

*Self Assessment in  
Cultural Competency Development:  
an Aboriginal Child Welfare Orientation*

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### **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to my children, Kailee and Thomas Gow, who have supported me through this academic learning journey, eating fast food, and missing good night hugs when I was working on papers. I am very proud of them, as avid learners, critically assessing their own cultural awareness and engaged in their own learning journey.

## Introduction

This research project was initiated in response to a request from the British Columbia (BC) provincial delegated Aboriginal child welfare agencies Training Advisory Committee (TAC). The goal of this project is to identify cultural competency information that Aboriginal<sup>1</sup> Child and Family Service Agencies (ACFSA) in BC require for their new staff to learn to practice with cultural awareness. Cultural competency is one of the foundational competencies required in child welfare delegation training for workers in BC by the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). The word *competency* is used in recognition of the (MCFD) requirements for *competency based* training— the term is used with the understanding that *competency development* is a process of development and a person of one culture can never be culturally *competent* in another culture. Although the term cultural competency is used, this project is intended to initiate and support cultural *awareness* within Aboriginal child welfare practice.

In response to the request by TAC for cultural competency information, twenty-four delegated Aboriginal agency supervisors and four instructors at Caring for First Nations Children Society (CFNCS) were invited to complete a survey for their suggestions for enhancing the current curriculum with a pre-

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<sup>1</sup> The term “*Aboriginal*” is referenced from Section thirty-five of the *Constitution Act, 1982* which provides constitutional protection to the aboriginal and treaty rights of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. (2) In this Act, “aboriginal peoples of Canada” includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada. It is understood that this identifier is imposed and may not be seen as favourable. With this recognition, the term *Aboriginal* is used because it is commonly recognized in child welfare as it is defined under the legislation that guides child welfare practice in BC.

training orientation package. CFNCS offers several training programs for the delegated agencies. Ten agencies and four instructors completed the survey questionnaire. The information from the survey provided directions and examples of materials including articles, books and practice skills to provide the basis for an outline to build curriculum for an orientation package for their new workers. The scope of this project was to gather data from the agencies and present an outline to guide curriculum development for CFNCS. The TAC committee will then provide agency perspective by vetting curriculum developed by CFNCS. The outline presented to the TAC committee will inform the development of a *Self-Assessment in Cultural Competency Development: an Aboriginal Child Welfare Orientation* package for the Aboriginal agencies to support ongoing cultural awareness skill development for their new employees.

### **Location of the researcher (personal ethical considerations)**

Absolon and Willett, in Brown and Strega (2005), assert researcher location is important; "Location exposes the researcher's current context as details about the researcher such as where they are from, their race and gender, who they are connected to, and what their research intentions are become revealed" (p.118). My personal interest as a white woman researcher in this subject is derived from my personal and professional experience in child welfare practice, both for the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) and working at Lalum' utul' Smun 'eem Child and Family Services for the Cowichan people on their traditional territory- as well as an instructor for Caring for First Nations Children Society. I use the term white to denote social location from a European Canadian

context with power and privilege and in recognition of the imposed colonized systems that continue to oppress Aboriginal people. I do not capitalize the word white purposefully; as I do not want to continue to dominate the word white with emphasis over other racialized groups. Kendall (2006) also notes the struggle of capitalizing this descriptor in her book, *Understanding White Privilege: Creating Pathways to Authentic Relationships Across Race* (p.xiii). When quoting, I follow the author's usage. The importance of looking at the social location of whiteness in child welfare is explored in the body of this paper.

It is ethically important to locate myself as a white woman in Aboriginal child welfare practice given the history of unethical Eurocentric research practice with Aboriginal people. Fixco (1998) "asserts that one of the roles of ethical Aboriginal research is to eradicate ethnocentrism in the writing of Aboriginal history and [lack of] representation" (cited by Absolon and Willett, in Brown and Strega, p.107). Absolon and Willett (2005), also "...believe that research conducted from a 'neutral' or 'objective' location is Eurocentric and is, therefore, unethical" (in Strega and Brown, p.107). Therefore, it is important to discuss my own learning journey and why I am currently engaging in this research project as a white, Euro- Canadian writing about Aboriginal child welfare.

In my practice in Aboriginal child welfare, I have benefited from respectful and caring, cross cultural relationships that gave me a chance to explore who I am. These relationships helped to reveal and develop my racial identity. My professional practice has given me the priceless gift of an opportunity to welcome many friendships, mentors and lessons in relationship with Aboriginal people that



would not have been likely otherwise. I have found that the societal structure of mainstream colonial lifestyle does not require white people to interact and understand the stark racial oppression and resulting conditions for Aboriginal people living in my own community. It is difficult to stand up against racial inequity unless you have been forced to come face to face with the ugly reality, to look fearlessly at it and critically self reflect. “For White, middle class, able-bodied, heterosexual people, this is our most important work in anti-oppressive practice – ‘recognizing our own privilege and working to dismantle unjust systems that keep us in that privileged space’” (Potts and Brown, in Brown and Strega, 2005, p.258). This work in Aboriginal child welfare requires resolute critical self reflection and race analysis. I need to look at who I am and the privileges that are granted to me as a white woman in Canadian society. My current professional capacity working for Caring for First Nations Children Society (CFNCS); writing curriculum, facilitating cultural awareness training for Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) workers, and teaching delegation training for Aboriginal child welfare agencies is deeply immersed in Aboriginal cultural considerations and white privilege.

In my role as a white facilitator training cultural awareness, I co-facilitated along side of an Indigenous colleague. We have invariably found resistance to learning about the power and privilege that is afforded to the white societal structure. Many challenging comments such as: “Do we have to say “white”; can’t we all be the same; I don’t see colour, I believe everyone is equal; and aren’t you just perpetuating racism by focusing on race?” demonstrate the lack of

understanding of the realities for all people of colour. Within this discourse is the principal assumption that racism simply does not exist in a democratic society.

As Henry and Tator (2002) state,

There is a refusal to accept the reality of racism, despite the overwhelming evidence of racial prejudice and discrimination in the lives and on the life chances of people of colour. The assumption is that because Canada is a society that upholds the ideals of a liberal democracy, it cannot possibly be racist.

These discourses of democratic racism affect everyday lives of marginalized populations, and need to be taught so that child welfare can begin to practice from a more realistic and equitable way. Race is not neutral, racism exists daily for Aboriginal people, and we are attempting to address generations that have been affected by a history of genocide and racist policies <sup>2</sup> in working in Aboriginal child welfare agencies. Refusing to understand or even acknowledge that racism exists is dangerous and has lethal consequences.

As child welfare practitioners, we need to be aware of both sides of oppression; we cannot have “underprivileged” populations without “over privileged” populations. It is important to recognize and identify our whiteness

...because racism keeps people of colour in the limelight and makes whiteness invisible. To change this we must take whiteness itself and hold it up to the light and see that it is a color too. Whiteness is a concept, an ideology, which holds tremendous power over our lives and, in turn, over the lives of people of colour (Kivell 2002 p.9).

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<sup>2</sup> Article 2 of the Convention defines Genocide: Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (E) Forcefully transferring children of the group to another group.

Addressing oppression requires the efforts of people in places of power to see the realities of both privilege and oppression, to change systems, and to take responsibility for addressing social injustice. Indeed as Blackstock (2009) stated in a key note address, “Racial equality is something all Canadians should fight for”. A turning point for me in looking at my own cultural and racial identity, and then what that meant to my relationships with Aboriginal people, occurred when I was teaching the CFNCS Cultural Awareness Training week 2 with Cheryl Ward, a Kwakwaka'wakw friend and colleague. One evening we were preparing our lesson on cultural identity development, where we each created a personal ‘cultural coat of arms’ with drawings representing our cultural identities, to present to the class the next day. When I saw Cheryl’s diagram and intricate representations of who she is as a Kwakwaka'wakw person, I felt a deep loss. I knew at that moment that I did not have a meaningful understanding or connection to my own cultural identity as a daughter of a Scottish mother and English father growing up in Canada. So I began to look deeper within - I knew my ancestors were hard working, resourceful, and thrifty and that this resourcefulness and desire to make their lives better had come at a cost to the Nadleh Whut'en community (close to Fort Fraser) where my mother’s family had been granted land when they emigrated from Glasgow Scotland in 1927. My mother was four years old and the fourth child in a family of six children – the youngest my Auntie Kathie was born in Canada and still lives in Fort Fraser. Unfortunately, my father’s family emigration history is a mystery and lost to us -

as my father said they never talked about it. I know that they both passed on a hard work ethic, tenacity and a value of education.

The important realization in this is that I saw the stark contrast in my understanding of family, roles, and relationships - I never knew my cousins and had only met my Grandmother once before she passed on. Many of the families that I was working with in child welfare on Cowichan Territory knew and were related to almost every person in the community and had always lived there. I realized that I could never be culturally competent in any Aboriginal culture. I began to realize that the culture that I was a part of as a white woman came with me to each interaction along with my early immersion in colonial worldviews. That led to a realization that no matter how nice I was, or how well meaning, I would never be able to really relate to an Aboriginal person and share in a conversation of race, unless I took responsibility for my racial identity. This meant learning about being complicit in whiteness, and that I had a responsibility to look at my cultural and racial identity development. This shook my concept of what culture means and who has the right, responsibility and ability to transmit cultural teachings to Aboriginal children in care. I very clearly saw how my lack of understanding of what culture meant to an Aboriginal person, could very easily relate to a deficit in capacity for planning for cultural identity development in Aboriginal children in care. How could I teach a Cowichan child what it means to be Cowichan or to be seen as an Aboriginal person in a race conscious world?

Looking at my own cultural identity development for the first time led to a reflection of my racial identity development as a white woman and my

relationships with Aboriginal people - I began to look at myself. From this point on I began to reflect on the systems that I benefited from - that I had taken for granted. I realized the stark differences in my life from that of Aboriginal people; that I had seen colonization as something that happened to Aboriginal people. The system of colonization impacts the opportunities for my family, from my ancestors to the present and continues to provide benefits for me and my children today - I saw what that meant for opportunities of Aboriginal families in comparison to my own. My children are growing up with life chances that very clearly advantage them over the youth that I worked with – both of my children were at college and have traveled. I could easily say that was because they worked and saved money- but the very reason they worked was because they had better chances at education and lifelong expectations that they could excel in anything that they attempted – was because they had unearned privileges because they happened to be born white.

I have found that this work has life altering considerations and challenges which come firmly attached to race, culture, names, places, and emotions. Therefore, self assessment in cultural competency development is essential in preparing workers for frontline work in child welfare practice, *especially* within an Aboriginal context. I aspire to work and live day to day as a white ally, helping frontline child welfare workers of all races to develop “cultural self awareness”. It is important for each person to ask, “Who am I, culturally, in all of this?”

All new workers, regardless of their own culture, need to be culturally self aware so that they can understand themselves and make a difference in the lives

of marginalized populations. Child welfare work requires a high level of relational and emotional awareness, knowledge, and skill. The rationale for this research project is to gather cultural competency development resources and stories from the Aboriginal agencies so their new workers can begin to examine their own cultural and racial identity, and to pass on some of the tools and teachings from the agencies that I would have liked to have had years ago when I started my child welfare practice working with Aboriginal families.

### **Research Project Rationale**

This project emerges from the tensions and challenges that are inherent to child welfare education and “best practice” with Aboriginal children, families, and communities. Aboriginal child welfare practice can be understood as a specific pedagogy and discourse that situates itself differently from other child welfare or social work practice. These discourses include understanding that child welfare work is ideologically based and therefore political; that Aboriginal people have experienced a unique and enduring history of cultural disruption, interference, and even genocide; that the socio-political realities of Aboriginal people need to be understood in a political context; and that all social work practitioners have personal standpoints (race, class, gender etc.) that directly inform their practice (Ward 2008). The assertion that child welfare is ideologically and politically based stems from the recognition that it is the responsibility of the provinces and territories to set the legislative guidance for policy and practice. Although each provincial jurisdiction has its own legislation, the laws share the ideology that child abuse is explained as the result of the dysfunction of the individual parents,

without consideration for the historical and economical conditions, or the ongoing influences of colonization. As Wikipedia (March 15, 2010) explains, ideology is “a set of aims and ideas that directs one's goals, expectations, and actions” and so this particular view of child welfare informs the education of child welfare workers, which then informs practice – without cultural considerations. Child welfare interventions are disproportionately aimed at families that are marginalized by race and poverty, with Indigenous families being over represented. In the document, *Reconciliation in Child Welfare: Touchstones of Hope*, Blackstock, Cross, George, Brown and Formsma (2006) write:

For thousands of years, Indigenous communities successfully used traditional systems of care to ensure the safety and well-being of their children. Instead of affirming these Indigenous systems of care, the child welfare systems disregarded them and imposed a new way of ensuring child safety for Indigenous children and youth, which has not been successful. Indigenous children and youth continue to be removed from their families and communities at disproportionate rates, and alternate care provided by child welfare systems has not had positive results.

