Alternative Mechanisms for Dispute Resolution with Aboriginal Communities

Traditional Decision Making in the Coast North Shore Region

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Executive Summary

The Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD) is committed to a Truth and Reconciliation process with First Nations. Becoming informed about the traditional decision-making (TDM) processes of the Nations they work with supports the goals of the Truth and Reconciliation process in terms of its recommendations on child welfare. The MCFD is looking to increase the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) processes and the knowledge gathered by this work can inform the increased use of traditional mechanisms. This means out of court dispute resolution in terms of Indigenous child welfare. The goal of this report is to reconceptualise dispute resolution strategies for MCFD in the Coast/North Shore region, informing both practices of social workers and recommendations for supporting existing structures of dispute resolution, the support of TDM processes and meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities.

It is of the upmost importance that our primary research question “How do we meaningfully engage with individual Indigenous communities about alternative mechanisms of dispute resolution?” be informed by Indigenous people. This means prioritizing cultural knowledge keepers and Indigenous scholars with an aim to collaboratively construct methods and guidelines. This also means sharing any and all information and reports from interviews with these communities. Due to time constraints, only one such knowledge holder hereditary and executive Chief of the shíshálh (Sechelt) First Nation Calvin Craigan was interviewed. For this reason, much of the recommendations in terms of what ought to be considered meaningful engagement in this study are derived from this interview and so are most applicable to the shíshálh First Nation. In addition we have conducted an interview with
Stephen Kozey, who although a settler, is a key informant in terms of his twenty years of experience with Squamish First Nation’s child welfare.
Introduction

Background

Child Welfare in Canada: Canada’s colonial history plays an unparalleled role in the disproportionate representation of Indigenous children in the child welfare system. The adoption and enforcement of settler laws and policies has undermined traditional laws and decision-making practices, including traditional parenting practices. Additionally, colonial programs and policies, including residential schools, the Sixties Scoop and the BC Adoption Act, saw the removal of thousands of children from their families and communities, systematically undermining Indigenous culture, rights, traditions and language (Richard, 2017).

Child Welfare in British Columbia: BC’s borders include 203 distinct First Nations communities, and approximately 200,000 indigenous people. Traditionally, Indigenous peoples had their own policies, systems and cultural practices to ensure the safety of their children (Richard 2017). Today, more than 62 per cent of BC’s children in care are Indigenous (Richard, 2017). This reality is a result of the atrocities of Canada’s colonial history, as well as contemporary federal and provincial policies and practices (Richard, 2017).

Delegated Aboriginal Agencies: In the province of BC, MCFD shares child welfare responsibility with Delegated Aboriginal Agencies (DAAs). With the exception of the Splatsin Nation (formerly Spallumcheen Indian Band), and the Nisga’a Lisims Nation, all DAAs in BC are bound by the provincial child welfare legislation and standards (Kozlowski, Sinha, Hoey & Lucas, 2011). The Splatsin Nation is the only Nation in Canada able to provide child services independently through an organization of social workers and family support workers called the Splatsin
Stsmamlt Services. The Nation started the original First Nation child welfare agency in BC in 1981. It was able to achieve freedom from the constraints of provincial laws and standards through a band by-law model, allowed under the Indian Act (Kozlowski et al., 2011; Rae, 2011). The Nisga’a have a similar freedom to make laws for Nisga’a children and families living on Nisga’a lands, through a treaty signed with the BC government in 1999, as long as the laws are comparable to BC’s provincial standards (Kozlowski et al., 2011).

As of December 2016, of the 7010 children in care in the province, 4,367 of these were Aboriginal. Of these, 57 per cent were served by MCFD, while 43 per cent were served by one of the province’s 23 DAAs (Richard, 2017). Of these 23 DAAs, there are three levels of certification. Eleven DAAs are level C6, offering full child protection services; eight are level C4, offering guardianship services to those children and youth already in care; and four are level C3 offering only voluntary services (Richard, 2017). See Figure 1.

Purpose

This report focuses on two research questions:

• How do we meaningfully engage with individual Aboriginal communities about alternative mechanisms for dispute resolution?

• What resources are necessary for ministry staff to understand and support the use of TDM and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in BC’s Coast/North Shore region?

Additionally, through the cross-jurisdictional scan, the authors have explored the question:
• How do governments and agencies successfully implement and/or support ADR and TDM practices with Aboriginal communities?

The purpose of the report is to provide relevant research to the MCFD office of the Coast/North Shore region to assist them in better supporting the utilization of TDM practices in the communities they serve. This will be accomplished through the literature review, cross-jurisdictional scan and key informant interviews that follow, concluding with short and long-term recommendations for the MCFD office, as well as a list of recommendations for frontline social workers and service providers working with the Coast/North Shore Nations.
Figure 1:

**BC Context**

Children in Care in BC

- 62% *Aboriginal*
- 38% *Non-Aboriginal*

Service Provision for Aboriginal Children and Youth in Care

- 42.8% *Delegated Aboriginal Agencies*
- 57.2% *Ministry of Children and Families*

**Delegated Aboriginal Agencies**

- **C6:** 11 Agencies offering full child protection services
- **C4:** 8 Agencies offering guardianship services to children and youth in care
- **C3:** 4 Agencies offering voluntary services

**Certifications**
Literature Review

Methods
The literature review focused on ADR methods in Child Welfare with Indigenous communities which are most similar to the Settler Colonial conditions in Canada. Specifically, the former British colonies of Australia, New Zealand and the United States. In addition to this, the focus on how to change current practices in Canada from the perspective of scholars. In particular, this review gives priority to Indigenous scholars with knowledge and experience on the following subjects whenever possible. The literature review has been organized into the following themes: How culture is assessed; Family Group Conferencing; Meaningful relationships.

