Aboriginal agencies and programs is more than a lack of family services funding; it is a structural issue stemming from colonial treatment and inequitable funding (e.g. Shannen’s Dream, 2011).

Cluster #3 – Affected Personally

This cluster had an average bridging index value of 0.19, which was the 5th lowest of the 12 clusters. These responses were grouped together often by participants, suggesting that they among the most cohesive and reliable ways participants were “Affected Personally”. Responses in this cluster referred to the challenge of feeling the effects of community need, personally. Participants noted that “when something bad happens I feel it personally”, and that because they live in the community there is a very short distance between them and people who come for service,

so they “can’t forget the tragedies that people have discussed with me”. There are risks and benefits of “getting attached”, which participants summarized with the need to constantly ask themselves the question “am I a friend or a staff member?” While they found it difficult “engaging people and keeping them engaged” the need for “finding balance but still needing to address the issues” remained in the forefront.

There is reference in existing literature to the importance of role clarity between staff and those coming for service (Colligan & Higgins, 2005; Maslach, 2003). Clear boundaries in the helping relationship are important and improve effectiveness (Lloyd & King, 2001). From a First Nations perspective (Reid, 2005), service providers are residents and community members first. These overlapping roles are necessary for the work to be done appropriately and well. In the present study participants described the depth of impact from the stories of those who come for service as shared experiences based on cultural past and current circumstances, related through a shared experience of historical trauma.

Cluster #4 – Keeping Healthy Boundaries

This cluster had an average bridging index value of 0.08, which was the 2nd lowest of the 12 clusters. These responses were grouped together often by participants, suggesting that they among the most cohesive and reliable ways of “Keeping Healthy Boundaries”. Boundaries were difficult for participants. They described the importance of “getting people to trust”, but letting “people tell me things but don’t want anyone else to know” leaves them vulnerable when “people think I had something to do with them not getting service”. The interaction between participant family members with others in the community during the course of their regular, everyday lives lead to “work-home boundary issues cause conflict with my family” and sometimes “you get caught in the middle of a situation.”

Maintaining a balance between self as staff member and self as resident was made difficult because of the location and clientele of the workplace. In her study of First Nations women providing family services in reserve communities, Reid (2005) noted similar experiences. In addition, there were references to the climate of the work setting (Hassell & Brandl, 2009), coworker support (Ducharme, Knudsen, & Roman, 2008) and the politics of the workplace (Huang, Chuang, & Lin, 2003) may take a particular spin when the differences between those delivering service and those receiving service are, outside of the helping relationship, negligible.

Cluster #5 – Knowing How Best to Help

This cluster had an average bridging index value of 0.19, which was the 5th lowest of the 12 clusters. These responses were grouped together often by participants, suggesting that they among the most cohesive and reliable ways of “Knowing How Best to Help”. Participants described the challenge of knowing the best way to help others. While they “don’t want to come off as Mrs. Know It All” sometimes “people think I can get them ahead in society” by assuming they have some kind of power or resource that can change their circumstances quickly, even “when I don’t have answers”. It is disappointing “seeing people struggle and I can’t really help them” because “you never know exactly how you can help somebody”. Sometimes, participants “can’t help them other than being a friend”. However, “there is tension” when participants are “tempted to intervene in situations I see after work hours” because “when you get to know people it is hard to know where to draw the line”. Others are “hard to help because they’re used to doing it on their own”.

The notion of not knowing how to help others was consistent with existing literature on job stress examining perceived control and a sense of personal agency (Muncer, Taylor, Green, & McManus, 2001; Troup & Dewe, 2002). The desire to help when not in a position to do so because of either being in a non-work context

or not having the right resource at the right time for a particular person, can cause considerable emotional pressure (Bussing & Glaser, 1999) and mental strain on employees (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Ebbinghaus, 2002).

Cluster #6 – Addressing Structural Issues

This cluster had an average bridging index value of 0.19, which was the 3rd lowest of the 12 clusters. These responses were grouped together often by participants, suggesting that they among the most cohesive and reliable ways of “Addressing Structural Issues”. There were challenges associated with discrimination. Participants who are “seeing the broader scope” of disadvantage in society recognize that “social issues are challenging” and it “seems hopeless when you are trying to get a head start” against those powerful forces. The complexity of the community, and in some cases divisions between members of the community are reflected in the fact that “people all have different wants and needs”. For example, among those who have faced cultural oppression their entire lives, many “people not used to getting help”. As well, problems within families leave “some people not supportive when family members need help”. Those who are a cultural minority in a small community can face “a problem if you’re White” (in an Aboriginal community).

The literature included reference to experiences of oppression (Alleyne, 2004) and discrimination (Bowleg, Brooks, & Ritz, 2008) as contributors to stress and burnout. The context of these experiences was explained by participants in the present study as challenges within the broader community of people who had experienced them in relation to their cultural, geographical, economic or social location. Within the local community of reference for participants, being Aboriginal was a majority status.

Cluster #7 – Meeting Varied Needs

This cluster had an average bridging index value of 0.57, which was the 3rd highest of the 12 clusters. These responses were grouped together by participants, suggesting that they were cohesive and reliable ways participants were “Meeting Varied Needs”. Because there is a great deal of diversity within the community, participants struggle with how to balance the different interests and meet needs of the community as a whole. The “language barriers” across cultural differences within a community that exist make it difficult to communicate and to help people to “try to get them involved other programs” that were developed for different groups. The needs of children are important too. “Working with the children who have experienced serious issues” is a challenge that leaves participants to “get scared for the kids” in the community. Making their “emotional pain” more visible has cost participants in their personal lives, for example “I lost a lot of friends”. The conduct of those related to participants in the community leaves them feeling like they are “walking on a tightrope”. For example, “my family gets into trouble and I get implicated”.

The responses by participants in this concept were consistent with the literature on outside influences on stress and burnout in relation to family commitments. Reid’s (2005) study also highlights this issue. There are also references in the international literature, not specific to Aboriginal staff and communities, on family commitments (Behson, 2002) and imbalance between work and family (Golub, Weiss, Ramesh, Ossoff, & Johns, 2007) as contributors to stress at work. In addition, experiences outside of work, such as in one’s personal life with those in the community can also impact one’s work stress (Csiernik, Smith, Dewar, Dromgole, & O’Neill, 2010).

Cluster #8 – Substance Use Problems

This cluster had an average bridging index value of 0.25, which was the 6th lowest of the 12 clusters. These responses were grouped together often by participants, suggesting that they were

among the most cohesive and reliable ways of characterizing “Substance Use Problems”. Participants identified the interrelated problems of substance abuse and crime in the community as challenges. The presence of “crack houses” in neighborhoods populated by families with children became focal points for “violence” and “abuse”. The result was “parents losing kids to the system.” In addition, “there are children 13 years old doing prostitution”. Participants’ agencies offered a safe space to be with others to combat the sense of “isolation” among residents, who had become afraid of “dealing with crack heads” in the community.

There is reference to research in the law enforcement literature on job stress (e.g. Alexander, 1993), regarding substance abuse and crime as challenges experienced among staff. In addition, the stressors associated with substance abuse and violence has also been reported in the family services literature among those providing addictions services (National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare, 2011; Oyefeso, Clancy, & Farmer, 2008). The strong presence of these issues among participants is different however than has been reported in the non-Aboriginal literature suggesting that the impact of colonization and historical trauma are responsible for the difference, and the need for its recognition by funders for appropriate staff support is essential.

Cluster #9 – Gang Activity

This cluster had an average bridging index value of 0.07, which was the lowest of the 12 clusters. These responses were grouped together often by participants, suggesting that they were the most cohesive and reliable ways of describing “Gang Activity”. The participants also described the presence of gangs in the community as a challenge to their work there. Participants had to “watch kids grow up sell drugs and get into gangs”. The “young gang members” developed their own “drug issues” and “turf things with gangs”. Their behavior (e.g. “lights broken where

there are prostitutes”) served to create fear and mistrust. It was difficult, but necessary, for participants to help “get gangs off the streets” as part of their work.

The presence of local gang activity as a challenge for family service workers is absent from the literature on stress and burnout. However, there are references in the law enforcement literature to this type of stressor (see Noblet, Rodwell, & Allisey, 2009 for a review). However, other than Reid’s (2005) study, there is little on the combination of that stressor as part of one’s work life and non-work life. The degree of risk and uncertainty about the potential for violence is a characteristic of certain communities and of law enforcement work, but not within family services work as is the case for participants of the present study.

Cluster #10 – Outside Influences

This cluster had an average bridging index value of 0.18, which was the 4th lowest of the 12 clusters. These responses were grouped together often by participants, suggesting that they were among the most cohesive and reliable ways of describing “Outside Influences”. Participants described several influences from outside of the community in the city itself that created challenges for them in their work. They noted “inner-city communities get taken advantage of”. Despite the high rates of “crime”, there were “not enough police” and “emergency call response time is slow”. Participants felt that “if we were White, the police would come faster”. In particular, they wanted police to target the “business-suit people who take advantage of the children (johns)”. A contributor to local “alcohol problem (was) because (too many) bars so close”. However, liquor licenses were granted despite protests from local residents because there was “not enough recognition that communities have own solutions” to the problems of alcohol abuse. In addition, the community had “no new parks for more than 30 years”. There were high rates “fetal alcohol spectrum disorder” of “kids not going to school” and children in school with disabilities, such as

“attention deficit disorder” because of the eroding of community responsibilities and “family bonds that were destroyed by Residential schools”.

The inner city was seen as distinct from other areas of the city and differences in treatment, such as emergency service access, were inequitable. This has been clearly noted by Aboriginal researchers in Canada (e.g. First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada and Paukuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2006). There was reference in the international literature to perceived mistreatment (Kop, Euwema, & Schaufeli, 1999) and organizational disadvantage (Freeney & Tiernan, 2006) affecting resources such as time (Kowalski et al., 2010) and service consistency (Vakola & Nikolaou, 2005). However, the location of necessary services for residents outside of the inner city was itself a challenge for staff, and exacerbated all of the other contributors to stress they faced trying to meet local need for their services.

Cluster #11 – Dealing with Government

This cluster had an average bridging index value of 0.45, which was the 4th highest of the 12 clusters. Two responses including “lack of parenting skills” and “seeing kids apprehended” had bridging values of 0.86 and 0.96 respectively, meaning that they were grouped together with responses in other clusters and not grouped with the other responses in this cluster by participants. They are therefore unreliable indicators “Dealing with Government”.

A lack of communication between residents and between governments also contributed to challenges for participants in the community. Participants noted that “city hall does not care about people here” and that the provincial “government does not look at nurturing the community”. Government did not help with “confronting the issues that happen in the community”. For example, “conflicting government systems” left no one responsible to help the community deal with the “painful amount of poverty”. The poverty, “*lack of parenting skills” and “family involved

in stuff that isn’t good” resulted in “*seeing kids apprehended” and taken from the community. In cases where children were able to remain in the community in care, participants noted the challenge of “working with the foster parents to help them keep the kids safe”.

Participants described that their interactions with governments, reliance on government services and gaps in those services led to problems that local staff faced in their work. Because of the agency’s role in family services, connections with the government in family services and income assistance as well as disability services would be crucial. However, participants noted that these relationships were one-sided. We found reference to these stressors in the worker burnout literature (Regher & Bober, 2005). We also found similar experiences in the literature on colonization (Wotherspoon & Satzewich, 2000) including the removal of children from community and segregation with relegation to secondary status in comparison to the dominant (i.e. non inner-city) group.

Cluster #12 – Limited Funding

This cluster had an average bridging index value of 0.79, which was the highest of the 12 clusters. The high value indicates that this cluster is not conceptually distinct from the others and should be interpreted with caution. Three responses including “dollars attached to programs”, “people are like crabs in a bucket” and “having strong financial managers” had bridging values of 0.83, 0.90 and 1.00 respectively, meaning that they were grouped together with responses in other clusters and not grouped with the other responses in this cluster by participants. They are therefore unreliable indicators “Limited Funding”.

Participants described a lack of agency funding as a challenge. It was noted that taxes paid locally cut into already small household budgets and what was returned to the community in funding and services was small in comparison to other areas of the city. It was concluded, “we’re overcharged and under serviced”. Because of a

lack of “*dollars attached to programs”, there was competition for funding between individuals (e.g. “*people are like crabs in bucket”). The lack of funding led to some leaving the city and returning to their reserve communities (e.g. “some go back to the reserve”). It was a challenge to find and keep good financial knowledge within the community even though “*having strong financial managers” was crucial.

There were references in the literature to the negative effects of a lack of agency funding and the effects of a lack of funding on staff pay (Hegney, Eley, Plank, Buikstra, & Parker, 2006) as well as the burdensome need to keep careful control and records over financial matters (Ito, Kurita, & Shiiya, 1999).

Conclusion

The findings of this study contribute to our understanding and knowledge about the challenges faced by staff who work in Aboriginal family services agencies in high poverty urban areas in a number of ways. The consistency between the experiences described by participants in the current study and those identified in the literature lends credibility to the pre-existing researcher-defined constructs in relation to concerns about staff safety, limited agency resources, boundaries between staff and service recipients, the dual roles of being community member and agency staff, knowing how to help in complex situations, inequitable and unreliable program funding and working within different levels of government with different rules and expectations. The contributors and extent of these factors vary between communities. Among Aboriginal agencies, colonial history and historical trauma underlie the depth of challenge faced and contribute extensively to the funding inequities that exist above and beyond what non-Aboriginal agencies and communities face.

The experiences described by participants also included challenges that had received little attention in the literature. While these challenges are apparent to Aboriginal family services agencies because of the histories, contexts and

realities within which they work, they have not been well explored in research. Other than notable exceptions by Canadian (e.g. Regher & Bober, 2005) and Aboriginal researchers (e.g. Reid, 2005 & FNCFCS, 2006) there is a relative lack of research on challenges faced by family services workers in Aboriginal agencies.

Participants in the present study identified their relationships with other residents in their community as factors that made their work in the community a challenge. There has been relatively little attention to the role of community characteristics and their relationship to the experiences of stress and burnout among Aboriginal family services workers working in Aboriginal communities. In the present study, not only was the community composition such that residents knew one another outside of the agencies, but the staff of those agencies were also known to and interacted on a daily basis with the individuals, families or associates of those who came to the agency for service. The depth and reach of dual role challenges faced by those hired from the local geographic and cultural community are different than those who provided service within a large or disparate community where there is less personal knowledge of one another between residents.

In addition to the depth of need for family services in the community, which was identified by participants in the study, individuals also spoke of the diversity within the community to which their agency attempted to respond. The assumption that a small community of individuals who share geographic, cultural and socioeconomic characteristics are uniform and require similar services was challenged by participants. The program funding that agencies depended on originated from outside of the community and was not sensitive to the range of services needed that was apparent to those living and working in the community.

The challenge of managing relationships in a community where residents work and live was compounded by the presence of commonalities

in their understanding of past and present life experiences. The degree of impact that service recipients' stories had on participants indicated the presence of a shared reality that was deeper than living day to day in the same community, such as the colonial past combined with experiences of poverty and discrimination in daily life. This shared reality made helping relationships deeper and the family services delivered by local residents more effective. However, the corresponding challenges were to the difficulties in establishing clarity about roles as staff and residents and not having enough of the right resources locally, to help more people, more efficiently.

Specific problems that existed within the community and made the work of staff challenging included problematic substance use and gang activity. These factors did appear in the family services literature on staff stress and burnout, and were prominent in the law enforcement literature. It is noteworthy that the nature of challenges for staff working in Aboriginal family agencies overlapped considerably with the law enforcement profession, which is known to have high rates of exposure to traumatic events, traumatic stress and job burnout and staff turnover (Perez, Jones, Englert, & Sachau, 2010).

In addition, the external control of funding and public service resources delivered within the community was stressful. Those at the top of the systems who made the funding and service decisions did so from their perspective as outsiders to the community. Those delivering services in the community did so from their perspective as insiders. The two perspectives did not match, and participants in the study noted that funding allocations were not sufficient to meet need and the public services offered in the community were not responsive. They also noted that their relationships with government systems for the purpose of accessing public services from inside the community were difficult because of gaps in service and their availability to people in the community. The documentation requirements by funders were heavy and a drain on agency service resources.

The importance of making decisions based on local expertise is underscored by the results of the present study. Outsiders, including policy-makers and researchers, basing assumptions, expectations and program funding decisions on the results of literature on experiences of family services staff will find gaps in the literature. While there are similarities between challenges faced by family services staff in non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal communities, the differences, highlighted by Aboriginal researchers and the results of the present study, support the need for more Aboriginal-led research that is community and culturally-based on the topic of family service worker experiences. Two areas emerging from the present study represent particularly significant findings that should be attended to in future research.

Issues associated with the management of tensions around dual relationships as well as the discrepancy between resources needed by staff and those available to the agency through inequitable funding are worthy of exploration. The contextualization of such research is critical. An understanding of colonial history and experience of historical trauma as well as characteristics of the community itself from community members, such as history and geographic and social location, are necessary to accurately represent current realities and priorities.

The staff characteristic of being both a community member and service provider is rooted in cultural ways of helping and essential to make service relevant, appropriate and effective. This greatest strength also poses some important challenges for identifying the issues and dealing with difficulties that arise. The experiences of people who have managed these tensions and achieved balance for themselves, their families and community are important to understand. How do service providers in Aboriginal family agencies manage relationships? Based on results of the present study, this is a very important direction for future research. It is also crucial that funders recognize the complexity and necessity of relationships and adequately resource for staff training and support on these issues.

The depth and extent of community need for family services varies between Aboriginal communities. However, all Aboriginal communities have experienced multiple and cumulative losses as well as inequitable political and social treatment. The discrepancy between funding available to family agencies to provide service and what is necessary to meet community need is great. The experiences of participants in the present study described their challenges associated with working in an agency situated within a community with poor housing, few educational and employment opportunities as well as social segregation within an urban center as profound influences on their work. Despite these great challenges, their strength and hope for change was not diminished. However, there is great potential for stress and burnout by staff in an environment where there is only enough funding for agencies to treat symptoms, such as crime and substance use, instead of dealing directly with oppression and disadvantage through real community and family healing. Not only should the strengths of staff be explored further in future research, but continued advocacy on the to change inequitable funding arrangements that continue to disadvantage Aboriginal family agencies and their staff.

Limitations

There were some limitations to the study in relation to sampling. All participating agencies were culture-based Aboriginal organizations that hired extensively from the local geographic and cultural community. While almost all staff were Aboriginal and residents of the inner city, there were exceptions which were not tracked in the study. Participation was voluntary and staff from the three participating agencies self-selected. While all who participated in interviews were invited to participate in the sorting only a small proportion did so. It is therefore not known to what extent those who participated differ from those who did not.

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Developing a Culturally Restorative Approach to Aboriginal Child and Youth Development: Transitions to Adulthood

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Abstract

An innovative approach to providing "care" to Aboriginal child who are making a transition into adulthood embodies the concept of culturally restorative practice. This paper is a literature review on Aboriginal child development for children and youth transitioning from a youth to an adult. This paper contains excerpts from "Developing a Culturally Restorative Approach to Aboriginal Child and Youth Development: Transitions to Adulthood" published as a social policy paper for Ontario's Ministry of Child and Youth Services. The paper was a review of the literature of the following: culturally restorative practices, best practices for successful engagement with Aboriginal populations, thematic of Aboriginal development, as well as implications for child and youth services.

Key words: Aboriginal child development; Aboriginal developmental theory.

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Methodology

Indigenous Ways of Knowing

The purpose of this paper is to provide an Indigenous perspective on development¹. The literature review was in a manner conducive to Indigenous/Aboriginal ways of knowing. Indigenous/Aboriginal ways of knowing presently are contributing to a broad spectrum of academic knowledge (Absolon, 2010; Cochran, Marshall,

¹ Although the authors would have liked to use the word "Indigenous" throughout the paper, the term Aboriginal will be used in replace of it. Aboriginal peoples refer to First Nation, Métis, Status, Eligible for Status, or Inuit people of Canada.

Garcia-Downing, Kendall, McCubblin, & Gover, 2008; & Tuhiwai-Smith, 2002). Indigenous/Aboriginal ways of knowing as described in the literature is the traditional knowledge transmitted from one generation to the next (Simpson, 2004). This body of knowledge is wholistic, family and community oriented, with an understanding of ancestral knowledge (Simpson, 2004). Tuhiwai-Smith (2002) has found that Indigenous research methodologies and designs have produced better outcomes for Indigenous people, and it is with this intention in mind that the perspectives on development are noted.

As a part of an Indigenous research design, 'celebrating survival' has presented as the main ideological basis for this literature review and developmental structural design. Celebrating survival "accentuates not so much our (Indigenous) demise but the degree to which Indigenous peoples and communities have successfully retained cultural and spiritual values and authenticity" (Tuhiwai – Smith, 2002, p. 145). Cultural perseverance celebrates our cultural structure, our cultural attachment, and our deeply ingrained cultural teachings on development. Celebrating survival, as an Indigenous research methodology, not only acknowledges the collective soul wound as Indigenous people, but also acknowledges and celebrates the extraordinary cultural survival unique to Indigenous people (Tuhiwai – Smith, 2002). This celebration of survival is affirmed through our language, our teachings, and our cultural structure.

Cajete (1994) in Tuhiwai – Smith, (2002) stated "celebrating is a natural outcome of spiritual sharing and it too can take a diversity of forms. It is an individual and communal process that celebrates the mystery of life and the journey that each of us takes. Celebration is a way of spreading the lights around" (p. 145).

Indigenous development is presented throughout this paper in a manner that celebrates survival of Indigenous knowledge.

Developing a Culturally Restorative Approach to

Aboriginal Child and Youth Development: Transitions to Adulthood

In Aboriginal worldview, visioning is a fundamental construct in the development of identity (Gross, 2002). As a part of visioning, storytelling evolves with the purpose to transcend knowledge and bring about value-based learning (Gross, 2002). One such story will begin this process of describing child and youth development in a value-based manner. An Elder in a Northern Ontario community described his dream to the audience. He described vividly the coming of thousands upon thousands of Abinoojiiyag (children) to Turtle Island. In his vision, he spoke of the transition of elders to the spirit world, the smaller circle of elders that would remain. He spoke of the approach of the children, the happiness of their spirits, and he guarded with caution against the transmission of dysfunction on the abinoojiiyag. In his storytelling he stated,

"do they know where they are going?... those little ones ... Maybe they don't ... but you know where they are going ... You are the ones that have to prepare that spot for them cause ... they are coming and they are coming by the thousands ... they are gonna darken the sky as they come down on this earth ... what have you got for them" (Sitting Eagle in Weechi-it-te-win Family Services, 2005).

In Aboriginal child and youth development sectors, a cultural perspective on child development is an important strategy for the government of Ontario. Recently, there has been a shift in Ontario toward the culturally competent systems of care in the social work, health, and mental health spectrums (Crooks, Chiodo, & Thomas, 2009). In a grander scale, world politics, social implications, and subsequent

social responsibility has led to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Within the Convention on the Rights of the Child under Section Eight – the child's entitled to the preservation of his or her identity (Bolzman, 2009; & Herrmann, 1991). Even with these political conventions, a colonization process has chipped away at the Aboriginal identity of children and youth. Aboriginal identity was not seen as a priority but more of a problem in the assimilation process of Aboriginal children and youth throughout the centuries. Great atrocities across Canada occurred in the vision of eradicating Aboriginal identity. One of the biggest problems that remains with the process of colonization is the deep seated unspoken history that have been passed on from generation to generation for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike. These very misconceptions and misapplications of Aboriginal understanding have lead to a continued process of colonization, which has not offered the necessary spiritual core to begin developmental achievement with confidence. The difficulty to achieving these goals is embedded in the philosophy of cultural understanding and application.

Cross cultural learning is a systematic approach, which requires learning tools for professionals in addition to a shift in philosophy within an organizational structure to create the elements of cultural safety for Aboriginal children and youth. Pedagogical practices for workers have promoted and fostered an ethnocentric view of educational development (Berrell, Gloet, 1999; Good, 2009), and as a result, there is unpreparedness for working in cross cultural settings with Aboriginal clientele. Some educational researchers have begun to lay an academic framework for understanding cultural applications in successful engagements with Aboriginal children (Berrell & Gloet, 1999; Good, 2009; Grant and Haynes, 1995; & Stairs and Bernhard, 2002). Stairs and Bernhard (2002) empowered traditional knowledge on child development and discussed the importance of family, community, and spirituality in wholistic development. Good (2009) discussed the

importance of inclusion into a multicultural society and the importance of blending and understanding history from an Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspective. Cultural discourse involved in shifts in perspectives in educational settings was provided as a backdrop to cross cultural learning (Berrell & Gloet, 1999). In educational settings the shift to include Aboriginal perspectives and content is afoot; however, in social service sectors in Ontario it may be just the beginning.

It is hoped this paper will influence these systems to take another step forward in promoting culturally "relevant" interventions and approaches to service provision geared toward developmental achievement for Aboriginal youth. Thematics of Aboriginal development are seen within the context of worldview, cultural structure, cultural attachment, identity, relationship, and most important developmental achievement. Developmental achievement will present in a manner that promotes effective developmental interventions that are community driven, community-based, and culturally relevant. Selected Aboriginal developmental authors will be presented as best practice, but offer some array of options for children and youth seeking cultural developmental achievement.

Cultural Restorative Practice

Culturally Restorative Practice (CRP) is a curriculum based on the MSW research project entitled *Culturally Restorative Child Welfare Practice: with a special emphasis on cultural attachment theory*. Simard (2009) had worked extensively with Weechi-it-te-win Family Services, and recognized the value of practiced-based evidence, in the promotion of alternative child welfare practices. Thematics developed into valuable practice knowledge, which has become a transformational strategy for different children's initiatives. Culturally restorative practice rebuilds First Nation community structures through the active engagement of cultural research. Cultural research defines as the process of acquiring

knowledge from the ancestral knowledge keepers within the First Nation community, and using this knowledge for the betterment of the community. Culturally restorative practices build on the sacredness of teachings and culture within an Aboriginal population by careful reflection on the natural protective network. The natural protective network is a principle of child, family, extended family, community, and Nationhood, contributing to the successful life way of the child. The natural protective network is a part of Aboriginal practice

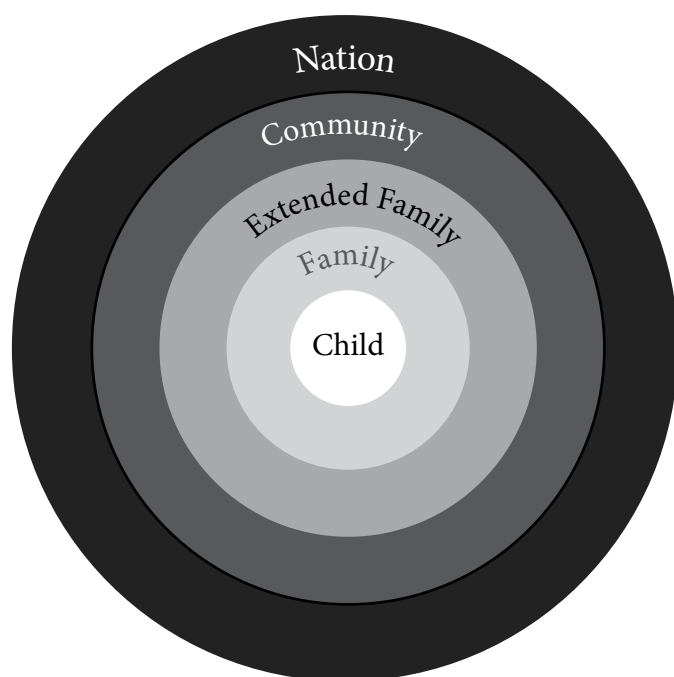


Diagram 1: The Natural Protective Network Principle
Simard (2009)

models, in which all elements of society embrace the responsibility of solidifying a child's cultural identity and subsequent cultural formation into adulthood. Each member of society contributes to all children's wellbeing in this effort. The protective network principle is a foundation for cultural attachment theory as a mechanism to culturally restorative practice (Simard, 2009). (see diagram 1 above).

The theoretical learning basis for the culturally restorative practice is Aboriginal paradigms and Aboriginal constructivism. Culturally restorative

practice asserts the following as it relates to cultural attachment theory:

The mechanisms of cultural attachment theory to achieve cultural restoration has suggested the greater the application of cultural attachment strategies the greater the response to cultural restoration processes within a First Nation community. This directly proportional proposition suggests an alternative strategy with First Nation people, which is based on reinvestment in cultural attachment strategies in First Nation communities (Simard, 2009, p. 54).

Culturally restorative practice incorporates cultural attachment theory as the main impetus to developmental learning (Simard, 2009).

Thematic of Aboriginal Development

Developmental psychology is a phenomenon that has etched the development of Aboriginal children for centuries. Development is the changes in human behavior that occurs throughout the lifespan, where all parts of self are evaluated against a worldview different from the Aboriginal context. Developmental theories are typically stage theories, in which you cannot pass from one stage to the next without its successful completion. Developmental theories link to nature versus nurture debates, behavioral roles in child development, information processing frameworks, or interpersonal relationships, or attachments. Developmental constructs were gathered through observational studies and established a basic milestone or transition of 'normal' development. Developmental milestones established the norm but also established the 'delay' of normal development. The milestones were often linked to age-based behavioral changes identified through habituation. Developmental stages entailed changes from prenatal, to infancy, to babyhood, to early childhood, to late childhood, to adolescence, to early adulthood, to middle age,

to old age. Development has been evaluated in the light of emotion, intellect, moral, physical, and social domains. Each domain has influenced each other in their respective complexity. Developmental theorist empowered his or her own unique understanding of development, for example, Freud empowered his psycho-sexual stages of development, Erickson empowered his developmental theory and Jean Piaget empowered his stages of cognitive development. Each developmental theory came with their own philosophical makeup and ideas on how a child develops throughout his or her life. The literature has also evolved to show how ecological systems impact development throughout one's lifetime. All of these developmental theories are important; however, they are missing one key piece when working with the Aboriginal population – the spirit.

Applying non-Aboriginal developmental theories with Aboriginal youth exclusively will not provide a complete or exact description nor will it show positive outcomes, because it is quantified against mainstream norms. These norms do not include the socio-economic contextual factors, which influence development. The remaining portion of this paper will begin to deconstruct development from an Aboriginal perspective. Aboriginal development must be seen in the light of the context of historical significance and its consequences on present day issues. Furthermore, these present day issues must be reconciled with cultural safety efforts. The thematic of Aboriginal development starts with Aboriginal worldview, cultural structure, cultural attachment, identity development, relational development, and task achievement.

Aboriginal Worldview - *Aki naanaagadawaabiwi*

To understand developmental milestones for Aboriginal children and youth, it is important to establish an in-depth look at how Aboriginal people see the world. It is important to understand that through an Aboriginal lens, all

things are related on a spiritual level. A primary difference between Aboriginal worldview - *Aki naanaagadawaabiwi* and Non-Aboriginal theories of development is that everything in Aboriginal worldview - *Aki naanaagadawaabiwi* is based on the spirit whereas the concept of spirituality or the spirit is often overlooked in Non-Aboriginal theories of development. Cross (2010) described worldview as a

term used to describe the collective thought process of a people or culture. Thoughts and ideas are organized into concepts. Concepts are organized into constructs and paradigms. Paradigms link together to create worldviews (p. 1).

Cross (2010) described two different types of worldviews: linear and relational. Linear worldview is systematic whereas relational worldview is cyclic. Aboriginal or Indigenous people come from a relational worldview.

... it is intuitive, non-time oriented and fluid. The balance and harmony in relationships between multiple variables, including spiritual forces, make up the core of the thought system. Every event is understood in relation to all other events regardless of time, space, or physical existence. Health exists only when things are in balance and harmony (Cross, 2010, p. 2).

In relational worldview, problems are viewed as imbalances and interventions are focused on bringing a person back to balance and harmony (Cross, 2010).

Many Indigenous peoples in Canada and elsewhere refer to health and wellness as a balance between the emotional, mental, spiritual and physical dimensions of the person in connection to his or her family and community (Parlee and O'Neil, 2007).

One of the most common means of describing Aboriginal worldview - *Aki naanaagadawaabiwi* is through the use of the Medicine Wheel. Hart (2002) explained one of the foundational concepts of the Medicine Wheel is "wholeness",

which challenges a person to understand each of the four parts of the Medicine Wheel and how he or she relate to one another. The next major concept Hart (2002) expressed is balance and the idea of bringing those four elements into balance and harmony.

The Medicine Wheel can be applied to the individual, family, community, and nation. Nabigon and Mawhiney (1996) discussed Aboriginal worldview - *Aki naanaagadawaabiwi* extensively. Nabigon and Mawhiney (1996) explained that Aboriginal teachings are based on natural world occurrences and symbolism; furthermore, through Aboriginal worldview - *Aki naanaagadawaabiwi* an individual is not separate from the natural world because all things are interconnected. Nabigon and Mawhiney (1996) used the Cree Medicine Wheel to illustrate the idea of finding balance and harmony in relationship with all of Creation. Through this model there is an assumption that growth and healing is always a spiritual process based on connecting to oneself and finding balance.