These historic and contemporary realities have resulted in many Indigenous communities viewing child welfare as an agent of colonialism rather than a support to the safety and well-being of Indigenous children and youth. Colonialism, in this sense, refers to the process of claiming superiority over the original peoples, deliberately usurping their cultural ways, and employing child custody as a means of extinguishing the Indigenous culture. Regardless of one's reactions to this perception, it is broadly held, has persisted over time, and is substantially supported by research (p. 6).

There has been a lengthy history of imposed white Canadian colonial policies and practices that have interfered with Aboriginal cultural identities and culture including: residential school, the reserve system, the Indian Act, the 60s Scoop, federal and provincial justice, and child welfare practices. As Justice René Dussault (2005) stated in a key note address at the Reconciliation Conference on

### Child Welfare:

Aboriginal peoples' traditional governments were disrupted, generations of children were forced into residential schools or given up for adoption outside their cultures, scores of communities were relocated, land that had been set apart in treaties was taken away and a system of welfare replaced any effort to permit them access to any self-reliant economic base (p.8).

This imposed disruption has directly resulted in Aboriginal people being over-represented in various institutions within Canadian society, such as the justice and child welfare systems. In addition, Aboriginal people do not achieve the same milestones as other Canadians in areas of education, health, income levels, high school graduation or even suicide prevention (UNICEF 2009 p. 2).

An understanding of the roots of these disparities is imperative. As Ward (2008) states:

Without an understanding of the context for these social realities, one may be at risk of believing that the Aboriginal community might be inherently deficient or even naturally predisposed to these conditions. The experience of oppression and racism in Canada has had a clear effect on Aboriginal identity and healthy development. There is a clear association between an aboriginal child's sense of cultural identity and their physical, spiritual, mental and emotional health and well being (CFNCS Pre-Adoptions online training module1).

An understanding of this intrusive history has helped me to change my worldview and to develop my own ideology regarding Aboriginal child welfare. This understanding, along with relationships with Aboriginal children, families and communities, has created a context for seeing the socio-political realities of Aboriginal people today. It was especially important for my work as a child welfare worker to understand how my



differences in beliefs and values influence my planning for Aboriginal children, families, and communities. I came to see the Aboriginal people I worked with as competent, resilient and holistic, rather than perpetuating the unspoken child welfare ideological view of dysfunctional individuals. I had been complicit in this ideological system and my beliefs impacted my relationships, my goals and expectations, and therefore outcomes in practice. Strega and Carriere (2009) note that:

Those who intervene with poor, Indigenous and otherwise marginalized children and families have always been and still are disproportionately White and middle class. The differences between workers and clients are remarkable...Although occupying a socially powerful race and class position does not disqualify someone from child welfare practice, it is essential for practitioners to recognize that hierarchical power relations are always embedded in child welfare encounters and that they must be actively resisted or they will simply be reproduced (p. 19).

The cultural backgrounds of people working in this field are diverse, as is their level of understanding of cultural differences and the history of Aboriginal peoples in Canada who have been: “oppressed, assimilated, apprehended, discriminated against and excluded from mainstream society” (Morris, 2007, p.133). New workers need to have self awareness, foundational knowledge, strategies and skills to help navigate the effect of a race-conscious society. As cultural values shape behaviour and parenting practices, it is important for child welfare workers to be aware of differences when supporting families. Self awareness and cultural competency training is required, as Strega and Carriere (2009) state, “We must be self-reflective, always considering how our values, beliefs and location are affecting our interactions with people we are working with

—the intention being to understand these interactions not in psychological terms, but in terms of sociology, history, ethics and politics” (p. 16). This process is not, however, a simple either-or situation. I would agree that too often only individual psychological approaches to self-reflection are taken up and I would assert that sociological, historical constructs of our selves are critical. I would also argue that psychological processes impact our judgement and decisions and therefore need to be considered as well.

Conscious Aboriginal child welfare practice requires critical self assessment of cultural knowledge. Indeed, according to Strega and Carriere (2009), “Anti-racist and anti-oppressive approaches to child welfare practice require us to understand any differences between ourselves and those we work with not as technical challenges that can be met through understanding the “Other” but as fundamentally related to power and our own positionality” (p.16). Potts and Brown also emphasize the importance of “becoming anti-oppressive” in our practice and state that, “it is not a comfortable place to be. It means constantly reflecting on how one is being constructed and how one is constructing one’s world— this requires constant reflection and critique” (in Brown and Strega 2005, p.283). This project seeks to explore ways to address the educational need for self assessment in Aboriginal child welfare practice.

Caring for First Nations Children Society (CFNCS) responded to the needs of Aboriginal child and family service agencies for delegation training required by the provincial Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) by developing the Aboriginal Social Work Training program (ASW). This training

was developed in an attempt to address (MCFD) delegation training requirements within an anti-oppressive Aboriginal context. Frustrations and challenges often emerge from a culture clash of practicing Aboriginal child welfare within a mandated, legally delegated colonial system. Looking at the world through one worldview, while wearing the cloak of another, can be restrictive and cumbersome. This can also be explained by the fact that a significant proportion of the Aboriginal population opposes the legislation of the Canadian state to govern them; they offer instead an alternative vision, in which the Aboriginal peoples deal with the federal state as equals (nation to nation), by virtue of self-government based on cultural recognition and treaty rights. Treaty rights are yet another challenge that complicates Aboriginal peoples' ability to strive for self determination in child welfare because of jurisdictional boundary limitations implicating which of their people they can serve. An understanding of cultural rights and the political challenges that Aboriginal agencies face are required to support a present day view of Aboriginal cultural existence within a child welfare framework.

The intent of this project is to support workers to create and execute their own individual action plans to meet cultural competency development requirements rather than simply reflecting on and learning about anti-oppressive practice. It is hoped that the cultural competency self assessment package that is to be developed as a result of this project will assist new workers to respect and walk within both worlds recognizing themselves in an Aboriginal worldview as well as their delegated mandate.

### **About Caring for First Nations Children Society (CFNCS)**

CFNCS website (March 2010):

Caring for First Nations Children Society provides culturally based professional development programs and information to delegated Aboriginal Child and Family Service Agencies in BC (ACFSA). Established in 1984 and incorporated in 1994, the Society works to protect and foster the well being of First Nations people by reaffirming traditions and beliefs, encouraging progressive and effective social work service delivery, and empowering the voices of First Nations peoples.

#### **Mandate**

- Development and delivery of professional development programs for child and family services staff employed by First Nations agencies. (i.e. Family Preservation Worker Training, Youth Agreement Training, Out of Care Options Training)
- Policy analysis and research on child and family service matters.
- Promote networking and information sharing amongst First Nations child and family services employees.
- Establish and maintain resource database on First Nations child and family services.

The mandate for Caring for First Nations Children Society demonstrates a clear connection to the development of this research project: to support professional

development for the Aboriginal agency child and family services staff, and to promote networking and information sharing.

### **Aboriginal Social Work Training**

The Ministry of Children and Family Development is engaged with Aboriginal agencies/communities in their efforts to transfer jurisdiction and authority for child welfare matters. Their involvement is in the form of tri-partite agreements (government of BC through MCFD, federal government through INAC, and the local Aboriginal agencies/communities), delegation enabling agreements or delegation confirmation agreements with each agency. These agreements, when completed, are intended to empower the local Aboriginal agencies/communities to move forward in their goal of realizing their inherent right to provide their own culturally appropriate interventions in child welfare matters. Although these agreements are seen as a step forward, the Aboriginal agencies are still bound by imposed delegated authority and legislation that supersedes Indigenous inherent rights. The Aboriginal Social Work (ASW) training program is a place where the agencies can affect the interpretation of delegated practice and legislation and provide a cultural interpretation for child welfare workers who will be planning for their communities' children and families.

The ASW training combines an Aboriginal definition of "best practice" in Aboriginal child welfare with the Provincial Legislation and Standards by using the Aboriginal Operational and Practice Standards and Indicators (AOPSI) in the training. This definition specifically identifies the child in the context of child, family and community as a fundamental cultural entity, and the fragile interactive

roles and positions that connect them. The curriculum for child welfare delegation in BC is built upon an MCFD model of training that is competency-based. The MCFD Competencies for Child Welfare Workers of British Columbia (2007) defines competency as, “Ability; capable of performing an allotted function; the combination of skills and knowledge needed to perform a specific task” (p.1-4). Competencies are used to assess the need for skill development, guide the development of courses and ensure that the essential components of job performance are addressed. This means that the training must provide all of the competency-based knowledge, skills and self-awareness that an individual must possess in order to carry out the various responsibilities at each of the three levels (Voluntary Services, Guardianship and Child Protection) of delegated authority under the Child Family and Community Services Act (CFCSA). There are challenges with a competency based training method in Aboriginal child welfare. As will be discussed later in this paper, the word *competent* brings the connotation of completion or attainment of a measureable skill and yet the reality of developing one’s cultural competency is that it is a lifelong relational process. The term *competency development* is used by CFNCS as a compromise to be seen as a learning process rather than the attainment of a skill. The belief is that that no one can learn everything about, or be fully competent in another’s culture. The goal is to have a way of being and viewing the world and relationships that is holistic and reflective. The ASW training incorporates the Aboriginal Operational and Practice Standards and Indicators (AOPSI) – the practice standards of Aboriginal Child and Family Service Agencies that have been developed with

Aboriginal community and MCFD consultation. The AOPSI standards clearly identify how child welfare workers must work with the families regarding roles, responsibilities, protocols and policies for relationships with other services and community stakeholders. Each of the eight weeks of comprehensive classroom instruction is enhanced by a week of field practice learning. The field component builds on the classroom experience and grounds practice within the Aboriginal agency setting. This program is unique in that the training is placed within the context of the family, community, culture and child welfare agency and is the only one of its kind in Canada.

As an instructor for CFNCS, I have noted gaps in the academic preparation of non-Aboriginal social workers entering the ASW training program. Some students appear to agree as the CFNCS instructors have received requests for extra material from the non-Aboriginal child welfare workers regarding topics such as white privilege and the 60s scoop. This report responds to these needs by proposing a pre-training package that is intended to fill in some of the requisite material to better prepare workers in an Aboriginal child welfare context. Specifically, this project has completed research to gather information and created a curriculum outline which CFNCS will use to build a pre-training orientation package to prepare workers for the cultural learning context in the ASW delegation training program.

Many students struggle with a lack of knowledge and emotional reactions to the historical cultural genocide of Aboriginal people in Canada. The training participants come from varying backgrounds and may not have had any

academic education on the history of BC's Aboriginal communities. This cultural disconnect has created varying reactions from confusion and sadness to frustration, anger, and disbelief. The orientation curriculum outline that is proposed from this study will serve two purposes; to provide a baseline of knowledge that the agencies would like their workers to have, and a starting place to support new employees to look at their own location. The Aboriginal agencies will benefit by reflecting on their own experience and having a voice in improving the training program to positively influence Aboriginal child welfare practice. The proposed orientation package will promote a child welfare perspective to cultural competency development in an Aboriginal specific context as a compliment to the MCFD delegation requirements as noted above. This orientation will not include community specific cultural training as cultural practices can only be transmitted by holders of the cultural knowledge, from those who have inherited the knowledge, rights and practices in a traditional way. To do otherwise is unethical, disrespectful and inappropriate.

This project is a direct result of my own past experience as a white child welfare worker with MCFD, and working with at least half of the families on my case load being from the local Aboriginal community. Looking back I realized that the one day of cultural awareness in my delegation training with MCFD did not begin to equip me to understand or communicate in a culturally sensitive manner. Subsequently working for an Aboriginal child welfare agency with mentors who supported me, as well as years of trial and error practice, gave me the lessons that I required to practice with cultural awareness- learning about protocols,



where and how to set up a meeting, how to listen first, how to ask questions, and who to include in decisions, to name a few important lessons. Having self awareness in cultural competency development will support better relationships in a career where stress leave and burnout is the norm. As Goodman (2002) notes,

Education, especially social justice education, is about change. The hope is to transform or broaden attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours. We may use a variety of strategies; cognitive strategies that offer new information or analyses, behavioral strategies that foster interpersonal contact or participation in new experiences, or emotional strategies to encourage empathy and personal insight. However, an educator cannot make someone change. Rather, we can provide the context, content, and process that allow an individual to grow (p.37).

People come to this work of child welfare with the sincere intent to learn about and help others, so providing them with an understanding of the current context of colonization along with an opportunity to explore their own racial and cultural identity will support better relationships with Aboriginal children, families and communities and provide opportunities for personal growth and development within child welfare practice.

### **Institutional Context**

It is important to understand the institutional context regarding provincially legislated authority over the formation of Aboriginal child and family service child welfare agencies to appreciate the complexity of Aboriginal child welfare practice in BC. The provincial authority carries mandated training requirements to provide delegated child welfare services. The stringent requirements and responsibilities that agencies and child welfare workers have are onerous, cumbersome, and

time consuming. The following information will attempt to clarify a demanding and complex legal process.