Family Group Conferencing
The Family Group Conferencing (FGC) model of ADR was developed out of a study done by a group of Indigenous Maori scholars known as the “Maori Advisory Unit” (Peri, Herewini and Wilson, 1985). This report was done for the Department of Social Welfare because institutional racism that Maori people face and the lack of Maori people in decision-making roles in terms of child welfare (Peri et al., 1985). FGC was instituted into law in 1989 and has since been the standard practice when dealing with juvenile cases in New Zealand (NCJRS, 2017). FGC is a non-adversarial dispute method. This non-adversarial approach to problem solving differs from an adversarial position in that the dispute is not focused on one person, but rather shared among the family and community. It has a holistic approach, which is aimed at helping those who have committed a wrongful act(s) and their families to prevent such acts from reoccurring. In the case of child welfare, it in still centered around the child at risk but the emphasis on non-adversarial approach
remains with family and parents. The Maori call kinship *Whanaungatanga*, an expression incorporating the concepts of ancestral and spiritual ties which bind people together (Lowry, 1997). The purpose of defining the family broadly is to ensure that all of the persons important to the child attend the conference. The idealized goal in these negotiations is to transform attendees from adversaries into joint problem solvers and to empower families, guided by assistance from professionals to devise their own solutions. Center to this is the idea that children are best raised in their families and communities. This method is broken up into four specific foci. The first is that all extended family is included. The Maori call kinship *Whanaungatanga*, an expression incorporating the concepts of ancestral and spiritual ties, which bind people together (Lowry 1997). The purpose of defining the family broadly is to ensure that all of the persons important to the child attend the conference. This brings us to the second focus of FGC, which is that the extended family be given the opportunity to discuss the assignment and prepare an action plan without professional child care workers being present at part of the meeting. The third focus is to involve an unbiased coordinator who does not work for the child welfare services on a daily basis to help the family plan and carry out the conference. The final focus is on approving the action plan that was formulated by the extended family, which is whether the plan protects the child and the ‘best interest of the child’ is met.

Recently, the institutional nature and structure of how FGC is currently being carried out has been called into question by Indigenous scholars. Maori representation in terms of whether their perspectives have significant input into decisions made about child care and child protection. In addition to this, despite the overall effectiveness of FGC as a model, the amount of Maori children in custody is on the rise (Moyle & Tauri 2016; Carswell, o-Hinerangi, Gray, & Taylor,
This is where we have turned to more contemporary examples of FGC, as it has had a tremendous influence in how researchers create strategies for ADR. Despite its limitations in its how it has been implemented in New Zealand, the FGC model has been adapted and influenced practices in various locations in Canada (Pintarics & Sveinunggaard, 2005), Australia and the United States (Marcynyszyn, Bear, Geary, Conti, Pecora, Day & Wilson, 2012; Desmeules, 2007). It is important to note that the authors of this report have chosen case studies which appear to directly address the concerns of Indigenous scholars which have criticised FGC. With this focus in mind, two interesting themes of how FGC has become a colonial structure emerged in the literature.

**How Culture is Assessed**

One common theme throughout the literature of how FGC, and child welfare practices in general, have become or are well established colonial structures is how culture is assessed in Indigenous child welfare cases in Canada. As one of the leading Indigenous scholars Ótiskewápíwske (Dr. Raven Sinclair) says: “It may well be true that generations of residential school trauma created the conditions for increased child apprehensions, but it is also likely that systemic and institutionalized structures have emerged that are enabling and encouraging overrepresentation.”

“Ótiskewápíwske (Raven Sinclair) well be true that generations of residential school trauma created the conditions for increased child apprehensions, but it is also likely that systemic and institutionalized structures have emerged that are enabling and encouraging overrepresentation” (Sinclair, 2016 P.14). In other words, while it is the case that residential schools have created much of the violence seen in Indigenous communities, it is also true that current forms of cultural and racial bias still play out in contemporary cases of
removal of children from Indigenous communities in Canada (Sinclair, 2016; Adjei et al., 2014; Wenona, 2007; Pintarics and Sveinunggaard, 2005). Echoing this sentiment, Maori scholars in New Zealand are concerned the FGC model there has become a “Eurocentric, formulaic, and standardized process” despite what it was intended to be (Moyle & Tauri, 2016 p.87), where institutional racism is still very prominent in child welfare (Moyle & Tauri, 2016; Connolly, 2006) as it is in Australia (Croft, 2015; Scougall, 2008; Smith, 2003) and the United States (Marcynyszyn et al., 2012; Hill, 2005). This body of scholarship refers to this problem as an epistemic rift, where what shapes how the decision on behalf the ‘best interest of the child’ is contested territory (Sinclair, 2016; Moyle & Tauri, 2016; Kahane, 2003). This has spurred researchers to come up with various methods to decolonize child welfare practices, all of which will influence the final recommendations of this report.

This topic resurfaces again in a recent report to the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia which cites the “paternal nature” of the provincial government’s approach to Indigenous child welfare (Richard 2017 p.3). All of the literature suggests that knowing what is the best interest of Indigenous children cannot be decided by government officials, social workers and judges alone. What this assessment of culture comes down to is a contemporary child welfare system premised on an ethnocentric paradigm that largely invalidates Indigenous perspectives in defining problems and prescribing solutions (Ney et al. 2014; Blackstock & Trocme, 2005; Bauman, Dalgleish, Fluke, & Kern, 2011). Where a continuation of exclusive decision making process co-opts efforts of Indigenous communities to provide their own care, while simultaneously stigmatizing and socially excluding them (Callahan & Walmsley, 2007). This means that people in decision making positions of power face challenges they may not perceive as “If
stereotypes and negative social constructions of Indigenous people are normative, and racism is deeply and unconsciously rooted in the collective Canadian psyche, can a white judge who is tasked to determine a child’s best interest be objective and judicially neutral?” (Sinclair 2016 p.8). A critique which could be extended to directors and frontline social workers as well. This led the authors of this report to seek what solutions to this clearly fundamental problem in Indigenous child welfare comes from the literature.