Aboriginal worldview *Aki naanaagadawaabiwi* is closely related to the fundamental concepts of tribalism and shamanism as described by Voss, Douville, Soldier, & Twiss (1999) in what they termed a spirit centered worldview. This means that everything within the universe is spiritual, everything has spiritual forces and these spirits have the power to influence results (Voss, et. al., 1999). This is an ancient philosophy in which humans are viewed as equals with other creatures on earth and knowing this reality requires a great deal of humility. They explain Tribalism as the high regard for interconnectedness such as kinship ties that extend from family, community, tribe; it also crosses generations and is inclusive of ancestors (Voss, et. al., 1999). Each person is viewed in a manner collective of his or her heritage and ancestry. They explain that the Lakota view life as a circular process in which there is really no beginning and no end and where both positive and negative forces exist not only across the lifespan but also within each person (Voss, et. al., 1999). It is important to note that within this

spirit centered worldview, good and evil, sickness and health, are not separate but instead they are coexistent, and it is a matter of obtaining balance and finding harmony in ones' self (Voss et. al., 1999).

In Aboriginal worldview - *Aki naanaagadawaabiwi*, the ancestors are viewed in the present tense. This concept is reflected in Weaver's (2003) discussion on cultural competence with First Nation people.

Within many Native American cultures, there is a sense of existing within a time continuum. The people of today maintain strong connections to ancestors and contemporary actions are undertaken with future generations in mind. The concept of seven generations is present in many First Nations cultures, although it is defined somewhat differently by different people. For some, the ancestors seven generations ago were planning for the people of today and these plans are the reason there is still land, language, and culture left for indigenous people. The people of today have the responsibility to ensure that the needs of future generations will be met in the same way (Weaver, in Lum, 2003, p. 203).

The ideology of seven generations promotes a sense of individual responsibility for the collective good. In Anishinaabe² a cultural teaching exists on the concept of seven generations principles. The Anishinaabe word is *niizhwaaching aanike'inawendiwin*, and it reminds us that the decisions we make today will influence the next seven generations to come. Therefore, it is with great respect and caution that Aboriginal people proceed in their decision-making responsibility. The original language of each Aboriginal nation is the most powerful way to understand the worldview because in the Aboriginal nation's original language there exists meaning, teachings, at times

² Anishinaabe refers to the Aboriginal people of the Anishinaabe Nation. Several borders have divided the Anishinaabe Nation; however, they are one Nation of people. The Anishinaabe have different names allocated to this tribe as well - Ojibway, Ojibwa, Ojibwe, Chippewa, Oji-Cree, and the Saulteaux. The Anishinaabe people have a language dialect, teachings, ceremonies, and societal practices unique to their Aboriginal tribe (Anderson, 2002).

ceremonies, colors, and intentions. Sitting Eagle of Rousseau River, Manitoba provided a teaching on seven generations at the Rainy River First Nation Roundhouse in 2005. He discussed that today the Anishinaabe carry the pain of the past seven generations, and the healing and success that take place in this lifetime or lack thereof, will have a direct result on the next seven generations (Sitting Eagle, 2005).

Ways of Knowing – Anishinaabe naanaagadawedamowinan

Aboriginal or Indigenous people of Canada have a rich cultural make up and their knowledge systems have survived over 500 years of colonization. This cultural make-up exists in the language and sacred ceremonies of each Aboriginal Nation to various degrees. Aboriginal knowledge paradigms are unique and different from non-Aboriginal paradigms. Aboriginal knowledge is not consistent with scientific method, it cannot be measured or possessed; instead, it is the capacity of one's' being to be resourceful and find context to everything in life (McKinley, Jones, & Maughan, 2009).

At the core of most Aboriginal knowledge systems is the building of competencies in self-development for the pursuit of sacred roles and functions within a society. Aboriginal knowledge systems are based on the natural protective network principle (Simard, 2009), in which the family, the extended family, the community, and the Nation support the child's wholistic development. Each member of society has a sacred responsibility in the sustaining of this development for a child. An example of language, ceremonies, and responsibilities exists within the word *Anishinaabe naanaagadawedamowinan*.

Anishinaabe naanaagadawedamowinan is an Anishinaabe word that translates as worldview, but means how Anishinaabe people come to see the world from a wholistic perspective. *Anishinaabe naanaagadawedamowinan* is the life teachings

for a child and its purpose or root ideology is to achieving *mino-biimaadiziwin*. *Mino-biimaadiziwin*, is a word that means wellbeing of a person, and describes a sacred way of life for the Anishinaabe. Aboriginal people understand to succeed in the present-day multicultural world the child must be spiritually grounded in *Mino-biimaadiziwin* (Simard, 2009).

Aboriginal ways of knowing are sacred knowledge passes down from generation to generation within a Nation of people (Ball, 2004). It is an old knowledge that has been lived and ancestrally transmitted via the generations. Aboriginal knowledge is not a bounded concept; rather it is a process that reflects a set of relationships and an embodiment of one's entire life (McKinley, Jones, & Maughan, 2009). More simply, "individuals live and enact their knowledge and, in the process, engage further in the process of coming to be – of forming a way of engaging others and the world" (McKinley, et. al., 2009, p. 2).

Within Aboriginal language, the word knowledge is considered a verb; whereas in western worldview knowledge is deemed a noun. Therefore, in Aboriginal worldview and their language, knowledge is considered a living, moving, growing entity (McKinley et. al, 2009). Because Aboriginal knowledge is considered an action, it is always placed within a value-based context. Aboriginal or "Indigenous knowledge systems value contextualized knowledge that is local and particular to the setting" (McKinley et. al, 2009, p. 6). Aboriginal or Indigenous knowledge is value-based and intrinsically tied to sacred land site where teachings, ceremonies, stories were given or where medicines or food were gathered (Battiste, 2002).

Cultural Structure - Anishinaabe zaagaswe'idiwin

An important trajectory for Aboriginal youth development pertains to their sense of belonging within their cultural structure - *Anishinaabe zaagaswe'idiwin*. Cultural structure refers to the variables and processes that occur within a way

of life, or more specifically it is all the items living and non-living that provide cultural understanding and context. A fine description of the processes that occur within culture are noted in Greenfield, Keller, Fuligni & Maynard (2003).

We view culture as a socially interactive process of construction comprising two main components: shared activity (cultural practices) and shared meaning (cultural interpretation). Both components of cultural processes are cumulative in nature since they occur between, as well as within, generations. Meanings and activities not only accumulate by also transform over both developmental time – across a single life cycle, and historical time – between generations (Greenfield, et. al., 2003, p. 462).

Another model of cultural variables are included in Day (2006) presentation on cultural competence. These definitions have been translated into Anishinaabemowin³ and include the following variables:

1. values - *ishpendaagokin*;
2. language and communication patterns - *azhawinamaadiwin (an⁴)*;
3. family orientations - *izhiningodogamig*;
4. healing beliefs and practices - *noojimotwaawin (an) gaye izhichigewin*;
5. religion - *izhitwaawin*;
6. art, dance, and music - *ozhichigan(an), niimi'idiwin nagamo(an)*;
7. diet and food - *inanjigewin*;
8. recreation - *izhimamaajiiwin*;
9. clothing - *gigishkigan (an)*;
10. history - *mewinzha*;
11. social status - *eshpendaagozid*; and
12. social group interactions - *oko'idiwin*.

³ Anishinaabemowin is the original language of the Anishinaabe people. Although there are many Nations in Ontario, Canada, this paper is partially Anishinaabecentric due to choice of language used throughout the remaining portion of the paper.

⁴ (an) after an Anishinaabemowin word, means this is the plural version of the word.

As previously stated the original language of the people provides the teachings, ceremonies, meanings, and teaching constructs for each word. These cultural variables are presented in Anishinaabemowin, but can be easily translated into other Nation's original language thereby providing a differing perspective on the cultural variable unique to another cultural language. The process of gathering the language information is called cultural diversity in action. Helpers must remember, in order for Aboriginal children to thrive within the majority culture, they must be grounded within the structure of their own culture and therefore be attached to the cultural variables and process within their families, communities, and Nation.

At the root of the sacred tree of cultural structure are values - *ishpendaagokin*. All cultural variables mentioned in Day's (2006) culture model are based on values - *ishpendaagokin*. Other mechanisms of cultural structure such as beliefs, rituals, customs, traditions, ceremonies are also "value" based. The Anishinaabemowin for these concepts are included in the word *izhitwaawin (an)*. For Aboriginal youth to be deprived of their cultural processes that teach values such as shared activity and shared meaning (Greenfield et al., 2003) is to deny them of their roots to identity development or to deny them their spiritual core - *maaminonendamowin*.

Clan - Doodem

Mother earth and the animal world are some of the teachers of Indigenous values (Nabigon and Mawhiney in Turner, 1996). Elders, family and community members teach values through stories that are about the earth, nature, the spirits, and animals. Storytelling in and of itself is a major way that values are developed within children; another method is through observation of nature and animals. Oral tradition or storytelling is a significant aspect of Aboriginal culture; essential values are transmitted during storytelling. Becoming physically close to nature is another aspect highly regarded in Aboriginal

culture because the values are learned through a close relationship with nature. In Aboriginal culture, nature is an instrumental part of a child's upbringing. The belief that everything has a spirit is solidified by holding the natural world in high regard. Through this worldview there is a belief that everything is alive including rocks, plants, water, air and animals (Nabigon and Mawhiney in Turner, 1996).

The clan teachings are an important part to understanding doodem connections. Doodem is the clan to which each Aboriginal child belongs, with the clan comes innate individual behavior characteristics similar to the doodem. Animals are looked at as value-based teachers. The animal world teaches life values such as kindness, honesty, respect and how to conduct oneself in relation to another (Nabigon and Mawhiney, in Turner, 1996). An example of values, beliefs, and life teachings, which transmit through the animal world lies within the conduct of the loon. The loon teaches about the love of family. Loons choose a lifetime mate, which is likely why their courting process is so public. There is a teaching that when you hear the loons calling in the evening they are celebrating a marriage. In loon life, both parents share responsibility for the children. Loons will adopt a baby loon if it is found to be abandoned or in need. The parent loons will accept that baby as their own and raise it up within his or her protective family system. There is numerous other teaching such as this within the animal world that children are provided within their cultural structure or shared activities.

Aboriginal children need to understand their customs such as the clan system; furthermore, it is in their best interest to know their clan or totem and be familiar with the inherent gifts that come with being a member of that clan. The clan system is a key organism that has provided cultural structure to the way of life for Aboriginal people for hundreds of years. The clan system is an ancient custom, which has been passed down through many generations; it is a system that has been recorded through historical rock painting, carvings, birch bark scrolls, and pictographs

(Mcguire, 2008; Sitting Eagle, 1993). Protocols exist for attaining information about clan systems. Information or knowledge on the clan system is usually given in the form of stories. It is believed that these ancient stories have a spirit that guides the learner (Mcguire, 2008; Sitting Eagle, 1993).

Although there may be variations in traditional teachings of clan systems, it is a fundamental customary structure within Ojibwe, Saulteaux, Algonquin, Oji-Cree and Iroquois culture. Mcguire (2008) notes that clan systems are primarily social systems that guide social relationships within the tribe and these social relationships and responsibilities attribute to community and tribal cohesion. A person's connection to clan provided several social relationships within the community that not only pertain to family, social responsibility, social role, but also a relationship to the land. The obligations within clan systems also served as a behavioral guide for life stages such as marriage, occupations, and social/political responsibilities.

Clan members are considered to be related through the clan system. An element of a person's identity is determined through the clan system by providing individual obligations for the collective good of the community (Mcguire, 2008). If a person does not know their clan for whatever reason there are options available for that person to determine his or her clan, either through adoption or through a spiritual ceremony. "Membership into clans is an inclusive process, although, one had to agree to take on the responsibilities associated with their adopted clans" (Mcguire, 2008, p. 2).

Sitting Eagle (1993) referred to the great law of clans as the odoidaymiwan. He describes it as a "way of sacred knowledge and order – a system that became a framework of government, for the unity, strength, and social order of the Nation" (p. 3). The seven original clans and each corresponding social function are as follows: the crane – chieftainship and leadership for external negotiations (Banai, 1981; Sitting Eagle, 1993). The loon – chieftainship for internal responsibility and effective community management, fish

– philosophers, mediators and visionary for program planning, design and leadership (Banai, 1981; Sitting Eagle, 1993). Bear clan people are guardians, healers, historians, protectors of justice and legal issues (Banai, 1981; Sitting Eagle, 1993). Martin clan people are hunters, providers and warriors for environmental protection and economic development (Banai, 1981; Sitting Eagle, 1993). Deer or hoof clan people are reconcilers and pursuers of well-being for the purpose of effective communication and community and social development (Banai, 1981; Sitting Eagle, 1993). Bird clan people are spiritualists, teachers, and pursuers of knowledge, facilitators of ongoing education and survival of the people (Banai, 1981; Sitting Eagle, 1993). From these clans there are sub-clans. The leader of the fish clan is the turtle clan; other sub-clans include bullhead, sucker, rattlesnake, northern, sturgeon, and frog. The chief of the bear clan is the black bear, other sub-clans include the brown, white, grizzly, and skunk bear. The chief of the martin clan is the marten; other sub-clans include the lynx, weasel, wolf, mink, otter, beaver, and muskrat. The chief of the bird clan is the bald eagle; other sub-clans include the golden eagle, hawks, skydivers, swimmers etc. (Sitting Eagle, 1993).

Language - Inwewin

Aboriginal values are within the language. Aboriginal people who were brought up to speak their language have a different worldview, which is much deeper, spiritual, and is value-based. Those that speak Anishinaabemowin language will concur that it is essentially a “teaching” language in the sense that values and teachings are passed through the language. An explanation of this concept is because the Anishinaabe language is 80% verbs. This indicates that Anishinaabe is a fluid language in which most reference points are in action form rather than noun form (Vollum, 1994). Second, there is no differentiation between male and female; instead, a phrase remains the same whether you are referring to a man or a

woman (Vollum, 1994). The Anishinaabe language is based on relationships and the language itself reflects the deep relationships that exist in this world (Vollum, 1994). For example, the word grief in English translates to a noun, which defines as deep mental anguish that arises from bereavement (Dictionary, 2011). The word grief in Anishinaabemowin is *ninondemowin* and translates as a healing that takes place through storytelling, this healing will occur because of this process. This example demonstrates not only a difference in language but also a difference in worldview. The example presents to affirm that Anishinaabemowin speaking people view the world on a much deeper level, and as such, values, teachings, and guidance are provided directly within the language.

Value Development - Ishpendaagokin

In his book, Hart (2002) referenced nine value categories consistent across Aboriginal cultures, these included: vision/wholeness, spirit-centered, respect/harmony, kindness, honesty/integrity, sharing, strength, bravery/courage, wisdom, and respect/humility. This is consistent with the seven sacred grandfather teachings of the Anishinaabe: wisdom, love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility, and truth. Wisdom – *nibwaakaaawin* – *gikensaasowin* is to acknowledge the opportunity to learn in every moment, to be reflective and to seek to extend knowledge and understanding. Love – *zaagi-idiwin* – *zheewenidiwin* is to care and cooperate well with others. Love is working toward harmony through kindness and sharing. Respect – *manaazodiwin* – *ozhibwaadenidiwin* is to maintain high standards of conduct that provides safety for the dignity, individuality, and rights of every living thing. Bravery – *zoongide'ewin* is to face adversity with integrity and courage by maintaining a strong sense of self and confidence in one's abilities and character. Honesty – *gwekwaadiziwin* is to be truthful, sincere, and fair through all circumstances. Humility – *dibasendizowin* – *nookaadiziwin* is to be modest, respectful, and sensitive in relation to all living things, and

to know one's status in all of creation. Truth – *dibasendisowin* – *nookaadiziwin* is to be genuine and true and know human development as it related to all seven teaching (Weechi-it-te-win Family Services, 1999).

Hart (2002) identifies how sharing, respect and spirituality are values especially helpful in attaining wellness or *mino-pimatisiwin*. Sharing is a value that facilitates equality and democracy within a system; sharing demonstrates that every person is considered valuable. Sacred knowledge, life experiences, and food are shared in order for people to nurture one another. Sharing eliminates the occurrence of greed, individualism, and conflict within a culture. Respect is a value that pertains to treating others with honor, non-interference, and non-judgment. Respect allows the child to see him or herself as an equal part of creation, no better, or no less than every other part of creation. The value of spirituality comes with the understanding that all things have a spirit and are viewed within a spiritual context; this includes healing.

Cultural structure is weaved together through the implementation of customs and traditions as well as rituals and ceremonies. Custom refers to “a practice so long established that it has the force of law” (Dictionary, 2011, p.1) . An example of a cultural custom in Aboriginal culture is the offering of tobacco or a gift when asking for knowledge or help. A custom is a universal idea generally congruent among many nations. Traditions are “the handing down of statements, beliefs, legends, customs, information, etc., from generation to generation, especially by word of mouth or by practice” (Dictionary, 2011, p.1) . Examples of traditions are legends, hunting, and craft-making practices. Traditions will vary within nations, communities, and families. An example of the difference between customs and traditions is that it is customary for a nation to have a clan system of government; however, what clan animals are represented and how these are passed will vary based on tradition. A ritual is “an established or prescribed procedure for a religious or other rite” (Dictionary, 2011, p.1). Rituals will also

vary between tribes, communities, and families because these are based on tradition. Ceremonies are “the formal activities conducted on some solemn or important public or state occasion” (Dictionary, 2011, p.1). Ceremonies are also based on tradition and will vary to some degree among nations, communities, and families; however, the custom driving the ceremony like marriage, puberty, healing remains the same.

Natural Protective Network Principle - Inaadiziwin

Fundamental beliefs and customs that apply to children are similar across all North American Aboriginal populations as recorded through early observations of Native American life (Blanchard & Barsh, 1980). First, children are viewed as a sacred gift and are looked on as an integral part of the family, community, and Nation.

Within this framework, the concept of children as property is foreign. A child has the right by virtue of birth to develop within the context of his or her culture and with the companionship of people through which the strongest definition of self can be formed (Blanchard & Barsh, 1980, p. 351).

Another such belief is that the child's life begins before conception, this is called *manidoo miigiwe bimaadiziwin*. Aboriginal people have Creation stories, which suggest we were spirits before we were human, and that our time on this earth is one of having a human experience. This suggests that once we leave this world we will return to the original spirit we once were. While the child is here on turtle island, the natural protective network or *inaadiziwin* is activated for the child (Simard, 2009). *Inaadiziwin* is based on the principal that children are placed at the centre of community life and they “in a very real sense represent the renewal and preservation of life” (Blanchard & Barsh, 1980, p. 350). Aboriginal children are born into a natural protective network of care *inaadiziwin* including a biological family, an extended family, a clan family, a community, and Nation. The child is provided with instant

relationships and an inherent network of support (Blanchard, et. al., 1980; Simard 2009). “It is within this interlocking network of support and interdependence that children develop competencies and learn what is expected” (Blanchard et. al., 1980, p. 351). This traditional process facilitates the child’s relationships with other people, the spirits, and the world. This inherent set of relationships allows the child to become both a student and a teacher during his or her childhood (Blanchard, et. al., 1980). The natural protective network or *inaadiziwin* provides children with a concrete understanding of community due to their,

close contact with many people who praise, advise, guide, urge, warn, scold, but most important, respect children [...], throughout the child’s development, the connections between everyday activity and the meaning of life are made clear so they can be understood by the child (Blanchard, et. al., p. 351).

This cognitive process makes sense to children because it is congruent to their community life experience and is relevant to their place within that system of care (Blanchard, et. al., 1980).

Cultural Attachment - Wiidamaagowiziwinan

Cultural attachment is a philosophy, which encapsulates how an individual bonds to his or her culture. Cultural attachment creates a direct spiritual force, where the bond begins, develops, and evolves for the individual. In Anishinaabemowin, cultural attachment is expressed as *wiidamaagowiziwinan*. This means the deep connection between the individual and their spiritual connection to their Creator through his or her access to cultural structure. Cultural attachment is a life-giving philosophy, as it instills life force energy into an individual.

Cultural attachment has remained in Aboriginal worldview because as Aboriginal people there exists the genetic memory of the ancestors,

this is called *gichi Anishinaabe aadizokaan(an) / gagiikwewewin(an)*. This genetic memory is the spirit of Aboriginal people. Cultural attachment is built on the principle that cultural memory is carried in an Aboriginal’s DNA. This cultural memory becomes active or alive, and inspires connection to the spirit. Many people feared that historical effect and colonization has eroded the cultural memory of the Aboriginal people, but they cannot be further from the truth. The truth is that cultural memory, connection to that memory, and its subsequent cultural attachment has never left the people, it has only waited to be awakened.

Simard (2009) discussed cultural attachment theory as a champion to culturally restorative practice. Originally, attachment theory was deconstructed from an Aboriginal perspective, wherein, philosophies, theories, application, research, and practice was analyzed through the lens of Aboriginal worldview. The intent was to understand this key children’s mental health and child welfare driver and its impact on Aboriginal children and youth. The result of this analysis was the development of a new attachment theory called cultural attachment theory. The conceptual framework was not to discredit or minimize attachment theory but to say, attachment theory by itself has not worked for Aboriginal people. Cultural attachment theory is built upon an existing framework, which supports Aboriginal cultural structure. Cultural attachment can reinforce cultural structure processes in the healthy development of Aboriginal children. Cultural attachment theory seeks to secure knowledge of family, extended family, community, and Nation and their relationship to each other and the world. Cultural attachment theory is the natural resiliencies, which exist within the Aboriginal cultural structures, which are supported by the roles inherent in raising a child of the Creator. Cultural attachment theory provides an Aboriginal child with the ability to have a secure base in which he or she can explore the world. More specifically, cultural attachment theory provides the individual with cultural support, via the structures to successful transition to adulthood. Cultural

attachment theory promotes the affectionate bond between a child and his family that endures over time and space throughout one's lifetime. Further, cultural attachment theory in application is the systematic embracing of the Aboriginal culture and matching of services to meet the cultural needs of the Anishinaabe child.

Cultural Identity Formation

The next phase in the development of the spirit is cultural identity formation. This section will discuss what the literature depicts on Aboriginal/Indigenous identity development. Further, it will offer the opportunity for Aboriginal children to hold their head high despite the dynamic of colonization (Ball & Simpkins, 2004). Cultural identity formation refers to a person's ability to self identify with a particular culture or Nation. Cultural identity is "a person's affiliations with a specific group, qualitative classifications of membership and although it is usually a self perception, in some cases it can be assigned by others [...], ethnic groups, self identification, personal traits" (Oetting, Swaim, & Chairella, 1998, p. 131). Cultural identity is development by the social learning concepts, which exists within specific cultural groups (Oetting, et. al., 1998). Cultural identity includes the person's attachment to cultural values, teachings, language, sacred traditions, territory, shared history, and learned wisdom (Peroff, 1997).

Weaver (2001) explains three facets of Aboriginal Identity including self-identification, community identification and external identification. She also explains that the premise of the article is based on cultural identify as revealed through values, beliefs, and worldview (Weaver, 2001). Weaver upholds that identity does not exist until it is constructed; therefore, prior to European contact there was no Aboriginal identity but rather tribal groups based their identities in relation to distinctions between other groups. Other aspects that form identity include recognition, absence of recognition, and mis-recognition by others; absence of recognition

and mis-recognition can be forms of oppression, especially if applied in a systemic manner (Weaver, 2001). Identity is also multi-layered and situational depending on whom the individual is relating to at the point in time. For example a Native person may be turtle clan when relating to others in his or her tribe, Ojibwe when relating to other Native people, and First Nation when relating to non-Natives (Weaver, 2001).

Self-identification is explained as being formed by self-perception.

Cultural identity is not static; rather, it progresses through developmental stages during which an individual has a changing sense of who he or she is, perhaps leading to a rediscovered sense of being Native (Weaver, 2001, p. 244).

The development of cultural identity is a process that progresses through understanding and awareness across the lifespan. Community identification is based on the premise that

Aboriginal identity is connected to a sense of peoplehood inseparably linked to sacred traditions, traditional homelands, and a shared history as Aboriginal people [...], the sense of membership in a community is so integrally linked to a sense of identity that Native people often identify themselves by their reservations or tribal communities (Weaver, 2001, p. 245).

It is important to understand that Aboriginal people have strong connections to their homeland to the extent that they may experience significant problems when they are away from home that can only be remedied by returning to their traditional homeland for ceremony and/or connection (Weaver, 2001). External identification pertains to the effects of non-Native definitions of Aboriginal identity. Specifically, the role that federal policy has played in defining who is Native and who is not and what social and economic roles Native people should take on (Allotment Act). External identification is also affected by the current Native American stereotypes that continue to exist in dominant society today (Weaver, 2001).

According to Weaver (2001), the facets of identity can interact in a conducive or conflicting manner. It may be difficult for those re-discovering their self-identification but have lost connection or have no knowledge of their community. Such people may have experienced inter-racial adoption, foster care, or boarding school. Interchangeably there may be those who have strong community connections but little cultural knowledge. Once again, such people may be children of those who have experienced some type of disconnection such as foster care. External identification is not based on reason.

While it makes sense that a community should define its members, it does not make sense for an external entity to define Aboriginal people. It is not up to the federal government or any dominant society institution to pass judgment on the validity of any individual's claim to an Aboriginal identity" (Weaver, 2001, p. 248).

Weaver (2001) goes on to demonstrate how external identification has led to internalized oppression among Native populations.

Aboriginal identity cannot be measured by one method alone. Assessment tools are designed to measure or assess cultural identity along a continuum; however, many of these measures are based on "measures of acculturation into dominant society" (Weaver, 2001, p. 248). Weaver (2001) cites Zimmerman whom developed an assessment tool that conversely measures enculturation, which is more reflective of cultural growth across the lifespan.

Another article described in the literature on identity, discussed the disparities and mental health issues facing youth from culturally diverse backgrounds (Pumariega, Rogers, & Rothe, 2005). One alarming disparity is the fact that Native American youth have the highest suicide rates among the adolescents in the U.S. (Pumariega, et. al., 2005). The authors discussed how culture influences child development.

Cultural values help define childrearing practices and developmental norms

(including behaviorally and emotionally) and expectations for such landmarks as toilet training, when to leave a child unsupervised, readiness of expression of sexuality and intimacy, and readiness to leave the parental home (Pumariega, et. al., 2005, p.540).

Culture plays a major role in determining family, gender, and occupational roles; it also greatly influences interpersonal communication within the family and community. The developmental tasks of minority youth are far more challenging, as these youth must adapt to at least two cultures; their minority culture and the culture of larger society.

This implies the development of knowledge, skills, and understanding in at least two cultures; while the youth retains his/her original cultural identity, they become adept at interfacing with the mainstream culture (Pumariega et. al., 2005, p. 541).

Therefore, minority youth are challenged from school age to incorporate various cultural perspectives. As a result, identity for Aboriginal children must be considered with the understanding of adaptation to worldviews; however, the core of Aboriginal identity must continue to be developed.

In cultural restorative practice model, cultural identity is a result of cultural attachment to cultural structures, thereby creating the spiritual essence of an individual. Cultural identity is the foundation from which all other domains of development will grow this will include physical – *inamanji'owin*, emotional – *naanaagaji-inendamowin*, social – *maawanji'idiwin*, and cognitive – *waawaanendamowin*. Cultural identity begins with understanding of who you are and what your sacred purpose is while you are here on turtle island. It is living with spiritual purpose grounded in the cultural structure of the Aboriginal nation. Spiritual purpose in one's life does not mean dogmatic structure, what it means is that the individual is grounded in the values of

the culture and can live in sacred harmony with oneself, his or her relations, and the world.

Cultural identity development can be restored at any age because cultural identity is helping someone return to his or her own spirit. The most important part of cultural identity development is ensuring the opportunities for cultural development exist within a community or a service structure. The opportunities need to allow for the expression, the practice, and the experience of cultural structures, such as sweatlodge ceremonies, long house ceremonies, pipe ceremonies, drumming groups or any cultural activity that enriches the spirit. Cultural structures can reinforce the cultural identity development because cultural identity is being equipped with the knowledge and skills within a young person's cultural background.

Cultural identity cannot be developed without all the factors being included. These factors are the understanding of colonial process, and its subsequent impact on a Nation of people. The explanation of the link between historical effect and present day calamities need to be acknowledged. Cultural shame or cultural self-loathing is a direct result of the unresolved historical effect; as such, a grief/healing process needs to be championed by the worldview of the Aboriginal person. Further, this worldview and cultural structures need to be offered as a mode of healing for the Aboriginal child and youth. Elders validate children and youth's experience of the dysfunction of historical effect (Weechi-it-te-win Family Services, 2005). The elder's say this has created a wedge between the child and the cultural structure, and as such, the re-introduction needs to be gradual (Weechi-it-te-win Family Services, 2005). However, the elders have also acknowledge the power of cultural structures to heal the child, youth, family, and community (Weechi-it-te-win Family Services, 2005).

Relationship - Gidinawemaaganinaanig

Relationships are secured through the natural protective network principle – *inaadiziwin*. Relationships begin with the family, the extended family, the community, and the nation. Relationships also exist through the wholistic definition of family. Simard (2009) discussed many definitions of family that could be incorporated into the relational system – *gizhewaadiziwinan*. The definition of family was first researched by Jourdain and was published in Simard (2009), they are described as follows:

Nuclear family: Immediate family, mom , dad, siblings

Extended family: Aunties and Uncles on Paternal or Maternal sides, cousins, second cousins, maternal family lineage and paternal family lineage

Community family: This is the membership of a First Nation community; Nation family: These are the members, who exist within a treaty. For example Treaty #3 is a nation and those members within this area are in fact family

Nationhood family: These are all the members of the Anishinaabe family, regardless of jurisdiction, provincial territories, or countries. It is all Anishinaabe

Clan family: There are significant teachings on clan and clan family which details the innate relationship to each other through our spiritual clan protector

Cultural family: The cultural family is linked to the ceremonial practices of the Anishinaabe. It is also the support within these circles of ceremonial activities" (Jourdain, 2006, in Simard, 2009, p. 56).

Each relational layer – *gizhewaadiziwinan* within the natural protective network – *inaadiziwin*, is established to strengthen and reinforce the healthy

transition points of Aboriginal people. If the Aboriginal child has a solid foundation from which to explore the world and know where he or she fit within it, the Aboriginal child can achieve greatness (Weechi-it-te-win Family Services, 1995).

Task Completion - Gashkitwaawin/ gashkichigewin

Gashkitwaawin / gashkichigewin is when an individual accomplishes a developmental task. Measuring task completion of the spirit is shown through the life in the eyes of an Aboriginal child and youth. This means an Aboriginal child and youth feels good about themselves. They understand that they are protected, loved, and cared for within their relational layers gishewaadiziwinan of the natural protective network principle inaadiziwin. Aboriginal children and youth have cultural pride and can show leadership through various social engagements. Task completion means Aboriginal children have problem solving skills, healthy decision making, and are grounded in the spirit in the face of adversity. They are competent in cultural activities, but they are equally competent in the mainstream world. They are able to function in society regardless of the systematic racism that exists, and they in their own way take on social advocacy education or roles. An Aboriginal child and youth will have an understanding of his or her own identity and have self worth because of that identity. Task completion of the spirit uses context, worldview, cultural structure, cultural attachment, identity, and relational development to create these types of outcomes for Aboriginal children and youth.

Models - Aabijichigan(an)/ aabijichigan(ag)

The following models are developed by Aboriginal people and were founded on Indigenous knowledge. The models presented are a small

sample of a rapidly growing resource. These models come from Aboriginal worldview and can be used in assessment and service provision for Aboriginal children and youth. Although these models are not yet considered “evidence based” through western standards, the models are the practice-based models on an ancient systems of knowledge that resonates within Aboriginal populations. These models can complement or even replace western models in providing services to Aboriginal children and youth. Models require cultural diversity strategies, one size does not fit all in Aboriginal worldview, you must allow for diversity that exists between Nations, between communities, and between families.

1. Cultural Developmental Milestones Principles

The cultural developmental milestones principle was documented by Simard (2009) but was developed by Jourdain (2005). The model is based on indigenous knowledge and traditional teachings of Ojibwe elders. The model identifies the four hills of life including: *Abinoojiwin* or childhood, *Oshkinigiwin* or youthhood, *Nitawigiwin* or adulthood, and *Kitisiwin* or elderhood (Jourdain, 2005, in Simard, 2009). Within the four hills of life are psycho-spiritual tasks and cultural ceremonies. According to the model, if these tasks and ceremonies are not accomplished there are psycho-spiritual consequences.