### **Child Welfare Delegation Process**

The delegation process is a legal process which requires steps in authorization by the provincial government, through the office of the First Nations Director of Child Welfare within the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). Reserve-based First Nations communities, urban based Aboriginal communities, and Métis communities who are seeking to develop an Aboriginal Child and Family Service Agency must undertake three phases of program development in order to build capacity to develop and deliver delegated services to their members (see Appendix 3: Delegation Process in BC).

### **Delegated Aboriginal Child & Family Service Agencies**

Through required delegation enabling agreements, the First Nations Director of Child Welfare (the Director) grants responsibility to Aboriginal agencies, and delegates authority to their eligible employees, to undertake administration of all or parts of the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* (CFCSA). That responsibility and authority can also be revoked by the First Nations Director of MCFD if the agency or delegated employee is seen to be in violation of the agreement. The amount of responsibility undertaken by each agency is the result of negotiations between MCFD and the Aboriginal community served by the agency, and the level of delegation provided by the First Nations Director. Simply put, the level of authority is determined by these

negotiations. The nature of Delegation Enabling Agreements (DEA) can be controversial as they are required by MCFD and contribute to neo-colonial relationships. They are not an emancipatory tool, but are developed and enforced through a neo-colonial process with the ultimate control held by government. Several communities may be required to negotiate together that may have had a history of conflict. DEA's are difficult to develop and subject to arbitrary government negotiations and funding formulas. First Nations have bi-lateral, federal, and provincial government funding negotiations. Metis and Urban Aboriginal agencies have provincial government funding agreements. The funding formula is a federal directive that is currently under review which disperses funds required for the operation of a delegated Aboriginal child welfare agency. If the agency fails to follow the requirements of their DEA, their legal authority and financial ability to provide services to their children and families can be withdrawn by MCFD.

To date, 156 of the approximately 198 First Nation bands and the Nisga'a Lisims Government in BC are represented by agencies that either have, or are actively planning toward, delegation agreements to manage their own child welfare services. MCFD is working with Aboriginal communities to develop their capacity to carry out these mandated responsibilities.

Currently, there are 24 delegated agencies with various levels of delegation: 3 are in start up phase; 4 provide voluntary services and recruit and approve foster homes; 10 have the additional delegation necessary to provide guardianship services for children in continuing care; and 9 have the delegation

required to provide, in addition to the above, full child protection services, including the authority to investigate reports of abuse and neglect and remove children; 1 agency has delegation to provide adoption services as well as child protection services. CFNCS delivers the delegation training program (ASW) to Aboriginal agency social workers that leads to the delegation or “authority” new workers receive to carry out roles and responsibilities under the Child Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA), which is the provincial law that governs child welfare in BC.

Child welfare workers with Aboriginal children and families are required to be able to describe the history of Aboriginal child welfare in BC and Canada as the first knowledge based competency in collaborative relationships with Aboriginal communities (see Appendix:4 MCFD Proposed DRAFT Cultural Competencies). Learning about the delegation process from the Aboriginal agency perspective is also important in order to understand the frustration for the Aboriginal communities and agencies at being directed by the provincial government as to how they must govern their child welfare matters. The delegation process has been a challenge as agencies are required to follow provincially legislated mandates that do not always recognize cultural practices.

The CFNCS ASW training program recognizes the tension between MCFD requirements and the agencies’ desire for self determination, to manage child welfare matters for their communities’ children as an inherent right. The training is intended to address the requirements of MCFD while attempting to do so in a culturally sensitive manner. The ASW training program has been

designed by the communities and MCFD to fill the mandated requirement for “culturally competent” social workers trained to meet MCFD required competencies.

### **Ethics and Indigenous Research**

Strict adherences to UVIC ethical guidelines regarding research was required as well as an application to the Human Research Ethics Board (HREB) before proceeding with the research survey. It is important to note that the importance of ethics in research is a global issue not just for Aboriginal communities but for all people of Aboriginal heritage. There has been a concern with respect to research in response to disrespectful and ethnocentric anthropological research since the 1950s (First Nations Centre, Considerations and Templates for Ethical Practices, 2007p2).

It is recognized that:

Since the 1990s, First Nations have become increasingly aware of inappropriate or harmful research that generally originates from external research proposals. Consequently, they are seeking to better manage research affecting them, avoiding harm and ensuring that good is done through research. First Nations have begun to establish their own regulations, committees, and procedures to protect their information, culture, traditional knowledge, and rights. In so doing, First Nations are asserting their rights to self-determination, cultural distinctiveness and dignity” (First Nations Centre, 2007, p.2).

Therefore, it is important that we consider the rights and views of people with whom this study is intended to help. The procedures required the researcher to follow the UVIC human ethics application process and to complete a human ethics application. The researcher explained that the participants may resign

from the research at any time with no explanation required. Verbal, and then a written informed consent form, (Appendix 6) were received by the researcher.

Ethical considerations require that this research be carried out acknowledging the cultural experience of those who have lived and worked in the communities. Those voices are based on familial, emotional, and relational connections to the communities and carry important expertise. This research project was designed in consultation with the Aboriginal agencies and intended to provide a venue for them to design and define their own cultural awareness based training for people who will be working with their children, families and communities.

Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP) is a report that defines this process of community driven research as an important part of their guidelines in addressing historical misuse of Indigenous research guidelines (National Aboriginal Health Organization, 2007). The OCAP guidelines list many concerns about the negative aspects of externally driven research, including a lack of meaningful community involvement in the research process and a lack of individual and community benefit from research (p. 3). The Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (p.6.3) lists the following as some of their recommendations for good research practices involving Aboriginal communities:

- To respect the culture, traditions and knowledge of the Aboriginal group;
- To conceptualize and conduct research with Aboriginal group as a partnership;

- To consult members of the group who have relevant expertise;
- To involve the group in the design of the project;
- To examine how the research may be shaped to address the needs and concerns of the group;
- To make best efforts to ensure that the emphasis of the research, and the ways chosen to conduct it, respect the many viewpoints of different segments of the group in question;

From the, Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (1998, with 2000, 2002, and 2005 amendments).

This research project has been designed in consideration of the OCAP, the Tri Council Policy, and UVIC ethical guidelines in research.

### **Literature Review**

A literature search was undertaken to determine the level of requirement for child welfare training to contain cultural considerations and to gain knowledge to enhance the CFNCS ASW training program. I wondered whether the current literature recognized cultural competency as a requirement for social work or child welfare practice and further, if any such recognition supported the view that cultural competency is indeed a foundational competency. The highlights of the literature review are presented here.

A literature search of— “‘social work’ and ‘child welfare’ and ‘evaluations or assessments’ and ‘education or training’”—in the University of Victoria peer

reviewed journals presented an excess of articles. These sources were then screened for relevance to the topic of child welfare education. A manageable body of literature of 24 of the most relevant to the focus of the research was thereby selected for inclusion in a thematic analysis.

Three broad emerging topics were identified in the sources from this analysis:

- 1.) Cultural awareness
- 2.) Cultural competency skill development
- 3.) Practical application

The Aboriginal agencies recognized that MCFD training was not meeting their needs for a cultural context in child welfare practice. Embedding the training in an Aboriginal context was the motivation for the ASW training which was developed to provide education and practical experience in Aboriginal child welfare practice. All three themes found in the literature related to considerations in the ASW delegation-training curriculum. The ASW delegation training provides MCFD competency based information as well as practical application of Aboriginal social work skills. The participants participate in; scenarios, group work, work with Aboriginal actors, and field practice, to gain child welfare practical experience. They can then relate the knowledge to the relational context required, in a safe and supported environment to build confidence as well as competence in child welfare practice. This research was developed to identify foundational Aboriginal cultural competency material, to identify practice gaps, to



provide initial support to prepare new Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal workers, and to enhance the CFNCS ASW delegation training.

### **Cultural Awareness**

The literature demonstrated a necessity to provide specific cultural awareness training. Rozas (2007) posits that:

Educating social work students in the present day requires that particular attention be paid to issues of diversity and social justice. There is a moral, legal and ethical responsibility for social workers to pursue social change, particularly on behalf of the vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people (p. 5).

The Child Family and Community Service Act (1996), is the British Columbia legislation, which clearly outlines the legal and practice responsibility for child welfare workers in Aboriginal agencies to protect and preserve culture in their practice (sec 2, 4). Stevenson, Cheung, and Leung (1992) offer a three dimensional approach to ethnic sensitivity as one of the critical components in child protection services. They recommend that systematic questioning methods assess; attitudes, knowledge, and skill building in cross cultural training (p.291). In the document, *Ethics in Social Work Statement of Principles*, The International Federation of Social Work (2004) states that, "...Social workers should recognize and respect the ethnic and cultural diversity of the societies in which they practice, taking account of individual, family and group and community differences" (p.3). Rozas (2007) also states that it is crucial that social work curriculum addresses issues of oppression and that core curriculum content must include the importance of understanding "culture and personal identity", as well as educate students to recognize power, privilege, and diversity in and among

groups (p. 3). Morris (2007) also demonstrates the importance of cultural sensitivity in social work and the importance for social workers to, "...acknowledge that child welfare practices have historically ignored the best interest of the child, separating families of generations, which has greatly contributed to the loss of cultural identity" (p.133). In Morris' study she demonstrates that Aboriginal children are 5 to 6 times more likely to commit suicide than non-Aboriginal children in the same age range also noting that, "Cultural continuity has been acknowledged as a protective factor against suicide risk" (p. 133). Chandler and Lalonde (2004) also demonstrate the importance of cultural continuity and health indicators and that, youth suicide rate is lower in communities that share markers of cultural continuity. They state:

More significantly, we have also demonstrated that bands that are well on their way toward preserving or rehabilitating their threatened cultures, and that have met with measurable success in recovering community control over their civic lives (i.e., that, in addition to having taken concrete steps to preserve their cultural past, have achieved a measure of self-government, have effectively militated for Aboriginal title to traditional lands, and have gained a measure of control over their own health, education, child protection, and jural systems) suffer *no* youth suicides, while those who fail to meet all or most of these standards of self-determination have youth suicide rates more than 150 times the national average (p. 2).

Cultural awareness is important for social workers planning for Aboriginal children and a lack of connection to culture has lasting and profound implications for Aboriginal children and youth. As Morris (2007) also notes:

The children are suffering terrible losses; they are like trees without roots, tossed around haphazardly without direction or purpose. The strength of any community lies in its potential for the future; without it there is no hope, no reason to move forward. Children need to be connected with their families and their communities, whether they are currently in care or at risk

of being placed in care in the future. ...these communities need to be provided with the resources they require so that families are given real opportunities to stay together (p. 140).

In Aboriginal child welfare a solid understanding of the historical impacts of colonization and an awareness of culture are a vital part of social work training that should be specifically taught and continually expanded upon.

### **Cultural Competency Skill Development**

Leung (2002) notes that the competency approach to curriculum development has been adopted across many fields and originated from a political perceived need to make the national work force more competitive in a global economy and to create national qualifications. A competency based approach to training is described as a “functional analysis of occupational roles, translation of these roles into outcomes, and assessment of trainee’s progress on the basis of their demonstrated performance of these outcomes” (Leung 2002, p.693).

A competency based approach to curriculum development has been prominent in child welfare training also as a result of independent reviews of the MCFD child welfare system. The Gove Report (1995) that came out of an inquiry by Judge Thomas Gove into the death of a child receiving services from MCFD, made recommendations for quality assurance in child welfare training both for social work practical training and in University education. The Hughes Report (2006) which was an independent review of BC’s child protection system also made recommendations for MCFD to require provincial standards in training and a quality assurance framework. The time frame for child welfare training has

increased significantly and the curriculum was developed on a competency based framework as a result of these recommendations.

Child Welfare workers require specific training to develop and demonstrate skill in an area of which they may have minimal experience or understanding. Williams (2007) states that, "Little in the literature has emerged to provide specific guidance to practitioners on how to take what they have learned about practice and merge it with what they are learning about race, and deliver effective services" (p.743).

The Aboriginal Operational Practice Standards and Indicators (AOPSI) were developed by Aboriginal Agencies and MCFD to ensure that the operational and practice standards that guide practice and form the basis of the audit process are culturally appropriate, achievable, and sound (2005, p.1). The AOPSI standards represent minimum expectations of performance that meet or exceed those standards developed by MCFD. These standards are used by delegated social workers in child welfare practice working for Aboriginal agencies.

The challenges with competency based training are described by Leung (2002) as; having a limited range that may not cover the work roles in their broadest sense, being value driven with one meaning, and being based on a behaviorist approach that attempts to break down roles into discrete tasks without considering the connections between individual meaning and the task.

These problems are evident in the term *cultural competency* as noted earlier, which I will expand upon here. MCFD child welfare delegation training requires

child welfare workers to demonstrate specific competencies to practice as delegated social workers in the province of BC. This creates a challenge in Aboriginal child welfare as competency based training is dependent on measureable task oriented outcomes as opposed to relational based outcomes, which are more difficult to measure. The Aboriginal agencies are aware of the imposition of practice competencies that are defined by MCFD and wanted to determine and define their own cultural competencies – what they want their workers to know- to practice with Aboriginal children, families and communities in a good way. It has been noted through; frontline practice, teaching ASW and developing relationships with community Elders that there are three distinct types of child welfare competencies that are involved in working within the Aboriginal communities.