Meaningful Relationships

Over the course of three years, Nenan staff listened to children, youth, parents, elders we show how the Dane-zaa have revived their laws and practices in contemporary context to ensure the sustainability of their people and culture. (Ney et al. 2014)

One of the reoccurring themes in the literature in terms of how culture is assessed and in terms what settler people working with Indigenous communities are lacking is an understanding of the importance of building strong relationships. But the fundamental questions that come with this solution seems to be: When and how is a relationship meaningful? How is such a relationship accomplished? The literature consistently supports two methods of how settlers, in general, can build meaningful relationships: Investing in long-term relationships to build trust and to engage in more collaborative focused practices in all levels.
Each of these methods are necessary, as collaboration takes long-term effort and communication; and long-term efforts and commitments need to be informed by Indigenous perspectives. Long-term may seem like a relative term, however there is a long history of short-term hiring, one-time workshops and training that does not prepare social workers, adjudicators or directors about Indigenous laws and practices with respect to the care of children or understanding their day-to-day lives (Sinclair, 2016; Ney et al., 2014). This experience is also key to understanding the stakeholders within the community as “they must entrust families to define who and what tiwahe (family) means to them” (Marcynyszyn et al., 2011, p.131). This means prioritizing the development of systems that are community driven, culturally sensitive and moving toward self-determining forms of child welfare as “Systems established by those not directly involved in the community to help people in need have not worked for First Nations people” (Holyk, Shawana & Adam, 2005 p.7). Understanding the kinship structures, practices, culture and languages—the things that make up these epistemics that are normatively ignored, takes times.

Collaboration also takes time, because it has to happen on various levels, contemporary framework needs to respond to the myriad critiques of enforcement-focused practices and consequences approach to Indigenous child welfare (Sinclair, 2016; Moyle & Tauri, 2016; Ney et al., 2014; Fluke, Chabot, Fallon, MacLaurin, & Blackstock, 2010). As philosopher Dale Turner says “history has shown us that Aboriginal People have had little say in determining the perspective from which their rights and sovereignty are understood and recognized” (2004, p.58). Decolonization is not a static thing, rather it calls for cross-cultural partnerships, collaboration and a recognition of the need for a focus on the complexities of the particular Indigenous context at hand (Denzin & Lincoln,
2008). This body of literature suggests that collaboration with Indigenous communities at all levels of decision-making is a necessary component to successfully developing meaningful relationships.
**Results: Cross-Jurisdictional Scan**

**Methods**

The cross-jurisdictional scan carried out below investigates the programs, methods, innovative strategies and policies used by organizations, Indigenous peoples, and governments to successfully support the use of ADR and TDM in child welfare cases. Highlighted below are a number of programs and organizations offering services that support ADR and TDM in Aboriginal communities in BC, Canada, the United States, and New Zealand. Examples were drawn from a number of sources outlined in the literature review above, an analysis of documents provided by MCFD, a search of secondary sources and grey material as well as brief telephone interviews with a number of DAAs in B.C. Figure 2 below will provide further comparison of each program mentioned, highlighting components of each program, as well as their strengths and weaknesses.

**BC Examples**

**Carrier Sekani Family Services (CSFS):** The CSFS DAA has been included within this jurisdictional scan for a number of reasons. It offers an example within the province of a DAA serving multiple nations. There is a large amount of data available on the services provided by the CSFS and they have demonstrated some innovative practices in incorporating traditional knowledge and empowering community members to become service providers within the agency. Specifically in 2005, through a partnership with the University of Northern British Columbia, 19 students from CSFS and its member First Nations completed Family Mediation Certificates and training in Family Transformative Justice (Holyk, Shawana & Adam, 2005).
Additionally, CSFS took part in the 2011 Touchstones of Hope program in Northern BC, which appears in Figure 2 and is discussed further in our recommendations section.

Nenan Dane zaa Deh! Zona Family Services Society (Nenan): Nenan provides an example of a family services society, not currently certified through the DAA system, providing extensive TDM programs to children and families of the Dane-zaa of Northern BC. In 2009 Nenan partnered with the International Institute for Child Rights and Freedoms to implement a three-year participative research methodology called the Circle of Rights, which saw the development of community action plans relating to TDM (Ney et al., 2014). Of the many examples looked at in this report, the circles conducted by Nenan during this time period honoured the traditional knowledge, unique worldview, and TDM practices of the Dane-zaa people with the least amount of compromise or limitation. According to Ney et al (2014), as recently as 2012 Nenan worked with Dane-zaa families in order to prevent situations that would call for the involvement of MCFD or the courts. They introduced preventative services, in the area of child welfare that in many cases circumvented the need for government intervention, and instead provided Dane-zaa families with traditional services involving their kin, extended communities and Elders. Circles lasted for up to three days, and included meals, ceremony, dancing, drumming, storytelling, and the family worked together, within the Dane-zaa worldview, to develop the Trail, or the positive path forward with the help of Elders (Ney et al., 2014).