Abinoojiwin occurs from ages 0-11 years old. During this time, the child must develop an identity and trusting relationships. The ceremonies that facilitate task completion during *Abinoojiwin* are: Welcoming, Naming, Clan Identity/Walk-out Ceremony (Jourdain, 2005, in Simard, 2009). If a child does not accomplish these tasks he or she will experience an identity crisis and have difficulty trusting others. *Oshkinigiwin* occurs from ages 12 - 15 (Jourdain, 2005, in Simard, 2009). Youth this age must learn to understand their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs. They must also learn essential life skills.

An instrumental task for youth this age is the attainment of a vision. The youth is provided with guidance for a fasting ceremony during this time in his or her life. The youth may also be initiated into the Medicine Lodge or *midewewin*. If the youth does not complete psycho-spiritual tasks of *Oshkinigiwin* they may experience physical aggression, emotional and mental arrest, inability to cope, wondering behavior, and spiritual emptiness. *Nitawigiwin* occurs from ages 15 - 50 years old. *Nitawigiwin*. The tasks of adulthood are learning independence, procreation and parenthood, and leadership skills. Adults in this age group participate in traditional ceremonies and learn to conduct ceremonies and healing. If the tasks are not achieved, the adult can experience dependency or addiction, lack of self-confidence, and the inability to care for others. The task of Elderhood or *kitisiwin* is to become a teacher and people in this age group are asked to take on a leadership role in the ceremonies. If the tasks of Elderhood are not achieved, the person will have difficulty sharing and cooperating and may not have a sense of fulfillment.

2. Child Rearing Practices

The data contained within this section on child rearing practices was gathered through a discussion with Weechi-it-te-win Family Services *ogitchitaakwewag* – female elders. The document *Traditional Childcare Practices: Raising our Children the Anishinaabe Way* (1995) identifies key cultural developmental drivers for Anishinaabe children. The traditional teachings on childcare practices began with the elders who have lived and breathed these teaching throughout their lives.

The second source of information is from *Raising Healthy Anishinaabeg Children* (University of Minnesota Duluth, 2011). This was a three-year project in which elders were consulted through focus groups to identify key developmental assets for raising healthy children ages 12 - 18. The project is a resource for professionals and family members to gain the elders' perspective in raising healthy Anishinaabeg children. Through focus

group consultations, these elders stated “healthy Anishinaabeg children make good decisions on their own and apply values to their own lives. They have positive self identification, are comfortable with who they are, are spiritually connected, and are part of an extended family unit and a cultural community” (University of Minnesota Duluth, 2011, http://www.d.umn.edu/sw/cw/anish_child/index.html).

Principles of Parenting

Parenting practices developed through these sources of information. Take the concept *spirituality*, which is a learning process that occurs over the lifespan. There is no set age to teach children about traditional values and beliefs; this is something learned all through life. It is important that children are not forced to adopt a certain belief system. They can be offered many beliefs systems, and the parents should always respect their freedom of choice (Weechi-it-te-win Family Services, 1995).

Special teachings exist for Aboriginal girls and boys. Traditional teachings specific to womanhood should be provided by women. Women cannot provide boys with teachings about manhood; this must be done by men (Weechi-it-te-win Family Services, 1995). One teaching specific to women is regarding their connection and reverence to water. A baby is protected within a system of water while being carried in the woman's womb. This water comes out into the world before the baby and of this women were given a special connection to water. It is believed that women are keepers of the water, and men are the keepers of fire. In Anishinaabe ceremony, a woman will always be called upon to provide a prayer for the sacredness of water.

A child is “*taught according to seasons*” (Weechi-it-te-win Family Services, 1995, p. 15). There are specific teachings to be provided at certain times of the year. For example, legends are told only during the wintertime and only when there is snow on the ground.

Children are *taught to respect everything and everyone*, and they are to be encouraged to connect

with mother earth. Children are to be raised with respect because they will become their parents' caretakers someday.

In Aboriginal society, it is the *entire community's responsibility to raise the child* by providing direction, supervision, guidance, and discipline. The elders believe that children must learn natural consequences and parents are not to interfere in the child's challenges; instead they are to be supportive, encouraging, and always aware of the sacred gift and responsibility that has been bestowed upon them (Weechi-it-te-win Family Services, 1995).

The *position of grandparents* in traditional child rearing is to provide knowledge and guidance within a relationship of unconditional love. In Anishinaabe life a female elder is grandmother to all children in the community and had the right to teach and discipline. It was the responsibility of grandparents to teach the children physical tasks such as making food and crafts, but they would also provide the value-based teaching that go with each task. The grandparents were the story tellers and would often teach by telling a story "about animals, clans, the future, and respect for nature" (Weechi-it-te-win Family Services, 1995, p. 16). Stories are different from legend, which can only be told in the winter. Legend telling was a lesson in listening, learning, problem solving, and spirituality. Sometimes it would take days for a legend to be told from beginning to end and children were to sit up and not fall asleep during story telling time as this was a form of disrespect (Weechi-it-te-win Family Services, 1995).

It is important to note that although ages have been separated into developmental groups, in Anishinaabe life some of these stages overlap, meaning that some teachings and practices continue throughout the entire childhood.

Ages 5 - 8

For Anishinaabe children ages 5 - 8, life is all about learning, primarily through the Seven Grandfather teachings of wisdom, love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility, and truth. Children in the age group are in the process of developing a

value system. The values and lessons that children ages 5 - 8 learn are related to respect. Primarily respect for nature, for other people, elders, and for themselves. At this age, children were primarily taught to respect themselves and everything else around them. Children this age were taught to wake up with the sun and go to sleep when the sun goes down; this was a teaching about respect for nature and for the good spirits that are active during the day. Children this age learned to offer tobacco for everything they take from the earth. They also learned about personal safety and to stay close to home where they can be supervised. Sometimes stories were told or tactics were used to invoke enough fear in children this age to stay away from dangerous areas and to stay close to home (Densmore, 1979). At this age, children are introduced to spiritual teachings such as the importance of their name, clan, and dreams. Children this age would be given regalia, and a ceremony to begin dancing in the pow-wow circle (Weechi-it-te-win Family Services, 1995).

Children ages 5 - 8 were taught through legends and stories given by grandparents and elders. It is believed that legends were an efficient discipline technique, "a legend would be told to the child to help him understand their behavior" (Weechi-it-te-win Family Services, 1995, p. 22). Boys were taught to fish and hunt. At the time of their first kill, the community or family would ensure that a ceremony occurred, which included a feast to honor the animal. Through hunting and fishing, young men were taught to be a "provider" for his future family (Weechi-it-te-win Family Services, 1995).

Ages 9-12

Teachings become more specific for children ages nine to twelve; the teachings for this age group focused on preparation for puberty or what can be termed rites of passage from childhood to young adulthood. Girls learned to relate to the moon as her grandmother, and they were taught special ceremonies to honor that connection.

In present day Anishinaabe culture, when a girl has her first menstrual cycle she is left alone

for 10 days under the care and instruction of a female elder or female family members. In some Anishinaabe cultures, the girl must fast with no food or water for four days (Densmore, 1979). She is not to be in the presence of men during this sacred time, out of respect for the power that she carries, which is essentially the ability to be life-giving. According to elder's teachings, the young woman is put on a *berry fast* for one year in which she is restricted from several activities.

She is not to go swimming during the first summer, cannot pick up or carry a baby, cannot go berry picking or eat berries of any kind, cannot hunt, skin animals or walk over anything (Weechi-it-te-win Family Services, 1995, p. 23).

After the berry fast, there is a feast and ceremony where the young woman can begin to re-engage in activities that were prohibited. The teaching around prohibiting the girl from eating berries and such is to teach her patience and discipline; two qualities believed to help her in her life (Densmore, 1979). Another important puberty teaching for girls is for them to have a set of their own utensils to be used only by them when they are on their moon-time, these usually become part of their personal bundle (Weechi-it-te-win Family Services, 1995).

Boys are given very specific teaching during the ages of 9 - 12, which help them to prepare to become men. When a boy's voice begins to change, he is required to fast. They are to go without food or water for four days and three nights. The boy is taken to a sacred spot where he was prepared to fast for his vision. "He wasn't told why he was being put out in the bush, but through his dreams and visions, later in life he will understand the meaning of this ceremony" (Weechi-it-te-win Family Services, 1995, p. 24). It is also important to note, that boys may not receive a vision on their first vision quest; but throughout their lives they have the option to fast for a vision again. Throughout their rites of passage boys are also taught to respect everything, especially woman, and they are taught to become providers

by hunting and being competent at making things (Weechi-it-te-win Family Services, 1995).

Ages 13 -18

During the teen years, ages 13 - 18, a young person's teachings become more concrete. The teachings continue during rites of passage or puberty. It was expected that youth this age show respect for all things. Young women are taught that they carry a powerful spiritual force that comes from their moon time and that they could do harm to others if they do not respect themselves. Young men are taught to become responsible providers for their families (Weechi-it-te-win Family Services, 1995). The Elders advised that youth ages 12 - 18 need the support and active involvement of their family, extended family and community; therefore, parents should organize their time around their child (University of Minnesota Duluth, 2011). To support Anishinaabe youth, parents must be home for their children, pay attention to them, and learn to communicate with them. Elders agree that youth should spend quality time with their grandparents and other elders to learn about the traditional ways and to visit with one another (University of Minnesota Duluth, 2011).

Youth who are empowered, know they are valued and that they will have opportunities to learn from their mistakes. They are praised often and treated with respect. "These activities are rehearsals for real life activities they will face" (University of Minnesota Duluth, 2011, p. 1). Youth must be praised but also allowed to make mistakes and learn to "get back up after they fall down" (University of Minnesota Duluth, 2011, p. 1). The elders advised that it is important for children in this age group to have knowledge of their culture "Those children that keep their culture do the best at staying healthy" (University of Minnesota Duluth, 2011, p. 1).

To ensure Anishinaabe youth use their time constructively, the elders advise parents to limit television and provide opportunities for them to be close to nature. Being close to nature is where they can learn about medicines and survival, these are valuable teachings that the youth will

use throughout their lives. In order for youth to develop a commitment to learning, they must have positive relationships with their school and feel good about who they are within that system. The elders recommend creating opportunities for youth to learn their Native language because the “good life” or “mino-bimadiziwin” is within the language (University of Minnesota Duluth, 2011).

For Anishinaabe youth, instilling positive values requires a grounding or connection to their cultural values and community. This connection provides a sense of belonging and security. The elders believe that positive values such as humility, sharing, respect, and humor must be modeled by the parents. Youth ages 12 - 18 should have their Anishinaabe name and know their clan they belong to, this helps the young person to know who they are so they can move forward in fulfilling his or her purpose in life. Being socially competent will allow youth to make good decisions and practice healthy conflict resolution. The Elders say that in order for this to occur, youth must be familiar with their spiritual practices and ceremonies. As the young person become familiar with his or her own cultural practices, he or she will be able to appreciate his or her own culture as well as that of others (University of Minnesota Duluth, 2011). Last, the elders believe that Anishinaabe youth require their parents to be role models of healthy behavior, provide good supervision, and provide stable consistent parenting. Youth require attention just like smaller children; they also require routines, rules, chores, and other expectations. This is a part of preparing the youth for adulthood (University of Minnesota Duluth, 2011).

3. The Cree Medicine Wheel Guide for Healing First Nations

The Cree Medicine Wheel Guide for Healing First Nations is a wholistic social work treatment model that can be applied at the individual, family, and community level. The underlying philosophy of the model signifies spirituality, achievement of wellness, and wholeness through finding balance. The model is grounded in the idea of finding

balance and harmony in relationship with all of creation; thus, someone who is out of balance (addiction, low self-esteem, violence) can be healed by incorporating Medicine Wheel teachings into his or her life. This model is supported by social works current trend to look outside the box and explore alternative methods of helping Aboriginal people (Nabigon and Mawhiney in Turner, 1996).

The Cree Medicine Wheel is based on two basic assumptions. The first is that spiritual life force is always present and all human beings require spiritual assistance in some manner (Nabigon and Mawhiney, in Turner, 1996).

... Cree ways of helping offer us ways to balance our inner selves by listening to ourselves, our surroundings, and others. When we listen to our inner self, we get in touch with our inner spiritual fire (Nabigon and Mawhiney, in Turner, 1996, p. 21).

The second assumption denotes that every person has an external and inner self; both require equal attention. Feeding the spirit is as equally important as feeding the body and both must be attended to in a caring manner.

The Cree Medicine Wheel is divided into four quadrants representing various teachings. It also includes layers of circles that begin at the centre and move outwards, which represent various levels of being; this is referred to as “the hub” (Nabigon and Mawhiney in Turner, 1996, p. 22). The outer circle represents the negative aspects within each quadrant and the inner circle represents the positive sides of being. The inner most circle represent the person who is part of the creator and all creation (Nabigon and Mawhiney in Turner, 1996).

Teachings within each of the directions that can be related to cultural attachment. In order for children not to feel inferior, powerless and victimized, it is important for them to “feel they have some power of choice over their own lives as they grow up” (Nabigon and Mawhiney in Turner, 1996, p. 22). Cree teachings emphasize the concepts of self-empowerments and self-

responsibility; therefore, success is defined and measured by the individual based on his or her own goals. The Cree Medicine Wheel emphasizes the importance of being still and listening to the self. Development of the core is essential to successful developmental transitions.

“The hub is useful in showing the interconnectedness of people in their external world, which includes ancestors, family, friends, community and natural environment” (Nabigon and Mawhiney in Turner, 1996, p. 26). The important values that form the Cree Approach, includes the connection to ancestors is the belief that their actions have influence on the current life process of each individual in the present. Each individual’s actions will have direct implications for the next seven generations. Further, the value is in becoming close to nature and observing the animal world. The animal world teaches life values such as kindness, honesty, respect and how to conduct oneself in relation to another. Another important value within this model is that everything is viewed as a spirit (Nabigon and Mawhiney in Turner, 1996).

4. Native Self Actualization Assessment Placement

The Native Self Actualization Assessment Placement was developed from the High Fidelity Wraparound model that evolved from John Brown and associates of the well-known Brownsdale programs (Stone Brown, 2008). Stone Brown (2008) developed the model from a needs assessment conducted on the urban Aboriginal population in Denver Colorado. The Native Self Actualization model is the first step in implementing the high fidelity wraparound process for families in crisis (Stone Brown, 2008). This model essentially assesses the level of enculturation within an individual or family.

The primary function of the Native Self-Actualization model is to determine the worldview of each member of a family (Stone Brown, 2008). It is based on eight domains from which four different worldviews can be determined. This

determination is done by the client. Each domain is based on a continuum that moves from a fully western or contemporary worldview to a fully traditional worldview.

Four aspects of worldview make up the continuum within each domain. The first worldview is a fully traditional worldview meaning that person’s belief system, practices, teachings, language, and thought process are based on Aboriginal teachings. First worldview people are very attached to culture and the majority of their social lives happen within their own cultural networks. First worldview people will prefer to use their traditional medicines or healers to deal with health issues. Second worldview is a traditional/contemporary worldview, which means that the person has a “predominantly traditional worldview that is mixed with contemporary” (Stone Brown, p. 12). The third worldview or “Contemporary / Traditional” is a transitional worldview like the second worldview; however, third worldview is predominantly a contemporary worldview that moves toward traditional. The fourth worldview is a fully contemporary worldview in which the person’s beliefs systems are non-traditional where thinking is linear, language is non-native and there is an apparent detachment from culture (Stone Brown, 2008). The assessment tool is broken down into eight domains: spirituality, social/recreation, learning, family, food, time, language, and attachment to culture.

5. Relational Worldview Model

Terry Cross developed the Relational Worldview Model. Relational Worldview is Indigenous knowledge. It is based on the concept that problems are a product of imbalance; therefore, problems must be viewed in light of all related variables, including spiritual forces, and interventions must be geared toward regaining balance (Cross, 2010). Unlike western models, the Relational worldview model does not look for one problem and one intervention; the person is treated in a wholistic manner and various interventions occur.

The model can be used for assessing family problems and is demonstrated through a four quadrant circle. The four quadrants of context, mind, body, and spirit are realms of being that are constantly interacting to bring about balance and harmony. When assessing Aboriginal families, everything must be looked at within context.

The context within which Indian families function is filled with strength-producing or harmonizing resources. Oppression, for all its damage to us, creates an environment where survival skills are developed and sharpened (Cross, 2010, p. 3).

Aboriginal people have systems within their families and communities, which are interdependent and it is within the context of these systems that Aboriginal people find their identity. The second quadrant includes thoughts and emotional processes; it includes the ways in which Aboriginal people learn to cope with the world through listening and sharing with one another. The third quadrant includes the physical self, gender, health level and how well the body is being cared for. When applying the third quadrant to a family, it refers to the roles and structure of the kinship network and how the family is sustained within this system. The fourth quadrant refers to both positive and negative spiritual influences. The positive practices are those actions that bring

about positive spiritual outcomes; whereas, the negative practices are beliefs that limit or cause people to engage in negative spiritual behavior (Cross, 2010).

The Relational worldview model considers all four quadrants and is based on the assumption that the system itself naturally seeks balance and is therefore naturally resilient. The role of the worker is to support the areas of resilience and assist in bringing balance. Aboriginal healers work within this model; they will not exclusively treat the mind, body, or spirit. Instead, they will provide interventions that work with the mind, body, and spirit, which becomes are part of the person's context. Relational worldview model is a traditional practice that has been active in Aboriginal nations for hundreds of years (Cross, 2010).

Western Models

Western models alone will not work with Aboriginal people, as the principle part of self is not acknowledged by these developmental theories – the spirit. The authors have provided some ideas on how to incorporate the worldview, cultural structure, cultural attachment opportunities into service practice. The service practice at any give agency will need to think about how to systematically address the Aboriginal developmental constructs

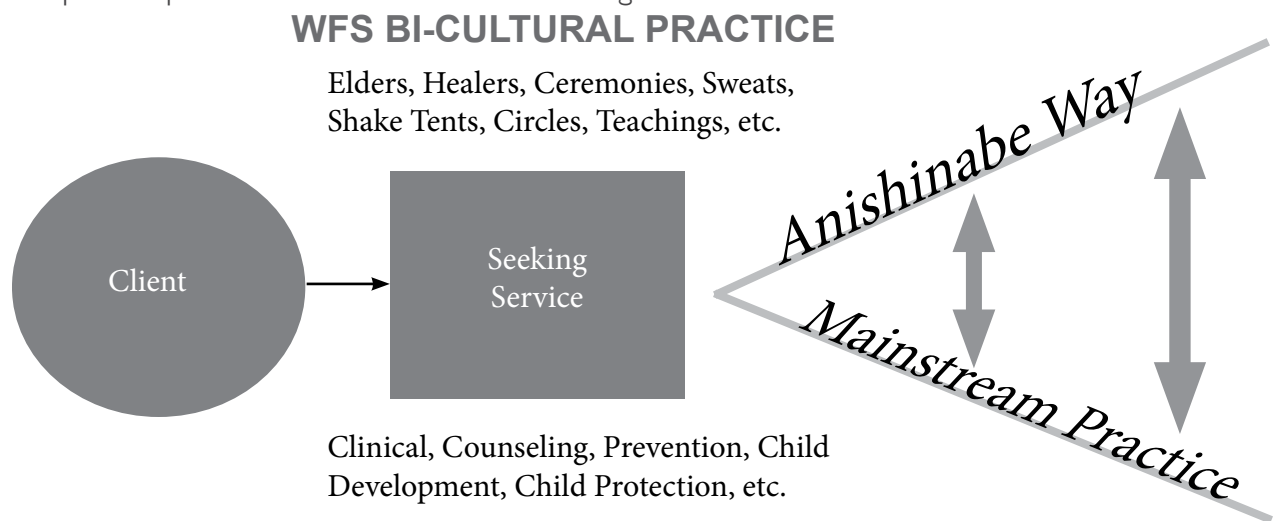


Diagram 2: Weechi-it-te-win Family Services, 2005

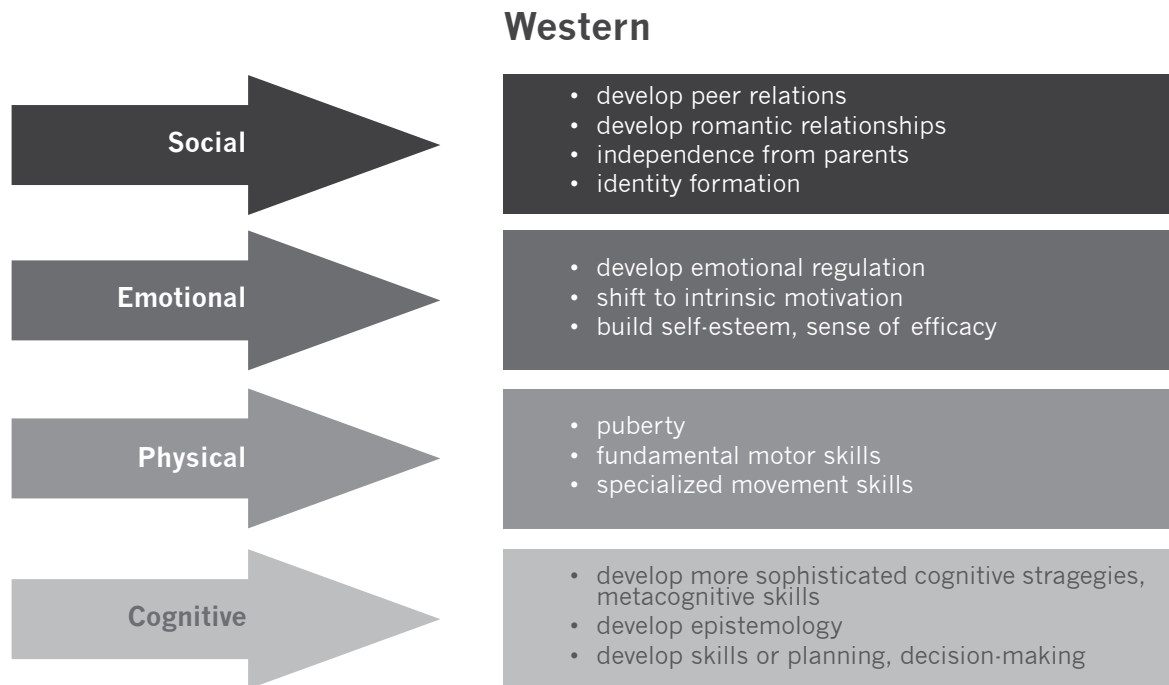


Diagram 3: Ministry of Child and Youth Services (2011)

into their practice. For this, Weechi-it-te-win Family Services has offered their model of bi-cultural practice for consideration (see diagram 2 below).

The philosophy of bi-cultural practice is to ensure the client has the best of both worldviews and their subsequent philosophies. Years of practice-based evidence exists for Weechi-it-te-win Family Services, which has evolved this type of services to a strong cultural restorative practice model (Simard, 2009).

Another important part of western models and their incorporation of developmental theories with Aboriginal people are many disconnected views of development throughout the lifetime. At present, there is a multitude of developmental theories leading the way; however, they are not connected into one single entity. In addition they are trajectories for the child, and seen as benchmarks of achievement (see diagram 3 above).

These development trajectories are not, especially different for Aboriginal children and

youth, but there is a significant difference that must be recognized in relation to historical context, contemporary issues, access to culturally safe and supportive services, in light of the socio-economic context. These variables along with the thematic of Aboriginal development need to be included into the developmental framework as a best practice for Aboriginal people. This will allow for Aboriginal children to success with confidence.

The model presented has offered ideas on how to incorporate the spirit into an Aboriginal child's development. Now it is the time to put it together and look at development from a wholistic perspective.

All parts to self are included within this model. First, within the Aboriginal core is the spirit. Second, all other domains are captured as well. These include the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive domain. Further, the diagram offers the contextual variables, which need to be included within any developmental framework for the Aboriginal child (see diagram 4, following page).

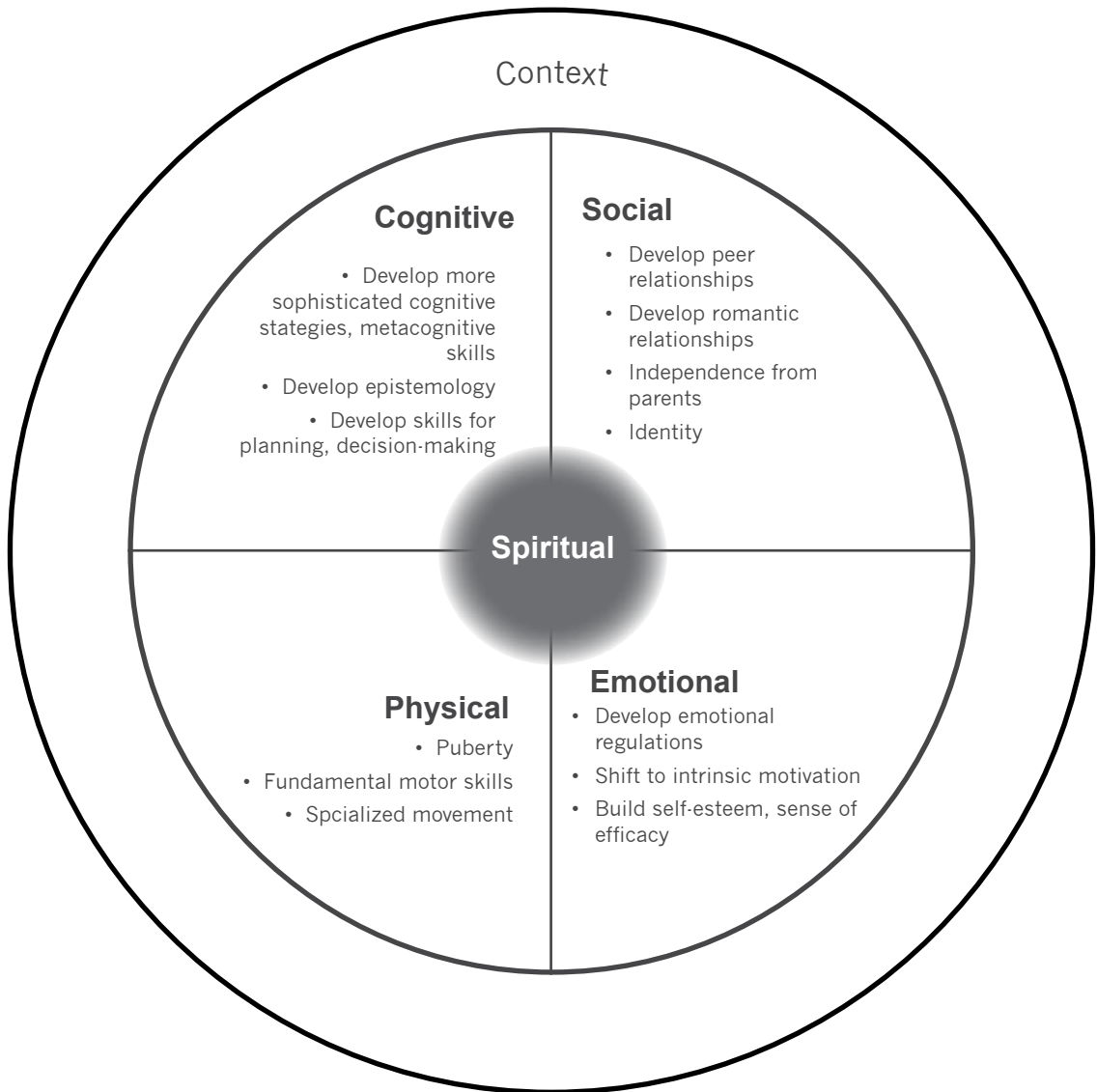


Diagram 4: Aboriginal Worldview on Development, Simard (2011)

Implications for Child and Youth Services

In working with Aboriginal people, one must remember the long history of colonization and its deep seated effects. Thira (2011) discusses the fourth wave of colonization as the “medical wave, made up of professional caregivers,

treatment centres, and others which encourage and provide so-called healing, based on the view of Aboriginal peoples as ‘sick’” (p. 1). In Thira (2011) framework, if children and youth do not measure up to the standards of development, they are “delayed”, but it does not suggest overall there is a problem with societal oppression, which needs to be addressed.

Conversely, to standardized healing methodologies, this paper demonstrated that Aboriginal knowledge systems are alive and well in the Aboriginal population, and as a result, a shift in policy, practice, regulations, and assessment, warrants consideration. The trend in assessment and service models based on Aboriginal knowledge is a valuable resource for child and youth services in Ontario. Interventions designed by Aboriginal people, and based in Aboriginal knowledge can compliment western models; these interventions can also replace them entirely. With careful research and the application of the OCAP principles – Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession the Aboriginal worldview outlined in the report can be empowered in service delivery systems (First Nation Centre, 2007).

Those professionals in charge of child and youth services in Ontario will have a better understanding of Aboriginal youth in the child welfare, children's mental health, and youth justice systems. The trajectories for development demonstrated in this paper will not only form a framework for assessing development, but influence policy directions that will ensure healthy development for this special population of youth who are over-represented in all systems.

The information revealed the need for policy makers to support the development of cultural interventions, which are meaningful, systematic, and embedded with cultural sustainability. Theoretical and economic support in the areas of culturally safe research and evaluation would prove beneficial to ensuring that cultural restoration frameworks are working effectively for Aboriginal youth. The introduction and maintenance of culturally restorative practices into agency service delivery would not only decrease barriers within the current system but also facilitate human development in the sense that children and youth would be served in a honorable manner.

A recommendation is service providers to consider the development of professional learning communities to discuss cross-cultural work with Aboriginal people. This is to discuss the historical

context and learn from Aboriginal people the best practices for helping with the Thematic of Aboriginal development in mind. Professional development programs require a change in operational paradigms. This means moving from a one-time workshop to a professional learning community. Professional learning communities offer: "job embedded learning; an expectation that learning is ongoing and occurs as part of routine work practice; team based action research; learning by doing; learning collectively by working together" (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008, p. 95). Professional learning communities offer more investment in professional development activities, as it promotes collegial support and learning. Further, professionals develop relationships with Aboriginal people, to strengthen and foster positive change for Aboriginal people, and this is a contribution we can make to increase successful transitions for Aboriginal children and youth.

Conclusion

To implement culturally restorative practice this calls for a shift in paradigms, by voicing the alternatives of child development structure and intent from an Aboriginal worldview. Justification within the collated data presents alternative schemas to developmental models with Aboriginal people. This culturally restorative developmental practice paradigms, includes at the forefront an understanding of Aboriginal history – both positive and negative effects. Negative history begins with the process of colonization whereas; positive history lends its way to a healing process for both cultures along with an understanding of Aboriginal worldview.

Worldview leads into the mechanisms of cultural structure, which exist in all Aboriginal Nations. The application of cultural structure into service practice promotes cultural attachment, which subsequently leads to cultural identity formation. This identity formation leads to relational development, which leads to task accomplishment. Task accomplishment embodies the spiritual part of development, and

further, leads the way to successful development constructs across other domains. Culturally restorative developmental practice paradigms are the alternative for Aboriginal development.

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Residential Schools: Creating and Continuing Institutionalization among Aboriginal Peoples in Canada

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Introduction

According to a variety of sources, Aboriginal peoples are overrepresented in a variety of modern day institutions. To increase our understanding of why this phenomenon has occurred, it is useful to review the history of residential schools and the nature of those now-defunct institutions. Furthermore, it is helpful to consider the reasons residential schools, and similar institutions, developed the way they did. Considering Goffman's (1961) notion of the Total Institution leads to a better sense of how institutionalization and re-institutionalization occur and how the consequences of these processes to Aboriginal peoples have played out over the decades.

A Brief History of Residential Schools

The colonization of North America started in the seventeenth century which saw increasing numbers of Europeans arriving in both what is now Canada and the United States (Tittley, 1986). Colonization is an act predicated on a mindset of

Abstract

Many Aboriginal peoples in Canada have experienced, directly or indirectly, the effects of residential schools. Some Aboriginal people have also experienced the phenomenon known as institutionalization, as a result of residential school experiences, experiences over which they had no control and that were demanded by law. Some Aboriginal people in Canada have moved from the residential school institutions to similar newly developed institutions such as shelters and to established institutions such as the correctional system, or both. Indeed, Aboriginal peoples are overrepresented in all such institutions. In this paper, I seek to demonstrate the association between Aboriginal peoples' experiences in and of residential schools and subsequent adult institutionalization. Attempts to 'civilize' Aboriginal peoples through cultural assimilation may have instead resulted in intergenerational institutionalization among many Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

Keywords: Residential Schools; child welfare and correctional systems; family violence; Aboriginal women; intergenerational institutionalization.

cultural superiority. Members of one culture view themselves – their own culture, worldview, norms, values and beliefs – as superior to members of another culture. The establishment of residential schools may be seen as an extension of the act of colonization.