- 1.) *Practical Competencies*- learning objective based measureable competencies; for example as required to write case notes, and to conduct an investigation.
- 2.) *Cultural Competency Skill Development*- which provides the understanding of colonial history, as well as self awareness, what your biases are and what you bring to cross cultural relationships and encounters. (This project is designed to contribute to this level of competency development)
- 3.) *Nation Specific Cultural Competency* – Knowledge of specific cultural practices that are not transferable to other communities and can only be taught by the community members.(Workers might not achieve this type of

competency unless they are from the nation, but can work to support connections for children of a specific nation)

The literature review, MCFD requirements for culturally competent child welfare workers, the Aboriginal agencies desire to direct the content for their new workers and CFNCS recognition of the challenge for new workers in the training program all have informed the drive for this research. This research logically leads to the eventual development of a pre-training cultural awareness package.

### **Research Question**

The Training Advisory Committee (TAC) requested that a tool be developed to support new employees and assist in orientation in Aboriginal child welfare practice. TAC operates as an advisory board on training matters and is made up of representatives from the Aboriginal agencies, CFNCS, MCFD and the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). This research project is designed to facilitate the development of a curriculum tool that responds to the request of the TAC. The specific research question that guides this research is as follows:

*What foundational information is required for new hires in delegated Aboriginal agencies in BC that will contribute to cultural competency development in Aboriginal child welfare practice?*

## **Research Design**

This section includes the design and the matters related to the methodology. A qualitative methodology frames the inquiry. Grinnell, Williams and Unrau (2010) state that, “The qualitative approach says that the only real way to find out about the subjective reality of our research participants is to ask them, and the answer will come back in words, not in numbers” (p. 99). As this project seeks to respond to the research question through consultation with key people, a qualitative methodology provides the appropriate framework for gathering and interpreting data that is grounded in peoples’ experiences and the meaning they give to those experiences.

The research design outlines a plan for collecting and utilizing data so that the desired information can be obtained. A survey of the frontline supervisors from all of the 24 Aboriginal agencies in B.C. and the four CFNCS trainers was conducted to determine the foundational information required when working in child welfare for Aboriginal Agencies.

The participant cohort was identified in consultation with TAC and CFNCS. They wanted people who held supervisory positions over the new employees in the Aboriginal agencies and CFNCS instructors to share their ideas for foundational cultural competency resources that they would like new workers to study. This would provide a baseline starting point from which a new worker would be expected to begin to work in Aboriginal child welfare. Recommendations for foundational material only were requested as it was

recognized that each nation must provide their own specific cultural training to their employees.

A questionnaire (see appendix 7) was designed to gather qualitative information. The TAC was involved in its design and approval. Further, it was decided that a mail out survey technique was the most appropriate method because it would be most time efficient. It also was not financially feasible for the researcher to travel to various locations in the province to gather the data face-to-face. Challenges of a questionnaire survey method were recognized where questions were left unanswered in some questionnaires and several agencies did not participate at all. Overall 10 out for the total of 24, or approximately 40%, of the agencies completed the survey questionnaire.

### **Steps in data collection, analysis and dissemination**

Steps taken in the research process were:

- 1.) A letter introducing the project and asking for a supervisor from each agency to complete the survey was sent to the 24 delegated Aboriginal agencies in BC (Appendix 5).
- 2.) The questionnaire (Appendix 6) and the consent form (Appendix 7) were electronically sent to the designated practice consultant representatives from the agencies as well as the instructors delivering the CFNCS Aboriginal delegation training.



- 3.) Follow up emails and telephone calls were made to the participants to discuss the process and answer any questions regarding filling out the survey and use of the data.
- 4.) Qualitative data was collected from the questionnaires to provide a list of resources and recommendations from the subjective experiences of the Supervisors at the Aboriginal child welfare agencies and the instructors from CFNCS.
- 5.) An outline was developed for curriculum development for a *Self Assessment in Cultural Competency Development: an Aboriginal Child Welfare Orientation* package (see Appendix 8) based on the recommendations of the survey and will be submitted to the Aboriginal Agency Training Advisory Committee (TAC) for authorization.

The researcher is required to have sensitivity to the topic in developing training and, as Creswell (2007) states, "It would be important to understand these common experiences in order to develop practices, or policies or to develop a deeper understanding about the features of the phenomenon" (p.60). As an instructor of the ASW training program and a former child welfare practitioner for an Aboriginal agency, I have a relational understanding of this research which will help in dissemination and the development of the curriculum outline. This information will inform planning for CFNCS curriculum development in the form of an orientation package and support practice for the new employees and their supervisors, as well as the ASW training experience.

The orientation package that is to be developed by CFNCS as an outcome of this research study - will require consultation and vetting from TAC and is beyond the scope of this project. The goal of this research project was to collect the data from the agencies to inform the development of curriculum.

### Research Findings

The findings<sup>3</sup> from the survey research indicate a strong desire for and the importance of a tool to prepare and orient new employees in cultural competency in Aboriginal child welfare practice. Statements included: *“They [new employees] need a framework for a generic tool that places culture into the practice in the context of culture”* and *“They need the history, for individuals to learn and understand how our people became oppressed and see the struggles”* and *“I would like to see training from an Aboriginal approach to CP [child protection] issues, rather than mainstream methodologies. Preference needs to be given to Aboriginal methodologies that need to be validated by mainstream systems.”*

Recommendations emerged from the research survey to provide the framework for the orientation package. The final *Self Assessment in Cultural Competency Development: an Aboriginal Orientation* package will be developed with the recommendations after a consultation and vetting process with the Training Advisory Committee (TAC). The researcher will present the findings and a framework for the proposed package in this document and take the findings

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<sup>3</sup> Note that all participants provided written consent to use their material and names in this research. Responses are italicized as direct quotes. The researcher also requested additional written consent for the use of the two stories submitted.

back to the TAC committee. Once the committee authorizes the outline, a final package will be developed for orientation of new employees at the Aboriginal agencies.

### **Demographics of the Study**

There was representation from 10 Aboriginal Child and Family Service Agencies present in the research; at one agency 6 staff members completed one survey and at another agency 2 staff members completed their agency survey together. 4 CFNCS instructors completed the survey, 2 of the CFNCS instructors collaborated on some of their answers as well. (N=20)

- The group surveyed represents a sample of 10 delegated Aboriginal child and family service agencies in the province of British Columbia (Appendix 1). 16 child welfare practitioners from the Agencies and 4 instructors provided recommendations (Appendix 2).
- The cohort for the survey included participants from 14 Aboriginal Nations as well as Métis Ancestry.
- 3 respondents identified as Caucasian/ Euro-Canadian Heritage
- 10 Aboriginal people were working for their own Aboriginal communities and 7 were not.

The group represented a sample of practice from all over BC. Although the Aboriginal child welfare agencies serve families in three jurisdictional structures; Métis, on reserve, and urban Aboriginal agencies— there were no respondents from the Métis child and family service agency.

Respondents included:

Created by Laurie Harding

On reserve;

Gitxsan, Okanagan, Ayas Men Men, Nezel Be Hunuyeh, Nisga'a, Lalum'utul

Smun'eem and Kwumut Lelum.

Urban services;

Surrounded by Cedar and Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services

Both urban and on reserve communities:

Xyolhemeylth

### **Practical and Supervisory Experience of Respondents**

The participants' (N=20) practical and supervisory experience totaled over 300 years in multiple roles in Aboriginal child welfare. Practical experience ranged from 3 to 30 years with an average of 15 years of experience. This demonstrates multiple levels of skill, authority and a dedication to cultural competency development in Aboriginal child welfare practice. The respondents' passion for their work was evident and all were eager to share their experiences and stories of cultural competency in their practice. An intensity and importance in having their requests heard and put into action was recognized by the researcher. Several people called back to make sure their points of view were heard and understood. The comments held the weight of their personal experiences, as well as the consequence of impacting future generations of child welfare practitioners. All of the participants felt that having this orientation tool would be of significant importance in supporting Aboriginal child welfare practice and cultural competency development.

### Delegation Training Experience and Cultural Competency

Of the 20 participants, 7 had not completed delegation training, 7 participants received their delegation training from CFNCS and 6 from MCFD. There are also positions in the delegated agencies that provide vital support and do not require delegated authority, such as family support workers, youth workers and cultural advisors. These agency supports are often natural life-long helpers who are ideally situated to guide the delegated workers in their cultural competency development. Questions regarding delegation were recognized from the responses including; *“Is delegation training a prerequisite for cultural competency development?”* and *“Are there different ways cultural competency is taught and learned?”* and *“Is there a relationship between delegation training (with MCFD or CFNCS) and cultural competency confidence?”*

There were three learning locations identified for cultural competency development; some of the respondents had been immersed in Aboriginal culture all of their lives and worked in their community and Aboriginal agency for over 20 years, other respondents had taken cultural competency training at CFNCS and felt well prepared to begin to learn and work with the communities to build cultural competency, and lastly others were delegated by MCFD and had to learn about culture in practice with the specific culture of the communities for whom they worked. Comments on delegation and cultural competency training varied:

*I appreciate the CFNCS delegation training on ‘white privilege’, racism and impacts of residential school - No suggestion for additional support other than to continue to look at individual bias and stereotypes”. “We had none back then, we may have talked about it, but there was nothing in the curriculum. (Note: This person was delegated by MCFD in 1994. The level*

of cultural competency training at that date and in the current MCFD delegation training is unknown to the researcher.)

One respondent felt that students from Universities should be screened and only taught by Aboriginal people:

*It is important to have Aboriginal people teach about this topic. It should be a pass/fail course in University that is a required course for all students in Social Work. If a student cannot demonstrate cultural competence, they should not be able to complete their degree.*

Another respondent felt that the CFNCS training should be expanded to train all child welfare workers in BC given the high numbers of Aboriginal children and families served by MCFD workers:

*Training provided by CFNCS should be expanded to include training for MCFD workers. The history of oppression, the impact of residential schools, the impact of colonization, the on-going oppression are fundamental teachings that workers need to be exposed to prior to contact with First Nations people in child welfare matters.*

Many of the recommendations for material to cover in an orientation to Aboriginal child welfare included the historical racist tactics of the government of Canada to address the 'Indian problem' (for example see Multicultural Canada, 2009; Anglican Journal, 2000). Indeed, the reason we have Aboriginal agencies is to give back the child welfare authority to the communities that was taken away because of racist ideologies. Furthermore, one respondent noted that, "*If we are not preparing workers to work together with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal workers and with Aboriginal families we will continue to contribute to an adversarial 'helping' system*".

### **Self Awareness and Cultural Competency Development**

Self awareness development was requested by the agencies and the instructors as an ongoing commitment to building cultural competency into professional development. One respondent to the survey noted that, *“SW er’s [Social Workers] should have self-awareness and knowledge about the history of Aboriginal peoples in Canada and the systematic ways the Canadian government implemented policies such as to the Indian Act.”* Cultural competency development needs to be assessed regularly and supported by supervisors to work safely and effectively with Aboriginal children, families, and communities. As one respondent noted, *“When providing foundational information to social worker’s I would also want to ensure the social workers have the emotional support within their agencies as it may impact some more than others.”*

The instructors at CFNCS reported in their survey responses that they have been asked many times to provide information on white privilege and racism from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants and listed recommendations for articles such as: *“Peggy MacIntosh (1990), White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack”*; and John Raible (1994) *Becoming an Ally: A Checklist for White Allies Against Racism.*”

Cultural competency training is seen by the research participants to be required for many reasons:

*“Being non-Aboriginal and having no significant, relational experience with Aboriginal families or communities”; “being Aboriginal and colonized”; “being Aboriginal and not having grown up in your culture because of*

*colonization”; “internalized racism”; and “working with another Aboriginal community other than your own”.*

Because of the multiple cultural backgrounds of child welfare workers, the participants felt that there is a specific need to educate all child welfare workers to work with Aboriginal families, whether they are Aboriginal or not.