Currently, Nenan is funded through Aboriginal Service Innovation Funding under MCFD. In accordance with their funding agreement, Nenan’s current mandate is to offer services to children in care, or at serious risk of being in care. As the
organization pursues DAA certification, further restrictions will be placed on the programs they offer, and will limit their ability to dedicate resources towards extensive preventative services, as they were able to do through their partnership with the IICRD.

**Coast/North Shore Region**

Within the Coast/North Shore Region there are currently two DAAs in operation. The first serves the Squamish Nation, and is a C4 certified DAA: Ayas Men Men Child and Family Services. The second serves the Heiltsuk Nation, and is a C3 certified DAA: Heiltsuk Kaxla Child and Family Services. Each of these agencies incorporates traditional knowledge into the services they provide to the families and communities they serve.

The Ayas Men Men Child and Family Services: Through the course of this research we conducted an interview with Stephen Kozey, the facilitator and coordinator for the Nexwniwnitway Family Circle program, operated by the Ayas Men Men DAA. Kozey shared that Nexwniwnitway circles are conducted for each child or youth of the Squamish Nation who comes into contact with MCFD. These cases account for approximately one quarter of the total number of circles Kozey facilitates. Others are referred through outside organizations like schools, non-Squamish service providers, probation officers, family members, or most recently, within the last four years, self-referrals have occurred. Kozey highlighted the strong preventative role that self-referrals play: “I mean it's sort of the ultimate prevention, hey? When people ask for help” (personal communication, March 16, 2017).
Heiltsuk Kaxla Child and Family Services: While the Heiltsuk DAA only has a C3 certification, they employ a C6 certified Heiltsuk social worker, and anticipate having C4 status by the fall of 2017 (B. Park, personal communication, April 18, 2017). Beryl Park, the executive director of the agency said that the funding of further research into the traditional parenting practices of the Heiltsuk Nation would be the most useful contribution that could be made towards incorporating further traditional knowledge in the services offered by the Heiltsuk DAA at this time. She mentioned similar research that was funded and conducted with the Haida Elders by Lucy Bell, and the Haida Child and Family Services Society. That research is currently unavailable to the public.

**Canadian Examples:**

Meenoostahtan Minisiwin: First Nations Family Justice: Started in 1999 the Meenoostahtan Minisiwin program served the First Nations and Cree people of Northern Manitoba including 17 First Nation communities. It was developed by the Awasis Agency of Northern Manitoba and offered a full range of family services outside of the mandated child welfare and justice structures of Manitoba (Pintarics & Sveinunggaard, 2005). The program incorporated a traditional Cree peacemaking role with contemporary family mediation, and through the use of trained Okweskimowewak (family mediators), facilitated innovative and collaborative planning with families to serve the long-term best interests of children (Pintarics & Sveinunggaard, 2005).

At the time of the report written by Pintarics and Sveinunggaard (2005), the program had served 700 families including 1900 children, and 1500 volunteer participants. It employed up to seven full time staff as coordinators, mediators and administrators. Unfortunately, the provincial and federal funding that enabled this
extensive program was cut, and Meenoostahtan Minisiwin no longer operates. Some services are still available through the Awasis Agency of Northern Manitoba but not to the extent they were previously.

**Touchstones of Hope:** *Touchstones of Hope* is a concept of reconciliation for Canada’s child welfare system and history developed out of the *Reconciliation: Looking Back, Reaching Forward – Indigenous Peoples and Child Welfare* event that occurred at Niagara Falls in October 2005 (Blackstock et al., 2006). The event brought together Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders in child welfare from throughout Canada. The Touchstones of Hope are five principles to guide a reconciliation process focused on engaging communities to redesign child welfare: self-determination; culture and language; holistic approach; structural interventions; and non-discrimination (Quinn & Saini, 2012). The reconciliation process includes four phases: truth telling, acknowledging, restoring and relating as they relate to Canada’s child welfare system and Indigenous children. Blackstock et al. (2006) describe the concept:

> *Reconciliation begins with a truthful exploration of the harm caused by child welfare by all who were, or are still, involved. The definition of harm must be acknowledged to be the first property of those who experienced it, just as acknowledging the harm and learning from it is the first obligation of those who perpetrated it. The journey through the other phases is often more tidal in nature than linear—respecting the need for natural processes of thought and paces for change to flow forward and backward before finally settling on a new and improved reality.* (p. 7)

This process was undertaken in Northern BC through the Touchstones of Hope community sessions which included participation from Carrier-Sekani Child and Family Services; Gitxsan Child and Family Services Society; Haida Child and
Family Services; Nezul Be Hunuyeh Child and Family Services Society; Nisga’a Child and Family Services; Northwest Inter-Nation Family and Community Services Society; the many communities served by these agencies; as well as MCFD and the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of BC (Quinn & Saini, 2012). Five of the DAAs involved hosted planning sessions and generated action plans for reconciliation in child welfare. DAAs, communities and MCFD have been implemented these plans since 2010 (Quinn & Saini, 2012). Findings from the community-based participatory research evaluation conducted by Quinn and Saini (2012), found that these community sessions increased collaboration among groups working in child welfare, shifted services to be more child centred and inclusive of families, and involved families in learning new skills and accessing education that allowed them to further care for children.

The Touchstones of Hope community sessions provide an excellent example of a cross-jurisdictional approach to empowering communities in the use of ADR and TDM.