Residential schools were built and operationalized in Canada after the federal government reviewed the policy known as "aggressive civilization", originally developed in the United States (Davin, 1879, p. 1). European colonizers in both countries experienced culture clashes with the indigenous inhabitants. These clashes intensified as members of the colonies

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increased in numbers and moved west (Titley, 1986). The policy was intended to assimilate Aboriginal people into the newly developing agrarian way of life. Assimilation was difficult because European settlers were encouraged to settle land already occupied by Aboriginal peoples living a nomadic, hunter-gatherer way of life. In order to vacate and assume ownership of the land, the American government created Indian reservations and opened industrial boarding schools (Brave Heart, 2000). In both countries, these actions resulted in the removal of Aboriginal peoples from the land which in turn enabled farmers to homestead and to establish settlements (Fournier & Crey, 1997).

According to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [RCAP], Nicholas-Flood Davin, a Member of Parliament for the Conservative government, was directed by the government to tour the United States to learn about that country's approach to dealing with 'the Indian problem' (1996). In his "Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half Breeds" (1879, p. 1), Davin identified industrial boarding schools as the "principle feature" of the policy of "aggressive civilization" which had been developed specifically to deal with what was identified as 'the Indian problem' in the United States. Industrial boarding schools in that country were primarily intended to assimilate Aboriginal children into the new American social order by providing them with the basics of an English education and training in both agriculture and skilled trades for boys and homemaking for girls (Davin, 1897). The Davin Report provided the basis for a proposal for the implementation of industrial boarding schools for boys. The final decision was to implement residential schools and children of both genders were required by law to attend. Both Canadian and American institutions shared the objective of "rapid assimilation" of Aboriginal children into the dominant social order (Enns, 2009, p. 117).

Once committed to this course of action, the financial costs of running these institutions became a major concern to the federal government. To keep costs down, the federal government

handed over responsibility for daily operations of residential schools to the established churches of the day. According to the RCAP (1996), Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, and Methodist (later, with other denominations, to become the United Church of Canada) clergy, motivated to convert Aboriginal peoples to Christianity, assumed responsibility for operations of these institutions at the request of the federal government.

The Canadian solution differed somewhat from the American solution insofar as, in Canada, residential schools were funded by the federal government but operated by churches. The federal government, "pressured by British homesteaders who demanded . . . [that] Indians be neutralized or removed from the land" supported "religious-run boarding schools for Indian children" (Fournier & Crey, 1997, p. 53). The Assembly of First Nations [AFN] maintains that the "acceptance of the Davin Report formalized the policy of assimilation in a systematic and all-encompassing way through the implementation of residential schooling and a cooperative relationship between "church and state"" (1994, p. 14).

Inherent in the concept of residential schools is the assumption of the acceptability of political violence against Aboriginal peoples, given the requirement that children be removed from their families in order to be placed in these schools, removed by force if necessary. The notion of political violence is applicable to the residential school experience in that it constitutes "those acts of an intergroup nature that are seen by those on both sides, or on one side, to constitute violent behaviour carried out in order to influence power relations between the two sets of participants" (Cairns, 1996, as cited in Weingarten, 2007, p. 55). Together, church and state in Canada exercised near absolute power over the lives of Aboriginal peoples, and in particular, over the lives of their children.

The residential school system provided the government with a critically important tool to use in working towards its objective of cultural assimilation. The government's "official policy called for children to be isolated not only from their

family and homelands but also, once at school, from their friends and siblings” (Fournier & Crey, 1997, p. 56). From their inception, residential schools were operated by non-Aboriginal staff. Cultural assimilation and religious indoctrination were to be accomplished by increasing a child’s vulnerability through isolation.

The objectives of religious indoctrination and cultural assimilation were realized through daily activities which followed a strict regimen of labour and routine (Fournier & Crey, 1997). All activities associated with daily living followed a strict schedule. A former student of residential school describes the school activities as “regimental . . . it was like what I imagine jail to be” (Jaine, 1993, p. 11). Fournier and Crey note the urgings of a federal report which stated “there should be an object for employment of every moment” (1997, p. 56), similar to the expression that ‘the devil finds work for idle hands.’ At residential schools, children were forbidden from speaking their native languages and from practicing traditional ceremonies (AFN, 1994). Aboriginal peoples, like those the world over, articulate their ways of knowing in their own unique languages. Since language reflects and reinforces culture and culture reflects and reinforces language, denying children their language was instrumental in the objective of the eradication of Aboriginal culture.

By the late 1940’s “four or five generations had returned from residential schools as poorly educated, angry, abused strangers who had no experience in parenting” (Fournier & Crey, 1997, p. 82). As a result, residential schools were ostensibly transformed during the 1950’s from institutions created to assimilate to institutions acting in loco parentis.

According to the AFN (1994), residential schools underwent three historical shifts during their operations. During phase one, these institutions were focused on assimilation and religious conversion while preparing Aboriginal children for a place in the lowest echelons of the economy. During the second phase, the intent was to prepare children to return to their communities,

taking with them their new European language and training with a view to introducing change from within to traditional Aboriginal communities. Phase three saw another shift in emphasis which aimed to integrate Aboriginal children into mainstream society by the introduction of programming that was much more in line with that found in mainstream schools. The last residential schools were not closed until the last decades of the twentieth century.

Generations of Aboriginal peoples were abused physically, emotionally, sexually, and spiritually while attending residential schools in Canada. Significant numbers of former residential school staff have plead guilty to charges of psychological, spiritual, sexual and physical abuse they committed against Aboriginal children residing in those institutions (RCAP, 1996). The federal government acknowledged the abuses suffered by Aboriginal peoples by issuing a formal, public apology in 2008. This acknowledgement, along with the negotiation of a \$2 billion class-action settlement for residential school survivors and the creation of the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission, solidified the reality of the horrific acts carried out in residential schools (Diebel, 2009, March 16).

Residential Schools Assuming Parental Roles

In families, primary caregivers tend to be parents. In residential schools, primary caregivers were the clergy and members of religious societies who were priests and nuns. Those very staff members who committed horrific acts against Aboriginal children assumed a parental role within residential schools on behalf of church and state.

Parenting can be viewed as an institution insofar as it is “a complex of values, beliefs, norms and behaviours centred in . . . the need to care for the young” (LaRossa, 1986, p. 11). Simply put, the parental role can be viewed as having three primary dimensions. The physical wellbeing of the child is the responsibility of the

parent as guardian or custodian. The spiritual, cultural and intellectual well being of the child is fostered by the parent as teacher and mentor. The child's sense of self as a being of worth and value, is reinforced by a parent's love, affection, and support. Involvement in a healthy community is beneficial for parents and families to successfully achieve these tasks.

In Aboriginal communities, children were highly valued and placed "at the heart of a belief system closely aligned with the natural world" (Fournier & Crey, 1997, p. 52). Traditional Aboriginal societies relied on an oral tradition for both the transmission of their beliefs, values, norms and behaviours and the transmission of knowledge of the physical world, fauna, flora, climate, astronomy etc. In traditional Aboriginal societies, the survival of the community depended on their oral tradition and the ability of children to successfully transition into the next generation of custodians of that oral tradition (AFN, 1994).

The ultimate indication of successful parenting in traditional Aboriginal communities was the survival and success of the community. According to Titley (1986) the goal of residential schools was three fold: the eradication of Native languages to be replaced with English, the replacement of Aboriginal spirituality with Christianity, and the assimilation of Aboriginal peoples into the dominant culture. The parental role of staff in residential schools included activities which, on the surface, were similar to those of Aboriginal parents but were directed at achieving very different objectives. Residential school staff assumed custodial roles with the intent of exercising complete control over children's actions and severely limiting their independence of movement. Staff in a mentoring role attempted to instil in children church-sanctioned norms, values and beliefs to replace those of traditional cultures. They assumed the role of educator with the objective of replacing children's traditional knowledge and ways of knowing with those in line with the dominant culture. Finally, staff also instilled a sense within the child that his or her role was not to be a full

member of an Aboriginal community but rather to be a member of the lower strata of society serving the dominant culture (Titley, 1986).

Clearly, based on this comparison of parental roles and objectives between Aboriginal parents and residential school staff, it is evident that staff generally assumed an extremely authoritarian, negative, and uncaring stance. "The missionaries, who essentially became substitute parents, did not provide the nurturing required for the development of positive self-worth and self-esteem or the ability to feel good about one's self" (AFN, 1994, p. 39). These institutions and their staff were highly inadequate replacements for children's rightful parents and grandparents. As indicated, parenting is not simply the passing on of knowledge, values and beliefs. The dimensions of nurturing and affection which underpin and infuse the transmission of culture in Aboriginal communities strengthen immeasurably both that transmission and the community. It is critical for a parent to provide a child with a mirror reflecting the child's value, importance, and sense of belonging to the family and the community. These essential aspects of parenting were absent from residential schools.

After isolating children from their families, further isolating them from friends and family within the institution and working to destroy their cultural identity, residential school staff then acted as surrogate families, albeit families characterized by significant dysfunction. The indoctrination of Christian religious beliefs coupled with Eurocentric cultural teachings created an identity crisis among many residential school survivors (Johnston, 1998).

The Total Institution

Goffman (1961) was the first researcher to conceptualize and articulate the notion of the Total Institution. The objective of the Total Institution is to destroy the ability of the institutionalized individual to fully achieve selfhood, to become an autonomous, self-actualized human being. Achieving this objective enables the Total

Institution to achieve its own institutional objectives which are generally associated with a political ideology. One important objective is the destruction of the individual's own cultural identity and its replacement with an identity closely tied to the institution.

A Total Institution is associated with a number of characteristics, a brief description of which follows. The Total Institution is characterized by its physical isolation from the community. Within the institution's physical structure, the elimination of the association between a role and a physical place where that role is played out is achieved. There is an extreme power differential between the inmates and the staff. Inmates are cut off from the outside world but staff continue to be integrated with the outside world.

A number of actions are taken against inmates to achieve the overall objective of the Total Institution. One set of actions focuses on an individual's possessions. Upon entering the institution, individuals are stripped of their own clothing and possessions which are replaced by goods provided by the institution. All goods, including clothing, tend to be identical which further erodes any sense of individuality. Another set of actions is focused on the body of the individual. He or she is subject to extreme cleansing, often including disinfecting, given standard haircuts, issued with an identification number and so on. Physical and sexual abuse may also occur. The next set of actions focuses on the elimination of the individual's social structure. There may be the potential for remnants of the individual's existing social structure to be rebuilt within the institution and this potential is destroyed. A last set of actions focuses on the elimination of the multiplicity of roles which characterizes life outside the institution and its replacement with the single role of inmate.

It is highly likely that anyone who has experienced life within a total institution on a long term basis will experience difficulty in taking up his or her role within the wider society upon release. Chrisjohn and Young (1997, p. 73) maintain that the "total institution does not produce a new self

but no self at all." A person who has become institutionalized often experiences a highly eroded, degraded or complete loss of personal identity. Reduced interest in the outside world, lost interpersonal relationships with individuals outside the institution, and diminished perceptions of personal abilities and personal agency for independent decision-making are correlated with long term residency in authoritarian institutions (Crawley & Sparks, 2006). Adjustment to life outside the institution can be difficult, given that, after spending years following strictly regimented daily schedules, that structure is suddenly absent.

Given similar experiences within a Total Institution, many individuals, after release, may exhibit similar behaviours. Individuals tend to gravitate towards what they know, towards what is familiar. After a long period of time in a Total Institution, what is familiar includes the expectation of externally-imposed regimentation and structure, the loss of personal identity, and the feeling of worthlessness. Such individuals may tend to gravitate towards the same or another Total Institution environment after having developed an institutional memory (Sider, 2005). It is critical to note that this is the case regardless of ethnicity, gender, religion, age, social status or other characteristics. Children experiencing a Total Institution during their formative years are likely to be even more damaged than adults.

If a mode of circular causality (Collins, Coleman & Collins, 2005) is adopted, institutionalization can be interpreted as a repetitive, circular pattern which is negatively reinforced. These traumatic experiences of isolation, institutionalization, and abuse coupled with the detachment from family and culture, create negative patterns of behaviour which may ultimately result in the re-institutionalization of many adults and subsequently of their children.

Residential School as Total Institution

As described in the first section of this paper, residential schools exhibited many of the

characteristics identified by Goffman (1961) as being associated with Total Institutions. Actions taken against Aboriginal children entering and living in residential schools are consistent with actions taken against inmates in Total Institutions. Therefore it is reasonable to identify residential schools as total institutions.

Why is it important to identify residential schools as Total Institutions? When an Aboriginal person who has experienced residential school rejoins the community, that person will likely experience difficulty in assuming his or her role within that community and within the wider society. For example, a former residential school student recalls:

After the ten years I spent in residential school there were a lot of adjustments to be made. The church was no longer the focal point of my life ... I wanted so much to be free and to do the things I had heard about and seen other people do. I wanted to do those things too, and I did them, but I couldn't handle the freedom. (Jaine, 1993, p. 63)

As indicated previously, like any former inmate of a Total Institution, many individuals who have experience of residential schools may gravitate towards that which is familiar. This tendency to gravitate towards the familiar may provide one explanation, among a number, as to why such individuals are found in disproportionate numbers in various types of institutions. The reactions of an Aboriginal person having experienced a Total Institution, such as a residential school, are likely to be the same as any other person with that experience.

Long term impacts of living within the context of a Total Institution may include a loss of personal identity and autonomy and, as mentioned previously, the creation of an institutional memory (Sider, 2005). Individuals who are taught/conditioned as children to obey without question the rules of an institution may, in turn, come to identify with and subsequently depend on this type of environment. As adults, they may experience significant difficulties in terms of

parenting, seeking and maintaining employment, finding housing, and accessing other support services. Individuals who continuously experience these kinds of difficulties may ultimately develop a dependency on social services and correctional institutions (Sider, 2005).

Through the lens of the Total Institution, it is reasonable to propose that the overrepresentation of Aboriginal peoples within social service and correctional institutions may, in part, be a result of Aboriginal peoples moving to present-day institutions from the historic institution of residential schools. It may be argued that many Aboriginal peoples have been conditioned to life in institutional settings. That is to say, a new identity has overlaid the original identity, one which is more consistent with institutional culture than with traditional culture. The next sections provide information which supports this view.

Aboriginal Peoples and Correctional Institutions

As colonizer, the government's agenda was to eradicate Aboriginal culture in favour of its own so-called superior culture using the institution of residential schools. The methods used to carry out this agenda have left many Aboriginal Peoples with significant feelings of rage. "Aboriginal Peoples are being re-victimized by colonization – this time indirectly as colonization is turned inside out by Aboriginal Peoples victimizing themselves and where women and children bear the brunt of such trauma" (Chartrand & Mackay, 2006, p. 6). One consequence is that, while Aboriginal peoples accounted for only 3.1% of the Canadian adult population, they made up 18% of the population in provincial and territorial custody" (Statistics Canada, 2009, para 19).

Family violence, alcoholism and suicidal behaviour among Aboriginal peoples, according to Gagne (1998), can be directly or indirectly related to abuses they suffered as children at residential school. Chartrand and Mackay (2006, p. 47) contend that "society's response to dealing

with the trauma experienced by abused Aboriginal individuals and the consequential effects has often been to institutionalize the affected individuals in prisons and other institutions”, essentially punishing the victim. According to Brzozowski, Taylor-Butts and Johnson (2006), Aboriginal people made up 10% of the general population in Saskatchewan yet they comprised 80% of adults in provincial custodial facilities; 11% of the general population in Manitoba were Aboriginal and comprised 68% of the province’s incarcerated population; 4% of Alberta’s general population were Aboriginal and 39% of its provincial prison population were Aboriginal. “In other provinces and territories the proportion of Aboriginal peoples in custody ranged from two to six times their proportional representation in the general population” (Brzozowski, et al., 2006, p. 13). These statistics are consistent with the findings of both Gagne (1998) and Chartrand and Mackay (2006). Clearly, Aboriginal peoples are overrepresented in correctional institutions and the impetus is likely to start with the process of re-institutionalization.

Aboriginal Peoples and Family Violence

As noted previously, the majority of family violence can be related to abuses many Aboriginal peoples experienced as children in residential schools (Gagne, 1998). According to Weingarten (2004), therapists generally accept that children of parents suffering from chronic post-traumatic stress disorder caused by political violence may well be affected by the experiences of their parents. Problems that these families experience may be linked to political events of long ago, events which have no apparent association with the current situation. As indicated in the first section of this paper, what was essentially imprisonment in residential schools was indeed a form of political violence. Weingarten (2004, p. 45) further describes “the belief that a family member who has experienced trauma can ‘expose’ another member to ‘residues’ of that

trauma, even though the exposed family member does not directly experience that trauma.” There can be intergenerational and multigenerational transmissions of trauma (Brave Heart, 2000). Fournier and Crey (1997) also agree that former residential school students and their own children and grandchildren experience intergenerational trauma.

Rates of sexual assault and other violent crimes are reported to be higher on reserves than in other areas of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2006). One in five Aboriginal people indicated that they had experienced spousal violence from a current or previous partner; in comparison with fewer than one in fifteen non-Aboriginal people (Brzozowski, et al., 2006). Rates and severity of spousal violence are higher for Aboriginal women than for non-Aboriginal women (Statistics Canada, 2006).

Aboriginal Women and Battered Women’s Shelters

A study conducted by Taylor-Butts (2003/04) found that 64% of women’s shelters across Canada provide culturally-sensitive programming designed for Aboriginal women. Provision of these services supports the assumption that a significant number of Aboriginal women require services from these institutions. The Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters [ACWS] reported in 2009 that Aboriginal women are at higher risk for experiencing domestic violence than other cultural groups, that they are generally overrepresented within battered women’s shelters and that this is a consistent pattern over a number of years.

Aboriginal women make up 81% of shelter residents in northern Alberta, 60% in central Alberta, and 28.7% in the southern region of the province (ACWS, 2009). Women seek shelter in and are admitted to these institutions largely because they have been victims of domestic violence. Domestic violence among Aboriginal people is either directly or indirectly associated with abuse they experienced or witnessed at residential school (Gagne, 1998).

Aboriginal Peoples and Child Welfare

Child welfare, while not having a physical location like a jail or a shelter, does exhibit some of the characteristics associated with a Total Institution. A Total Institution is characterized by isolation from the community. A child taken into care will likely be isolated from his or her community while parents of an apprehended child are forced to deal with child welfare staff, generally outside the community, as opposed to seeking guidance from Aboriginal Elders and members of the Aboriginal community. A Total Institution is characterized by an extreme power differential between staff and inmates. In the child welfare system, there is an extreme power differential between parents and child welfare staff. Parents involved with child welfare must demonstrate their competencies as parents to child welfare staff who ultimately decide whether or not their child should be apprehended and placed into state care. While systemic racism and discrimination certainly play a role in the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children within the child welfare system, residential school experiences of parents and grandparents within Total Institutions may also play a role in the disproportionate number of Aboriginal children in state care.

While the population of residential schools was completely disproportionate given that the population was exclusively Aboriginal, Aboriginal children continue to be disproportionately represented within child welfare systems across Canada. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation [CBC] reported in November of 2009 that one in ten children in state care are Aboriginal. In that same year, Laurie Monsebraaten, a reporter with the Toronto Star, reported that more Aboriginal children "are in the care of children's aid societies today than were forced to live in residential schools." In that same report, Monsebraaten estimated that 27, 000 Aboriginal children were living in foster care across the country (2009, November 22). It is interesting to note that, while residential school staff usurped the role of

parent in the 1800s and 1900s, the child welfare institution and staff have been viewed as usurping the parental role in Aboriginal families as child welfare gradually replaced residential schools over the latter half of the twentieth century. The tragedy of the remove of children from Aboriginal parents which first started with residential schools is often repeated with the actions of child welfare staff.

Conclusion

The information presented in this paper demonstrates an association between residential school experiences and the re-institutionalization of Aboriginal adults. Further, it is clear that the overrepresentation of Aboriginal peoples within modern institutions also has an association with the residential school experience. It is likely that re-institutionalization and overrepresentation are linked. As shown by the discussion of the concept of the Total Institution, Aboriginal peoples are by no means unique in their lived consequences of experiencing the Total Institution and any notion that Aboriginal peoples are responsible for their own victimization is groundless. With respect to these consequences which include loss of personal identity, intergenerational trauma, increased violence etc., as Chrisjohn and Young (1997) make clear, there is no mystery, no need to obfuscate in a fog of misplaced compassion. There is a chain of cause and effect, outcome and accountability, the clarity of which becomes clearer over time as attention is focused on the history and aftermath of residential school institutions. Chair of the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Justice Murray Sinclair encouraged healing among Aboriginal peoples and acknowledges the destructive nature of residential school institutions imposed upon them:

Our families were broken ... and must be rebuilt. Our relationships have been damaged and must be restored. Our spirits have been stolen and must be returned. Our love of life was turned to fear and we must

work together to learn to trust once again.
(CBC, 2009, October 15)

Many Aboriginal people and their communities have begun processes of healing in which traditional cultures have played and continue to play an instrumental and integral role. However, many individuals are still lost. Aboriginal peoples across Canada have displayed courage, resilience, tenacity and strength in their ongoing commitment to bring to light in the broader Canadian context the reality of their experiences. It is the responsibility of all Canadians to understand the oppressive nature and the historical attempts of the federal government to assimilate Aboriginal peoples through its implementation of Indian residential school institutions.

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Stuck in the Ways of the South: How Meritocracy, Bureaucracy, and a One-Size-Fits-All Approach to Child Welfare fails Nunavut's Children

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Introduction

In March, 2011, the Office of the Auditor General released a report on the state of social services in Nunavut titled *Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut-2011: Children, Youth and Family Programs and Services in Nunavut* (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2011). In this Report the Government of Nunavut's (GN) Department of Health and Social Services was criticized for failing to meet its responsibilities regarding the protection and well being of children, youth and families. The Report included responses from the Department of Health and Social Services regarding certain "problem" areas identified by the Auditor General's office, such as the Department "not complying with the procedures it has set for itself," one example being the inability to "track the current status of the children in its care" (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2011, p.22, 23). These responses indicated the

Abstract

Based on qualitative research that explored the experiences of social workers in Nunavut's child welfare system, this paper examines the current approach to child welfare in light of a critical report issued by Canada's Auditor General in March 2011. Through a discussion of meritocracy, this study highlights the problematic approach to child welfare used by the Government of Nunavut, particularly in their reliance on Qallunaat or non-Inuit social workers. The territory's current child welfare system, modeled on child welfare systems operating throughout southern Canada, does little to change the status quo and instead serves to maintain the colonial power structure in place for the last 50 years. This study determined that a unique and culturally relevant approach to child welfare is needed in Nunavut and Inuit traditional knowledge is essential is the move towards this important goal².

Key Words: Nunavut; child welfare system; Qallunaat / non-Inuit social workers.

Government of Nunavut agreed with all of the recommendations put forward by the Auditor General's (AG) office. Yet rather than providing ground breaking advice and direction, many of the recommendations offered by the Office of the Auditor General appear to only describe in detail the problem the Government of Nunavut has faced for years. Namely, that the approach

1 This paper consists of excerpts from Patricia Johnston's MSW thesis titled *When cultural competence is inadequate: an opportunity for a new approach to child welfare in Nunavut* supervised by Professor Edward Kruk. It is available at <https://circle.ubc.ca/handle/2429/12602?show=full>.

2 This research received approval from the University of British Columbia's Behavioral Research Ethics Board (BREB) and licensing from the Nunavut Research Institute. As well, the Government of Nunavut's (GN) Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), the Union of Northern Workers (UNW) and the Association of Social Workers in Northern Canada (ASWNC) were all advised of the research and asked to participate.

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to child welfare in the territory, including the standards and practices the GN set for itself, in an attempt to model service after the rest of Canada, has ultimately been its downfall.

Although these standards and practices have been in place since the creation of the territory in 1999 and the GN has reportedly not even come close to meeting them³, the Auditor General recommended in the Report that the Government of Nunavut should now finally meet them. Herein lies the problem. Or rather, what appears to be the problem, which is the difficulty the Government of Nunavut has had in turning Nunavut's child welfare system into a smaller version of other government child welfare systems currently operating below Canada's 60th parallel⁴. However, this is not the problem at all. Instead, the problem lies in the government's refusal to do things differently. By neglecting to develop an approach to child welfare that is as unique to the territory, as the territory is to the rest of Canada, Nunavut has put itself in a terrible position. In fact, the territory is poised to continue to receive criticism regarding its child welfare system as long as the Government of Nunavut continues to do as the Auditor General recommended: to attempt to meet the standards and practices it adopted from southern Canada.

In response to the Report, *Nunatsiaq News*, one of the territory's few newspapers, published an article titled *Nunavut must do human resource plan, MLAs say*, which highlighted some of the Auditor General's key recommendations (George, 2011). The article described how Nunavut must now grapple with requirements to "improve

the human resource capacity" and address staffing shortages in the social work field, yet the statistics the article offered suggest a larger problem: meritocracy so embedded within the GN that despite the immense gains and successes Inuit have earned, including the creation of the territory itself, they remain at the margins. Within the article the most obvious example of this is despite the government's target of employing 53% Inuit by 2012, the number of Inuit in executive and senior management capacities has been *decreasing* over the past ten years (George, 2011). Equally concerning were the online public comments in response to the article, which included, "Stop resenting people who come here from the south, they are here for a reason. Want the better jobs? Get an education." As people responded to each other the list of statements grew to include "Some people don't get hired and sometimes they think it is because of race instead of because of merit...Hopefully, one day, everyone will be hired based on merit/the ability to do the job and everyone, regardless of race, will have the equal educational opportunities to do so." This last statement appeared to be considered by the others to be one of the more "progressive."

The Real Problem

This article in *Nunatsiaq News* and the Auditor General's Report highlight the real problem in Nunavut, namely the marginalization of Inuit, particularly regarding employment, within their own territory. The problem can be summed up as follows: Inuit are entitled by law to receive preference for employment yet they still occupy barely half of the government positions (Windeyer, 2010). Qallunaat, who make up only 15% of the population occupy the majority of government jobs, particularly in management, and routinely defend their positions, in a similar fashion to the responses of the *Nunatsiaq News* article, suggesting that Inuit do not possess the "education" or "merit" needed to do the job (Statistics Canada, 2006). This position is based on the fallacy that Qallunaat cling to: the belief

3 One example of this is: "According to the Department's Program Manual on Group Homes in Nunavut, the Department must conduct yearly evaluations of the group homes to determine if they are meeting appropriate program standards to provide for the well-being of their residents. We reviewed whether the Department had conducted yearly evaluations during the 2008–09 and 2009–10 fiscal years. We found that no evaluation had been conducted on any of the group homes during this time" (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2011, p.20).

4 All provinces below the 60th parallel are commonly referred to as southern, consequently, all people from the southern provinces are referred to as southerners. Since the use of the word "southern" is very common in Nunavut and it is regularly taken to mean all the practices, behaviors and thinking connected to a Euro-western and Canadian world view, the term "southern" has also been used throughout this paper.

that certain education is needed for the positions currently held within the territory by Qallunaat. It should be noted that this is not to suggest that certain positions do not require extensive training, but it is necessary to point out and to recognize comments regarding “merit” and “education” for exactly what they are: a means for continued marginalization.

In conversations among Qallunaat throughout the territory, it can often be heard how Inuit lack the “education” required to manage social services in their own communities. From this, it’s not surprising that within the Department of Health and Social Services, Qallunaat hold the highest positions of directors, managers and supervisors. Working below them are again primarily Qallunaat social workers from southern Canada, while almost the entire client population remains Inuit. Based on this display of continued colonial power, it is also not surprising that discussions regarding the lack of social workers in the territory are consistently met with the solution of employing more Qallunaat social workers. Unfortunately, this same strategy has previously only lead to an increased reliance on “southerners”⁵ in the Arctic, which has further served to continue the colonial relationship between Qallunaat and Inuit in place now for over 50 years (Thompson, 2008, Paine, 1971).

A Unique Territory

Yet if the norm throughout Canada is to fill the lack of social work positions with “qualified” social workers, one might ask: why should Nunavut be any different? The answer to this lies in Nunavut’s uniqueness. In fact, Nunavut is so unique; it even stands apart from the other northern territories. This uniqueness begins with the territory’s geography, for Nunavut has

⁵ Also directly linked to European ideology, the term “southern” in this text refers to scholars, practitioners and laypersons that, whether consciously or unconsciously, have absorbed a liberal European-based understanding of the world, now typical of the dominant “white” culture of Canada. A perspective that is “southern,” therefore, within this paper is also used to make reference to a way of interacting with the world based on the many values and beliefs commonly associated with liberal Euro-Canadian culture, such as capitalism and individualism.

the smallest population of all the provinces and territories, spread out throughout the largest area in the country, with not even one road connecting its many small communities to the south. The territory is home to 85% Inuit, 90% of whom speak fluent Inuktitut (Statistics Canada, 2006b) but perhaps most importantly, the significant cultural difference between Inuit and other Canadians are what contributes to the territory being so special.

One of the most fundamental differences between Inuit culture and the dominant culture⁶ in Canada for example, is that Inuit culture is based on values of collectivism, as opposed to the dominant liberal Euro-Canadian culture, such as capitalism and individualism. Despite awareness of this value base, it is not until one witnesses a mother give the last of her money to an extended family member, that this difference in perspective can be truly understood. If the family member asks and the mother has money to give, she gives. End of story. Except those who possess an individualistic perspective may question the mother’s ability to care for her children once she has given the last of her money away and consequently may ask: how then does she feed her children tomorrow? In a communalist culture, someone else inviting the mother and her children for dinner answers this question. It is not a question of the mother’s “ability or willingness” to care for her children, as child welfare workers from the dominant culture may perceive it. Instead, it is a caring and trusting way of living as part of a family, a community, and a culture.

Adding to Nunavut’s uniqueness are the territory’s challenging social issues, a significant lack of infrastructure, a unique justice system, and young legislation and organization within the territory. Upon arriving into one of the territory’s remote communities, it becomes instantly apparent to Qallunaat just how different Nunavut is to southern Canada. It is a territory where hunting in the spring is essential to families,

⁶ Referring to the majority of Canada, where the way of interacting with the world based on the many values and beliefs commonly associated with liberal Euro-Canadian culture, such as capitalism and individualism.

leaving school to take a back seat to this event for most Inuit children. It is this uniqueness that justifies and explains the need for a tailor-made child welfare system and one not simply fashioned after the rest of Canada. Yet this is the missing piece within the Auditor General's Report, which ultimately leads the AG away from the real problem Nunavut faces. For rather than continuing to apply a southern Canadian perspective and approach to child welfare to the territory, which has helped place the GN in a position where it could "not comply with the procedures it has set for itself," a new approach could provide the best possible child welfare system if it were indeed designed for the territory (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2011, p. 22). In fact, to truly address the many problems highlighted in the Auditor General's Report will first and foremost require moving away from the current one-size-fits-all approach to protecting children.

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ)

Fortunately, a road map to resolving issues within Nunavut's child welfare system has already been drawn. Inuit culture and traditional knowledge can provide the direction, for Inuit epistemology or the theory of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ), has been described as "a means of rationalizing thought and action, a means of organizing tasks and resources, [and] a means of organizing family and society into coherent wholes," (Arnakak, 2001). IQ is particularly important to Nunavummiut families today, as "the traditional kinship structure is the means whereby goods and services are transacted and exchanged" but it also is the "means of transmitting ideas, values, knowledge and skills from one generation to the next. In other words, individual, family and society are linked by the kinship structure" (Arnakak, 2001). Therefore, IQ or "that of which Inuit have known for a long time" is essential within child welfare so as to not damage the kinship structure, which underpins the transmission of culture between generations (Legislative Assembly of Nunavut, 2008).

The Government of Nunavut has recognized the importance of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and has reported on how it is incorporating IQ into the government workplace, while outlining the additional principles, values and directives for practice specific to the Department of Health and Social Services (GN, n.d.c). Unfortunately, the GN has described these priorities vaguely and has not expanded upon how social workers are to ensure their practice is consistent with IQ. This can be understood as providing very little guidance to the current Qallunaat social workers in Nunavut regarding the incorporation of IQ in their child welfare work. The Government of Nunavut has stated, "we will maintain positive innovations guided by Inuit knowledge, wisdom, values and beliefs" (GN, n.d.c, p. 44), but has yet to describe how this is to occur particularly when over half of the government workers are Qallunaat and do not possess Inuit knowledge, wisdom or values (Legare, 2008; Tester, 2006).

Fortunately, the Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association's (2006) *The Inuit Way*, describes traditional methods of addressing issues within communities, such as how Inuit may have traditionally addressed issues with child welfare. The traditional methods for example, included the act of ignoring someone, mocking or shaming a person, the use of gossip, embarrassment and ostracizing someone who refuses to change their behavior. These approaches, among many others, historically worked to maintain community order while simultaneously maintaining the family unit by focusing on the behavior of the person or offence, with the basic rule being "that the punishment must not cause more problems for the group than the initial infraction" (Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association, 2006, p. 19). The goal of these approaches were to maintain community balance.