### **Self Awareness, Healing and Self Care**

The responses indicated concern about child welfare workers who are not culturally competent or self aware doing serious damage to children, families, and communities. One respondent noted that:

*Knowledge of the history of First Nation oppression is a key to good practice. Attempting to work within First Nation communities in a state of ignorance of past and current racist subjugating efforts by the federal government and the dominant society is futile. It is critically important that social workers working within aboriginal communities have a level of self awareness (and self care plan) that allows them to see themselves professionally and personally within this historical context. Social work practice in aboriginal communities devoid of this information significantly increases the risk of a continued dis-connect between First Nation communities and the wider national community, with continued disastrous consequences for First Nation people(s).*

The risk assessment decisions that are being made require self awareness and cultural competency skill. Three respondents emphasized the importance of doing personal healing work to become aware of triggers and to know how to manage them. One respondent noted:

*Self awareness on its own is a big piece in people’s well-being. It should be a part of orientation, should be structured as simple communication skills and build on it. People need to have the ability to relate their own family history to where they are in their lives. Family of origin stuff relates to making assumptions & biases because of that. Needs to be part of degree training - find CYC degree are way more aware & way more conscious of own personal biases – can pick them out from our staff.*



A need to manage triggers was identified so that the worker can be emotionally present and support the family, rather than being emotionally damaged and burning out from being in a traumatizing environment. There were also concerns expressed that, *If a child welfare worker has no understanding of cultural dynamics in structure, roles and relationships and is planning for that family - decisions can and have been made that sever fragile cultural and family connections forever.* Once a child's connection to family, culture, and community has been altered, the worker's efforts to maintain connection must match the importance of addressing safety and risk. One participant stated that, *It is not: a question of either safety or culture; or of culture more than safety or vice versa, but BOTH culture and safety balanced together.* Another participant stated that:

*Non Aboriginal workers need to know what they represent to our clients and not get all caught up in their personal feelings. Aboriginal workers have to be ready for the 'flack' that they will have to take for doing what can be seen as the work of the colonizer. Non-Aboriginal workers, if they truly want to be allies, need to learn that we are not going to do the work the way it has always been done. They have to trust that there is a way to keep children safe, involving family and community that is different from status quo MCFD practice and that losing power and control of everything does not mean that things aren't being done properly. We are drowning in the bureaucracy of the colonizer!!!*

Training and education must be provided to prepare workers to do their own emotional healing work and to prepare themselves for emotionally challenging practice. Ongoing self healing and awareness, along with a solid self care plan can help workers to provide culturally safe practice and stay balanced in emotionally challenging work. One participant noted that it takes time and patience to develop cultural awareness:

*I need a lot of patience, I know it will take time to learn things – it is so based in every day, lifelong experiences & passing on of traditions that had begun before you were born – it is a lifelong thing. It is ongoing from birth to Elder hood. Sharing cultural aspects does not stop. Roles in community change. I am just starting to share knowledge with others. Took years and years working in this community to realize what is meant when they say ‘working together as one’ and all that entails.*

### **Specific Resources**

Three respondents did not identify any specific resources; however, most people had suggestions. Specific foundational resources recommended included journal articles, authors, books, videos, and relationships with elders, community professionals and the people who experience the issues are strongly recommended. Several people recommended an on staff community Elder to provide cultural connections.

The resources requested were grouped into the topics of: colonization, residential school, 60s scoop, Indian act, political interference and neo-colonial practices, racial and cultural identity development and put into the proposed curriculum outline.

A sample of responses included references to various ways of learning including Elders:

*I am afraid that I do not have any recommendations for specific resources. I am aware though, that the majority of my teachings have come from the elders and community professionals that I have always worked with. I feel that when someone is passionate about their experiences and their community, it always serves as the bridge to understanding.*

As well as written resources:

- “Calvin Helin- “Dances with Dependency”, Gerrard Bellefeuille et al, “Breaking the Rules: transforming Governance in Social services.”, ‘Delgamuukw v The Queen “–edited by Frank Cassidy.”

- *“The Legacy of Hope Foundation (2008). Where are the Children? Healing the Legacy of Residential Schools may be an excellent use for workers to access on line. Sterling-Collins, R. (1995). Summary of Canada’s Indian Policies. Aboriginal Social Work Training. Caring For First Nations Children Society.”*
- *“Watch out for the hegemony of the written word!! Duran and Duran have done some interesting writing on Healing. Calvin Morrisseau’s book on Healing is very good. I find we have to “take care” of the Non-Aboriginal people sometimes when we are going thru this work and we have to careful not to privilege that too much.”*

Several of the sources are reliant on ASW material and indicate a possible lack of continuing academic and professional development of the participants. A question arose for the researcher to the degree of ongoing professional development opportunities provided to or taken by frontline workers once they are working in child welfare, as some of the workers delegation training occurred over ten years ago.

The resources recommended will be the basis for the material to be developed for the orientation package. There appears to be a need to support workers who are out in the field, on the front line with current, updated information. The self assessment and ongoing building of academic awareness is vital to keep people in the frontline up to date with new research and practice findings. Five participants stated relationship with Elders were required and that we need a formal mechanism to provide workers who have been out doing the work with the families with ongoing cross cultural relationship support (working with people of another culture). I would like to share a story that a participant provided to demonstrate divergent worldviews and the importance of cultural competency training and support in Aboriginal child welfare:

Participants Story (with permission)

*I have a vivid memory of a new worker coming out to the Nation I worked on. She showed up, on a rainy day, wearing dress pants, a silk blouse, and high heeled slip on shoes. She was 22, Russian and looked lovely. However, as she trudged through the mud, she continually fell off her shoes and was slipping and sliding everywhere. She then had to climb around the construction zone of this new house to finally appear before our client to have a conversation about his parenting. Before she even began, I suspected we would have difficulties because I realized she had absolutely no concept of the world our client lived in. She was as far removed from this community as it was possible to go. She had no idea of his cultural identity, the community in which he lived and there was an obvious communication difference. How could we expect her to advocate to her supervisor on his behalf if she had no inclination of his world or his beliefs and values? I compared this worker to another new worker who arrived at a home with an attitude of “what can you teach me today”. She wasn’t the expert and she didn’t even try to put herself there. The outcomes were much more favorable. Perhaps only experience will ultimately support these new workers, but I suspect challenging their belief systems with alternative world views might ultimately support their practice.*

This story helps to demonstrate the importance of training in cultural competency development and its impact on outcomes for Aboriginal children, families and communities.

### **Next Steps**

The feedback from the research was organized into the outline below and will be disseminated and presented to the Training Advisory Committee (TAC). The goal of this research was to complete research with the Aboriginal agencies to gather recommendations and resources that would inform an outline for curriculum development of an orientation package to be developed at a later date. Curriculum development from CFNCS will occur upon feedback and authorization of the outline from the TAC committee.

### **Proposed Outline**

The topics for development into the orientation package have been organized into the following proposed curriculum outline;

#### 1) Introduction

- Setting a context for cultural competency development in Aboriginal child welfare
- Self care and triggers

#### 2) History of Context for Aboriginal peoples

- Terms and definitions
- Colonization
- Residential school
- 60s scoop
- Indian Act
- Political influences and neo-colonization

#### 3) Self awareness

- Self awareness and cultural competency
- Cultural knowledge
- Locating self
- White privilege and power
- Stereotyping
- Racism
- Cultural and racial identity development

#### 4) Skills in Cultural Competency Development (equally weighted)

- Communication
- Relational skills
- Conflict resolution

Proposed format for each of the four modules:

- 1.) Introduction
- 2.) Articles
- 3.) Sources - websites
- 4.) Reflective questions
- 5.) Practice Recommendations from the research survey.
- 6.) Recommended Resources/websites

The content and design will be screened by the TAC committee. This project document will be presented to the TAC committee for authorization, and then will be developed into curriculum by CFNCS. TAC will advise CFNCS on the development and then approve the final orientation curriculum package.

### **Conclusions**

All of the participants of the survey felt that cultural competency in Aboriginal child welfare practice is important and that specific training is required. Their responses reflected the literature findings in the recommendation that, “foundation curriculum content must include the importance of understanding ‘culture and personal identity,’ as well as educate students to recognize diversity in and among groups” (Rozas 2007, p. 22). The ASW delegation training is recognized for providing ongoing up to date information on Aboriginal issues and

cultural awareness. The Aboriginal child welfare agencies and the CFNCS instructors of the ASW delegation program have found that the new employees and training participants are extremely diverse in; cultural background, education, life experiences, and self awareness. This diversity can create emotional challenges for the new employees in both settings, for delegation training participants and their supervisors in the field, and facilitators to manage the classroom group dynamics. Racial identity issues are identified as important and are addressed early in training as a foundational platform for the delegated Aboriginal social work training delivered by CFNCS. During each round of this training there are a large proportion of white or non-Aboriginal participants in the classroom as new employees of Aboriginal agencies. The non-Aboriginal participants often struggle emotionally with the recognition of their own lack of awareness of colonization, racial and or cultural identity. The agency participants as well as the instructors at CFNCS in the survey requested material regarding white privilege and historical racist child welfare practices e.g. the 60s scoop, residential school experience and on becoming a white Ally in working with Aboriginal peoples. The challenges in the classroom and in the workplace can sometimes be attributed to the diverse lived experience of being Aboriginal or being white. A multi-educational, experiential, and multi-cultural mix in practice can cause tensions.

New practitioners with psychology, or other human service degrees, and minimal cross cultural exposure, or race based context, can also contribute to a lack of cultural awareness in Aboriginal child welfare issues. As each person's

context and understanding of culture and the history of child welfare is uniquely diverse, ongoing self-assessment and responsibility of cultural competency development will be continually required in all levels and positions of child welfare practice. Cultural competency knowledge, awareness and skill, is not a destination but a lifelong process. This orientation package is requested by the agencies and instructors as a place for child welfare practitioners to start that important journey.

### **Recommendations (for curriculum development)**

The intent of this research is for the recommendations from the Agencies that responded and the CFNCS trainers to provide specific material to build a package for new employees to identify their own cultural awareness level and build confidence. The orientation package is to become a living document, alive with each individual's experience, knowledge, and skill level. These emerging child welfare practitioners are expected to be in the field working day to day to improve the lives of Aboriginal children, families, and communities who have been deeply affected by a history of colonial child welfare policies and practices. The orientation package will help new workers to prepare for the ASW delegation training so that they can arrive emotionally prepared for a potentially challenging and transformative learning experience. The ASW training needs to support the new employees who have an immense ethical, legal, and personal responsibility to demonstrate cultural competency in their practical skills. All Aboriginal child welfare workers must continually place checks and balances in their practice to continually learn by asking questions, conducting research, evaluating, and



assessing what we are doing in a way that encourages resistance, recovery, and renewal. This research project is intended to provide information for a *Self Assessment in Cultural Competency Development: an Aboriginal Orientation Package* for the ASW training program and to support emerging child welfare workers with useful information. The information provides clear implications for knowledge, self-awareness and skill development in Aboriginal child welfare cultural competency. The information that was gathered will inform planning for curriculum development and support practice for both the new employees and their supervisors from a practical, action based perspective.

### **Intention of the Orientation Package**

The orientation package that is to be developed is intended to be a place to self assess, and to identify a beginning individual cultural knowledge level. All workers will need to continually create connections with fellow learners and champions for culturally competent practice— no matter where we are in this learning journey. Looking at our cultural competency forces us to look at our own beliefs and values, and question them, sometimes for the first time. New employees will be encouraged to look for trusted, aware mentors and people to learn from when feeling frustrated, confused, and incompetent. Being comfortable with feeling uncomfortable is eventually expected. The tool will be designed as a way to identify strengths and weakness, with the intent to develop an action plan for improvement. Each agency serves a completely different Aboriginal population with their own cultural practices, traditions, and values. New employees are on a journey to awareness and self discovery, there will be

many bumps along the road— they are advised to expect them and embrace them as signs of growth, to put away any expectations of being “the professional” and always knowing what to do. Humility is critical in recognizing that you can’t be the expert in anyone else’s life. This is *social, emotional, and relational work*. Workers will need to know that they cannot do this cross cultural work by themselves; they will cry, they will laugh, and feel deep sadness as well as the deepest joy. The orientation package will provide a framework to follow to develop a path to a cultural competency plan and continual self assessment in this important work.

I close with a story shared by one of the participants that beautifully explains what cultural competency looks and feels like in practice (written permission granted):

*If done with an open mind and heart, the work in Aboriginal Communities with families and children will bring many gifts, awareness and teachings to those guided to carry out this Sacred work. Short Story: I was not exposed to constructive parenting/unconditional love until age 16 when the woman who became my mother in law - came into my life. My most useful teachings came from her in the latter 18yrs of my life – when I needed it the most, I guess. I was working as a GSW [Guardianship Social Worker] at the time she began her journey to the other side; the Dept. of Health Services denied us any opportunity to bring her home from the hospital during her extended illness and the hospital was hours away from our home. A woman who would never leave anyone she identified as “her people” alone during a critical time, ultimately passed over in the night – alone.*

*Shortly after this, I was approved to take a couple, youth and a baby to Northern Canada to visit their own community. These were ‘tough’ kids and the trip had its challenges, for sure. The gift though, was when an Auntie took us to visit a Great Aunt and Uncle in another community. Great Uncle was in the process of passing. Their home appeared as one you’d see in a documentary on the poor living conditions for Aboriginal Peoples’ on Reservations in Canada; slap board walls, no clean water, furs on the inside walls! There were two rooms, kitchen and living room. The small living room was consumed by a hospital bed where*

*the Mushum was sleeping. A sacred fire burnt outside of the home and community members passed through the house day and night bringing food and water and songs.*

*The Mushum seemed to go in and out of consciousness and respond to visitors sometimes. He awoke to see his great, grandchildren who grew up in care in Vancouver. He remembered them, and even told a story (with his wife's help), of the children's mother- who the children barely remembered. These young people left with pictures of themselves as babies, pictures of them with their mother and of siblings they never knew, connections to family and a better sense of Identity and a place to belong.*

*I left with awareness that First Nations People are not 'poor'-but rich in culture and traditional ways that support life in all phases. Children are not forgotten. Family is paramount. These people didn't have electrical power but the sacred fire lit the way to complete emotional, spiritual, physical and mental care for the person passing, family and community sending him off in a good and proper way. I remember thinking- "we have it wrong – they have it right". I realize that I have been fortunate to work in an Agency that supported the Sacred work of repatriation for displaced CICs – for all the obvious reasons. Ultimately, it's not the pension plan, flex day schedule or benefit plan that stand out for me in my JOB - It's the teachings and the memories; the energy of the hug from a Kukom who said, "Kitatum-skatin", "I prayed to see my grand-daughter everyday of her life-last 7 years."*

Thank you for sharing in this important part of my cultural competency development journey.