**Ontario: Family Group Conferencing**

Ontario provides Canada’s best example at a dedicated FGC model. In 2005 Ontario published what came to be known as the Transformation Agenda, but was officially titled *Child Welfare Transformation 2005: A strategic plan for a flexible, sustainable and outcome oriented service delivery model*. It emerged out of years of child welfare reform. In 2006 Ontario introduced changes to the *Child and Family Services Act* requiring the child protection agency to consider the use of ADR and highlighting FGC as an approved method. FGC is now offered by nearly every child protection agency in Ontario (George Hull Centre for Children and Families, 2011). The 170-page guide, *Family Group Conferencing/ Family Group Decision Making*
Coordinator Manual for Ontario provides an excellent resource with a thorough breakdown of the history of FGC in Canada and internationally, a step-by-step guide for how Ontario’s child protection agencies implement the process, case studies and additional resources. Referenced within this manual are also a number of resources developed through the American Humane Association (AHA), which could not be accessed during the writing of this report; however, the AHA resources as well as the Ontario coordinator manual are invaluable guides for the implementation of ADR methods and especially FGC.

New Zealand

Family Group Conferencing: FGC has already been discussed at length in this report, and is included in Figure 2 below. For the purpose of this jurisdictional scan, FGC offers an example of a nationally mandated program that incorporates elements of TDM from the Maori people. While the widespread adoption of such a practice could be considered encouraging, there are many drawbacks given the inevitable warping of traditional knowledge through the structures of bureaucracy, authority and western ideology adopting them, both in New Zealand and internationally. Take for example the experience of members of the Dane-zaa Nation:

Community members explained how their traditional practices had been replaced with Western governance and legal systems, as well as court structures that undermine and dismantle their families, communities, and culture. They also shared stories of how their families had not been well served by what are called “alternative dispute resolution” methods like Family Group Conferences (FGCs) and mediations used in child protection decision-making processes. They reported that these processes were dominated by government practices and authority, and lacked the safeguards of the courts. (pp 20-21, Ney et al., 2014)
In New Zealand, FGC is used with Indigenous and non-Indigenous people as part of the national child welfare program. While there are opportunities for individual families, social workers and community members to bring Maori culture into the process, what once emerged as a practice based on traditional knowledge, has been appropriated as a mandated, government run program that does not support Maori sovereignty, but instead perpetuates a reliance on (white) professionals and western authority structures (Ban, 2005).

**United States**

The use of FGC varies throughout the US, often being used by social service agencies and social workers outside of legislation and at their own discretion (Lowry, 1997). Examples can be found in at least Alaska, Illinois, Hawaii, Kansas, Maine, Michigan, Oregon, South Dakota, Vermont, and Washington, each operating with different rules and principles, but based on the FGC model (Ban, 2005; Hill, 2005; Lowry, 1997; Marcynyszyn et al., 2012). Referrals might come through families themselves, judges, social workers or citizen review boards, as is the case in Oregon (Lowry, 1997).

**South Dakota: Family Group Decision Making (FGDM):** FGDM, used in South Dakota with the Lakota is based on the FGC model (Marcynyszyn et al., 2012). The model, implemented at the Sicangu Child and Family Services, and Lakota Oyate Wakanyeja Owicakiyapi child welfare agencies, provides an example of ADR that provides families with private time, in which they can process information, formulate responses and make plans. In this model, as long as the agency’s concerns are addressed, the family’s plan is given preference and supported through services and resources (Marcynyszyn et al., 2012). The article: *Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) with Lakota Families in Two Tribal Communities:*
Discussion
The results of the cross-jurisdictional scan offer many examples of successful programs supporting ADR and TDMs in Aboriginal communities. For the Coast/North Shore region, the Touchstones of Hope program offers an excellent possibility to engage in a community planning process with any Nations wishing to engage with MCFD frontline workers further in order to put in place traditional practices, and further develop positive relationships around child welfare protocols. The FGC manual produced by the George Hull Centre also offers a comprehensive guide for administrators and frontline workers wishing to coordinate or facilitate FGCs. BC has some excellent examples of TDM models that have emerged from individual Aboriginal communities in order to directly serve their unique needs. There is however, a danger and tendency for these programs to be undermined as they enter into funding and operating agreements with MCFD and the provincial government. Whenever possible, resources should be given freely to Aboriginal communities wishing to develop preventative services and culturally appropriate and effective programs that meet their needs, and the needs of their children.
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<td>Community planning model</td>
<td>Provisonal mandate</td>
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<td>Informed by Elder participation</td>
<td>Thorough and extensive manual</td>
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<td>Improved ties of frontline workers with communities</td>
<td>In response to evolving child welfare approach for Aboriginal children</td>
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<td>Few examples available so far</td>
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<td>Lack of use</td>
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### Alternative Mechanisms for Dispute Resolution

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Canada: Northern BC: Carrier Sekani People</th>
<th>Canada: Northern BC: Dane-zaa Nation</th>
<th>Canada: British Columbia: Coast North Shore: Squamish Nation</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Family Group Conferencing</strong></td>
<td><strong>Nenan Dane-zaa Deh! Zona Family Services Society: The Circle: Traditional Decision Making</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ayes Men Men Child and Family Services: Nexwniwnitway Family Circles</strong></td>
<td><strong>Meenoostahtan Minisiwin: First Nations Family Justice:</strong>*</td>
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</tbody>
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#### Program Elements:

- Level C4 DAA
- Serves 11 communities
- Provides FGC
- Extensive circles (up to 3 days) based on traditional knowledge
- Includes traditional meals, dancing, drumming, storytelling
- Collaborate to create "The Path"
- Level C4 DAA
- Facilitates approx. 60 circles per year
- Family centred circles last up to 4 hours

- CSFS worker
- In 2005 trained 19 Aboriginal facilitators through a partnership with UNBC
- CSFS worker
- In 2005 trained 19 Aboriginal facilitators through a partnership with UNBC
- Nenan Guide
  - With support of Elders
- DAA facilitator sometimes in partnership with MCFD worker