Child abuse and neglect, when it occurred, was also traditionally addressed within extended family camps as Ekho and Ottokie (2000) describe:

Some of the parents had their children taken away, because the whole camp could see

that the child was often very hungry and it was obvious that the child was being mistreated. Sometimes the child would be taken away and placed with another family. There are a few parents who only mistreat one of their children...so we have to show them love...they would tell the parents in a kind way that they would take the child for a while to provide for him or her. They would do this in a way so that the parents didn't start hating the child (p. 97).

Ultimately, Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit may, if truly given the opportunity to lead and give direction for the territory, show how a new approach, or rather a very old approach, to child welfare could better meet the needs of Inuit children, youth and families.

Education and Training for Social Work in Nunavut

The lack of “educated” Inuit social workers in Nunavut is routinely used to justify the employment of Qallunaat and in the past, this has led to the practice of Qallunaat social workers being recruited for Nunavut social work. Qallunaat social workers are typically educated through southern Canadian universities and have attended courses and workshops that incorporate learning on “cultural sensitivity” and “cultural competence.” Yet these “culturally competent” southern Qallunaat social workers are trained in “dominant practice models...urban-designed and urban driven,” which has invariably maintained “the social worker as colonial agent” who then “enforces metropolitan requirements on the hinterland” (Schmidt, 2000, p. 345). In fact, no university in Canada currently offers an education aimed at preparing Qallunaat for work with Inuit in Canada’s arctic.

However, there is a college in Nunavut that provides a diploma to Inuit who are interested in working in the territory’s social services⁷. Although this college graduates up to five

⁷ Some southern universities and colleges also offer courses directed towards Inuit entering the social work field.

social workers a year (Legislative Assembly of Nunavut, 2007) and there have been over 10 years of graduating Nunavummiut (people of Nunavut) still only “half of the social workers in Nunavut are Inuit” (Legislative Assembly of Nunavut, 2008, p. 2961). Of the approximately 51 social work positions spread among the 26 communities in the territory, where typically only 33 positions are filled, it follows that there are less than 20 Inuit currently working in social work positions in Nunavut, while the other positions are either vacant or held by Qallunaat social workers (Legislative Assembly of Nunavut, 2008, p. 2961). The Auditor General’s Report echoed this in its review of the almost 40% vacancy rate in the territory’s social work positions. These numbers require in depth examination. They also raise questions as to why all of the college’s social work graduates are not all employed in Nunavut, thereby eliminating the use of southern Qallunaat social workers altogether.

New Racism and a Poor Fit

This question regarding the lack of Inuit social workers may in part be answered by the fact that for most Inuit, being employed as a social worker may require working outside of their home community, while others might find working in their home community challenging due to their existing personal relationships. Augoustinos, Tuffin and Every (2005), however, provide another explanation as their research has shown “liberal principles such as individualism, merit, and egalitarianism” are “recurrently drawn upon to justify, argue and legitimate opposition to affirmative action” (p.315). Their research determined that for many in the dominant culture, the view of “Aboriginal disadvantage becomes similar to other situations in which disadvantages and setbacks can be overcome by hard work and application” (Augoustinos, Tuffin and Every, 2005, p. 331). This suggests the lack of Inuit social workers may be due to “new racism” within the Government of Nunavut and the high value placed on “the principles of individual achievement and

meritocracy,” which consequently “protects and maintains white privilege and leaves minority groups disadvantage intact” (Augoustinos, Tuffin and Every, 2005, p. 337). In addition to the very real “tension between Indigenous Aboriginal people and the predominantly European newcomers” (Schmidt, 2000, p. 341), Qallunaat are likely to be hired in a “leadership role” due to their “merit,” thereby placing Inuit workers in a subordinate position to a southern colleague, which may have much to do with the lack of Inuit workers (Paine, 1971).

Research by Zapf (1993) regarding northern and remote social work practice in Canada provides an outline of what urban trained social workers from the dominant culture may experience when arriving to work in Canada’s Yukon Territory from southern locations. Similarly, Schmidt (2008) provides a glimpse of northern social work through a study of social workers in remote communities of northern British Columbia. Together these two studies provide a picture of the challenges associated with southern social work models being practiced in Canada’s northern communities. Both Zapf (1993) and Schmidt (2008) have shown that social work in Canada’s north pose particular challenges for urban oriented social workers, such as retention and turnover, largely owing to a “poor fit between urban-based professional social work training and the realities of northern communities” (Zapf, 1993, p. 694). Southern social workers reported difficulty with “the lack of anonymity, high visibility, isolation, and the poverty of amenities” (Schmidt, 2008, p. 104) and this “poor fit manifests itself in the field as a stressful choice perceived by the worker as he or she comes to view the requirements of the job as incompatible with active membership in the community” (Zapf, 1993, p.696). This conflict results in what Zapf (1993) refers to as the experience of “culture shock.”

Schmidt’s (2008) research determined that social workers reported issues of personal safety within communities and “personal health being threatened by the stress of the work” as well “the constant challenge of trying to meet standards

that are impossible given staff shortages and workloads” (p. 102-103). These stressors and the culture shock associated with working in remote Canadian communities led Zapf (1993) to the overall conclusion “that the difficulty may not be an issue of the wrong people in the north as much as a question of the role of conventional social work itself in the setting” (p.701). Social workers respond by attempting “to understand the community using frameworks from his or her own familiar culture and profession” (Zapf, 1993, p. 702). The southern or dominant world view, values, and the beliefs held by social workers and their use of southern based practice standards inevitably lead to “the futile feeling of trying to do a job that cannot be done according to standards because the human resources are simply not there” (Schmidt, 2008, p. 100). Although Zapf’s (1993) and Schmidt’s (2008) studies provided useful information as to the challenges and issues associated with providing southern social work to remote Canadian locations by southern social workers, both omitted a discussion of the culture of communities, the power inherent in the role of social worker, colonialism, or the role of social work as colonial agent.

Becoming Educated

Another possible answer to the lack of Inuit social workers employed in Nunavut may lie in the training Inuit receive at Nunavut’s *Arctic College*. For example, although the college holds cultural components within it’s programming, it is unlikely that the social work program is focused on “the decolonization of Aboriginal people, which is enacted through methodology that contextualizes colonization, and integrates healing methods based on Aboriginal epistemology” (Sinclair, 2004, p. 55). This is because the college’s current human service or social work program is “considered bi-cultural in the sense that it attempts to incorporate the orientations and values of traditional First Nations culture with the dominant values of Euro-Canadian society” (Durst, 2006, p. 10). Interestingly, this choice of First

Nations culture rather than Inuit culture highlights the use of southern mainstream cross-cultural education. Although this could be understood as a positive sign of “Indigenous themes entering mainstream social work discourse” (Grey, Coates and Hetherington, 2007, p. 60), social work education in Nunavut remains “mainstream” as it comprises dominant culture educators, dominant culture course work and materials, dominant culture theories, approaches, interventions, expectations, and values and beliefs (Nunavut Arctic College, 2008b). This value base is clear within the college’s programming, which includes “post-modern counseling and capacity building techniques” and employs Qallunaat instructors to teach the programs (Nunavut Arctic College, 2008a). The curriculum also includes standard mainstream courses commonly taught at southern Canadian Universities including “Social Work Methods,” “Interpersonal Communication Skills,” “Human Development,” “Applied Counseling Skills,” “Theories of Counseling,” and “Sociology: Family Dynamics” to name a few (Nunavut Arctic College, 2008b).

In addition to this, the Nunavut Arctic College requires the majority of students to have “completed grade 12” and “submit a letter” in application, possibly submit to “a security clearance” and be “required to *write*”⁸ a proficiency exam to enter the social work program (Nunavut Arctic College, 2008b). These entrance requirements indicate that the college’s social work program is more congruent with southern Qallunaat educational institutions than the “principles and values of IQ” and the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement regarding a reduction of barriers to Inuit. Surely the college recognizes how asking these entrance requirements of Inuit who come from a verbal culture, may have in part led to the criticism that “Nunavut schools are essentially foreign institutions delivering a foreign curriculum in a foreign language” (Legare, 2008, p. 365). Creating further challenges is the southern model of education in place in Nunavut, for “following natural rhythms make the artificial schedule of the Qallunaat school especially

difficult for some Inuit” particularly when there is daylight or darkness for 24 hours during certain times of the year (Berger, Epp and Moller, 2006, p. 188). Along these same lines, even the “structure of curriculum in Qallunaat schools [is] hierarchical and therefore problematic” (Berger, Epp and Moller, 2006, p. 188) and for the majority of Inuit, they are required to leave their home communities to access “training” by Qallunaat in the larger communities (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2005).

Inuit that do attend Nunavut’s college to become social workers are also required to learn southern social work theory and then learn to practice social work consistent with southern universities and colleges (Nunavut Arctic College, 2008b). It is possible that this may be counter-productive to the employment of Inuit social workers and may even discourage those who would be appropriate for Nunavut social work because “unless we train the ‘natural’ out of their style, it is assumed that they will operate in a culturally-sensitive way and likely to remain in their communities” (Berman, 2006, p. 103). For “even without formal training, villagers can better identify problems and write better case histories” than southern social workers who have been selected for their extensive education and cross-cultural practice experience (Berman, 2006, p. 102). This is likely because “they have grown up with clients, are better at monitoring situations on a daily basis,” and “their work is likely to be compatible with the culture and lifestyles of their clients” (Berman, 2006, p. 102). One thing is clear; the lack of Inuit employed within the Government of Nunavut’s child welfare system is more than just hiring “based on merit/the ability to do the job.” In fact, it raises the question of who really needs to become educated?

The Study

The desire to look critically at child welfare in Nunavut, which led to this research, stemmed from my personal experience as a social worker in the arctic. In particular, it grew from the discomfort of being expected to apply my southern

⁸ Emphasis added.

Canadian based knowledge of child welfare to the communities I visited. From this experience, I realized quickly that I represented the colonial power in the territory, the authority, and for many Inuit, my arrival in their community likely conjured up fear and discomfort. This was a far cry from the feelings associated with wanting “to help” that initially brought me to the social work profession. Yet I participated in the Government of Nunavut’s struggle to meet standards and procedures until the lack of relevance the current child welfare approach had to the community became so apparent that I could no longer turn a blind eye. It became clear how the government’s goal of creating a replica of southern child welfare in the north was not only *not* culturally relevant, but worse, striving toward this goal was “pushing Inuit out of a relatively embedded culture into the disembedded culture that is our own” (Irniq, Rowley and Tester, 2006, p. 5). After witnessing grandmothers in Nunavut communities do child welfare work, and by this I mean intervening when parents were unable to care for children, I believe I have seen first hand how this approach works better for families, but even more so for children, compared to the current meritocratic, bureaucratic, and one-size-fits-all approach to child welfare being sought after by the government. Therefore, this study went in search of social workers’ thoughts, perspectives, experiences, and opinions on child welfare in the territory. What were their experiences of social work in Nunavut? Did any of them, like me, question the current direction?

Method

As the research topic for this study involved exploring the experiences of social workers, it was appropriate that participants be provided with an opportunity to state their thoughts through open discussion, which consequently allowed for a greater understanding of the context in which they work. Since the information sought out was focused on developing a deeper understanding of child welfare, it was essential that detailed information be collected. Selecting a qualitative

study was key to collecting this information (Grinnell and Unrau, 2005). As there is very little known about child welfare in Nunavut within academic social work discourse, this study sought to obtain social workers’ perspectives and to do so, participants were provided with the time and space to describe their experiences through semi-structured open-ended interviews.

A grounded theory approach that drew on elements of phenomenology was selected to better understand the subjective experiences of the social workers interviewed, particularly regarding their relationships, the environment, and working in Nunavut’s remote communities. This approach was selected as phenomenology seeks to deepen our understanding by delving into the “truths” of the participants’ experience through descriptive investigation, while grounded theory seeks to collect these truths to gain explanation and better understanding (Grinnell and Unrau, 2005). This is an ideal way to explore how social workers experience child welfare in Nunavut, as each participant can provide unique and subjective information based on their work, their personal feelings, values, and beliefs, making up their overall view of child welfare work in Nunavut. Grounded theory was also appropriate to this research, as it can involve the experience of the researcher as well as the participants. As I have personal experience working as a social worker in Nunavut, and therefore fall within the population group being studied, I am also able to provide my thoughts and reactions within this research method (Grinnell and Unrau, 2005). Using my own experience as a starting place, I sought out social workers’ experiences to determine linkages, patterns, themes and overall theories that could emerge from the data.

Unfortunately, despite the intent to interview both Inuit and Qallunaat social workers, almost all of the participants were Qallunaat (9/10 social workers interviewed), which is likely a consequence of the research design as “it was not reasonable to assume that [Inuit social workers] would have unqualified confidence in, or be comfortable with, the methodology, the researcher, or the

interview process” (Berger, Ross Epp and Meller, 2006, p. 185). Research in Inuit communities has left negative feelings between Inuit and researchers due to studies where the information was not provided back to the communities. Similarly, when outsiders conduct research in northern communities “without co-creating the agenda with insiders,” or at least inviting Inuit perspective has also led to “doing more harm than good” and has not fostered relationships built on trust and respect (Berger, Ross Epp and Meller, 2006, p. 184). Although this research was not conducted in Nunavut, it still pertains to the territory and to Inuit, and I am, therefore, at fault for not seeking Inuit input and collaboration in the research design. In retrospect, it is easy to understand how the lack of “insider” discussion, Inuit perspective and community collaboration into the development and design of this research likely had a large role to play in who volunteered to participate. Therefore, by not involving Inuit in the creation of this study likely led to the final product, which is a study conducted by a Qallunaaq researcher (myself) regarding of, for the most part, experiences of Qallunaat social workers. Consequently, this study does little to reduce the dominant culture discourse regarding Canada’s Inuit people. It does, however, serve to examine the limitations and challenges of the current approach to child welfare, as well as the Government of Nunavut’s reliance on Qallunaat social workers as colonial agents of social control.

Over the course of one calendar year, participants were obtained via convenience, criterion, and snowball sampling methods, resulting in a total of 10 interviews. Each interview took place via an Internet telephone or *Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP)* software known as *Skype* so as they could be recorded on another computer software program called *Trx Recorder*. This data collection method was selected due to the lack of opportunity to meet in person and the large distance between researcher and participants. I conducted each interview while I was physically in Vancouver, British Columbia,

with the participants physically in Nunavut or spread across Canada. Interviews ranged from 45 minutes to a little over one hour in length and were scheduled at the participants’ convenience. In two cases, interviews were cut short due to the employment demands of the participants and second interviews were scheduled. All participants were offered transcripts of the interviews, but only one participant was interested in this and was subsequently provided with the transcript of the interview. This participant did not make any comments upon review of the transcript.

Unfortunately, as I am unilingual and cannot speak Inuktitut and because the employment of a translator was not financially possible for this study, all interviews were conducted in English. Should Inuit social workers wished to participate in Inuktitut, it is possible that a translator could have been achieved within their community, however, in hindsight, I now recognize that this was not indicated through the means of recruitment. Therefore, it is possible that some Inuit social workers did not wish to participate or believed they were not able to participate due to the requirement of speaking English. It is also possible, that because the research was designed to use questioning, and because some “Inuit may perceive direct questioning as invasive” some Inuit social workers may have chosen not to participate for this reason (Berger, Ross Epp and Meller, 2006, p. 185). Finally, my personal involvement and employment in Nunavut may have presented the largest limitation, for when I was in the territory I was employed as a Supervisor of a number of different communities. It would follow that some participants may have felt guarded in terms of how much information they were willing to share with me due to concern that it could impact our working relationship. In addition to this, I am Qallunaaq from southern Canada, which likely had an impact on Inuit social workers’ ability to trust me to conduct respectful research. As well, some social workers may have simply not wished to participate, due to our current or previous working relationship.

Due to the very nature of discussing one's employment, additional attempts were made to maintain the anonymity of all participants. In this way, it was hoped that all participants could freely describe their thoughts and experiences without reproach. Therefore, this research served as an opportunity to begin discussions and share comments in a confidential environment. In order to maintain confidentiality of all participants the majority of demographics of participants have been withheld. This is because there are so few social workers that have worked or are working within Nunavut's child welfare system that by distinguishing gender, age or even the communities participants worked in could add to the likelihood of their identities being determined. However, it can be noted that the participants were both male and female, 90% were Qallunaat and 10% Inuit, currently 50% were living in Nunavut and 50% were living outside of the territory, and all have worked from short term (less than six months) to long term (many years) within Nunavut's child welfare system. Participants also held a range of education and experience prior to their work in the territory and all had been employed as a social worker at some time in Nunavut.

Due to my personal involvement in Nunavut's child welfare system and my connection to the work, the north and even the participants, it was that much more important to let the experiences of the participants guide this research, so as to ensure that my personal bias did not lead, nor determine, the findings. Using the constant comparative method, commonly known through work by Glasser and Strauss (1967), to develop categories, the data collected was transcribed, coded, and grouped into categories and themes and from this theories have emerged. To do this I began by looking for key issues and recurrent events, such as perspectives or experiences that were common among participants. During analysis there were 19 overall categories that had developed through interviews with participants, but the categories that generated the most responses included: "description of role and work," "education and training," "expectations

and first impressions," "funding and resources," "concerns with child welfare in Nunavut," "safety, stress and discomfort," and "worker turnover and employment." This method helped to ensure that the information collected from all participants, and not my own prior hypothesis or assumptions, was truly the driving force of the research.

Keeping in mind that data collection is "particularly vulnerable to biases of the data collector," I was careful to reflect upon each interview and collected content, and note my personal reactions and biases (Grinnell and Unrau, 2005). In order to reduce my biases and ensure the credibility, transferability, and dependability of the research, I articulated data collection decisions. Also, my prolonged engagement through participant observation has provided me with access to the culture of the participant population. By conducting interviews to the point of saturation and providing a review of the pertinent literature, I demonstrated a basis for the research. Through explicit and thick descriptions of data I also aimed to bring the reader into the text as much as possible.

Findings

Heading North

This research study uncovered a number of issues related to social work employment and training within the territory. The Qallunaat participants interviewed all reflected on their preparation for working in Nunavut and their feelings of being unprepared for the difficult work required of them. Consistent with the findings of the Auditor General's Report, all of the participants interviewed for this research indicated that there was no orientation or training provided to them to prepare them for child welfare work in the territory, and what skills, perspectives and understanding of child welfare each social worker brought to their social work practice was entirely up to them. Despite the range of experience participants held, only one participant indicated there was training during

their entire employment with the Government of Nunavut. Another participant was provided with “about an hour overview” and then was handed a “caseload I would be covering and a couple of the significant cases and what I should start off doing that day.” Another explained, “They pretty well gave me a day to look over the legislation, to look over the policy manual.” Finally, one participant was provided with “a tour of the town of [community x] and introductions to the RCMP and a tour of the health centre and introductions there. [This community] also had a [additional resource] so we also went there. So that was my orientation. That was my introduction...and then I was off and running.” This lack of orientation or training provided to Qallunaat is concerning, particularly as it suggests Qallunaat are expected to know how to do child welfare work within an Inuit community, despite never having lived or worked in the territory before. The last comment raises an even greater alarm for it indicates that the orientation to the work involved a Qallunaat social worker being introduced to other Qallunaat in the community who hold decision-making power, such as the medical professionals and the RCMP, thereby reaffirming the status quo.

For those participants that came to Nunavut from southern Canada, there was no discussion in advance of beginning their employment about what they would be doing upon arrival. Consistently, the experience included “absolutely nothing. I was told that I would have [x] amount of weight [in luggage]. The government was more concerned with what I brought up with me and my packing than what I was going to be doing when I got there and I assumed I would be trained but I wasn’t.” Another participant stated, “I sent a resume, got a telephone call and a month later I was on a plane and I had no idea what to expect, knew nothing about Nunavut” which was again similar to the experience of another participant who stated, “there was no information session, there was no training, oh God there was no training, there was let alone any cultural acclamation or anything like that, you were really like in a sink or swim situation you know, and you

have to learn the culture or you don’t.” Overall, it became clear how the preparation for work in Nunavut, including any education regarding Inuit culture, the social context and history of the territory, and relevant perspectives or ideologies to child welfare was entirely up to each Qallunaat worker.

Necessary Knowledge and Training for Child Welfare Work in Nunavut

Despite the lack of preparation or training for the work, the importance of having an understanding of Inuit culture was raised by a number of participants. When looking back to first arriving in Nunavut, one participant described how not understanding Inuit culture was evident in an interaction with a child:

That whole raised eye brows is ‘yes’ and scrunch your nose means ‘no’ and I remember asking a little girl something and...she raised her eyebrows...I [thought] that she couldn’t hear me so I asked her again only louder. So she raised her eyebrows again until I was like screaming at this girl wondering if she needs to go the health centre because no one has checked her for a hearing disorder. And she was like ‘I’m saying yes.’ And that’s so simple, like that is so basic. That’s not even a nuance part of the culture and nobody tells you that!

The Inuk participant added to this sentiment by explaining that for those working in child welfare an understanding of Inuit culture is essential because, “There are things that maybe a white person or social service worker doesn’t understand [about] our culture or our traditions. [If they] come up here and see some of the things and how we treat or raise our children and you know kind of maybe see it as neglect or but it’s just the way.” This participant’s comments are essential to the discussion on child welfare and clearly indicate how misunderstandings can occur when Qallunaat social workers lack an understanding of Inuit culture and operate from a southern world view of childrearing. As

apprehension of children from their families is an intervention social workers are able to use when they believe it to be necessary, it becomes clear how misunderstandings regarding culture can hold enormous implications for children and families.

Although most participants described initiating and seeking out informal means to prepare themselves for their job, even after doing this, none of the Qallunaat participants indicated they had any solid understanding of Nunavut prior to arriving there for work. "Everything I know about Nunavut, I learned once I got here," explained one social worker. Many participants indicated that they learned "on the job" and described how local Inuit community members or other Inuit staff trained them or helped them get acquainted with child welfare work in the territory. As one participant explained:

the secretary and the [other staff person] fully trained me, and completely trained me very well to the resources in the community and who the people are and that [was] not anything I would have gotten out of a policy manual. And they taught me how to do my job in a respectful way and I really had to listen to the people of the community because they have been doing this for thousands of years and even just the past ten years when you haven't been in that community and they know who the people are."

Another participant confirmed this reliance on the Inuit support staff for essential training as, "the person with the most experience was the secretary and she quite literally trained both of us." The positive associations social workers held to being trained by support staff came through clearly in the interviews. Interestingly, the Government of Nunavut's failure to train new Qallunaat social workers, perhaps out of a reliance on their education and "merit" in southern Canada, led to the unintended result of blurring or exchanging of roles between Inuit and Qallunaat. This left southern educated Qallunaat

social workers to exchange their role of "expert" for the role of "student."

Culture Confusion

In addition to their lack of knowledge about Nunavut, many participants described their arrival in the territory as disorientating. One participant explained, "I remember the day I got off that plane and I realized that I have no idea where I am or what I am doing." The feeling of disorientation and cultural confusion were consistently described by Qallunaat, as another social worker recalled "it was like a shock after shock after shock." One participant described their arrival in Nunavut as, "a fly by the seat of your pants situation. And I think I would say I was in a daze for about two weeks of just, like sheer culture shock where I was just, like it's almost like a hazy experience when I look back." Despite the "shock" of arriving, social workers described feeling an expectation to begin working in a culturally specific way immediately upon arrival. Yet one participant described an inability to rely on their previous social work practice, knowledge and skills:

I would say, child welfare, you can't- your practice is hard as it stands especially with the lack of resources, the sheer lack of resources is- you know there are times when I didn't apprehend kids because I didn't have the foster parents and I knew I didn't have the foster parents so I'm not taking these kids and we're going to have to go down another route. Maybe I should have maybe I shouldn't have, maybe should have taken them and put them in another community, but you can't just practice your practice.

This realization that "you can't just practice your practice" is indicative of how southern social work is not transferable and may even be inadequate and culturally unspecific to Nunavut. Equally as important, this issue of Qallunaat being unprepared to work in Nunavut and begin practicing in a culturally relevant way was,

perhaps obviously, not raised by the Inuk social worker. Instead, this social worker commented instead on the needs of the community not being addressed through the current approach to child welfare in the comment, “parents themselves are not being heard.”

Closely connected to this was a comment by another participant who stated:

people knew exactly what the issues were and what they should be doing, but it seems to me that it wasn't an easy, it wasn't easy to effect change in the way that we're talking about...I think that the [senior staff persons] that were in place, were just basically I mean trying their best to keep standards in place and to keep the ship afloat. You know. And to respond. And that's one of the reasons too that I think that you know it is a child protection act and because with those types of resources you don't have much choice.

Although this comment by a Qallunaaq social worker recognizes the community possesses knowledge of social issues, the participant neglects to envision another approach or perspective other than the southern colonial model and keeping “the ship afloat.” This further suggests that not only is southern child welfare education, experience and training not necessarily relevant to child welfare in Nunavut, this comment may be indicative of the larger problem: namely the belief that there is no other “choice” to the current child welfare approach.

Discussion

A Faulty Argument

Many Qallunaat and Inuit alike have accepted that solutions to some of Nunavut's social issues should include incorporating Inuit culture into government programming while focusing on training and employing Inuit to “take over” the role of social worker from Qallunaat workers (Timpson, 2006). This solution, however, appears to be rooted in beliefs that “the recruitment process of

government staff has been plagued by a shortage of qualified Inuit professionals” and “the problem is more than half of the government positions require college or university training” (Legare, 2008, p.357). In fact, the solution of training Inuit to fill social work positions is indicative of the dominant culture's lack of an alternative world view, including the belief and reliance on southern training or education as necessary and the only acceptable solution. This perspective is further based on “meritocratic ideals presented as ‘consensual’ values that were central to a fair and just society that treats everyone equally” (Augoustinos, Tuffin and Every, 2005, p.319). In this same line of thought, many Qallunaat social workers justify their work in Nunavut as necessary until “trained” Inuit are available to take over the social work position within the communities. Yet this research with social workers in Nunavut indicted the opposite, for not only did Qallunaat end up relying on Inuit to teach them how to do child welfare work in Nunavut, Qallunaat social workers identified that their past education, experiences and training were not necessarily relevant nor applicable to working in the territory.

As Qallunaat participants recognized in this study that they were unable to practice social work as they did in southern Canada, they found themselves being trained and educated by Inuit staff and the community. This was not to say that social work education is negative, or that there is nothing to be learned from southern Canada or southern education methods. Instead, it is to suggest that the role of social work education in Nunavut could be culturally relevant if educators “conceptualize education as a dialogue between the educator and students –a process in which both learn and are changed” (Green and Dumbrill, 2005, p. 173). This exchange and process of learning could be transcended to child welfare practice, particularly as the Inuk social worker interviewed in this study stated so clearly, “parents themselves are not being heard.” For it is clear who is being heard. The dominant culture and their perspective of how the territory's child welfare system should be organized and controlled, is

made even louder when it is reaffirmed in the Auditor General's Report. Instead, recognition of community knowledge and experience is required and should play heavily into who is provided with the decision making power regarding Inuit children within the territory. However, as long as Qallunaat continue to rely on the argument of "merit" as why Inuit do not hold the majority of power in the territory, both social work and social work education will only continue to act as "instruments of assimilation to western culture" (Berger, Epp and Moller, 2006, p. 196).

Bureaucracy and Meritocracy

The perception that Inuit require college or university level social work training to do child welfare work within their own culture, communities and with their own people is an example of "indigenization as a bureaucratic reform measure aimed at integrating Indigenous minorities into the imposed system of social control by co-opting Indigenous people to enforce laws of the state" (Litwin, 1997, p. 334). It also raises the question: is the profession of child welfare not simply about keeping children safe and ensuring their wellbeing? One has to ask, is lengthy formal education necessary to meet this goal? Is the kind grandmother who knows everyone in her community, the history, strengths and challenges each person faces, and is respected by all, not qualified to do this work? If so, for whose purpose does the bureaucracy serve? Surely the Government of Nunavut, criticized in the Auditor General's Report for "not keeping track" of the many children in its care, would agree that their bureaucratic approach is flawed (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2011). Unfortunately, in response to this criticism, the Government of Nunavut indicated, it is now preparing to launch new computer software aimed at increasing the ability to "track" children in its care. This response will ultimately serve to increase the bureaucracy and create the need for an even greater requirement of "education" related to computer skills for its workers.

Indeed, the meritocratic hiring of social workers and the requirement for a bureaucratic process in the Government of Nunavut needs to be questioned, for it is clear that it is not even meeting its own needs. But as this research has shown, the move towards replacing Qallunaat social workers with Inuit social workers is also not the answer. In fact, this move is similar to what many Aboriginal child welfare agencies in southern Canada, who which have completed this replacement only to find it served to "compound the oppression of Indigenous people within an operational context which paradoxically, by appropriating Indigenous personnel, manages to enhance the legitimacy of state intervention" (Litwin, 1997, p. 335). Ultimately, such a move by the Government of Nunavut seeks to turn Inuit into the "family police" of their own communities. Where instead, recognition of Inuit traditional knowledge and community understanding as more specific to Nunavut child welfare, than southern education and training, is the starting place for a real solution.

Although education was not the entire focus of this study, it is important that we remember how it "has been used as a pretext for removing Aboriginal children from their communities and indoctrinating them in western/European knowledge systems. Even though residential schools no longer exist, [the current] educational systems remain steeped in Eurocentric knowledge" (Green and Dumbrill, 2005, p. 171). We must also remember the "bias in education is often invisible to those from the dominant western culture because society is so steeped in this culture that western ways can appear to be 'normal'" (Green and Dumbrill, 2005, p. 171). The desire by the Government of Nunavut to mimic child welfare systems in other provinces and territories is an injustice to Inuit who deserve a system that does more than just "keep the ship afloat." This desire also signals a denial of Inuit capacity to develop a truly unique culturally relevant child welfare system. Even as the Auditor General's report recognized that Qallunaat social workers require an understanding of "Inuit societal values," this

still falls short of the real answer to Nunavut's need for a "human resource plan:" to recognize Inuit as experts on the protection and wellbeing of their own children.

A Necessary Change

Dismantling colonial relationships and moving toward Inuit possessing the decision-making power and control over the protection of Inuit children, in line with Inuit culture and traditional knowledge, will no doubt be challenging. This is because "the more widespread, the more unsettling, the more radical the change, the more intensely it will be resisted," particularly when change "call[s] for organizations to dissolve or to reconstitute in some basic way" (Wharf, 1979, p. 18-20). Resistance to a different approach to child welfare can also be expected, as it will require a departure from the notion of social worker as "expert" and relinquishing the power Qallunaat hold within their roles as child welfare workers. A new approach to child welfare will also require:

forfeiting status, comfort, and certainty as one who has access to the 'true' reality and the authority to dispense that truth... It means a shift in thinking away from the comfortable idea that there are 'right' methods of practice, towards the idea that methods and practices can be improvised to fit each community's unique, dynamically-changing contextual demands (Sellick and Delaney, 1996, p. 42).

Giving up power is not something likely to be comfortable for those who have embedded beliefs of their personal status due to their education and years of experience within the working environment. But it is this very notion of a social worker's education and experience or "merit" that is the foundation of the subtle "new racism" that meritocratic logic holds, which ultimately prevents social change (Augoustinos, Tuffin and Every, 2005).

Moving away from a western view of merit is a necessary step towards Inuit self-government and reversing the current flow of power in Nunavut

communities. Elders and community healers in the territory are unlikely to hold degrees or certificates in healing, counseling or social work, and young community members that might obtain the necessary education or credentials may not be recognized in such respected roles due to their young age and lack of experience (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2005). In order to view Inuit elders and healers as qualified and able to teach, heal and support, requires abandoning the southern meritocratic paradigm currently being upheld in Nunavut by the dominant culture. Moving beyond the view of credentials, resumes and formal "experience" will be necessary to the development of a new child welfare approach within the territory. This move will naturally be difficult for those who "still cling to a value system that cherishes rugged individualism and extols the myth that Canada is an open society in which anyone can succeed with the requisite amount of hard work and determination" (Wharf, 1990, p. 174). However, until a move away from meritocratic thinking to the "very opposite of the hubris which so often accompanies academic training and expert status," the status quo in Nunavut will be unable to change hands (Sellick and Delaney, 1996, p. 42).

