



University
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

GWENDOLYN GOSEK

MSW (University of Manitoba, 2002)

BA (University of Manitoba, 2002)

BSW (University of Manitoba, 1991)

**“The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry-Child Welfare Initiative in Manitoba:
A study of the process and outcomes for Indigenous families and
communities from a front line perspective”**

School of Social Work

December 19, 2017

10:00 A.M.

Clearihue Building

Room B017

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Leslie Brown, School of Social Work, University of Victoria (Supervisor)

Dr. Jeannine Carriere, School of Social Work, UVic (Member)

Dr. Susan Strega, School of Social Work, UVic (Member)

Dr. Sandrina de Finney, School of Child and Youth Care, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Michael DeGagné, President and Vice-Chancellor, Nipissing University

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Audrey Yap, Department of Philosophy, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

Abstract

As the number of Indigenous children and youth in the care of Manitoba child welfare steadily increases, so do the questions and public debates. The loss of children from Indigenous communities due to residential schools and later on, to child welfare, has been occurring for well over a century and Indigenous people have been continuously grieving and protesting this forced removal of their children. In 1999, when the Manitoba government announced their intention to work with Indigenous peoples to expand off-reserve child welfare jurisdiction for First Nations, establish a provincial Métis mandate and restructure the existing child care system through legislative and other changes, Indigenous people across the province celebrated it as an opportunity for meaningful change for families and communities. The restructuring was to be accomplished through the Aboriginal Justice Initiative-Child Welfare Initiative (AJI-CWI).

Undoubtedly, more than a decade later, many changes have been made to the child welfare system but children are still been taken into care at even higher rates than before the changes brought about by the AJI-CWI. In order to develop an understanding of what has occurred as a result of the AJI-CWI process, this study reached out to child welfare workers who had worked in the system before, during and after the process was put in place. Using a storytelling approach based in an Indigenous methodology, twenty-seven child welfare workers shared how they perceived the benefits, the deficits, the need for improvement and how they observed the role of Indigenous culture within the child welfare context. The stories provide a unique insight into how the changes were implemented and how the storytellers experienced the process, as well as their insights into barriers, disappointments, benefits and recommendations for systemic change.