- BC Government; MCFD
  - Originally partnered with IICRD to complete participative research methodology
  - Currently funded through MCFD
- BC Government; MCFD
- Originally partnered with IICRD to complete participative research methodology
- Currently funded through MCFD

- Uses Aboriginal facilitators
  - Engaged in community engagement through Touchstones of Hope community planning
- Unique program developed by the Dane-zaa for the Dane-zaa
  - Preventative services
  - Elder involvement
  - Autonomous program
- Only one quarter of circles are referred through MCFD
  - Informed by Elder participation
  - Coordinator has strong ties within communities
- Only one quarter of circles are referred through MCFD
  - Informed by Elder participation
  - Coordinator has strong ties within communities

- 6 full time dedicated staff members
  - Informed by Elder participation
  - Coordinators have strong ties within communities

#### Coordinated/Facilitated by:

- CSFS worker
- In 2005 trained 19 Aboriginal facilitators through a partnership with UNBC
- Nenan Guide
  - With support of Elders
- DAA facilitator sometimes in partnership with MCFD worker

- CSFS worker
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- In 2005 trained 19 Aboriginal facilitators through a partnership with UNBC
- Nenan Guide
  - With support of Elders
- DAA facilitator sometimes in partnership with MCFD worker

#### Legislation/Funding:

- BC Government; MCFD
- Originally partnered with IICRD to complete participative research methodology
- Currently funded through MCFD
- BC Government; MCFD
- Originally partnered with IICRD to complete participative research methodology
- Currently funded through MCFD
- BC Government; MCFD
- Originally partnered with IICRD to complete participative research methodology
- Currently funded through MCFD
- BC Government; MCFD
- Originally partnered with IICRD to complete participative research methodology
- Currently funded through MCFD

#### Strengths:

- Uses Aboriginal facilitators
  - Engaged in community engagement through Touchstones of Hope community planning
- Unique program developed by the Dane-zaa for the Dane-zaa
  - Preventative services
  - Elder involvement
  - Autonomous program
- Only one quarter of circles are referred through MCFD
  - Informed by Elder participation
  - Coordinator has strong ties within communities
- Only one quarter of circles are referred through MCFD
  - Informed by Elder participation
  - Coordinator has strong ties within communities
- Only one quarter of circles are referred through MCFD
  - Informed by Elder participation
  - Coordinator has strong ties within communities

#### Weaknesses:

- Dependent on DAA funding and limitations
- Funding dependence has meant that the prevention services can no longer be offered and more restrictions are in place
- Dependent on DAA funding and limitations
- Funding dependence has meant that the full services and staff can no longer be offered
- Dependent on DAA funding and limitations
- Funding dependence has meant that the full services and staff can no longer be offered
- Dependent on DAA funding and limitations
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- Dependent on DAA funding and limitations
- Funding dependence has meant that the full services and staff can no longer be offered
Key Informant Interviews

*Interview analysis tables can be found in Appendix C.

Methods

This study used a thematic analysis consisting of two key informant interviews: Chief Calvin Craigan and Stephen Kozey, coordinator for Ayas Men Men Child and Family Services. Semi-structured interviews were carried out by researchers using a questionnaire that can found in Appendix A. A thematic analysis focuses on both the frequency of codes and an analysis of their meaning in terms of context. Themes refer to specific patterns found in the data, which are typically broken down into two types: Manifest content, which is directly observable repetition of specific words that relate to a specific theme or category; and Latent content, which refers implicit and indirect reference to a theme (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The purpose of this thematic analysis is content-driven exploratory approach, where the interviewees perspectives inform the content of the entire report (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2011). Above all, this is a qualitative study where meaning making is at the center of how analysis is done. Focus and attention was paid to findings capturing the rich meanings of the particular, time, place and context (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012). This is all done intentionally to In other words, giving priority to the words and ideas of the interviewees, and in particular Indigenous participants. The transcripts were analysed and reduced into smaller categories and themes, the authors have intentionally left many of the ideas, language and context that the themes are embedded in unchanged.

Limitations
Because much of this methodology relies on the interpretation of the authors, a significant limitation of this method, and of this report in general, is that the authors of this paper both identify as settler Canadians. This means an acceptance of our own roles in the type unconscious racism that was pointed out earlier in this paper, and take an active stance to decolonize the methodologies which we use in this report (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012; Smith 1999). Because we as academics have learned to examine the world in specific ways, we must acknowledge that such views are embedded in racialized discourse in which scholars knowingly and unknowingly reproduce what Linda Smith calls a “language of colonization” (1999 p.47). For this reason, the authors have attempted to meet the standard of Critical Indigenous inquiry which “Begins with the concerns of Indigenous people. It is assessed in terms of the benefits it creates for them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008 p.2). With this in mind, an underlying goal of this paper is that it empowers the Sechelt and Squamish First Nations whose communities this analysis is intended for as much as it is a report for the MCFD.