Conclusion

The Auditor General's Report, if created for anywhere but Nunavut may have been useful. Unfortunately, the Report only suggested Nunavut continue to do more of the same thing; a plan that clearly has not been working. Through interviews with social workers in the territory and examining the meritocracy within the child welfare system, this research concluded that the Government of Nunavut (GN) has not just failed to protect children. By continuing to mimic southern Canada's child welfare systems, the GN has simultaneously maintained the territory's status quo and eliminated opportunities for parents to be "heard." Nunavut's current approach has also neglected to address the real problems in Nunavut, such as the continued marginalization of Inuit

within their own territory. The overall result is a child welfare system that lacks cultural relevance to Inuit. Fortunately, Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) is able to provide the direction for designing a child welfare system for the territory. From this, a different approach to child welfare in Nunavut, one based on traditional knowledge, Inuit culture and overall well-being, may just provide what the Auditor General, the Government of Nunavut, Qallunaat social workers and all Nunavummiut collectively want for the future: a system that truly works to protect Inuit children.

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“Make Them Stop it”: What Aboriginal Children and Youth in Australia Are Saying About Bullying

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Introduction

Bullying among school-aged children and adolescents is a significant problem, in Australia (Rigby 1997; Zubrick SR, Silburn SR et al. 2005; Griffin Smith and Gross 2006) and worldwide (Olweus 1997; Salmivalli, Kaukiainen et al. 2005). Characteristically, bullying can be defined as the repeated infliction of physical, mental or emotional trauma, on one person by another or others. There is a plethora of research on bullying from a mainstream perspective. However, little has been done to explore bullying amongst Aboriginal children and adolescents. The Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey found that approximately one third of Aboriginal school students aged 12 to 17 years had been bullied

Abstract

This paper explores and summarizes a three year research program into contextualizing bullying in an Aboriginal cultural environment for youth and children. Bullying is not a new concept; it has been passed down from one generation to the next for many years. Effects of bullying can be long term and often manifest as being the causal pathway to other undesirable behaviours. Among children and youth effects of bullying are seen in many forms, for Aboriginal children and youth these effects are magnified. Aboriginal children and youth are already over represented in truancy, juvenile detention and anti social behaviours, bullying is in the mix and it is preventable. Intra racial bullying and turning inward on one's own cultural group is surely a cry for help with these complex and intricate relationship issues. This paper concludes by considering some of the implications of these findings for future research and conceptualization and has practical solutions for those who are in the care and position to influence the outcomes for Aboriginal communities.

Keywords: Aboriginal children; Australia; bullying; social behaviours.

at school, one quarter had been ‘picked on’¹, and one in five had been subjected to incidents of racism in the six months prior to the survey (Zubrick, Silburn et al. 2005).

Bullying can lead to significant mental and emotional health problems and behavioral difficulties, which is of concern, especially among Aboriginal children and youth who have a much higher risk of developing these clinically significant problems than the general population (Zubrick SR, Silburn SR et al. 2005), than non-Aboriginal children (24% and 17% respectively). Bullying is also associated with disengagement

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¹ ‘Picked on’ is similar to being victimized, or ostracized

from school, an increased likelihood of other aggressive behavior and cyclic behaviors. Aboriginal children have high rates of school truancy (Mellor and Corrigan 2004; Boon 2008), phone help line usage (Kids Help Line 2005), and juvenile detention (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001; AIHW 2003; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006). However, no research has investigated whether bullying could be one of the underlying causes of these outcomes. What is becoming evident is that some behavioral problems have their roots within the aggression and victimization that can result from relationship problems with peers and others. Aboriginal children disproportionately experience the high levels of personal and intra-racial violence which are often attributed to bullying and its complex causal pathways (Whaley 1992; Unnever and Cornell 2004; Craven and Bodkin-Andrews 2006; Harris, Lieberman et al. 2007; Beaty, Alexeyev et al. 2008).

Cultural construct (that is, the creation and maintenance of true and accurate cultural representation), plays a major role in research undertaken in an Aboriginal context (Foley 2003). Successful, community driven research agendas within an Aboriginal Australian context have been documented, where the community is free to decide upon the elements of Aboriginal research—such as the cultural agenda—without the worry of pre-formulated agendas from mainstream-driven research projects. As Dutta (Dutta 2007) explains, a culture-centered approach is a commitment to theories and applications from within the culture, and is useful in bringing the voices forward and offering alternative entry points to open up discursive voices of those who may be marginalized. This approach further legitimizes the cultural knowledge component of the research context and highlights its importance in any Aboriginal-based research. Further, it recognizes both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers (McCoy 2008) as being integral components of Aboriginal-based research, with conscious participation in the cultural aspirations, preferences, and practices of the research participants.

The Solid Kids Solid Schools (SKSS) project, on which this paper is based, was developed to better understand bullying within an Aboriginal cultural construct (that is, what it looks like and feels like in an Aboriginal context) (Coffin 2008). Despite the emergence over the last two decades of an impressive body of knowledge on the impact of childhood trauma on emotional health (Dahlberg 1998), this has only recently been extended to an Aboriginal context, where the picture is different and the trauma, in many instances, is far more severe (Zubrick SR, Silburn SR et al. 2005.).

This project was guided by the views and expectations of research conducted within the community of the Aboriginal participants. Aboriginal adults expected that research among their children and families would have leadership from an Aboriginal community member at all times and the engagement of an Aboriginal epistemological positioning around knowledge creation and ownership. This also helped to establish relationships and to maintain cultural construct integrity (Coffin 2008).

The voice of the Aboriginal child on issues around bullying has not been heard. This paper uses Aboriginal children's voices to learn where bullying occurs, and in what contexts, what it looks like, its causes, and its effects. It provides some direction to minimize the impact of bullying on Aboriginal children and youth in school, families and communities.

Methods

The goal of the SKSS project was to contextualize bullying behavior(s) and translate this knowledge into community owned and identified strategies in the Yamaji region (Midwest /Murchison) of Western Australia. Three locations within the Yamaji region were used within the study. These can be best described as a regional town (population of 35,000), a remote inland community/town (population of 800), and small coastal rural town (population of 9,000) (Australian, Bureau et al. 2007-08).

Sampling

140 children/youth (aged 8yrs to 18yrs) were interviewed. These children/youth came from schools in all three locations. The regional town has four high schools - Catholic, Public, Grammar and Christian. The state high school has the largest student enrolment and a much higher proportion of Aboriginal students (40%) than do the other schools. The next largest high school is the Catholic school with only 5% Aboriginal enrolment at the time of the interviews. In comparison, the state school and the Independent school in the remote town have 93% and 99% Aboriginal enrolment respectively. Regional schools have between 300 and 500 students, compared to remote schools where numbers fluctuate dramatically and average around 120 students. The coastal rural town has similar Aboriginal enrolment numbers to the regional town, but has a higher proportion of Aboriginal students located in its lower secondary schooling system. Both the coastal rural and the regional town have around 15% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolment in their upper secondary years (all statistics based on the Midwest Education Department Data, 2008). The results were collected in the space of approximately two years over 2008 and 2009.

The methodology used to review children's issues around bullying involved:

- Working with an Aboriginal steering group
- Developing and piloting the interview guide
- Recruiting/training Aboriginal research assistants
- Conducting interviews with children from the three locations
- Organizing focus groups
- Analyzing results
- Following up findings with schools and communities.

Aboriginal Steering Group

A critical component of this project was the formation of a regional Aboriginal Steering Group comprised of Aboriginal community leaders. This group provided advice on each stage of the project, from data collection and interpretation through to follow up and dissemination. Additionally, the steering group provided a conduit between the research project and the community, often encouraging people to become involved, and informally updating the community about the project's progress. As issues were raised and a more global perspective was required than that of members of the steering group, each member networked within the community and collected feedback, which was then communicated to the research team. Although there were no young people in the steering group, their opinions were sought throughout the project using talking circles (Power 2004), youth workshops, and small gender-specific focus groups.

Development and Piloting of the Interview Guides

Creating a safe space for Aboriginal students to verbalise, in their own words, what bullying feels and looks like is fundamental to developing an understanding of the complexity of this issue. An interview guide was developed and validated with the steering group's involvement, and pilot tested by the Aboriginal research assistants with a convenience sample of five students in each age category (8-12 and 13-18 years of age). Some of the questions were adapted from previous research conducted by Trevaskis (Trevaskis 2003).

The interview guide comprised five main parts including an introduction, a background and permission form, and several warm-up familiarity questions, followed by key questions and an additional comments section. The key questions for participants (primary children aged 8-12 years and youth aged 13-18 years) were grouped into questions around family and community connections such as:

- How many cousins do you have at school?
- Do you mix with them all the time?
- Who lives with you?
- Do many of your siblings go to this school or do any family work here at school?

There were also questions about personal interests and general feelings about school. Discussions were open ended and children/youth were asked their personal opinions on life in the community, family and community connectedness, school life, home life and also about who is the best person to help them solve issues around relationships and personal issues that may arise. Children/youth were also asked to comment on what was needed and currently may not be available to help solve any of the issues they may have brought up in the interview.

In all interviews, language and the individual's understanding of bullying were clearly defined. Bullying was introduced by asking participants what they liked and disliked about school and community life. If bullying behavior was not raised by a participant unprompted, pictures were utilized as a uniform cue and participants were asked to describe the behaviors depicted. The pictures were used with the majority of primary school aged children but were rarely used with high school or older students. These pictures also reduced interviewer variation and possible language confusion, especially with slang words, such as 'deadly', which means different things to different people. Participants were asked to describe the behaviors depicted. After discussing the picture or bullying behavior described by the participants, interviewers asked a standardized question about the frequency of bullying involving the student and, more generally, in their community.

Interviewers encouraged those they interviewed to describe their physical and emotional responses to bullying behavior. Often the physical response formed the main component of the 'story' or answer to the posed question. This was captured by the interviewer taking notes, for example; "Child x, got up from his seat and acted

out how the beating was administered with a full account of the events that had taken place...". The emotional and emotive-type responses and language were further explored with those who had a good rapport with the interviewer and felt safe enough to offer this.

Participants were asked about the frequency of bullying both at school and within broader community life. With the focus on "what do you see" rather than what happens to you personally. The rate refers to what was happening to them and/or around them in their school setting or within life in the wider community. Frequency questions were asked in such a way that participants could utilize their own language, for example, when talking about rates of bullying behavior. Due to differences in language ability and stage of development, high school youths were not as descriptive as the primary school children. For example, it is hard to determine exactly what the word 'sometimes' means, and at times opposing meanings had been combined, such as 'almost every day/not that much'.

The conclusion to the interview had several open-ended questions where the participants could offer an opinion or ideas towards a solution to the issues they had discussed. For example "What do you think would make school and community life better for you and or other children/youth in this town?".

Recruitment/Training of Aboriginal Research Assistants

Two female and one male Aboriginal research assistant were trained to conduct interviews, transcribe tapes, and assist in coding the text. The research assistants used their local knowledge and networks within the community to recruit participants, provide information on appropriate language, and maintain cultural security (Coffin 2008).

The interview procedure was consistent with best practice for interviewing children and adolescents, as described by Wilson and Powell,

including elements such as alternative framing of questions to avoid guilt and feelings of ‘dobbing’² (Wilson, et al. 2001; Wilson and Powell 2001). This questioning technique is particularly important in the area of bullying, as many children do not want to be stigmatised as a ‘dobber’, and worry it will lead to further victimization. Other best practice principles used in the interviews included:

- The interviewer doing the least talking; and
- Using questions which are open ended, focused on the child’s needs, responsive to the responses provided, and which remain adaptable throughout the interview process.

The interviews utilized identification markers as part of normal questioning, and interviewers used the introductory phase of the interviews to build rapport and to explain what the interviewee could expect, with a focus on confidentiality and honesty.

Wherever possible, male researchers interviewed male participants and females interviewed female participants. In an Aboriginal context gender roles are very important and it is more likely that each gender will engage better as a young male would not open up about personal information to an unknown female and vice versa. Gender specific interviewing maintains cultural integrity for Aboriginal participants and researchers involved. Interviews were taped, and transcribed by an Aboriginal transcriber or one of the appropriate Aboriginal researchers. While interviews varied according to an individual’s situation, the average duration was 40 minutes. Aboriginal researcher assistants who were

responsible for conducting the interviews throughout the research were also given time after each interview to debrief and conduct a brief analysis of the interviews in relation to what went well and what needed improvement.

Interview Recruitment

Purposeful area and snowball sampling (Sarantakos 1993) was utilized to recruit participants through the use of the SKSS Steering Group and Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers (AIEO)³ based in each of the target schools. This process ensured the sample represented a range of localities and schools, and involved children from Year 4 to Year 7 (8 to 12 years) and Year 8 to Year 10 (13 to 16 years). Additionally, several interviews were held with individuals who had left school (described as ‘disengaged’ were placed in age appropriate categories in Table 1). These youth were categorized in the appropriate locality and classed as high school age (age appropriate). Consent was obtained from parents/ caregivers and from the children/youth for each interview. This was usually done in person by an AIEO or Aboriginal researcher visiting the child’s home or by contacting parents/caregivers in another way, such as at local sports events or school assemblies. Table 1 below describes the location and gender spread of children/youth interviewed.

² ‘Dobbing’, is the same as telling, it is reporting behaviors to usually an older more authoritative person.

³ AIEO, or also known as ATA or AEW in other systems other than the state education system

Table 1. Distribution, gender and number of children and youth interviewed in SKSS

	Regional town		Coastal Town		Remote		Total
	Primary School (2 state/1 catholic)	High School	Primary School	High School	District High School	School residential remote	
Male	28	11	9	3	7 (primary)	8	66
Female	35	2	16	2	9 (primary)	10	74

Focus Groups

Focus groups were held with:

1. Youth of high school age from Geraldton Residential;
2. Children/youth at Gunnadoo Farm School Holiday program (aged 8 to 17 years); and
3. Geraldton Aboriginal Streetworkers Holiday Program participants (aged 8 to 14 years).

While interviews had been planned, the focus groups were held instead as some members of these three groups asked to be together. Each focus group was gender-specific and lasted no more than an hour and a half. The questions used were similar to those utilized with individual interviews. Groups were no larger than eight and privacy was maintained for these groups during the focus questions.

Analysis

Colaizzi's (1978) framework was used to conduct the analysis to maximize validity and maintain the 'community voice', ownership and representation (Coffin 2008). Since most interviews were conducted by female Aboriginal researchers, the transcripts of interviews with males were checked by a male Aboriginal researcher to ensure gender equity. To maintain dependability (Bryman 2004), transcripts were read three times, firstly by the author (AR1), secondly by another Aboriginal researcher familiar with the work (AR2), and thirdly, in summary form by the steering committee members.

Summary points and main themes that evolved from these data were then double-checked, and validated, changed, and/or discussed if required. For example, AR1 found a pattern to describe bullying behaviors, and AR2 reviewed the data to validate the pattern and, where appropriate, added further supporting information. At times, AR2 found different themes, which were either added to the list, or used to alter the definitions of existing themes. After presenting the themes to the steering group, each theme was deemed to be either significant or secondary. This process

consisted of much discussion and voting. Some significant themes were presented to the steering group and to be validated by the community. The process also determined if there was any pattern or similar examples from the study region to validate these findings; or if they were unique to one school/area in the region. This approach strengthened the information that formed part of a summary document distributed to all schools and communities.

Responses were coded through QSR Nvivo software (QSR, International et al. 2007). The initial coding results were open-ended, however after the steps described above, more selective coding was systematically applied (Glaser and Strauss 1967). A condensed set of data was then analyzed to identify any linkages and to consolidate or dispute earlier or ongoing theory.

Follow-up/Translation to Schools and Communities

Follow up with communities was an integral part of the research. Information from interviews and focus groups was taken back to representative community groups for validation or further insights.

With the themes endorsed or modified by the steering group, a summary for each region was prepared and sent back to all schools and community groups (including parents, care givers, youth workers) involved with the project and others who could benefit from such localized knowledge. Additional knowledge-translation activities included newspaper publicity, articles in local and state papers, and conference presentations about the findings and possible actions to address the findings.

RESULTS

The interviews with children/youth provided information about what bullying looks like, feels like, its frequency, where it happens and to whom, and who Yamaji children/youth tell when they are being bullied. The interviews also addressed what

the participants wanted done about bullying, and some of the complexities around the issue of bullying and its cultural implications for Aboriginal children and youth.

Frequency of Bullying

Unlike young people of secondary school age, primary school aged children readily quantified their bullying experiences. Nearly 40% reported that bullying happens at their school every day. A typical response was “Yep, all the time, might as well say every day.” Just 16% of youth reported that bullying happened all the time/every day, while nearly a quarter reported that bullying happens, every couple of days/weekly at their school. However, 43% gave a relatively non-committal answer, acknowledging that ‘it happens’, or it happens ‘sometimes’. Just over 14% of younger children used the term ‘sometimes’, whereas over two thirds of them gave a quantifiable answer.

Some differences were evident by gender, school type and locality. Boys and girls were equally likely to report that bullying happened daily in primary school, but among the youth, females were more likely to report bullying as a daily occurrence. Most male and female students at the two residential schools reported that bullying occurred daily. Interestingly, the proportion of Aboriginal students enrolled within a school did not appear to have a direct influence on the frequency of reported bullying in that school.

The ‘Language’ of Bullying

The children in this study described bullying as “Big kids picking on little kids”. The phrases ‘picked on’ or ‘picking on’ were the most commonly used when describing older or bigger kids bullying younger/smaller kids. Twenty five percent of all student respondents mentioned “teased, hitting” and “carrying years” to describe bullying, and described bullying as “people picking on people for fun”.

Bullying means picking on little kids, teasing them, hitting them and swearing at them. (Male, 12yrs, rural coastal primary school)

Slight variations were found in the words used to describe bullying and in the meanings attached to these words. The differences found between regional/coastal and remote were possibly due to the way the respondents used their ‘own’ Aboriginal language and the influence of the schooling system. Students in the remote and coastal areas, for example, tended to use the word ‘teasing’ instead of ‘bullying’. For example, “...teasing, picking on little kids...” was a typical response when seeking a definition of bullying. These children and youth used more descriptive language such as ‘swearing’, ‘smashing’ and ‘hitting’.

In contrast, over 70% of children/youth from the regional town used the term ‘bullying’. When the illustrations of children fighting were used the majority of respondents throughout the region responded with either the word ‘bullying’ or ‘bully’. Children and youth often provided detailed and graphic descriptions of violent bullying behavior, frequently using adult words and concepts of fighting. These children/youth gladly demonstrated some of the more physical forms of bullying they had seen.

The language used by children and youth to describe bullying behaviors was also localized in some instances. Numerous phrases such as “What’s your go” were localized and well understood by children as young as 8 years old. This phrase typically means ‘let’s go and fight’ and is a direct challenge from the person who says it to another. Interestingly, no major gender differences were found in terms of the use of language to describe bullying, except that girls generally provided more detailed accounts of physical, social and emotional bullying or to forms of bullying other than the physical kind.

Feelings Associated with Bullying

When asked 'How does bullying make you feel?' more than 50% of all respondents said "sad and angry", with the vast majority of remote respondents indicating that the major cause of unhappiness at school was bullying and teasing.

"I feel so sad, worried and, angry that I punch walls to get it out of my system and then stay away for a while." (Male, 11 yrs, regional primary school)

Again, children provided more detailed descriptions of their feelings than did the youth. However, even the older age group indicated the level of frustration they felt when bullied, saying, for example, "you get hit and then you either take this anger out on someone smaller or weaker than you...". Some students talked about 'payback' and being prepared to 'wait until the person bullying was older when they would be an easier target' or spoke of how they would redirect their aggression onto weaker siblings, family and others.

While many children and youth felt that school was 'good' because they had lots of friends, some mentioned that when they had only a few friends or were new, school was not a place of happiness.

The most prominent observation relating to feelings about bullying was the lack of emotion shown by Aboriginal children when describing harrowing bullying experiences. Their responses seemed to indicate they were everyday 'normal' and accepted behaviors and just part of life. In contrast, a few children/youth used strongly emotive words such as 'terrorized', and were clearly distressed and anxious about the bullying and violence they had witnessed or experienced. They described the behaviors as 'unacceptable and unfair', 'not normal', and something they wanted 'corrected almost immediately'.

When I was in Year 8 it used to happen a lot, I think the other kids thought that it was funny but they didn't know how that hurt my feelings. (Female 15 yrs, disengaged, coastal rural)

Interestingly a few children indicated they felt a bit sorry or sad for the victims of bullying, although this response was rare.

Um, they bully different colored skin kids, um like last year at the school we had this one girl and she was a bit mumingie (simple) and people kept on teasing her and hitting her and all that so she left and that's sad. (Female 14 yrs, remote)

What Bullying Looks Like

The size of the perpetrator and of the person being victimized was a major descriptor when talking about bullying with all respondents. Over half of all students referred to the 'big' students verbally or physically picking on the 'little' students. The theme of bigger-bullying-smaller was consistent throughout the whole region.

The majority of respondents, when describing what bullying is or looks like mentioned it was '*Aboriginal kids bullying Aboriginal kids*'. Aboriginal children and youth also indicated that while bullying was also perpetrated by non-Aboriginal students they felt it was not as frequent as intra-racial bullying and that it didn't hurt as much.

Children suggested that 'bullying', or 'running somebody down' seemed to be normalized behavior. They said it was just "something that Aboriginal people do", intrinsically linked to being a 'proper' Aboriginal.

When children arrive from different Aboriginal language groups⁴, this can be extremely confronting. Aboriginal children often report feeling threatened or fearful when entering another community/school, partly due to the lack of family support as well as how other language groups not from that local area might be treated. Being from another area and feeling uncomfortable that they might be bullied was mentioned by more males than females in this study, and only among the youth.

⁴ Different regions have many diverse language and or tribal groupings, long standing confrontation is sometimes present and preconceived ideas about groups are formed through generations and handed down to children/youth.

Why Bullying Occurs

Aboriginal youths consistently responded that the major causes of bullying were boredom (30%), jealousy (60%), and drugs and alcohol (95%). For the majority of children (95%) boredom was also a prominent reporting followed by just 'wanting to be the boss' and that the perpetrators 'just can't help it' as major causes of bullying. Children also mentioned drugs and alcohol as a common factor related to why some people bully others. A small number of male children indicated that some people bullied others to gain attention and friends.

A feeling of jealousy towards other Aboriginal students was also mentioned as an issue that contributes to intra-racial divisions and bullying, especially in the wider community. Personal or physical features and sexuality (sexual jealousy) also ranked highly among the reasons why young people in this study were bullied, especially in the remote region. There was no mention of positive image and/or of positive associations and being proud to be Aboriginal by any of the children interviewed. Questions were geared toward students being able to provide a positive and or negative response, for example "What do you like about living in this community? And what don't you like so much about living in this community?"

I feel alright today. Last week, well yesterday, I cried because um, these, um this one boy was bullying me. I told the teacher but I'm getting sick of people calling me names, yeah, such as Big Bird and swearing at me and that. They are in the same year as me and they are boys and girls. (Female, 11yrs, coastal)

The normalization of this behavior was evident in comments from both children and youth, suggesting there was legitimate place for older cousins, siblings or family members to bully others and 'sort out' an issue. This perception is likely to maintain a bullying cycle, with children and youth talking about 'payback', or 'getting their payback', particularly among the female youth living in coastal and remote

towns. Children and youth reported that they feel compelled to fight and be strong for their family. In the Aboriginal context, this includes cousins, distant relatives and lifetime friends (that is not exclusively family). Young people reported a great sense of family pride and loyalty and the following two quotes exemplify this:

I don't like it when we fighting, swearing, ... the other girls fight with my sisters and then I gotta fight. (Female, 14yrs, remote)

Where Bullying Occurs

Children of all ages, locations, and school types reported that their school was where bullying is most likely to occur. Children from the entire region described how easy it was for bullying to occur and that teachers did not take action to stop it.

... only place kids can catch one another. At school there is a crowd. (Male, 12 yrs, regional town)

Mainly playground, oval, undercover area, when the teacher leaves the class – even for a second, the other kids start teasing and calling names and when we tell the teacher they don't do nothing. (Male, 9 yrs, remote)

Sport was also mentioned frequently as an opportunity for bullying or family fighting and dominance.

Teasing all the time, where no teacher when we playing or in sports time it happens. (Male, 12 yrs, remote)

Children and youth, especially girls, felt that there was nowhere to go for help if they were bullied after school hours, while the youth indicated that when you are being bullied "no place is really safe except in your own house".

Who do Students Tell about Bullying?

Yep, nearly every day but once really bad um, I told the Teacher and they sorted it out. (Male, 12yrs, remote)

Yamaji children reported that when bullying occurred, they mostly tell their teacher (52%), and their mother (20%). In contrast, youths are more likely to tell their mother first (40%), then their teacher, Nana, and relatives (12%). Interestingly the children reported a longer list of people from whom they could seek help than did the youths.

In remote and coastal towns, most children who reported the bullying told their teacher or the school principal, and their main care giver, nana or mum, whereas the youth from the coastal area were more likely to report the bullying to their family, predominately their Mother. A small number of these coastal area youth indicated that they would only tell their family and not the school staff, as they felt the staff weren't helpful, and it would be a 'waste of time'.

In contrast, youth in the regional town were more likely to tell their mother, AIEO, friends, and other accessible adults such as school counselors, chaplains, mentors and youth workers.

Very few of the youth mentioned they would talk to a male family member, such that dad, uncle, and pop were only mentioned once. This could be due to a lack of responsible males in the young person's family unit, or to the mother being more pivotal in the child's life. Some children and youth reported that they largely had no-one with whom they could talk if they were bullied.

Um ...I don't know, sometimes I tell the teachers but the kids keep on doing it so, um no one really ... (Male, 11yrs, coastal)

I am a Person Who Bullies...

Approximately 15% of children and youth openly admitted to being a 'bully' 'sometimes' or 'all the time/everyday' or indicated they had previously bullied others.

... every day, every couple of days, depends on how I am feeling. (Female, 12 yrs, coastal town)

All the time. Anytime. Whenever I feel like it. (Female, 12yrs, regional town)

Even though more students from the remote residential school reported being bullied, fewer remote students admitted they bullied others compared to students from the coastal town, but some indicated they would bully back if they were bullied. Slightly more males admitted to bullying others than females, although bullying others was reported most frequently among boys from year 5 to 7, with the majority of overall bullying reported among boys and girls in Year 7.

The Importance of Friends

Friends rate highly as a protective factor against bullying for Yamaji children/youth. There were more than twice as many positive comments related to having friends as there were negative comments around friends (56 compared to 19). Students, especially primary school aged males, mentioned bullying as a means to gain attention and friends, but interestingly three young males mentioned that their peers talked about having been 'taught to bully' to gain friends.

There was also a direct positive correlation between friends at school and having multiple siblings/cousins at school.

Oh well like we fight about whose friend, like we have to pick like best friends and stuff. But I don't reckon we should because that hurts other people's feelings. And some people get left out like we always often get left out all the time. It's mainly me and S who get left out. (Female, 12 yrs regional town)

Children from other areas felt this isolation and some felt culturally as well as socially isolated for large periods of time - for example 'all last year, after when I first came here'.

What do Children/Youth Want Done about Bullying

Almost all students reported they wanted the issue to be resolved, although many indicated they often had to resolve it alone, because telling an adult was interpreted as weak. Many children

and youth suffer in silence. Some children and youth acknowledged they were not sure what teachers could do about bullying, yet they still wanted teachers to 'fix it'.

Um I don't know (ha ha) probably take the kids aside and talk to them and work out a solution like separate the class or something ... (Male, 14yrs, regional)

Some suggestions from children and youth for teacher responses included telling them to stop and verbally chastising them, while children wanted the people bullying to apologize - "make them apologize to me."

Finally, some suggested parents should be part of the solution and that they should give their child 'a hiding'⁵ if they bullied others. However, more commonly children/youth felt positive that parents respond to bullying by keeping kids home from school until the issue settles down. Many children/youth felt it was 'normal' to stay home when socially or emotionally challenged.

I want them to tell her off and tell her to stop. (Male, 12yrs, remote)

Just tell the parents of the other kids and tell them to make them stop it and make them get a hiding. (Female, 11yrs, remote)

Discussion

This paper explores concepts held by Aboriginal children and youth about bullying. The culturally, linguistically and geographically specific study conducted provides an in-depth analysis of Aboriginal children's and youths' experiences of bullying behavior. The respondents very rarely referred to ethnicity in the interview, although when it was 'whitefella' specific, this was spelled out by the students. Hence, given an Aboriginal interviewer conducted all interviews, it appears the Aboriginal children and youth were discussing intra-racial bullying or bullying involving other

Aboriginal children that often involved their own family and other Aboriginal families.

The two most important and unique contributions of this study are:

- How Aboriginal children and youths' identity and cultural obligation impact on the likelihood of them being involved in bullying behavior; and
- Consequently, the largely intra-racial nature of the bullying described by the participants.

Aboriginality and Identity

The normative expectations and social norms to act or respond demonstrating one's Aboriginality, especially from pre-adolescence and onwards, appears to increase children's and youths' vulnerability to being victimized and/or to perpetrate bullying behavior (Kickett-Tucker and Coffin 2010).

Aboriginal children and youth reported they often didn't have a choice in how they respond to potentially threatening situations, because of their intrinsic need to adhere to their Aboriginality. This was particularly evident when their identity was under threat, such as a racial slur or when they experienced tribal or language group alienation. Children and youth needed modeling of positive responses, so that a taunt such as 'oh you people just live in the bush' could be met with a positive response about their survival and hunting skills and their great utilization of resources in the environment.

Similarly, Aboriginal children and youth described feeling threatened intra-racially when entering another community and/or school if they didn't have cultural support (such as language recognition of other groups, other people of their cultural group, people who understand Aboriginal culture and have knowledge about Aboriginal ways etc). Interestingly more males than females in the older age group (12 years upwards) felt more exposed to bullying victimization due to threats about their identity.

⁵ Physically hurt them

A major factor that Aboriginal children and youth said caused intra-racial bullying was jealousy. Perceived inequity among respondents such as owning better clothing or receiving sporting or scholarly accolades was a factor that led to jealousy, which was often expressed through aggression and bullying. This may occur because among Aboriginal people resources were traditionally shared equally within the community, whereas today many Aboriginal communities no longer function in this way because of influx of money and housing and stigmatization (Foley 2003).

Bullying, or running somebody down was also deemed by respondents to be normalized behavior and was just 'something that Aboriginal people do', intrinsically linked to being a 'proper' Aboriginal. Although there were no specific questions about positive image, there was no mention of a positive image and/or positive associations and being proud to be Aboriginal by any children or youth who were interviewed. This absence of positive associations and pride in being Aboriginal was striking.

Being bullied (mostly) verbally in response to jealousy (Bessarab 2006) about one's personal characteristics and/or sexuality was of concern to Aboriginal children and youth, particularly those from remote regions. Female perpetrators were more likely to use nasty language suggesting high levels of promiscuity and unattractiveness, whereas the males tended to bully using terminology that inferred failure, with words like 'loser'.

To respond to this entrenched internalized racism and to counteract this bullying, it is essential that Aboriginal children and youth receive support to build a strong, positive racial identity rather than only focusing on self-esteem related issues (Dudgeon, Garvey et al. 2000; Kickett-Tucker and Coffin 2010). Positive racial identity must include all racial groups taking pride in their contribution to society and accepting differences as a strength - not a reason for division.

Cultural Obligation: How Does This Impact on Children?

Aboriginal children and youth feel compelled to fight and to be strong for their family, including cousins, distant relatives, lifetime friends and their immediate family. The respondents reported a great sense of family pride and family loyalty. Long standing feuding is sometimes present and preconceived ideas about groups from different Aboriginal language or tribal areas have been formed through generations and handed down to children/youth. The family obligation for children and youth requires them to side with their family or be outside their cultural and family circle. This cultural obligation to behave in accordance with their family can be extremely confronting for Aboriginal children and youth when they first enter a geographically or linguistically different group.

Well ever since I've been here I've felt a little bit nervous. I don't know how to, how I feel and felt real scared because well I just got here and I don't know most of the kids at school their names but they all know my name. And because I don't know them and I want to be all the kids friends, but I don't know their names and they just look at me and what I look like or what I do. Like if they look after me I said to myself, I'll look after them. And now I get bullied all the time because I look after my own, I'll kill for my family and friends. And back in X whether it's my brother or sister or friend and they get hurt I just always want to get to help them out and to protect them from people that try to hurt them. (Male, 7 yrs, regional town)

Having friends and or family within the school setting was described as a double edged sword. With friends, and sometimes with family (e.g. having multiple siblings/cousins at school), respondents described security and popularity. However, friends also came with the obligation to 'stick up' for them or be on the outer of the friendship circle. Some children and youth

reported being outside of friendship circles as a result of family feuding within the community. Feuding is a damaging issue for children/youth and adults alike within the community. It is often subtle and long standing, it can be physical in nature but for children and youth, it is more often about exclusion and intimidation.

What Does This Mean?

One of the unique findings in this study is the extent to which bullying in the communities studied was intra-racial. Intra-racial bullying was pervasive, and damaging. Intra-racial bullying attacks the core of Aboriginal children's and youths' being, their Aboriginality (Kickett-Tucker 2008). This factor alone could represent one of the most important areas in need of intervention in order to support both Aboriginal children and youth. Aboriginal children and youth need to be given opportunities to describe how they are feeling about these complex relationship issues and what can be done to address them.