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## **Appendix 1: Aboriginal communities served by the delegated Aboriginal agencies.**

The 10 Aboriginal Child and Family Agencies that responded to the survey serve multiple Aboriginal communities as well as Urban Aboriginal and Métis populations. It is important to understand the diverse backgrounds and demographics of each agency and the communities that they serve. This is a small introduction from the agencies regarding their community services. Workers at each agency will need to connect with a cultural mentor to provide specific cultural teachings that the mentor deems important for their workers.

Information provided from their websites and literature

### **1.) Gitxsan Child and Family Services:**

There are approximately 13,000 members of the Gitxsan nation worldwide, with about 70% living on the traditional territories. The population is young compared to provincial and Canadian statistics with over 70% under the age of 30. Most live in five Gitxsan villages (Gitwangak, Gitsegukla, Gitanmaax, Glen Vowell, Kispiox) and two provincial municipalities (Hazelton, New Hazelton). The Gitxsan people make up about 80% of the total population living on the territories. The remaining population is mostly of European descent. Settlement of the area by non-Gitxsan began around the turn of the century. Gitxsan people have lived on the territory since creation. Western archaeological evidence has so far supported more than 10,000 years of occupation by the Gitxsan. The English translation of the Gitxsan is "People of the River of Mist".

### **2.) Xyolhemeylh Child and Family Services**

Xyolhemeylh provides child protection and support for children up to 19 years of age, and their families/guardians. The Agency provides on- and off-reserve services to members of the Sto:lo Nation and anyone who identifies themselves as a person of Aboriginal origin. They work with the family to assess safety of children, provide a safe environment, improve parenting, and help the family plan for change. Also provides counselling, respite services, and preventive and remedial programs.

### **3.) Lalum'utul Smun'eem Child and Family Services**

Lalum'utul' Smun'eem (caring for our children/families and extended families) Child & Family Services provides programs and services for children at risk. Its services are provided to all on-Reserve Cowichan Tribes members. Cowichan Tribes was one of the original First Nations communities in the province to

develop their own Child & Family Services (CFS) program, and is only one of six providing the full range of protection and prevention services. With over 4,000 members, we are the largest single First Nation Band in British Columbia. About half of our members live on the Reserve. Ours is a relatively young population, with a large percentage of the population under the age of 35. We have seven traditional villages. Our total reserve area is currently 2400 hectares (~5900 acres) made up of nine Reserves. We have been delegated responsibilities for a variety of member services including Children & Families, Adoption, Education, Health, Housing, Membership, and Social Development.

#### **4.) Nisga'a Child and Family Services**

Nisga'a Lands lie at the heart of the world's largest temperate rainforest. The Nisga'a Nation owns 2,000 square kilometres of land on the northwest coast of British Columbia. Nisga'a Lisims Government is committed to supporting healthy and economically prosperous Nisga'a communities where children, youth, and adults have hope and opportunities, and access to a safety net that ensures a healthy living standard. This is accomplished by developing individual and family strengths, and by providing access to services that will enhance their self-sufficiency. In 2000, the landmark Nisga'a Final Agreement went into effect, heralding a new relationship between Canada and its Aboriginal First Nations. The treaty recognizes Nisga'a Lands and the Nisga'a people's right of self-government. The Nisga'a villages of Gingolx, Laxgalts'ap, Gitwinksihlkw, and New Aiyansh are accessible by vehicle and plane from Vancouver.

#### **5.) Kwumut Lelum Child and Family Services**

Kw'umut (bringing up children) Lelum (Home) "It's a place where you bring children, where it is safe..." Kw'umut Lelum Child and Family Services is the organization responsible for the safety and well being of the st'ulul'iqulh (children) in the nine Nations that Kw'umut Lelum provides culturally sensitive services that include The nine nations served by Kw'umut Lelum are: Snuneymuxw, Nanoose, Penelakut, Malahat, Lyackson, Lake Cowichan, Qualicum, Halalt, and Chemainus family support, foster care, guardianship, support groups and child abuse prevention programs.

#### **6.) Okanagan Nation Alliance**

The Okanagan Nation Alliance is a First Nations Tribal Council in the Canadian province of British Columbia, spanning the Nicola, Okanagan and Similkameen Districts of the Canadian province of British Columbia and also the Colville Indian Reservation in Washington State.

#### **7.) Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society**

VACFSS is an Aboriginal non-profit society providing service to urban Aboriginal children and families living in the Greater Vancouver area. Our vision is a balanced and harmonious Aboriginal community. We strive to culturally and

spiritually strengthen Aboriginal families through holistic service delivery. VACFSS has been a child and family serving agency since our incorporation in 1992. We are continuing to transform our services to make them more grounded within our history and to reflect the diverse cultures of the clients we serve. With the transfer of child protection services from the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) in 2008 we continue to focus on better outcomes for the children and families we serve. This is a very exciting time for VACFSS and Aboriginal people in BC.

### **8.) Ayas Men Men Child and Family Services**

Ayas Men Men child and family services - serve the Squamish Nation. Squamish people have lived in villages in Greater Vancouver, Howe Sound and the Squamish River watershed since time immemorial. After contact with European settlers, 16 tribes united as the Squamish Band on July 23, 1923. Traditional Squamish territory measures 6,732 square miles. Currently, there are 3,446 official members. 1,941 of who live on Squamish Nation reserves. Ayas Men Men Child and Family Services has a vision for strong healthy individuals and communities working together honoring our positive identity as First Nations families and to effectively manage our resources for the benefit of future generations.

### **9.) Nezel Be Hunuyeh Child and Family Services (agency literature)**

Nezel Be Hunuyeh, provides; Support Services for families, Voluntary Care Agreements, Special Needs Agreement and establishing Residential Resources for children in care to the on reserve population of the Nak'azdli Band and the Tl'azt'en Nation. Our Vision is that family life in our community will be restored as the primary focus. We envision our community as a place where children will learn and be nurtured through positive role modeling by community leaders and that they will be guided by the teachings of our elders'. Children will be empowered to carry forward the tradition of caring into the next generation.

### **10.) Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services**

Surrounded by Cedar - is an urban Aboriginal delegated child and family serving agency. In Victoria, the Capital Region, we raise our hands to the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations for allowing those who are visitors to live on their traditional lands. We will work in partnership with other urban and on-reserve agencies and communities to provide cultural programming, intervention, education, prevention, support, and delegated child welfare services. Our services are based on the principle that the best interests of the urban Aboriginal child must be maintained, within the context of the child's family, his or her community, and his or her Nation.

## **Appendix 2: Survey Respondents**

(Note: written permission granted for use of names)

We would like to thank and acknowledge the respondents to the survey for their important contributions to cultural competency development in Aboriginal child welfare

- a.)** Ian Clark - CFNCS Instructor
- b.)** Lloyd McDames – Gitxsan Child and Family Services
- c.)** Melanie Scott - CFNCS Instructor
- d.)** Kelowa Edel – Xyolhemeylh Child and Family Services
- e.)** B. MacKenzie, Lori Guerin, Victoria Mills, Kevin Paige, Liisa Laakso, Joseph Tom – Lalum’utul Smun’eem Child and Family Services
- f.)** Maurice Squires – Nisga’a Child and Family Services
- g.)** William Yoachim – Kwumut Lelum Child and Family Services
- h.)** Jennifer Houde – Okanagan Nation Alliance
- i.)** Bunny (Sharon) LeBlanc – Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society
- j.)** Linda George, Jackie Gonzales – Ayas Men Men Child and Family Services
- k.)** Don McLelland – Nezel Be Hunuyeh Child and Family Services
- l.)** Lisa George - Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services
- m.)** Norah Drury –Xyolhemeylh Child and Family Services
- n.)** Kim Grzybowski – CFNCS Instructor
- o.)** Chris Pearson – CFNCS Instructor

### **Appendix 3: The Delegation Process in British Columbia**

**[http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/about\\_us/aboriginal/delegated/delegation\\_processes.htm](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/about_us/aboriginal/delegated/delegation_processes.htm) retrieved November 13, 2009**

#### **Delegation Enabling Agreement Requirements and Operational Stages**

Reserve-based First Nations communities, urban based Aboriginal communities, and Métis communities who are seeking to develop an Aboriginal Child and Family Service Agency (ACFSA) must undertake three phases of program development in order to build capacity to develop and deliver services to their members.

#### **Phase 1: Pre-planning**

This activity is intended to support community consultation, data collection and information gathering sufficient for the preparation of an initial community proposal and preliminary discussions with the province and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC).

This proposal should produce a detailed plan indicating the services required and how the community intends to establish these. It also must indicate community support for the development of an ACFSA (including band council resolutions for reserve based agencies).

#### **Phase 2: Planning**

This activity is intended to support all the work up to, and including, a formal agreement involving the province (represented by the Director of Child Protection), the Aboriginal community, and INAC.

This stage of program development entails the completion of a needs assessment and elaboration of plans which address the following operational readiness criteria:

- respective roles and responsibilities,
- service delivery model,
- personnel policies,
- financial policy,
- organizational chart,
- job descriptions,
- accounting system,
- implementation plan, and
- funding arrangements.

### **Phase 3: Start-up**

This phase begins to operationalize the readiness criteria established in the Planning stage, and includes the following activities:

- staff are hired, oriented and trained,
- offices are established and furniture and equipment is purchased,
- information management systems are installed,
- training is established for local committees and boards of directors.

The result is the establishment of an ACFSA that is ready and qualified to deliver services.

This three phased program development process is consistent with INAC's child and family services program delivery model (Directive 20-1). It also accommodates for all aboriginal communities designated under the CFCSA, including urban based Aboriginal communities, Métis communities, and reserve based First Nations communities.

### **Delegation Enabling Agreement Requirements**

Prior to receiving delegation from the Director of Child Protection under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act*, which will enable the Aboriginal Child and Family Service Agency (ACFSA) to enter into the operational stages of service delivery, each new ACFSA is required to have completed the following requirements:

#### **Signed Agreement with the Director**

Components of the Delegation Enabling Agreement between MCFD and an ACFSA pertain to the following areas of program delivery:

- delegation of the Director's authority under the CFCSA,
- contracting of legal counsel,
- provision of service and emergency/after hours service,
- policy development; standards, monitoring and reporting,
- reviews, audits and evaluations,
- information management (file transfer; confidentiality, electronic systems, etc.),
- conflict/dispute resolution,
- financial arrangements,
- liability issues, and
- terms of agreement.

## **Obtain Start-up Funding**

Funding is provided by INAC for reserve-based ACFSA, and by MCFD for urban-based Aboriginal communities and Métis communities.

## **Pass a Program Review by the Deputy Director**

The program review that occurs before an ACFSA can begin delivery of delegated services is based upon the operational readiness criteria which have been established. The operational readiness criteria address key areas of organizational development and services planning including:

- governance,
- service delivery model design,
- general administration (including information sharing, management information systems, caseload standards),
- financial administration policy,
- human resources policy (including staff recruitment, training, and supervision), and
- communications policy.

Upon passing the program review by the Deputy Director, an ACFSA will be eligible to enter operational C3 of program delivery.

## **Operational Stages**

After the negotiation of a Delegation Enabling Agreement, each new Aboriginal Child and Family Service Agency (ACFSA) enters into a three tiered operational process as defined in the MCFD "Delegation of Authority to Aboriginal Agencies" matrix. The levels of operational readiness are as follows:

- C3 - Resource development and voluntary service delivery
- C4 - Guardianship services for continuing custody wards
- C6 - Full child protection services

Each operational level has specific operational standards and practice standards associated with it. An ACFSA may progress sequentially through operational levels C3 - C6, however, prior to progressing through the levels of delegation, each ACFSA must meet specific operational standards pertaining to the authorities associated with the level of delegation.

## **C3 - (Delegation Matrix)**

The areas of service covered under this level include:

- support services for families,



- voluntary care agreements for children, including temporary in-home care, and
- special needs agreements, including those for children in care on no fixed term.

Operational and Practice standards address:

- case management,
- family assessment,
- service planning and agreements,
- children in voluntary care,
- standards for care in regular, restricted, and specialized family care homes,
- monitoring and evaluation, and
- closure and transfer of cases.