**Findings**

Chief Calvin Craiga of the shíshálh First Nation is both a hereditary Chief and the Executive Chief of shíshálh community. For the purposes of this paper, and as is his stated preference, the authors will refer to him as Chief in this section. The themes in this section are largely based on Chief’s perspective, but also build off of that of Facilitator-Coordinator Stephen Kozey of the Ayas Men Men Child and Family Services of the Squamish Nation. Stephen identifies as a settler, but has worked in various social work related roles with Squamish First Nations communities for twenty years. His perspective is particularly important when considering the *how* of building meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities is being explored.
Traditional Ways of Knowing and Current Practices: There isn’t much in terms of traditional practices in the shíshálh right now, but it begins with the idea of a broader conception of family Chief suggests that “historically the way it was in my community, was that if the young parents weren’t taking care of the children than the aunties and uncles, grandfathers and grandmothers took control of the children”. He himself has taken on many responsibilities doing cross-cultural training the local police, educators and community members. As an example, Chief explains: “I went and reconciled with the bank and the banker with my word and with their word gave them a loan and got their house back. Those are the kind of efforts I do in the community. So again, the whole community takes up responsibility”. But admittedly, Chief does not think enough is being done “Very little right now. We’re just establishing healing circles right now. So healing circles are, they start off with two to three people. But they generally end up going into a bigger circle where it involves the entire family.” The healing circles in shíshálh are just beginning, while in Squamish nation they are very common and well-established part of the community, as Ayas Men Men went from being a MCFD funded services provider to one seen as important and essential to the Squamish peoples who now fund it. Stephen Kozey coordinates the Nexwniwnitway family circle in Squamish, which is derived from FGC in New Zealand except “So ours is somewhat different, you know, cause we're using, at least I am, indigenous approaches, so for us, um, for us is, it's more flexible, each family case is different”. In many ways, this is what Chief

You need to be able to fulfill those promises you make when you step into the community. Too many government programs that have started something and never finished, that has cause an ill-effect. So that’s the kind of understanding you need to have.

Chief Calvin Craigan, Shíshálh First Nation
mentions as an ongoing problem with as government employees “Need to understand which families are moving forward and which are falling behind. And only certain people in the community are aware of that. So someone has to bring you in and point that out. That there are two sets of healing that needs to happen”. Chief is careful to explain that “You need to be able to fulfill those promises you make when you step into the community. Too many government programs that have started something and never finished, that has cause an ill-effect. So that’s the kind of understanding you need to have”. This brings us to our next point, the importance of building strong relationships.

The Importance of Long-term Relationships: “What they need to understand about a community is the actual profile of that community. Their way of life needs to be understood. By that social worker and having that understanding of that community is the main part of it” says Chief. That’s because the situations, the communities and the people are complex, they require time, patience and effort as “no one coming in from the outside will ever come in and then be aware of that. The problems are humungous, are complex”. For Chief, this extends beyond the shíshálh community, to any First Nation community. It requires that each Nation be necessarily treated as a unique entity with unique needs, thus the ideal is “Whoever provides that training is from the community and shares that information with the workers so that they can get an understanding of where the community is at with their culture, language and the different complexities about all the other families… I can take to a house and show you, and you’ll see it right away. That family has a different set of problems and you have to understand that. So those are the kind of cross-cultural things that need, have to happen”. For Chief, it isn’t just about proper training, but about people being willing to engage in order to create “Some trust factors, not just with the community but with the families there has to
be a trust built before their going to effect these families in a positive way... that’s the biggest challenge right there is to earn and get that trust that’s going to be needed to provide authentic counselling for these families”. So the question we are left with is: how government employees do this?

In Squamish, we can see a different set of circumstances altogether. Circles are well-established “When we first started we would actually get some feedback that said that well the circles don't really work eh? Because we look at, the parents didn't go to treatment, and we look at it differently, we'll have another circle when we kind of find out why. And sometimes we'll have three or four, uh, but it's always done in a respectful way, we're always engaging that same family, the same parents come in and we talk, and um, in most cases, when you get to the third or fourth circle they will agree with us, or we'll mutually go, well, I guess we can't, I guess we can't really look after all the needs for our kids, but we're really happy to that aunt so-and-so is going to take the kids and we can see them every day. For example ya know? So it's kinda process based, we don't give up” say Kozey. These early years reflected earning trust. “NEEOHNATEWAY, it means ‘to seek council’” says Kozey, where he has weekly or bi-weekly meetings with Elders of the community “So there's variety in those, so who is involved? We always, I actually work with a couple of elders, and I meet with these Elders all the time, cause this is an ongoing process of reintroduction, in our case of Squamish knowledge.

Stephen Kozey, Ayas Men Child and Family Services
elder who talks about stories from the past and so on, there's always this infusion of new information eh? of Squamish stories, historical, really need stuff ya know?" this process speaks to well-established relationships, where “We know our people better simply because we live with them, you know the lived experience, we're living with them and as long as we uh, so you need, their needs to be inclusion, and uh, so for the ministry, they uh, it would be useful for them to allow that to happen, to allow each First Nation to articulate its process, you know?” This final point is extremely important to this report. Each First Nation has a specific epistemic, a specific set of historical and social circumstances that apply. This is where we see the need to understand that understanding a specific culture is so important, and where institutional racism comes into play.

**Institutional Racism and the importance of including Indigenous people in Decision Making:** It’s important that people not look at institutional racism as some relic of the past, just like colonial structure—institutional racism is very present. Both respondents spoke of this directly and implicitly. Where it seems to play out most commonly, is in the sharing of power at every level. From individual social workers, to directors and judges, there was clear reference to a history and contemporary reality of institutionalised racism. As Chief said, at the very outset of the interview:

“So, for far too long now. Generations have been effected by government and legislation in all. The term, the meaning of not only the protection of children but looking after the will of the people was um... forgotten. So the people lost control of their children many, many generations ago through the missionaries and residential schools and in a different way and a different manner that still continues today ah through the MCFD and because there’s legislation and the province gives
authority to the courts. Then the courts decides where those native children are
placed and we disputed that we wanted to
change that be apart of the decision
making about how our children are being
not only protected but how they were
given the type of care that was decided by
the courts. Not just during the foster
period, but even the after care that really
effected these children was never taken
into consideration”.