There exists an overburden of relationship issues for families and parents, with cyclic events such as poverty, unemployment, goal terms, drugs and alcohol abuse, overcrowding, hopelessness), as well as wider racial, societal and discriminatory issues. The burden of these relationship issues and complex social issues ultimately comes to rest with the children/youth and their caregivers. By contextualizing what bullying looks and feels like for Aboriginal children and youth, we can determine more clearly the most culturally secure ways to address this problem. Children and youth need to be able to build relationships with a neutral person who has the cultural understanding of their individual situation but also who has the ability and power to go respectfully into the community and help create practical solutions. Sustainability of any project or research outcomes are achieved from partnership with, and engagement of, Aboriginal communities within the region, and the establishment of 'public' displays within school grounds to demonstrate these partnerships, (e.g. language welcome, art works, visiting speakers,

plaques). Displays showing famous Aboriginal people from the region and positive contributions of Aboriginal people from the region would also assist in engendering pride and positive attitudes amongst Aboriginal children and youth. It involves the community truly becoming part of the process of change, not just being invited in as an afterthought without any real power to change or develop direction (Chandler and Lalonde 2004).

Aboriginal children and youth are frustrated. In primary school Aboriginal children tell the teacher about bullying, often with limited results. Similarly Aboriginal youth report they don't tell teachers, possibly because they are not able build relationships with teachers like primary aged students, or possibly because they have learnt in their younger years that typically nothing happens if they do tell.

What is clear is that the respondents don't want bullying behavior to continue, they want consequences and someone in authority to take action (Varjas, Meyers et al. 2008). The Aboriginal Indigenous Education Officer (AIEO) was barely mentioned as a person who could provide help with bullying, unless they were also a family member. It appears, in some contexts, that the AIEOs have a type of 'invisibility' in relation to social and relationship issues (Partington and Galloway 2007). By not actively engaging AIEOs to help deal with bullying issues, the education system may be missing a vital culturally secure intervention opportunity. To address this situation, the status of the Aboriginal Indigenous Education Officer role should be raised within the system and incumbents given more training in how to more effectively respond to the very complex social and emotional health issues experienced by, and between, Aboriginal students.

Having a high Aboriginal student enrolment does not appear to be a solution to protect Aboriginal children and youth from bullying. Strategies that do appear to be protective against bullying, however, are:

- Having high numbers of visible and well trained Aboriginal staff in schools who are accessible to students;
- Having the positive contributions of Aboriginal people to society and the wider social positives of being Aboriginal reflected in schools and school grounds; and
- Providing a safe common room or shared space for Aboriginal students in schools, (students reported this as a helpful factor in solving bullying issues).

Conclusion

The research has only begun to document the experiences of Aboriginal children/youth and their experiences with bullying. Two of the most interesting and surprising results of the research were the extent to which the bullying experienced or observed by the participants was intra-racial and that this hurt more than inter-racial bullying, and the notable lack of positive comments by the participants about their Aboriginality. The research also showed that Aboriginal children and youth want parents and teachers to deal with bullying, but they are often ineffectual in their efforts to deal with it. To date, we have not given our teachers and/or parents adequate tools to effectively deal with bullying related issues, especially intra-racial bullying, to the scale and degree that is required.

It appears that schools and communities mostly take notice of physical bullying and aggression, probably due to safety reasons and duty of care and because it is more obvious. It also seems that attention to this issue often comes too late when the problem has become too large to be dealt with easily and is confounded by other community issues such as family feuding. Internalized racism and feuding among families and wider groups affect the most vulnerable among the Aboriginal population. To address these complex social and societal issues it is essential to rebuild positive/strong Aboriginal identity within all Aboriginal communities (Kickett-Tucker and Coffin 2010).

Summary of what will make the most difference:

- More resources, capacity and skills-based training for schools, teachers, parents and AIEO's with training to help them address the mental, emotional health needs of Aboriginal students.
- Provision of more school-based psychologists with training in culturally secure practice to support Aboriginal students and families
- Adoption of locally developed and informed practical resources and training (linked to community needs) addressing both prevention and management of bullying and relationship issues provided to parents and teachers such as www.solidkids.com.au.
- Engagement of, and a true partnership with, the community showing positive associations with Aboriginal people from the region.

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“Why Do I Need to Sign it? Issues in Carrying Out Child Assent in School-Based Prevention Research Within a First Nation Community

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Introduction

Research involving children requires the free and informed consent of parents or guardians along with the assent of the children involved. Informed consent is understood to involve the issues of competence to decide, the provision of adequate information, and confirmation of the voluntary nature of consent (Beauchamp & Childress, 2001). Informed consent with children contains two parts: parental consent and child assent. Parental consent refers to parent's or guardian's informed consent to allow the researcher to ask the child if they agree to participate in research; their agreement is called child assent (Broome, 1999; Meaux & Bell, 2001). In cases where consent is received from parents or guardians but the child does not give assent, or later changes their mind, the child's wishes are respected. Meaux and Bell (2001) suggest that the

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Abstract

The practice of and procedures for obtaining child assent in research involving children are based in Western conceptions of individual decision-making rights, free from any form of coercion including that of parents. In the context of obtaining assent for children involved in research in an Alberta First Nation, the issue can become more complex given respect for ethical frameworks based in collective decision-making and the responsibility of Elders and families to protect children in interactions with Western institutions. This article explores the results of a focus group held to discuss our experience with child assent in research taking place with a community-initiated and culturally-adapted substance abuse prevention program being taught in the community school. In this case the process of being asked to sign written individual assent in the classroom was perceived as bearing extrinsic risk. Given collective cultural norms, the communities past experiences with the safety of signatures, and the proper roles of Elders and family, the children asked “Why do I have to sign it” when asked to sign their assent for participation in the project. A process that involved gathering child assent with children surrounded by family and community was recommended. Greater researcher and REB responsiveness to the issue of non-maleficence is needed, in this case, by not asking researchers and community members to act in ways that violate culturally-based ethical norms and protocol all of which are important to community continuity, self-determination, and well-being.

Keywords: child assent; First Nations children; research ethics; community-based participatory research; Indigenous research; research ethics boards.

process of obtaining assent from children should involve providing information in developmentally appropriate language and obtaining assent in an environment separate from the direct influence of parents and institutional representatives, including health care providers and teachers.

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These definitions of consent and assent are derived from Western assumptions about the importance of autonomous decision making and the ethical procedures involved in protecting that autonomy. The ethical dilemmas created by attempts to meet criteria for consent driven by these assumptions and processes can lead to further ethical dilemmas in the context of research with First Nations peoples who live and act within an ethical framework based in collective decision making (Ball & Janyst, 2008; Brant Castellano, 2004; Fletcher et al., 2010; Holkup et al., 2009). Given the likelihood that a First Nations community may take a collective approach to making ethical decisions, the ethics of research involving children, including obtaining parental or guardian consent and child assent takes on unique challenges in community-based research.

This article reviews the literature on free and informed child assent and discusses the contradictions and challenges of gathering child assent experienced during a community-based participatory research (CBPR) project carried out in partnership with the Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation located in Western Canada. This community-initiated research project involved the cultural adaptation of the Botvin Life Skills Training (LST) Program followed by implementation and evaluation. The LST program is an evidence-based substance abuse prevention program delivered in school settings developed by Gilbert Botvin (Botvin & Griffin, 2004; Botvin, Griffin, Paul, & Macaulay, 2003). Prior to delivery, the LST program was culturally adapted by a team of Nakota Sioux Elders, community resource people, and staff members from the community school. The adapted program, named Nimi Icinohabi, added cultural teachings, values, Stoney language, cultural activities, and local art and visual images to the core LST program. Nimi Icinohabi was

delivered by trained community members and evaluated using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies (Baydala et al., 2009). Parental/guardian consent and child assent were obtained for involvement in the program evaluation (Fletcher et al., 2010). Throughout the duration of the project, processes associated with obtaining adult consent and child assent were problematic. A focus group was held with research team members to document concerns and to explore possible solutions. Issues and strategies specific to parental/guardian consent are addressed in an earlier article (Fletcher et al., 2010). In this article we look specifically at perspectives regarding how, where, and whether child assent should be obtained based on the experience and views of the research team. This issue has not been addressed to any significant degree. We hope that this discussion will open up consideration of this issue for practitioners of CBPR in projects involving First Nations children.

Issues in Research Consent Involving Children

One of the early concerns for research ethics in 20th century North America involved the ethics of medical research practices with children, often orphans or other institutionalized children, as well as children from other marginalized groups (Burns, 2003; Lederer & Grodin, 1994). These circumstances, along with the after-shocks of the Nazi medical research post-World War II, led to an increased emphasis on the development of basic research principles including those of autonomy (independence of decision-making), non-maleficence (doing no harm), beneficence (benefit), and justice (equality of representation and of risks/benefits) (Beauchamp and Childress, 2001). Codes of ethical principles were also

developed, including the Nuremberg code in 1949, Declaration of Helsinki by the World Medical Association in 1964, and the influential Belmont report in 1979 which followed the finding of highly unethical, race-based medical research practices at the Tuskegee Institute in the United States (Meaux & Bell, 2001; Nelson-Marten & Rich, 1999). Along with these emerging research principles and codes came much more stringent limits to research with children (Burns, 2003).

In Canada, guidelines for informed consent and assent in research involving children are contained in the Tri-Council Policy Statement Second Edition (TCPS-2) developed as part of the work of three national funding bodies in medicine, science, and the social sciences (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2010). This policy indicates that researchers must consider participants' capacity to provide consent for themselves (Article 3.9). In the case of minor children, this has meant that permission from the proper third party, parents or legal guardians, must be received. Authorization by parents or guardians is based on the assumption that they are most fit to protect the child's interests. Research involving children must balance vulnerability with any injustice occurring as a result of their omission from pertinent research; for example, over-reliance on adult-based research results or research that does not include minority groups (Canadian Institutes of Health Research; Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada; Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 1998; Meaux & Bell, 2001). This issue is further complicated by legal, developmental, and socio-cultural determinants of children's decision-making readiness and responsibility (Baylis, Downie, & Kenny, 1998). Therefore, researchers must indicate in their REB applications how children's best interests will be protected, coercion avoided, and their involvement limited to no more than minimal risk without direct benefits (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., Article 2.5, 1998). Further, Baylis

et al. (1998) recommend that what children want to know, what their understanding and decision-making capacity is, and what they need to know should all be considered in conducting child assent processes.

Current trends in regards to child assent include an increasing focus on their capacity and individual rights (Hill, 2005; Powell & Smith, 2009; Weithorn & Scherer, 1994). From this perspective, Powell and Smith (2009) hold that, "children should be viewed, not as vulnerable passive victims, but as social actors who can play a part in the decision to participate in research" (p. 638). The right of the child to express his or her views in all matters affecting them, given consideration for age and maturity, is enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Morrow & Richards, 1996). This emphasis on rights is seen by ethicists and institutional ethics review boards to be empowering, as "the opportunity to give or deny informed consent is not only a right in relation to research which children share with adults, but also contributes to their wellbeing, through giving respect to their sense of control" (Hill, 2005, p. 68). Interestingly, in a study involving children's understanding of these rights as research participants, Hurley and Underwood (2002) found that grade school children understood what they were asked to do and what their research rights were but generally did not understand the purpose of the study.

Ethical Issues in School-Based Research

In school settings, consent may involve many layers. For example, school boards or trustees may need to give permission for a research project to take place, approval by school principals is required, parents or guardians must give consent either actively or passively, and children need to give their assent. In the past, requests to parents for their children's participation in school-based research programs were simply sent home with a cover letter and no response was interpreted as indicating consent. Increasingly, active response or

return of forms is required and failure to return the forms is assumed to represent lack of permission (Esbenson et al., 1996; Esbensen, Melde, Taylor, & Petersen, 2008). Debate about best practices in regards to parental consent is an ongoing issue. Rates of return or failure to return forms often are not truly representative of parents' true awareness of or thoughts on project participation and may further marginalize some children whose perspectives are important and who may accrue direct benefit through participation (Esbenson et al., 1996; Esbensen et al., 2008).

Another issue involves obtaining the child's assent in the school setting where the roles and relative authority of adults and children are typically quite clear. Giving assent may be compounded by the expected compliance of children within the institution. Asking children whether or not they wish to participate in non-research related activities is unusual in educational contexts. Educational institutions are a setting of authority; the degree of autonomy for any child participant within that context raises concerns. Involvement of school personnel in dual roles within the research project, although not uncommon, is usually not recommended and is understood as presenting unique challenges in terms of obtaining assent, confidentiality, and autonomy (Hammack, 1997; Nolen & Putten, 2007). Finally, the participation of First Nations children in research within the school context is a particularly sensitive issue given the devastating harm done to families and communities through colonizing educational institutions, including residential schools.

Challenges to Obtaining Informed Assent with Children in First Nations and other Aboriginal Communities

Children are not isolated research participants; they are embedded in the context of their family, community, and cultural backgrounds which all play a part in the process of parental consent

and child assent (Baylis et al., 1998; Holaday, Gonzales, & Mills, 2007). The context of cultural and historical background is particularly salient in the case of First Nations and other Aboriginal peoples. In speaking of international research settings, bioethicist Patricia Marshall (2006) states that in the conduct of research extrinsic vulnerability, or vulnerability related to outside factors, "occurs where certain population subgroups are denied social and political rights" (p. 30). In Canada, the issue of extrinsic vulnerability is especially pertinent, given the history of harm to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children and the denial of control or self-determination to their families. As a result, it is critical that the collective context be given priority and that ethics be rooted in the community, in relationship, and in respect for Indigenous research principles and collaborative practices; otherwise, we are destined to replay history, causing enduring harm to individuals and whole communities (Brant Castellano, 2004; Ruttan, 2004). The American Academy of Pediatrics (2004) acknowledges that, "there are communities in North America in which cultural perception and historical experience create a different, somewhat hostile view of Western science and research" (p. 148). Additionally, the "collective risks to members of specific geographic, racial, religious, or ethnic communities" (p. 148) caused by superficial attention to ethical conduct in research must be a thing of the past.

Ball and Janyst (2008) note that for many Indigenous communities, given the integration of "children's wellbeing in family and community health and wellness across generations, the family, or sometimes the community, is a more culturally fitting unit of analysis rather than the child alone" (p. 43). This raises the question of who should give consent. Panagiotopoulos, Rozmus, Gagnon, and Macnab (2007) indicate that great care for protocol, involving a three stage process with the entire community, was an important aspect of this community-initiated research project involving diabetes screening for children in a First Nations community located on the west coast of Canada.

While full community, parent or guardian consent, and child assent was received, community members expressed reluctance for children to sign assent. They indicated that ideally Elders who are responsible for children's wellbeing would make this decision and, at the very least, parents should be able to sign for their children.

Addressing these same issues, Ball (2005) noted that researchers must be flexible and open to negotiating the process of obtaining research consent on a case by case basis, especially in "regards to protection of the rights of children and families and promotion of that particular community's well-being" (p. 4). She stressed that, given historical and cultural factors, obtaining consent and assent "should not require isolation of children from their caregivers. Parents should be fully informed of what will be done with their children and special steps should be taken to explain their right of refusal" (Ball, 2005, p. 4). Further, Fisher, Hoagwood, Boyce, et al., (2002) suggest that in work with minority groups, including Native Americans, "investigator's should make an effort to understand expectations about guardian permission and child assent that reflect cultural attitudes, values, and histories related to the roles of family members and community structures in decisions regarding the welfare of children and adolescents" (p. 130).

Background to Research Approach and Consent Procedures

From the start, principles of CBPR (Israel, Schultz, Parker, & Becker, 1998) and guidelines from the TCPS (Canadian Institute of Health Research et al., 1998; Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2010), as well as, the Canadian Institute of Health Research's document, Guidelines for Health Research Involving Aboriginal Research (2007) informed the research team's decisions regarding ethical conduct (Baydala et al., 2009; Baydala et al., 2010). Shore and colleagues note that CBPR,

"challenges us to expand the traditional framework of ethical analysis to include community-level and partnership-oriented considerations" (Shore, Wong, Seifer, Grignon, & Gamble, 2008, p. 1). In First Nations and other Aboriginal communities, issues of reliance on outside authority and expertise at the expense of self-determination and cultural relevance are now rejected (Brant Castellano, 2004; Schnarch, 2004; Smith, 1999). Research requires the active involvement and consent of both the community and individual participants. By using an appropriate approach to research and acting from an appropriate ethical basis we attempted to equalize research partnerships and processes (Castledon, Garvin, & Huu-ay-aht First Nation, 2008).

Initial community consent for the CBPR LST project involved several steps including Elder's approval for the overall research project, along with oral consent for their own involvement in various aspects of the project, such as focus groups. A resolution of support from the Chief and Council in the form of a Band Council Resolution (BCR) was received and a community consultation meeting held. Community-based research team members advised us that parental consent would require respectful and informational visits to parent and/or guardian's homes by a community-based researcher. Historically, signing papers with Western institutions have resulted in negative consequences for First Nations communities. Involving community insiders who were members of the research team would help address issues of trust, ensure use of proper protocol, and communicate community partnership (Ball & Janyst, 2008).

The importance of children and youth to the community was emphasized by Elders, leaders, and community educators. Children are understood to live within family, clan, and community and are taught respect and responsibility along with the importance of kinship and relationship. The Alexis Nakota Sioux kinship and clan system means that the whole community is responsible for raising the child. Adults endeavor to protect children from situations that ask them to act contrarily to

community values. Parents and guardians, usually grandparents or other relatives, are considered the decision-makers for children especially in contexts involving Western institutions. Elders are essential in teaching cultural values, protocol, and behavior to children. The right to protect and the responsibility to teach their children has historically been denied to many First Nations families through the phenomenon of residential schooling and the practice of placing children in the custody of non-First Nations foster and adoptive families.

The Focus Group

During the course of this research project numerous issues arose in terms of consent and assent processes requiring frequent discussion at monthly team meetings and requests for amendments to the University-based REB. An initial focus group was designed to discuss the issues that arose during the process of gaining consent. After identifying child assent as an issue in the initial session, members of the research group gathered to further explore the process and ethics of attaining child assent with the intent of making our own efforts more effective in both this project and in future research with other First Nations communities. Focus groups are inexpensive, data rich, and stimulate participants to further explore the issue (Fontana & Frey, 1994). Focus groups are known for their effectiveness because they bring together individuals and groups attempting to understand differences in perspectives, factors that influence those perspectives, and innovative ways of proceeding in the future (Krueger & Casey, 2009). The focus groups were clearly delineated as such and differentiated from team meetings. Seven research team members, representing both community and academic perspectives, participated in the initial two and a half hour focus group and a second 90 minute focus group held specifically on child assent

Following iterative readings of the focus group transcripts, the data was reduced and then

analyzed thematically as is standard in qualitative analysis of focus groups (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Issues of cross-cultural communication, salience, and intent are important and were actively considered in the analysis (Dreachslin, 1998). The trust that developed between team members over a three-year period was evident in the depth of discussion and willingness to explore alternate views. Preliminary interpretations of the data were checked through circulation of the transcript and, subsequently, the draft manuscript to research team members as is standard in CBPR research (Israel et al., 1998; Macaulay et al., 1999).

Research Findings

“Why do I need to sign it?” Exploring the Child Assent Process

The process of obtaining assent and the children’s reactions were reviewed as an initial grounding to the discussion. While parent or guardian consent was carried out in the child’s home, the program facilitator for the Nimi Icinohabi program, a community member and community-based research team member, asked the children to sign the informed assent forms during class time. She explained the research aspects of the program to the children including completion of pre and post questionnaires and a sharing circle for those who participated in the Nimi Icinohabi program. She clarified that all children in the intervention group would receive the program; however the signed assent was needed for completion of the questionnaires and participation in the sharing circle.

The cohorts of children involved in this research component of this project (grades three, four, seven, and eight) appeared puzzled by the request to sign assent. After explaining what was being asked of them, the facilitator recalled, “they had the opportunity to ask questions, being kids they didn’t hesitate. They wanted to know, ‘What’s this about? Why do I have to sign

my name? What's this for?" The children were particularly interested in knowing whether their parents or guardians had signed a consent form. They were then shown the forms their parents/guardians had signed; a reassuring move that the facilitator believed was important to increasing their comfort level with signing their assent.

In carrying out the assent process and in interpreting the children's reactions the facilitator spoke about relying on, "how growing up [I was taught]... my own teachings and things that were in lessons I've learned." One of these lessons was the significance of the kinship system in the community. Recalling the children's reactions, she considered the issue in light of her grandfather's concern that people were no longer using the proper kinship terminology. The children's reaction to being asked for assent was interpreted by the facilitator and other community-based team members as an indication of their understanding of the kinship system. Their reactions were taken as an encouraging sign that the community was making headway in their efforts to retain and revive culturally appropriate normative expectations of kin including the children's relationship with the facilitator. Thus from this perspective, the fact "that the kinship system still seems to be there" was interpreted as a good thing which needs to be respected in carrying out future research assent.

Conflicting Paradigms of Protection

Western academic norms, found in documents such as the TCPS-2 (Canadian Institute of Health Research et al., 2010), upon which Canadian REBs base their decisions, stress minimizing potential risks for children in an effort to avoid repeating past abuses. The activities involved in protection from risk that Western academic policies were intended to provide (i.e. autonomy, justice, and independence) were seen by community-based team members to be counter to this goal. In fact, risk accrued from the REB protections. From her perspective as a Nakota woman who has raised

her own family, the facilitator explained that asking the kids for assent rather than relying on their parents or on overall community consent was considered unnecessary. Reflecting not only her own opinion but also her perceptions of fellow community member's views, she commented that, "if someone were to come to me and explain this research project and I signed that consent, I'm signing the consent for myself and my child."

Another issue presented was the role of dual relationships or consent bias. One of the university-based team members, to promote discussion of strategies for negotiation with REBs, voiced institutionally framed REB concerns regarding duality in research relationships when obtaining consent or assent. She noted that, "the ethics committee might say [that since] you know the people and you have a relationship with them, perhaps you are influencing their decision in some way to agree to participate, so.... you're actually introducing some bias into the consent." In response, one of the community-based researchers voiced her frustration regarding the lack of understanding regarding community relational ethics and the inappropriateness of this argument: "I am related to practically everybody here somehow. And if we are not related we make kinship [ties] somehow. So, you know, to use that argument, I don't think it will apply." In the context of this community and its history, obtaining parental/guardian consent and child assent was seen as best carried out by trusted community members who in most cases are also relatives. Additionally, in asking for child assent at the school, the facilitator was both a relation and teacher for the Nimi Icinohabi program. As part of the culturally adapted program, she was engaged in teaching the children proper protocol for asking for participation or help from others in an entirely different manner from the university assent protocol. In this case, the duality of roles is not a source of conflict in gathering child assent, but rather a means for increasing confidence

in the safety of the research relationship, thus creating conditions appropriate for assent.

Dilemmas Related to Rights-based Approaches to Child Assent

As the discussion progressed, the university-based researchers expressed their belief in the importance of additional training for institutionally based REB members on the unique challenges of child assent within a First Nations context. For instance, one university-based team member held that while the usual REB approaches to child assent, even for First Nations children, was appropriate in the context of standard medical research, a very different approach was needed in carrying out CBPR research. As she explained, “within a medical research context I believe a child has a right to decide what will or what will not go into their body, whereas in a social research context that decision is perhaps more appropriately decided collectively.” At the same time, one of the other university-based team members believed that in either research context culturally-based assent approaches are required for First Nations children and families.

Assent as a form of children’s rights was also discussed and differing perspectives shared. One university-based participant indicated that even if differing processes were used in this community or others like it, the need to ensure the child has the right to refuse participation remained essential. She pointed out that, “the child may have some reason why they don’t want to participate, you’re taking away that right to express themselves [if you don’t use some form of individual child assent].” In response, another university-based researcher pointed out that for her what was more significant was that, “in carrying out forms of consent that are not culturally appropriate, particularly in a program like this one with an emphasis on cultural values ... if you put [the children] in a position to do something that is contrary to their cultural upbringing, you’re imposing something upon them as opposed to removing a right.” Finding a way to respect differing definitions of children’s

rights and how individual rights and/or collective rights are prioritized from within culture was seen as presenting particular challenges by focus group members from both university and First Nations contexts. It may be that these complex issues must be negotiated and assumptions examined before determining procedures case by case.

Issues of Trust, Safety, Respect, and Ownership

Issues of trust, safety, respect for community protocol, and research ownership were raised for discussion and problem solving by community-based researchers throughout the project, often in response to REB requirements. Community-based researchers experienced the required consent procedures and paperwork burdensome but also, as disrespectful (Fletcher et al., 2010). For this and many First Nations communities, trust remains an issue when using written forms of agreement with Western institutions. As one of the community-based researchers put it, “consent is like negotiating with Western ideology...this is because this is not ours”(emphasis original). Another powerful dynamic raised is that, “over history our people signed with x’s. So the fear of what you’re signing is always going to be there.” She reminded the non-First Nations university-based team members that, “the country of Canada, your government, came in and made a decision on this country and so all you guys are following it ... but this isn’t our way.” Community-based team members interpreted the children’s hesitance to sign assent forms to mean that they have heard these stories and incorporated them in their attitudes towards signing an assent form individually in the school setting.

Maintaining cultural traditions and teaching the children cultural protocol as an important aspect of life skills development are goals of the Nimi Icinohabi project. Yet community-based research team members indicated that Western institutional perceptions of children which emphasize individualism were seen as contributing to inappropriate and unhealthy

forms of role reversal for children, parents, and relatives. Reaction to the request for child assent can be understood in that light. As one community-based team member explained, based on traditional values and customs, “the family, or the community was the one that took care of the child - the community ... not only the parents but the community.” Asking the community, children and families to do otherwise was seen as disrespectful of these values and roles.

Protecting Contexts of Role Responsibility in Decision-making

Decision-making about activities that could affect the whole community is understood as “not something for the young.” To support this statement, two of the community-based team members recalled that a highly respected Elder (Paul Potts) recommended increasing the age from 21 to 25 for participation on the First Nation Council. His teaching was that before this age young people can’t “make decisions . . . in the best interest of the community . . . because they’re like immature children that are making the decision for the community.” In contrast, the community-team members described Western institutions like schools, health care, child welfare services, and the REB as encouraging children to make choices they are not mature enough for or that are properly not theirs to make including, in this case, child assent. Concern was raised that this may put the children “in conflict with some of their kinship responsibilities” by encouraging them to challenge parents’ and relatives’ decisions.” When this happens the child may be “in conflict with the community because the child was given the responsibility of the family.”

Asking a child to make a decision that an adult should be making for them or that the community as a whole should make is giving the child adult responsibility before they are ready for it. A story that illustrates what can happen when these norms aren’t respected was shared. In this case the child’s guardian, the grandmother, allowed the child to do as he wished rather than to follow

the recommendations of a team of community educators, health specialists, and other relatives. Today the child is grown up and in difficulty. As a result, “the community suffers from that child not being educated, that child being illiterate. That child is not really contributing to the community.” When children are put in inappropriate roles like this, particularly by outside institutions, “you’re allowing the child to be the parent.” This can result in the kind of values and role loss that was understood by community team members as contributing to increased child welfare involvement, which then affects the family’s kinship responsibility, respect, and wellbeing.

The point being made was that current child assent procedures, which stress individualism, are another example of a process that conflicts with community norms. To explain concern regarding this undermining effect further, a teaching from another Elder (Nancy Potts) was offered by one of the community-based team members: “You have to shape that child [in our culture] until he gets to a certain point. And then if you raise that child to become independent then they’ll be able to go on its own.” In contrast, the Elder described intervention by Western systems as, “making a point with laws [which stress independence and individuality]” and “through law [you] make somebody else [rather than the community] be responsible to raise that child” and as a consequence, “you’re going to affect the family responsibility.”

Carrying Out Assent “in a Good Way”

The final focus group question asked, “What kind of consent/assent process would allow us to work respectfully within the community and still meet REB expectations and can we find some way to satisfy both?” In response, community-based team members recommended that, ideally, issues of parent/guardian consent and child assent be addressed in a “campout” setting open to all community members. In this “on the land” approach, the program and research activities could be discussed while also holding land-based

cultural activities. By obtaining community and parental consent, along with child assent in a collective setting, you would begin the program with appropriate cultural protocol, roles, and build relationship with the project. Being on the land would also set the activity in a place of comfort, cultural safety, and spiritual integrity while reinforcing the value of the traditional Nakota life skills emphasized by the Nimi Icinohabi program. Other collective settings suggested for obtaining consent included holding a gathering or feast at the community school or in some other public centre.

This process, however, may not always be possible and some families may want more time to think about their choice in giving consent or to talk with Elders or other family members. Going out to family homes, not just for parental/guardian consent as we do now, but for a joint family consent process where at least one adult would sign as well as the child/ren involved would then be the best way to proceed. Acknowledging the difference from usual REB procedures, one of the community-based researchers argued, “the university, you know, doesn’t want the student and parents to do it together... but ...that’s not how we do it” (emphasis original). Carrying out consent/assent at home in a supportive and culturally congruent context was seen as “allowing the parent and the child to make that decision together.”

While acknowledging that these processes can be time consuming, all team members agreed that obtaining child assent, either in a campout setting or at the child’s home, must reflect community ownership and be based in community values. This is a very different process from that of Western practice which aims to ensure that children are free from undue influence from their parents or guardians and respect for the child’s growing autonomy fostered. For the Alexis Nakota Sioux “no lone person” makes decisions that might affect the community as a whole (Fletcher et al., 2010); children appear aware of this. Their response to signing assent suggests that they are uncomfortable in an individual spotlight, especially given that from their perspective the decision has already been

made by their leaders, parents/guardians, and Elders. Rights based in Western values should not come at the expense of disturbing cultural values that have been retained and are being brought back to life by the community. Instead, one of the university-based team members suggested that, “if you could have that community and family ... consent you’re going to respect the values and the beliefs of the community and you are going to meet the expectations of a Western academic ethics review board.”

Discussion

Table 1 illustrates significant differences that exist between this First Nations community and Western values and approaches pertaining to the issue of child assent. The column on the left indicates priorities from the perspective of Western research ethicists and research ethics boards. The right hand column indicates priorities from the perspective of Elders and community researchers from the Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation. They reflect differing ethical frameworks that developed in particular socio-cultural contexts experienced over time. As part of this dynamic, the right side reflects not only Nakota norms but also response to the assertion of values from the left side.

The Western priorities and values listed, evolved in light of very real concerns regarding abuses in earlier research practice. Ensuring children’s autonomous involvement in research is presented as not only good practice, but as a right (Powell & Smith, 2009). Increasingly, it is argued that REBs should allow for children’s consent rather than simple assent. However, in this community asking for child assent by children in isolation is seen as disrespectful of the collective nature of the community, the socio-historical relationship of risk, the proper role of one’s relations in decision-making and, further, as putting children at risk by placing them in a culturally unsafe position.

Areas of understanding that emerged in light of the literature review and the individuals’

Table 1: Two perspectives of the ethics and values involved in child assent.

Western Priorities	Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation Priorities
Individual autonomy/freedom.	Family and community responsibility.
Ensuring child's independence.	Ensuring child's safety/cultural safety.
Privacy and confidentiality are a priority.	Individuals don't make decisions privately which affect the community.
Individual assent free from possible influence of parents.	Collective responsibility to protect child from within community/ family and for the children to follow guidance of Elders.
Assessment of developmental competence to make decisions.	Protection from harm of being placed in individual (alone) dilemma rather than safety of community.
Advocacy for children's individual human rights and issues of justice.	Rights based in community self-government and community self-determination in response to injustice.
Assessment of harms and benefits from within a dominant cultural norms and systems of political and economic power.	Assessment of harms and benefits from context of history, marginalization and affects of dominant culture on own culture.
Avoid dual roles in research relationships	Find connections in all relationships
Respect and empower dignity of child as adult-like, able to stand up for self.	Protect cultural dignity by surrounding child in protection of community.

experiences of this research project, as captured in this focus group, contrast with Western assumptions in the following ways:

1. The relative importance or degree of emphasis on parental consent versus child assent, along with differences in perceptions on who is most fit to decide in the case of children.
2. The role of making ethical decisions based on an appeal to the authority of codes, rights, and other legalistic mechanisms versus the need to make decisions based on the impacts on relationships with others, including family, clan, and community.
3. The need to obtain child assent away from the influence of family or others that might influence their decision versus the need to protect children while helping them learn their responsibilities to their family and community and to learn proper protocol for making decisions within this context.

4. The need to examine differing culturally-centered beliefs regarding who, how, and where decision making with/for children in research occurs, their developmental readiness, and the factors involved in decisions and how this effects concepts related to children's interests, child development, and avoidance of risk.