#### **C4 (Delegation Matrix)**

The areas of service covered under this level include those found in C3, as well as guardianship of children in the continuing custody of the Director. Practice standards for guardianship are similar to those for voluntary care in C3, but also include:

- develop, monitor and review comprehensive plans of care for children in care,
- legal documentation,
- permanency planning for children in care,
- prepare youth to transition for independence,
- reportable circumstances,
- ongoing monitoring of child's well-being while in care, and
- quality care reviews.

#### **C6 (Delegation Matrix)**

The areas of service covered under this level include those found in C3 and C4, as well as child protection, which include:

- receiving, assessing and, as required, investigating reports of child abuse and neglect;
- deciding the most appropriate course of action if a child is deemed in need of protection;
- where necessary, removing the child and placing the child in care; and
- obtaining court orders or taking other measures to ensure the ongoing safety and well-being of the child.

Practice standards address the following areas:

- intake,
- investigation,
- taking charge of children,
- risk assessment,
- risk reduction,
- ongoing protective family service, and
- investigate allegations of abuse in foster homes.

## **Appendix 4: Proposed DRAFT Foundational Competencies for Child Welfare Workers MCFD January 2007**

### Proposed DRAFT Foundational Competencies for Child Welfare Workers

#### Culture and Diversity

##### **1. Culture Awareness**

*The ability to be aware of one's own culture and traditions and how they affect interactions with individuals*

##### **Knowledge**

☐ Recognizes the multicultural context of Canada, and of the communities in which one works

☐ Knows one's own culture and traditions and how they affect child welfare practice

☐ Understands the specific norms, values, codes of conduct, traditions and child-rearing practices of cultural groups served by the child welfare organization

☐ Understands how coping strategies may vary among cultural groups and how to consider cultural norms when working with families

☐ Knows strategies to increase one's cultural competence, including ways to understand specific cultural norms, values, traditions and child-rearing practices

☐ Knows strategies to conduct culturally competent casework practice

☐ Knows how to differentiate stereotypes and culturally relevant information

##### **2 – Foundational Competencies for Child Welfare Workers**

##### **2-2 Foundational Competencies for Child Welfare Workers in British Columbia**

##### **Skills**

☐ Demonstrates inclusion and being open to individual and cultural differences

☐ Differentiates abuse and neglect from diverse child-rearing and disciplinary practices in case practice situations

☐ Accesses and applies culturally relevant information to all aspects of casework intervention

##### **2. Diversity**

*The ability to be aware of diversity, other cultures and traditions and how they affect working with children, youth and families*

##### **Knowledge**

☐ Understands that diversity encompasses age, gender, race, ethnicity, ability, education, marital and parental status, sexual orientation and lifestyle

☐ Understands how racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination can impact individual and family functioning

☐ Understands how personal perceptions, biases and assumptions of diversity may impact working with children, youth and families

**Skills**

- ☐ Demonstrates respect for differences
- ☐ Uses strategies to support diversity and inclusion
- ☐ Responds to the needs of children, youth and families from diverse populations in a respectful and effective manner

**3. Cultural Responsiveness and Culturally Competent Services**

*The ability to form constructive collaborative relationships with families and communities of various cultures and respond in a culturally sensitive and respectful manner, while providing culturally competent services*

**Knowledge**

- ☐ Identifies and describes how personal and cultural backgrounds, beliefs and perspectives may influence relationships with children, families, colleagues, caregivers and service providers

**2 – Foundational Competencies for Child Welfare Workers****Competencies for Child Welfare Workers in British Columbia □ 2-3**

- ☐ Understands that a family's cultural background will impact participation in developing a service plan
- ☐ Understands the importance of a child and youth's cultural background in placement selection
- ☐ Knows strategies for conducting culturally competent practice in order to provide services to children, youth, families and caregivers
- ☐ Identifies ways to establish positive working relationships with children, youth and families from diverse backgrounds

**Skills**

- ☐ Plans, supports and promotes activities which maintain and enhance a child and youth's connection with his or her culture
- ☐ Engages and supports caregivers to ensure that the child and youth's cultural rights and needs are met
- ☐ Conveys respect for and respond with sensitivity to families with varied cultural, lifestyle, educational or racial backgrounds
- ☐ Assesses whether service providers provide culturally competent services and how to locate culturally responsive services in the community
- ☐ Establishes and maintains positive working relationships with various cultural communities, individuals and families
- ☐ Involves cultural consultants from within the culture and local community to facilitate communication and promote culturally relevant casework service
- ☐ Conducts casework tasks and interventions with families in a culturally competent manner and links families with resources that provide culturally competent services
- ☐ Follows the organization's standards and policies to provide services that respect a child's culture and identity

**2 – Foundational Competencies for Child Welfare Workers****2-4 □ Competencies for Child Welfare Workers in British Columbia**

## **Aboriginal Children and Families**

### **1. Collaborative Relationships with Aboriginal Communities**

*The ability to strengthen collaborative working relationships with Aboriginal communities*

#### **Knowledge**

- ☐ Describes the history of Aboriginal child welfare in BC and Canada
- ☐ Describes the residual effects of residential school/colonization/systemic issues and the current unresolved issues/treaty/governance/generational issues on Aboriginal communities
- ☐ Describes the role of Aboriginal agencies in BC
- ☐ Recognizes and understands the diverse history, cultural practices, traditions, ways of life and child-rearing practices of the Aboriginal communities
- ☐ Understands how this diversity impacts child-rearing and child care practices and provision of child welfare services
- ☐ Knows whom to contact in the community to learn about the traditional protocols for determining the decision makers in the family and community
- ☐ Knows how to involve the child and youth's community in planning for the child and youth by working with formal and informal decision makers

#### **Skills**

- ☐ Works within the diverse cultural norms, values and traditions of the Aboriginal community
- ☐ Establishes positive working relationships with Aboriginal communities, families and individuals
- ☐ Includes the family traditions, specific to family and community, in assessing, planning and providing services
- ☐ Identifies, plans and delivers services that are culturally appropriate and accessible
- ☐ Involves the Aboriginal community in identifying the heritage of the child, youth and family and the strengths within the Aboriginal community
- ☐ Facilitates family meetings and conferences in a culturally competent manner

## **2 – Foundational Competencies for Child Welfare Workers**

### **Competencies for Child Welfare Workers in British Columbia □2-5**

## **Appendix 5: Authorization letter from CFNCS**

### *Caring for First Nations Children Society*

3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, 7728 Tetayut Road  
Saanichton, BC V8M 2E4  
Tel: (250) 652-9899  
Fax: (250) 652-3399  
Website: <http://www.CFNCS.com>

School of Social Work  
University of Victoria  
PO Box 1700 STN CSC  
Victoria BC V8W 2Y2  
Phone: 250.721.8036  
Fax: 250.721.6228  
E-mail: [socw@uvic.ca](mailto:socw@uvic.ca)

February 18, 2009

Dear Dr. Brown,

This letter authorizes our employee, Laurie Harding, to contact the delegated Aboriginal Agencies in the province of BC and to conduct a research survey for our Aboriginal Social Work training program. She has our agencies full support and authorization to complete her Cultural Competency Self-Assessment Project in partial completion for her Indigenous Masters in Social Work degree at the University of Victoria.

Sincerely,

Linda Lucas MSW  
Executive Director  
Caring for First Nations Children Society  
3rd floor, 7728 Tetayut Road,  
Saanichton, B C V8M 2E4  
Phone: 250-652-9899 Extension 222  
Fax: 250-652-3399  
Cellular Phone: 250 857 4960  
Toll Free 1 800 342 4155  
[www.cfncs.com](http://www.cfncs.com)

Created by Laurie Harding

## **Appendix 6: Introductory Letter to Delegated Aboriginal Agencies in British Columbia**

Hello Everyone!

My name is Laurie Harding. I am an Instructor for Caring for First Nations Children Society (CFNCS), a former delegated social worker at Lalum 'utul Smun'eem child and family services and a student at UVIC in the Indigenous Masters in Social Work program.

I am pleased to inform you that CFNCS is conducting a study to develop a *Foundational Cultural Competency Package* to prepare new employees for child welfare work in Aboriginal Agencies.

To complete this project we will need to gather information from Aboriginal agency supervisors as well as instructors of the ASW delegation program to determine the information required to establish an initial level of cultural competency awareness for Aboriginal child welfare practice. This means that we are inviting supervisors in delegated agencies to contribute by completing a survey research questionnaire and telephone follow up in the near future. You will be asked questions to share some of your child welfare experiences and also to make recommendations for the information package. This project will also be used in partial requirement for my Indigenous Masters degree in Social Work program at UVIC.

If you are willing to participate, Please email me at < laurie.harding@ cfncs.com> or call me at 250-857-4968 during the hours of 8:30-4:30PM.

I will be completing this project under the direction of Dr. Leslie Brown from the University of Victoria (UVIC) and the supervision of Linda Lucas from CFNCS.

Linda Lucas can be reached: by email at [linda.lucas@cfncs.com](mailto:linda.lucas@cfncs.com) or by telephone at 250-652-8899 local 222 and Leslie Brown can be reached at UVIC School of social work at 250-853-3247 or by email at [lbrown@uvic.ca](mailto:lbrown@uvic.ca). Please feel free to contact any one of us during this research with any questions or concerns.

I look forward to hearing from you and your feedback regarding your experience and support of Aboriginal cultural competence in caring for our children, communities and families.

Huy ch qa,

Laurie Harding  
CFNCS Instructor  
Indigenous MSW candidate



## Appendix 7: Survey Sample

Name:

Agency:

The purpose of this survey is to gather information and recommendations in developing a *Foundational Cultural Competency Package* for the Aboriginal Agencies to support Aboriginal child welfare practice and to support the delegation training program at Caring for First Nations.

Please note: This package is not intended to address the unique cultural diversity of each agency but as a foundational starting place for Aboriginal child welfare practice.

- 
1. Please tell me about your role as a Supervisor in an Aboriginal agency (*or as a CFNCS ASW instructor*)? How long have you been in this role?
  2. How long have you been involved in child welfare practice and in what capacity?
  3. What is your cultural/ethnic background?
  4. Did you take your delegation training with MCFD or with CFNCS? When did you take your delegation training?
  5. What cultural competency material would you have liked to have had in your delegation training?
  6. What **specific foundational TOPICS** do you recommend all new employees have regarding cultural competency and self-awareness in Aboriginal child welfare practice? What **specific foundational RESOURCES** do you recommend all new employees have regarding cultural competency and self-awareness in Aboriginal child welfare practice? Please provide APA citing, authors, article names, videos etc and electronic copies if possible.

For example:

**A) Colonization-** “The Occasional Evil of Angels”- Cindy Blackstock 2005

**B) Residential School** Video1994 –Kuper Island: Return to the Healing

Circle

**C) White Privilege** (Peggy MacIntosh- White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack 1990)

**D.) Becoming an Ally** (John Raible 1994- Checklist for White Allies Against Racism)

**This is just an example of topics or resources. YOUR own experiences, stories, ideas and examples in any kind of learning are highly valued.**

7. What unique cultural awareness activities or information is required for either Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal child welfare workers that will make a difference in Aboriginal child welfare practice?
8. Do you have any other comments you would like to make or stories you would like to share that you feel are important for cultural competency in Aboriginal child welfare training?

**Please note that** completion and submission of the survey constitutes consent.

Please be sure to complete the consent form and fax both the consent form and the survey with your listed recommendations back to the CFNCS office by FAX: 250-652-3399 Attention: Laurie Harding- PLEASE call first to advise the researcher when you are faxing your survey so that I can make sure to receive it personally. The researcher can also be reached at Laurie.Harding@cfncs.com

The researcher will be contacting you personally with the results of the study.

**Your support of this project is very much appreciated! ☺**

### **Appendix 8: Consent Form**

My name is Laurie Harding; I am deeply honoured to conduct this research project for Caring for First Nations Children Society. I will be completing this project in partial requirement for completion in an Indigenous Master's of Social Work degree in social work from the University of Victoria. THE MATERIAL WILL BE USED IN MY UVIC MASTERS THESIS. I will be completing this project under the direction of Dr. Leslie Brown from UVIC and the supervision of Linda Lucas from CFNCS. Linda Lucas can be reached: by email at [linda.lucas@cfncs.com](mailto:linda.lucas@cfncs.com) – or by telephone at 250-652-8899 local 222 and Leslie Brown can be reached at the UVIC School of social work at 250-853-3247 or by email at [lbrown@uvic.ca](mailto:lbrown@uvic.ca).

UVIC RESEARCH ETHICS CONTACT INFORMATION (250) 472-4545  
[ethics@uvic.ca](mailto:ethics@uvic.ca)

This study has been initiated by Caring for First Nations Children Society and has been authorized under the direction of the delegated Aboriginal Agencies executive directors' forum to benefit training for their social workers.

The potential benefits of your participation in this study include providing valuable information and recommendations that will inform the ASW training program development; as well as planning and awareness for the delegated Aboriginal agencies and the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

Your participation must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or explanation. If you do withdraw from the study, your information will not be used in the analysis.

Created by Laurie Harding

In terms of protecting your anonymity, all information will be gathered and presented in a manner that is not directly attributable to any individual participant, unless requested in writing by the participant. Individual participant's names may be listed in an appendix, again only if authorized, in writing, by the participant. Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the information will be protected, stored in a secure filing cabinet and all files will be password protected and accessible only by myself and my supervisors.

Information from this study will be disposed of in the following manner; All hard copy materials containing participant information not contained in the final report will be shredded at the end of the project. All electronic files containing personal information, not contained in the report, will be permanently deleted. It is anticipated that the results of the study will be shared with others in the following ways: A final report will be presented to Caring for First Nations Children Society Board of directors and Aboriginal Agency directors and the Ministry of Children and Family Development Aboriginal services to assist in training planning. If you would like to voluntarily participate in the study, your participation will include a completion of a survey questionnaire and a follow up telephone call regarding completion of the survey. It is anticipated that approximately a half an hour will be required to complete the survey, your opinions are valued and the time may be extended as necessary. **THERE IS NO OBLIGATION TO PARTICIPATE IF YOU KNOW THE RESEARCHER.**

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this study.

Your information will be required to be verified by you before being added to the study and your final authorization is again required before the final report is approved. THE DATA WILL BE DESTROYED AFTER SEVEN YEARS.

Your time and input is greatly appreciated and is most valuable in contributing to planning for training for Aboriginal child and family service agencies in BC.

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of your participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered.

**Please note that** completion and submission of the survey constitutes consent.

**Consent for PARTICIPATION:**

**Print name:**

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**Signature:**

---

**Witness:**

---

**Date:**

---

**SIGNATURE FOR PERMISSION GRANTED TO USE NAME:**

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## **Appendix 9: Outline and Introduction for Orientation Package**

Self Assessment in Cultural Competency Development:  
An Aboriginal Child Welfare Orientation

### **DRAFT**

*Proposed OUTLINE adapted from Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA)*

*Indigenous Cultural Competency Online Training Program*

*Note: (to be authorized and vetted by the TAC committee)*

#### 1.) Introduction

- Setting a context for cultural competency in Aboriginal Child welfare
- Self care and triggers

#### 2.) History of Context for Aboriginal peoples

- Terms and definitions
- Colonization
- Res school
- 60's
- Indian Act
- Political influences and neo-colonization

#### 3.) Self awareness

- Cultural and racial identity development
- Self awareness & cultural competency
- Cultural knowledge
- Locating self

- White privilege and power
- Stereotyping
- Racism

4.) SKILLS in Cultural Competency (equally weighted)

- Communication
- Relational skills
- Conflict resolution

**SELF ASSESSMENT & CULTURAL COMPETENCY PLAN (Appendix 9)**

**EVALUATION Forms (Pre- and Post evaluation)**

Proposed Format for Modules 1- 4:

- 1.) Introduction paragraph
- 2.) Articles
- 3.) Sources
- 4.) Reflective questions
- 5.) Practice Recommendations from survey
- 6.) Recommended Resources/websites

**INTRODUCTION for Orientation Curriculum**

***Why a Self Assessment in Cultural Competency Development Orientation Package?***

The Aboriginal child welfare agencies and the CFNCS instructors of the ASW program have found that new employees in Aboriginal agencies are extremely

diverse in cultural background, education, life experiences, and self awareness. This diversity of awareness can create emotional challenges for the participants and a challenge for new hires working with people of other cultures. This *Self Assessment in Cultural Competency Development Orientation Package* was developed to provide an 'initial awareness' of the topics to support them in their child welfare practice. The topics included in the package are by no means exhaustive and are meant only as minimal expectations for 'beginning' working with Aboriginal agencies. The package has been informed by the recommendations of the delegated Aboriginal Agency supervisors, MCFD Aboriginal services, CFNCS Instructors and the Training Advisory Committee (TAC), which is representative of the 24 delegated Aboriginal agencies in BC.

### **Intention of this Package**

The hope is that this cultural awareness package will support each employee working for an Aboriginal agency to recognize the importance and to build individual cultural self awareness so vital their practice in Aboriginal Social Work. Cultural competency is not a destination but a journey which is as unique and diverse as the populations we serve. It is expected that each employee will be responsible for recognizing his/her own cultural awareness needs. Each person is required to identify, develop and document a plan to meet his/her own Cultural Competency needs with a mentor to monitor and support continued development. This package *is not intended* to address the unique cultural



diversity of each agency but ONLY as an orientation and starting place for Aboriginal child welfare practice.

## **Appendix 10: Self Assessment in Cultural Competency Development**

Adapted from: *Cultural Competency: A Self-Assessment Guide for Human Service Organizations*

Source:

[http://www.calgary.ca/docgallery/bu/cns/fcss/cultural\\_competency\\_self\\_assessment\\_guide.pdf](http://www.calgary.ca/docgallery/bu/cns/fcss/cultural_competency_self_assessment_guide.pdf)

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Canada*

Prepared By Hieu Van Ngo  
Cultural Diversity Institute, Calgary, Alberta

### **Purpose**

The Cultural Competency Self- Assessment Instrument offers a structured format to assess the delivery of culturally competent services to;

- assess progress in culturally competent service delivery;
- identify what changes are needed and who should assume responsibility for those changes;
- develop specific strategies to address cultural competency issues.

### **Service Delivery**

Agency policy requires staff members pay attention to cultural identity, customs, communication, norms and structures in the family and community that they serve.

### **Objectives**

Created by Laurie Harding

- To ensure that agency staff incorporate cultural competency in their work with culturally diverse clients and service providers.
- To establish a comprehensive service delivery process that involves culturally diverse clients and communities to address individual and cultural needs.

**Procedure**

Individuals who provide direct service delivery, information and referral services to clients will complete this questionnaire. For each of the following statements, choose the answer that best describes your practice at the current time.

Write down positive progress as well as additional practice needs to move towards cultural competency; in the additional comments space below with.

Go over your self assessment with your supervisor and develop a plan and timeline to meet your cultural competency practice needs.

Circle Y, N or IP after each statement and provide examples where possible.

Y • YES

N • NO

IP • IN PROGRESS

**SERVICE DELIVERY**

1. I use cross-cultural skills and knowledge of cultural dynamics to conduct client assessments. Y N IP

2. I use assessment instruments or tools that are culturally sensitive. Y N IP

3. I work with clients to set culturally relevant goals and objectives. Y N IP

4. I learn as much as possible about the cultures of my clients and the cross-cultural patterns that affect the way in which individuals communicate, use survival strategies and deal with their unmet needs. Y N IP

**PLANNING**

1. I utilize my cross-cultural skills and knowledge of cultural dynamics to develop action plans. Y N IP

2. I involve clients and recognize culture in the development of their action plans. Y N IP

3. I work with clients to set culturally relevant goals and objectives. Y N IP

4. Whenever possible, I work with clients in settings that are comfortable and familiar to them (i.e., home, neighborhood, reservation or community facility). **Y N IP**

### **INTERVENTION**

1. I recognize all aspects of my service delivery must demonstrate cultural competency. **Y N IP**

2. I empower clients by using their cultural strengths and informal support networks in service delivery. **Y N IP**

3. I assist clients to develop and/or maintain cultural supports in their families and communities. **Y N IP**

4. I access outreach activities as appropriate to address the needs of culturally diverse clients. **Y N IP**

5. I use culturally diverse natural helping networks in my interventions. **Y N IP**

6. I consider the impact of acculturation, assimilation and historical perspectives on the cultural groups in all interventions. **Y N IP**

7. I empower clients by using their cultural strengths and informal support networks in service delivery. **Y N IP**

8. I evaluate case outcomes with respect to culturally relevant goals outlined in case plans. **Y N IP**

9. I include client input in assessing the level of cultural competency in service delivery. **Y N IP**

10. I consult cultural organizations to learn more about the effectiveness and responsiveness of its programs and services. **Y N IP**

### **ADVOCACY**

1. I ensure advocacy activities are appropriately integrated in client services. **Y N IP**

2 I work with community groups that are actively advocating for freedom from discrimination, equity and access to participation for all Canadians.

Y N IP

3. I am involved in efforts to advocate for programs, policies and services that directly and indirectly have impacts on culturally diverse people.

Y N IP

**Additional Comments:**

Please note gaps in progress and steps planned to meet the goals.

This assessment is to be reviewed regularly with your supervisor to become a standard of cultural competency in your child welfare practice.

**MY LEARNING NEEDS ARE:**

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**RESOURCES (actions, people, books, and websites) to meet my needs are:**

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**MY PLAN to address my needs:**

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**My plan will be completed on:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Witness:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 11: Pre Training Evaluation

### Self Assessment in Cultural Competency Development: An Aboriginal Child Welfare Orientation

Adapted from CFNCS ASW Week1 and Cultural Awareness Training (CAT) training (developed by Cheryl Ward 2006)

Pre -Training Questionnaire

Name \_\_\_\_\_

This orientation package is an opportunity for participants to explore the core values, attitudes, skills and knowledge that inform their practice with Aboriginal people and communities. Through this orientation and the ASW delegation training, participants will develop and enhance their understanding of the impact and legacy of colonization and residential school; are introduced to concepts of “white privilege”, “democratic racism” and “unintentional racism”; will explore the history of cultural interference in child welfare, education and the justice system; and will learn about the importance of cultural and racial identity development.

It is generally understood that “cultural competence” is an *evolving* process that depends on self reflection, relationships, self awareness and respect for differences, and is based on improved understanding as opposed to an increase in specific cultural knowledge. It is the intention of this package to broaden the core foundations and to shift the learning focus toward current practice themes. This Pre-Training Questionnaire is intended to provide baseline information that will inform a Self assessment in Cultural Competency and a subsequent learning plan to demonstrate practical skill.

The answers to these questions will provide you with the opportunity to evaluate for yourself where learning has occurred as a result of the training, your strengths, and areas for further development. Please read the following statements and list examples:

1. Describe your current understanding of cultural competency practice in child welfare;

■ \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_

3. Describe the areas that you experience as the most challenging in cultural competency;

- \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_

The following questions will provide baseline information that will inform your self assessment. The questions are to be revisited following completion of the orientation package to assess progress as well as further learning required.

#### KNOWLEDGE:

1. I am aware of the implications for Aboriginal children not being connected to their communities in a meaningful way. For example:



2. I have a clear sense of my own ethnic and racial identity and how this impacts my social work practice. For example:



3. I am able to integrate my knowledge of the history of colonization of Aboriginal people into my practice by:



#### SKILLS:

1. I can identify actions that I have taken to develop a constructive and positive relationship with the Aboriginal community in my area. They are:



2. Aboriginal community representatives and service providers consider me an ally and know I have the skills to support them in culturally appropriate intervention strategies. By:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

3. When working with Aboriginal children in out-of-home care, I make it a habit to ask them about their experiences with racism at home, in the school and community. I can provide strategies to assist the children to manage their experiences. For example:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

#### Values and Self Awareness:

1. I am comfortable not being “the expert” and I recognize when I am in danger of imposing the so-called “correct course of action”. Therefore I:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

2. I practice from a strengths perspective and one of my core beliefs is that the Aboriginal community has within it the capacity to heal and create its’ own solutions. Some of these strengths include:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

3. I have a support system in place that I use to debrief experiences which I have found to be upsetting, hurtful, destructive and wounding. I have managed to develop allies, both Aboriginal and White, and our relationships have promoted personal and professional growth.

Yes: \_\_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_\_ I am working on it: \_\_\_\_\_

4. I recognize that people of different backgrounds can take different but equally effective approaches to their work, and I can avoid turning those differences into stereotypes by:

- \_\_\_\_\_



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I want to learn more about:



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My plan to address my learning needs includes:

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Thank you for completing this evaluation!

Further cultural competency learning is your ethical responsibility, please feel  
free to contact CFNCS and search our website for further resources at  
CFNCS.com



## Appendix 12: Post Training Evaluation

Adapted from CFNCS ASW and CAT training

### Post Evaluation of the Orientation Package

Name \_\_\_\_\_

The intent of this evaluation is two fold: it is an opportunity for you to reflect on the learning that has occurred for you and also to provide constructive feedback in order to shape and contribute to curricula development. Please comment, based on this training:

1. What has emerged for you as the most important way you need to grow personally or professionally?

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2. What I will now incorporate into my practice:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

3. Evidence I will use to judge that my practice has moved/improved:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. What I hope to do differently (action plan):

1. Immediately: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Six months: \_\_\_\_\_
3. One year: \_\_\_\_\_

5. What I want to explore further:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

6. When the activities were challenging, I was able to work through my emotional responses by:

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7. Areas that I experienced difficulties and that I will need to further process are:

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8. Areas that I particularly enjoyed or valued:

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9. Readings/research/theory/ people that helped my learning and professional development:

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10. How will families know that I am practicing cultural safety?

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Suggestions for improving the training:

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*Thank you for your participation, and contributions to this training.*