Thus, actions must be taken that ensure that individuals and communities, to benefit from research impact and outcomes, are not required to adhere to any procedures that undermine children as they learn values and responsibilities in cultural contexts. In this case they should not be asked to forgo community norms for their protection. Thus, child assent as conducted in this project was, in some ways, disrespectful of culturally based teachings regarding community collectivity and protocol and thus not likely to fulfill the intent of either community or institutional ethics as they relate to the protection or best interests of children.

In this sense, we are obligated to reconsider the issue of non-maleficence, or doing no harm. Is non-maleficence, a concept embedded in a Western ethical perspective, undermining the traditional ethical norms of this community? The request for assent puts the child in a stressful situation, given community norms which stress that, “no lone person” makes decisions affecting the whole community (Fletcher et al., 2010). The Alexis Nakota Sioux children involved in this project likely sensed that this is not the proper way to make decisions; asking them to do so appeared to make them uneasy. The children also seemed perplexed by being asked to give written assent by a community member who they respect but who should know that “this isn’t the way.” This was demonstrated by the fact that many of the children asked a number of questions before signing. For example, in asking repeatedly whether their parents or guardians had already signed and why they needed to sign, the children appear to be asking whether their relatives, who usually speak on their behalf, approved and whether the program facilitator, as a member of the community, believed that the community thought this was okay. This also puts community-based researchers in a place of ethical conflict in that they are asking the children to sign something in a manner that is not culturally appropriate. Further, doing so presents a mixed message given that this substance abuse prevention program, Nimi Icinohabi, involves teaching children appropriate culturally-based ethical protocols. Finally, research should not replicate or re-inscribe harm done in the past, one aspect of which is ensuring respect for the collective nature of consent in this community.

Conclusion

To protect children in research, academic researchers and REBs have developed a Western rights-based process based on the child as an individual. To protect children, within the traditional Nakota Sioux culture, they are surrounded in context by family, clan, Elders,

and community leaders and protected from value conflicts with the larger society. Dialogues involving children and child assent for research participation are bound up in narratives of interaction with Western systems along with traditional beliefs about proper ways to raise children within collective dignity.

Western narratives are about the dignity of the child as an individual with rights while protecting them by preventing the research abuses of the past. Ethical frameworks involving children ask researchers to balance vulnerability with any injustice occurring as a result of their omission and to consider the likelihood of any pain, anxiety, or injury while considering the nature and degree of any harmful impact on child participants. Other factors commonly addressed are decision making readiness, avoiding duality in roles, and careful consideration of who should or should not participate in decisions regarding children’s involvement in research. All of these issues are affected by worldview and cultural frames.

We believe that extrinsic vulnerability occurs in asking First Nations children to engage in activities that reduce or minimize cultural protection. From this background, practices imposed by REBs are, in some ways, seen as analogous to imposed government practices and deserve re-consideration in light of this historical and ongoing context. Consideration for the research must take place within socio-historical, relational, and cultural contexts. If not, it may not be in the child, family, or nation’s best interest to participate in the research.

We found significant differences in what is seen as appropriate ethical conduct, including the appropriate degree of focus on protocol, relationship and responsibility for others, and the process and/or practices involved. Thus, current child assent processes may contribute to undermining community and cultural maintenance. At the least they may make all those involved uncomfortable with the process and the message. Adherence to Western ethical protocol over community protocol leads to the

replication and reinforcement of colonial systems and can do harm. In a project such as this, where use of teaching materials that are culturally adapted to reflect community values is a priority, this conflict puts all those involved in a double ethical conflict. These choices cannot be based in Western principles of ethical utilitarianism but must occur from within culturally-based ethical principles and protocol for asking for assistance.

Some questions regarding the need to obtain child assent at all were raised given that consent for the children's participation was already received from the community through a BCR, Elder's through their participation in and support of the project, and parents/guardians through the approved REB informed consent process. Nevertheless, two recommendations for conducting child assent were developed. They both include carrying out child assent in the context of culture, family, and safety and are aimed at equalizing differing traditions of ethics and protocol while affirming the traditional roles of Elders and families in protecting children.

Although the research literature is beginning to address the issue of obtaining child assent in projects in First Nations communities, this issue needs further exploration. Limitations to this study include a small, single case sample. However, it is believed that similar and even more complicated issues would occur in projects with larger sample sizes or across multiple cases. As well, variation exists within and between communities. The issues addressed here raise important points that may be applicable in other contexts; however, protocols, views, and best practices need to be considered community by community. Nonetheless, this is an important issue that warrants additional research on appropriate processes of child assent for research in First Nations communities. Additional REB responsiveness to these processes is also needed. Reforming policy, as it pertains to parent consent and child assent, may be one way to begin to reinstate First Nations people's control over their communal lives and self determination with regard to their present and future.

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Cannabis Use Among Aboriginal Youth in the Non-Aboriginal Child Protection Services System

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Introduction

Child maltreatment challenges the youth to successfully negotiate developmental tasks and cope with potentially chronic stress which makes substance use more attractive in terms of managing overwhelming tension, negative affective states, feelings of depersonalization, dissociation, and numbing, as well as a need to counter stress for normative socialization (e.g., MacMillan & Munn, 2001; Wekerle, Miller, Wolfe, & Spindel, 2006). Adolescence, in particular, is a

Abstract

The social, cultural and political contexts of vulnerability need to be considered in defining, understanding, and reducing substance abuse among maltreated youth with an Aboriginal background (MacNeil, 2008; Tatz, 1999). Aboriginal cultures tend to incorporate an ideology of collectivism that manifests in shared childrearing responsibilities within aboriginal families and communities (e.g., Dilworth-Anderson & Marshall, 1996). As such, Aboriginal children may identify with multiple and equally important attachment figures, and be more accepting of multiple caring adult guardians who can direct them away from risky behaviour (Christensen & Manson, 2001). We examined the relationship between cannabis use and reported identification with a caseworker among youth-identified Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal adolescents randomly drawn from the active caseload of a large urban non-Aboriginal Child Protection Services (CPS) system. While an Aboriginal-specific child welfare agency exists in this catchment area, youth need to be identified as Aboriginal to be involved in that system and some youth with Aboriginal heritage inevitably end up in non-Aboriginal CPS agencies. There were no significant differences in rates of maltreatment, trauma symptomatology, or overall cannabis use between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth in this study. However, Aboriginal youth who reported a more negative (i.e., low) identification with their caseworker were five times more likely to use cannabis in the past 12 months compared to Aboriginal youth who reported a more positive (i.e., medium-high) identification with their caseworker. These results suggest that having a moderate-to-high positive identification with caseworker may be a protective factor in regard to abstinence from cannabis use among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth in the non-Aboriginal CPS system.

Keywords: Aboriginal Youth; Emotional Abuse, Posttraumatic Stress; Child Protection Services; Adolescent Health

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developmental period of opportunity to build upon youth resilience, as they negotiate their transition to independent identity and, ultimately, living full and productive lives. The concept of resilience is founded on the idea that poor outcomes do not

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necessarily follow from exposure to traumatic life events or genetic predisposition to engage in maladaptive behaviors, such as substance abuse. Resilience is based on both fixed factors (i.e., race and gender) and context factors, such as the presence of positively engaged adult role models (Banyard et al., 2002; Siegel, 2000; Wekerle et al., 2007).

Social learning theory advances that a youth learns by observing and interacting with adults, where continuity of interaction over time is expected to reinforce learned associations in social interactions, from engaging in conversation, to sharing attention or activities, to how to cope with stressors. Learning is enhanced when there are strong positive feelings towards the role model or a positive identification with them (e.g., Akers, Krohn, Lanza-Kaduce, & Radosevich, 1979; Bandura, Adams, & Beyer, 1977; Wall & McKee, 2002). From social learning, "acceptable" norms and attitudes of behaviors as "good" (reinforcing) or "bad" (aversive or punishing) influences the degree to which an individual will be motivated to engage in the behaviors (Akers et al., 1979; 1992). Control theory (e.g., Hirschi, 1969) posits that the elements of bonding and attachment, commitment, involvement, and beliefs restrain antisocial tendencies, such as use of illicit drugs. Bonding to society initially occurs through attachment to parents or guardians, an empathic identification that fosters acceptance of their beliefs in the moral validity of societal laws. The most important of these elements are the beliefs that individuals have towards legal and illicit

substances, formed from adult role models and peers, which then inform values and actions from an individual to cultural level (Elliott, Huizinga, & Ageton, 1985; Marcos, Bahr, & Johnson, 1986). In the Aboriginal context, cultural safety reflects sensitivity to power imbalances and discrimination at many levels (National Aboriginal Health Organization, 2009). These are evident in Aboriginal families engaged in the child protective services (CPS) system, where Aboriginal children are over-represented, at over 10 times the rate of non-Aboriginal children, and where substantial resource inequity exists for family preservation (Auditor General of Canada, 2009; for a discussion of the historical mistreatment and child welfare issues, see Blackstock, 2009). For example, in Ontario, in 2006, about 16% of out-of-home care were Aboriginal children, with 20% of reviewed Crown Wards (i.e., parental rights are terminated)¹.

Child protective services (CPS) youth represent a unique sub-population of adolescents in terms of studying resilience processes and factors. Most CPS youth will have a primary form of maltreatment substantiated (CIS-2003 report, Trocmé et al, 2005) and, according to self-report, many indicate more than one type of maltreatment (Trocmé et al, 2005). Also, as many youth reside in monitored environments, alcohol, which is the drug of choice for youth from a population perspective (e.g., OSDUHS report on

1. 37% of these Crown Wards were served by Aboriginal child welfare services. In terms of Aboriginal Crown Wards who were reviewed, 10% were placed in their home communities, and the majority had some involvement with cultural practices (e.g. Canadian Council on Learning (2009) Looking to the Futures Report, Wekerle et al, 2010)

trends over time, Adlaf et al, 2007), appears to be significantly under-used by CPS adolescents (i.e., Up against the wall report, Wekerle et al, 2009). From population studies, cannabis is the next most commonly used substance (e.g., Monitoring the Future Study, Johnston et al, 2009; OSDUHS report, Adlaf et al, 2007). Preliminary research with Canadian CPS youth indicate that problem or heavy cannabis use may be an area of risk, where females may be particularly vulnerable (Wekerle et al, 2009). While harm reduction approaches include a target of abstinence (Marlatt & Witkiewitz, 2009; National Anti-Drug Strategy, 2009), understanding the contexts of resilience is important for prevention and early intervention. More recent evidence under-scores the toxicity of cannabis on the developing adolescent brain, including greater vulnerability to severe mental illness (Patton et al, 2002). Further, in health promotion terms, use of cannabis removes opportunities for other gainful engagement and use of funds. The physiological impact of cannabis is harmful to school performance, safe driving, etc. (e.g., driving while high, Adlaf et al, 2007; poor educational outcome, Fergusson & Boden, 2008), although it reduces tension and may be sought as a means to cope with problems (e.g. cannabis is used as a means of self-medication for problems controlling aggression, Arendt et al, 2007). Recent reviews support the positive association between childhood maltreatment history and adolescent cannabis use (Tonmyr et al., in press). While research indicates that substance abuse is a community-identified problem, and Aboriginal youth show higher rates of cannabis use (e.g., Rutman et al., 2008), often the contribution of poverty and social service resources are not considered (MacMillan et al., 1996). Presently, CPS services do not routinely screen youth on their substance use, and adolescent-specific substance abuse treatment availability is low (e.g., Wekerle et al, 2009).

Aboriginal cultures tend to incorporate an ideology of collectivism, as demonstrated in research on the significant role of shared childrearing responsibilities among families and

communities (e.g., Dilworth-Anderson & Marshall, 1996). In this culture, children may be raised in an open-system, extended-family context where there may be multiple important caregivers (Red Horse, 1982). As such, Aboriginal children may be more accepting of multiple caring adult guardians (Christensen & Manson, 2001). Beebe et al. (2008) report that non-parental adult role models were associated with four to seven-fold lower odds of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use among American Indian (AI) adolescents. Swaim et al. (1993) report that "Peer drug associations, although still dominant in the model, were not as highly correlated with drug use for American Indian youths (when compared to Anglo youths), and family sanctions against drugs had a direct influence on drug use in addition to an indirect influence (among American Indian youth)" (p. 53).

As a result of the migration away from traditional ways of life, of the 4.1 million persons who reported American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) race on the 2000 U.S. Census, 67% (2.8 million) resided in urban areas (US Census, 2000). Youth also make up a large proportion of the total AI/AN population, with one-third under age 18, compared to less than one-quarter of the white population (US Census Native Summary File, 2000). Almost 1 million people self-identify as Aboriginal in Canada, representing 3.3% of the total population. While many live on reserves, 41% reside in non-reserve areas (36% urban, 5% rural) (Kirmayer, Simpson, & Cargo, 2003). The population is demographically distinctive in being younger than the general Canadian population (mean age 25.5 vs. 35.4 for general population), with fully one-third of the Aboriginal population is younger than 15 years of age (Kirmayer, Simpson, & Cargo, 2003). As such, it is important to consider Aboriginal youth living off of reserves (i.e., in urban areas).

In this paper, we report on the Maltreatment and Adolescent Pathways (MAP) Longitudinal Study which collects data from randomly-selected active case files in three CPS agencies that together capture most of the CPS "traffic" in a large Canadian urban centre. Here, we

present an exploratory comparison of Aboriginal youth in the non-Aboriginal CPS system to non-Aboriginal youth in the same system on cannabis use. While Aboriginal CPS agencies are provided in this geographical region, some youth may not find themselves in this system. We hypothesize that Aboriginal youth have greater flexibility in connecting with caring adult guardians given their cultural context of resilience in community concepts of “family” and may be more likely to benefit from this extended circle of adult caregivers than non-Aboriginal youth. For youth who are wards of the state, the caseworker represents an adult who is potentially involved with the youth over the long-term and is mandated by law to visit with the youth every 90 days in the jurisdiction of the present study. It is specifically predicted that Aboriginal youth who report a positive identification with their caseworker will report less cannabis use than Aboriginal youth or non-Aboriginal youth who report a negative relationship with their caseworker. For purposes of this study, Aboriginal background is considered broadly in terms of the youths’ identification, rather than a status Indian designation.

Method

The MAP study followed a community-university collaboration model (Waechter et al., 2009) and received ethics clearance from CPS agencies and university research ethics boards. CPS youth who participated in the MAP Study were drawn via random numbers table from CPS agency provided master lists of all active caseloads of youth aged 14.0 to 17.0. This age range was selected to maximize the measurement of adolescent health risk behaviors, such as substance use. The three participating CPS agencies account for the majority of the child welfare caseloads in this urban centre. (For further details on the MAP study, see Wekerle et al., 2009 and Waechter et al., 2009). The sampled targeting youth who were in care and living with their biological families,

where cases of the latter type could be opened for a short time frame (i.e., less than 6 months)².

Thus, of 1879 cases sampled, 56% were available for study inclusion, with the majority issue being that the case was already closed by the time of readiness of caseworkers to contact youth about a research opportunity. Other reasons for ineligibility at the CPS agency checking-stage included youth being outside the 14.0 to 17.0 year age range (4%), youth developmental delay (12%), youth being absent without leave (7%), and the youth being in a crisis (i.e., actively suicidal, self-harming, in extended treatment or detention – 9%). Of the 827 eligible youth who remained at the time of writing, 259 refused participation and 560 had participated in the initial testing point for a 68% recruitment rate, and 1% were in the process of initial data collection (Eight youth still need to be contacted about initial involvement in the study).

MAP participants did not differ significantly from non-participants with respect to youth age, gender or type of maltreatment. However, there is a significant contingency between participation in the current project and youth CPS status ($X^2(1, N = 560) = 112.02, p < .001$), with more youth coming from society ward (adjusted residual = 7.1) and crown ward (adjusted residual = 4.0) categories, and fewer youth coming from community families (adjusted residual = -8.9). Thus, the MAP sample may generalize less well to community families. Data from the initial time point in the MAP is presented in this paper.

The MAP collected consent from guardians if the youth was under age 16.0, and youth provided their own consent from age 16.0 and

2. Crown wards: Refers to a CAS designation for children whose parents are deemed by the court to be unable to provide care, such that the Crown (Province of Ontario) assumes all responsibility as the legal guardian for that child's care and custody. Society wards: Children who temporarily come into the care of a CAS for a period of time specified by the Court, based on evidence presented by CAS that the child is in need of protection. Community families: Families who are receiving voluntary CAS services, where children may be in out-of-home care temporarily or may remain at home throughout CAS involvement. Temporary wards: Involvement of children who are in out-of-home care at the request of or with the co-operation of their parents, using a temporary care order or temporary care agreement, and temporary custody of the child by the CAS.

up. An explanatory letter highlighted limits to confidentiality and potential action for verbal disclosures of child abuse/neglect, harm to self, and harm to others, as well as the independence of the MAP Study from CPS services. The clinical protocol for reporting child abuse/neglect concerns was to contact the caseworker and indicate the maltreatment event. MAP testers would proceed to contact CPS intake if the maltreatment was new or unknown to the caseworker, which operates on a 24-hour basis. In this jurisdiction, law dictates that the direct recipient of the maltreatment information must be the reporter. Youth received a help sheet with a range of web and local resources for all main variables queried in the MAP, including anonymous help sources, such as 24-hour hotlines at the close of testing. Youth were paid \$28.00, given refreshments, and reimbursed for any necessary travel to participate in the MAP. Testing time ranged from 1.5 to 4.0 hours, with an average of 2.5 hours. Youth were given the option of participating in the study by meeting research staff at a CPS agency, healthcare institution, neutral location such as a library, or their place of residence, wherever privacy could be obtained. Most youth (90%) selected testing at their place of residence.

Participants: Current Report

The current report is based on a subsample of 476 MAP youth (53% female) with complete data at the initial time point of the study. Their mean age was 15.8 (SD=.99) and most youth (62%) were crown wards, followed by community family status (17%), society ward (15%) and temporary care status (6%). On average, the youth reported being involved with CPS for 5.9 years (SD=4.4) and they reported having an average of 3.1 CPS workers (SD=1.7) in that time. At the time of the survey, most youth (43%) lived with foster parents, followed by a group home (25%), with one biological parent and/or one other parent (9%), on own or with a friend (5%), with two biological married or common-law parents (4%), with other

relatives (4%) or "other" living arrangements (10%). Thus, in terms of system variables, most of these youth have been involved in the child welfare system across the pre-teen and teen years, and have some sort of more formal relationship with child welfare. There was no significant difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth on demographic or CPS experience variables. Non-Aboriginal youth did report a slightly greater number of personal computers in their home (M=2.5; SD=.67), compared to Aboriginal youth (M=2.1; SD=.81), $p < .01$.

Youth were queried about their ethnicity via a checkbox where as many identifications as were considered appropriate could be reported. For 31% of MAP youth, dual or multiple ethnicities were noted, followed by single-only ethnicities identified: White (30%), Black (25%), Latin American (4%), Chinese (2%) and other ethnicities (8%). In total, 43, or .9% of the youth self-identified as Native or Aboriginal, with most (86%) of these youth endorsing Aboriginal, along with another ethnic status (mainly bi-racial White and Native heritage). Specific status or tribe connections were not queried. This subsample of 43 youth was the basis for further analyses, and comparison to the rest of the sample of youth who did not report Native or Aboriginal ethnicity (n=433).

Measures

In the MAP Study, CPS youth completed a package of mostly commercially available or standardized questionnaires. The following measures were selected and analyzed for this report.

1) Socioeconomic status and CPS experience

Socioeconomic status and CPS experience were considered to assess whether they needed to be controlled in group difference analyses. An adolescent population survey (i.e., Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey, Adlaf et al,

2007) included in the MAP includes questions that approximate socioeconomic status that are summed as a total score. The three questions used in the MAP study are: (1) "In the place you lived most of your life, did your caregivers own or rent?" (2) "How many cars does your family/care home have?" and (3) "How many computers does your family/care home have in the house?" Four questions were used to assess CPS experience, to control for variability across youth: (1) "How many years have you been involved with CPS?" (2) "How many CPS workers have you had since being involved in CPS?" (3) "During the last 5 years, how many times did you move between homes?" (4) "How many difference places have you lived in the past 5 years?"

2) Maltreatment: Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ) & Childhood Experiences of Violence Questionnaire (CEVQ)

Experiences of childhood maltreatment were assessed via the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ; Bernstein et al., 1994). The CTQ short form (Bernstein et al., 2003) assesses maltreatment via a standard stem (e.g., "While you were growing up..."), rating 28 items on a 5-point scale (1 = "never true" to 5 = "very often true") across five subscales: emotional neglect, physical neglect, sexual abuse, physical abuse, and emotional abuse. Three of the 28 questions are validity items and there are five items per subscale. The CTQ does not tap exposure to intimate partner violence. Two-week test-retest reliability of the CTQ for a MAP youth sub sample ($n = 52$) was moderate [physical abuse ($r = .64$), sexual abuse ($r = .52$), emotional abuse ($r = .70$), emotional neglect ($r = .63$) and physical neglect ($r = .56$)], while internal validity was high [physical abuse ($\alpha = .92$), sexual abuse ($\alpha = .88$), emotional abuse ($\alpha = .85$), emotional neglect ($\alpha = .87$), and physical neglect ($\alpha = .68$)]. Youth report and worker's rating of childhood maltreatment are significantly correlated in terms of physical abuse ($r = .48$), sexual abuse ($r = .58$), and physical neglect (r

$= .26$), but not for the emotional abuse or the emotional neglect subscales.

Self-report of maltreatment experiences was also assessed with the Childhood Experiences of Violence Questionnaire (CEVQ) (Walsh, MacMillan, Trocmé, Jamieson, & Boyle, 2008). The CEVQ assesses physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, witnessing domestic violence, peer-to-peer violence, and exposure to corporal punishment. It does not tap neglect. This self-report measure queries age of maltreatment, frequency, outcome, and perpetrator characteristics. The CEVQ demonstrates good test-retest reliability (kappas ranging from $.61 - .91$), and validity, as determined by clinician assessment, with estimates falling in a similar range (kappas for physical and sexual abuse were $.68$ and $.74$, respectively). Two-week test-retest reliability of the CEVQ among the MAP youth sample ranged from moderate to high [physical abuse ($r = .88$), sexual abuse ($r = .71$), emotional abuse ($r = .51$)], while internal validity also ranged from moderate to high [physical abuse ($\alpha = .82$), sexual abuse ($\alpha = .70$), emotional abuse ($\alpha = .68$)]. The CEVQ is used to provide more detailed descriptive information of maltreatment and can, therefore, reflect maltreatment where caregivers are the perpetrators (or failure to protect), as would be the chief concern in child welfare cases.

3) Trauma Symptomatology: The Trauma Symptom Checklist for Children (TSCC)

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptomatology was assessed with the Trauma Symptom Checklist for Children (TSCC) (Briere, 1996). The TSCC is a 54-item self-report measure consisting of six clinical scales (anxiety, depression, anger, PTSD, dissociation, and sexual concerns) and two validity scales (under-response and hyper-response). The measure was normalized on teens and was intended for use in the evaluation of children who have experienced traumatic events. Reliability is high (internal consistency is $.82 - .89$) and good convergent,

discriminant, and construct validity have been established. The 2-week test-retest reliability of the MAP subsample on the TSCC was moderate ($r = .50$) and internal validity was very high ($\alpha = .97$). In keeping with developmental traumatology hypotheses on the importance of subclinical symptoms, we use a total score of any clinical elevation among the subscales of the TSCC.

4) Guardian Identification: The Identification Questionnaire

The importance of each youth's relationship to his/her CPS worker was measured by responses to seven items that were adapted from a questionnaire developed by Palmonari, Kirchler, and Pombeni (1991). Originally, these items were queried with the family, mother and father as the reference point, and caseworker items were added for the MAP study. These items require youth to respond on a 5-point scale from "completely disagree" to "completely agree" on: (1) I identify with my CPS worker, (2) I feel strong positive feelings about my CPS worker, (3) I feel strong negative feelings about my CPS worker (reverse coded), (4) My CPS worker is very important to me, (5) I would like to be like my CPS worker, (6) I have a strong relationship with my CPS worker, and (7) My CPS worker cares about me. Responses were summed and averaged to obtain an overall CPS worker identification score for each youth in the study. Reliability (internal consistency) of the CPS Worker Identification measure based on data collected from youth in the MAP study is high (Cronbach's $\alpha = .832$).

5) Substance Use: Cannabis Items from the Youth Risk Behaviour Surveillance Study (YRBSS)

Cannabis use was measured by a single item drawn from the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), a US survey that monitors health risk behaviors among adolescents. The item included in the MAP was:

"In the last 12 months, how many times did you use cannabis (e.g., cannabis, hashish, hash oil, pot, grass)?" Responses ranged from "don't use" to "0 times", "1-2 times", "3-5 times", "6-9 times", "10-19 times", "20-39 times", and "40+ times". Youth responses to this item were recoded into a dichotomous variable consisting of: 0 = don't use or 0 times in the last 12 months versus 1 = used 1-2 times or more in the last 12 months. Of the $N=394$ MAP youth who responded to this item, 203 (51.5%) reported using cannabis at least once in the last 12 months.

Data Collection Procedure

At each testing, youth were reminded verbally of the right to skip questions, withdraw from the study at any time without consequences and without explanation, and that CPS services were unrelated to their research involvement. Data collectors were undergraduate psychology or science students or graduate psychology students. MAP staff provided training in testing procedures, mandatory reporting, and clinical protocols. Post-training, testers first shadowed an experienced tester prior to independent testing. Testers communicated with supervisors on a weekly basis and kept filed testing notes per occasion indicating if testing was uneventful or noting any issues. MAP research team staff signed confidentiality agreements with the CPS agencies. The majority of the data was collected electronically on laptop computer and uploaded to a secure internet site immediately post-testing. Any hard copy information is maintained in locked offices within locked cabinets, and consent forms are separated from all other materials.

Monitoring Youth Responses to Study Involvement

Given the sensitive nature of the questions, in conjunction with the nature of the population of participants, several questions were incorporated into the MAP questionnaire package to

measure reactivity to the research. Specifically, participants were asked to respond to a set of identical questions at the beginning and end of the questionnaire package on a 0 (not at all) to 6 (a lot) scale. An analysis of differences in responses to pre- and post-questionnaire items indicated that participants were slightly less relaxed ($M=4.4$ drop to 4.0; repeated-measures $t(1,157)=3.281, p<.01$) and happy ($M=4.2$ drop to 3.7; repeated-measures $t(1,158)=4.29, p<.01$), after completing the initial MAP questionnaire package. Despite the slight negative impact of the questionnaire package on participant mood, the youth positively regarded the study on six other evaluation questions. Youth indicated that the study was interesting ($M=4.1, SD=1.2$), the questions were clear ($M=4.7, SD=1.3$), the questions were not distressing ($M=2.4, SD=1.2$), and completing the questionnaire was not upsetting ($M=1.1, SD=1.0$). Youth responded favorably ($M=4.7, SD=1.3$) when asked if they still would have agreed to get involved in the study if they had known in advance what completing the questionnaire package would be like.

Results

The overall pattern of results are that youth who identified themselves as having an Aboriginal background did not significantly differ from youth who did not identify any Aboriginal background. The Aboriginal youth did not differ from the non-Aboriginal youth on their report of lifetime specific child maltreatment types (CTQ), nor on exposure to intimate partner violence (CEVQ). Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal youth scored similarly on the CTQ physical abuse subscale ($M=.94, SD=1.23$ and $M=1.02, SD=1.12$, respectively), sexual abuse subscale ($M=.41, SD=.95$ and $M=.44, SD=.94$, respectively), emotional abuse subscale ($M=1.12, SD=1.15$ and $M=1.31, SD=1.18$, respectively), emotional neglect subscale ($M=2.52, SD=1.36$ and $M=2.30, SD=1.16$, respectively), as well as the physical neglect subscale ($M=1.58, SD=.53$ and $M=1.48, SD=.55$, respectively).

The Aboriginal group did not significantly differ from the Non-Aboriginal group on PTSD symptomatology as measured by the total score on the Trauma Symptom Checklist for Children (TSCC). Overall, Aboriginal youth did not report a significantly higher CPS worker identification score [Aboriginal: Mean=4.16 ($SD=1.27$); Non-Aboriginal: Mean=3.97 ($SD=1.13$)]. The endorsement pattern of ever having used cannabis in the past 12 months was not significantly different among groups (Aboriginal: 63%; Non-Aboriginal: 49%).

Given the small and unevenly distributed cell sizes in the contingency table between Aboriginal status and use of cannabis during the past 12 months, a Fisher's Exact Test was conducted to examine the significance of the association between these two variables (Fisher, 1922, 1954; for a discussion of the advantage of Fisher's Exact Test over Chi-square estimation in cases of small and unevenly distributed cell sizes in contingency table, see Agresti, 1992). First, a median split was carried out on the CPS worker identification score. Afterwards, two separate Fisher's Exact Tests were run: The first with both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal youth who scored below the median on the CPS worker identification score and the second with both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal youth who scored above the median on the CPS worker identification score. The conditional distributions in the two contingency tables were then compared using the Test of Homogeneity of Odds Ratio.

The Fisher's Exact Test indicated that the association between Aboriginal Status and cannabis use among youth who scored below the median on the CPS worker identification scales was significant ($p<.05$). Aboriginal youth who reported low identification with their caseworker were 5.47 times more likely to have ever used cannabis in the past 12 months compared to Non-Aboriginal youth who reported a low identification with their caseworker (95% confidence interval=1.20-24.87) (see Table 1). The association between Aboriginal Status and cannabis use among youth who scored

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Table 1. Cannabis use among Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Youth – Low Identification with CPS Worker (N size among groups reported)

	Aboriginal*	Non-Aboriginal	Totals
Used cannabis at least once in the past 12 months	13 (87%)	107 (54%)	120
Did not use cannabis in the past 12 months	2 (13%)	90 (46%)	92
Totals	15 (100%)	197 (100%)	212

Note. Difference between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal groups: * $p < .05$

Table 2. Cannabis use among Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Youth – Medium-High Identification with CPS Worker (N size among groups reported)

	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal	Totals
Used cannabis at least once in the past 12 months	9 (43%)	74 (46%)	83
Did not use cannabis in the past 12 months	12 (57%)	87 (54%)	99
Totals	21 (100%)	161 (100%)	182

Note. No significant difference between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal groups ($p > .05$)

at or higher than the median on the CPS worker identification scale was not statistically significant (see Table 2). A test of the Homogeneity of the Odds Ratios between the two contingency tables (i.e., low identification with CPS worker versus medium-high identification with CPS worker) was significant (Breslow-Day Chi-Square=4.52, $p < .05$). These results suggest that the statistically significant association between Aboriginal youth and cannabis consumption is more frequent among those who are low in identification with their CPS worker than those who are not.

Discussion

The results partially support our hypothesis. Aboriginal youth who report a medium-high (i.e., positive) identification with their CAS caseworker reported less cannabis use during the past 12 months than Aboriginal youth who reported a more negative (i.e., low) identification with their CAS caseworker. However, cannabis use was not lower among Aboriginal youth compared to non-Aboriginal youth overall, as was hypothesized. Instead, the significant difference in cannabis

use among Aboriginal youth is driven by a much higher likelihood of use over the past 12 months among those who report a low identification with their CAS caseworker. As such, poor caseworker identification may present as a significant risk factor for these youth. More generally, these results suggest that caseworker identification may be an important variable for understanding Aboriginal youth outcomes in the child protection services system.

This study allowed youth to endorse multiple ethnicities and, thereby, approach Aboriginal identity more broadly than categorically. This study did not address the extent to which youth engaged in Aboriginal practices, were connected to Aboriginal Friendship or community centres, or maintained contact with Aboriginal siblings, families, and heritage community. Further, the study did not assess the ethnicity of caseworkers and the match of youth ethnicity to caseworker ethnicity is unknown. Given that most of these youth have been involved with CPS over a number of years, it may be important to consider caseworkers as potential attachment figures and a moderate-to-high positive identification with caseworkers may be a protective factor, at least with respect to engaging in cannabis use, as compared to youth who report low levels of positive identification with their caseworker. Identification with caseworker is not typically formally assessed by youth within CPS and the current 7-item scale may be useful in this regard. In general, research with maltreated youth considering substance use has not considered empirically youth perceptions of aspects of their relationship with their caseworker. In this study, most caseworkers were the legal guardians in whole, or in part, for most of these youth. These preliminary results suggest that identification with caseworker may be a fruitful area to pursue in further research on adolescent adjustment among those that are involved with the child welfare system and, given the context of Aboriginal youth in non-Aboriginal child welfare agencies, may be salient in considering Aboriginal youth outcomes.

Finally, it is important to consider that these results may not generalize to Aboriginal youth within an Aboriginal child welfare agency, or non-urban Aboriginal youth, or youth solely identifying themselves as having an Aboriginal background.

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