This thought by Kozey, who comments
“We need to move from the western way
of learning about communities and so on.
Which is somewhat superficial, its sort of
like we'll hold some workshops, and we'll give you some
stuff to read and we'll and
you'll learn about the people, but that doesn't, you
know, it doesn't work that
well, what really works well, is uh, if you get in the
community, be patient, keep your eyes open and
participate”.

Stephen Kozey, Ayas Men Men Child
and Family Services

you'll learn about the people, but that doesn't, you know, it doesn't work that well,
what really works well, is uh, if you get in the
community, be patient, keep your eyes open
and participate”. Part of how institutions are
racist is institutionalized reasoning that comes
out of them. “Too many government
programs that have started something and
never finished, that has caused an ill-effect. So
that’s the kind of understanding you need to
have” in a way this quote epitomizes the way

“Too many government
programs that have
started something and
never finished, that has
caused an ill-effect. So
that’s the kind of
understanding you need to
have.”

Stephen Kozey, Ayas Men Men
Child and Family Services
that Chief characterized racism both implicitly and explicitly. It is both a historical
continuation of false promises, whereby agencies and agents come in and make
claims, but do not adapt are too rigid with their approach to meet the needs of
Indigenous peoples. “Their approach, they will stick exactly to the structure, they
will put up on the board ten or twenty or so outlines, sheets of paper, then they
start the process and fill in all of those boxes, ya know?” says Kozey, having
worked within and outside of these structures has given him a unique perspective
“Community centred, it means the people, local people, were really there, they
have involvement in decision making, they play an actual role, its like just some of
the things, I'm glad that I learned”. Overcoming institutional is a shared
experience, as Chief highlighted numerous times “So again, the whole community
takes up responsibility, but we need those resources that are been denied by all the
wrong things that have been done over the last hundred and fifty years”.

**Solutions**

Both participants to this study were very hopeful. Chief simply stated “I would like
to sit with the people who are sitting in authority to help to make those changes for
the long-term”. For him, collaboration and a sharing of resources is a necessary
step. He has an abundance of ideas of where to start “I see centers being located in
the communities where the children and the grandfathers and the grandmothers
can go to a place of not only security, but to a place where they can receive
counselling, they can receive the resources they have been denied in the past”. For
Chief, this sharing is would be mutually beneficial, the start of a reciprocal
relationship as “The government and the MCFD would really profit from sharing
that knowledge and the understanding and that has to happen. It has to happen
soon. I can do that. I can share everything I’ve learned over the last ten, twenty
years”. For Chief this sharing of power, the inclusion of Indigenous peoples and
families into every stage is paramount “I think the real essence of that [Child Welfare] is that someone has to go into a territory and begin working not only with the Native community but with the entire community that totally involves the education system and all those things that I mentioned before and then an outline can be developed to suit different regions”.

Similarly, for Kozey the primary solution comes down to sharing, to being flexible and adaptive “along with that [long-term experience] comes the trust, and uh, because you're a visitor, an outsider and people, the local people, they need to see you more than just a couple of workshops. They need to be with you a year and then they'll say ok, this person is our helper, ok, and you become accepted as part of the local service network if you will”. This means a different set of demands, one that recognizes that there are not an easy answers “just because you had one circle, doesn't mean that everything works out, ya know? For example one of the conclusions is that parents will go to treatment say, so we check back six months later; they didn't go to treatment”. The only way to deal the complexity that is involved with each Nation, is to try to understand their specific needs and circumstances. This takes time. Earning trust, understanding these nuances is a process. But it’s one that is in urgent need as Chief notes:

*S*o* y*o*u* k*n*o*w* the TRC thing that came out of Ottawa, they made all these promises that they would put all these resources back in to the communities. W*e*ll y*o*u* k*n*o*w* were still waiting. A*n*d* w*e* k*n*o*w. W*e* k*n*o*w th*e*y* ar*e* p*ay*in*g* the province millions of dollars, b*e*t* they ar*e* n*o*t* p*ro*v*id*in*g* the work and the resources we need.*
Discussion

The literature, jurisdictional scan and interviews have a lot of similarities. The literature consistently supports two methods of how MCFD, in general, can build meaningful relationships: investing in long-term relationships to build trust; and engaging in more collaborative focused practices in all levels. In the jurisdictional scan, the importance of Indigenous worldviews, tradition knowledge as well as child and family centered approaches that move away from traditional western authority structures, was presented. This was also a clear focus of what Squamish facilitator-coordinator Stephan Kozey thought made his work successful. This was also a clearly made desire of Chief Calvin Craigan, that all people concerned with and making decisions on behalf of Indigenous children need to collaborate with the particular First Nation and its community members. Bridging this epistemic gap requires recognition that Indigenous epistemics are necessarily different than the one that informs current child welfare practices.

Contemporary colonial conditions are very significant to this report. Institutional racism in terms of child welfare is clearly evident in the literature and key informant interviews. Lack of funding, resources and collaboration with First Nations in the Coast/North Shore is evident. The Truth and Reconciliation Act (TRC) that Chief Craigan refers to has five detailed calls to action to advance the process of reconciliation in terms of child welfare (2015). These include, but are not limited to: properly training social workers; prioritizing culturally appropriate methods; providing adequate resources to Indigenous communities and organizations. As Paulette Regan, author of Unsettling the settler within, says: “Question deeply the accepted wisdom that still prevails among majority Canadians, that we know what is best for Indigenous people” (2010, p.4). This
extends to the ‘best interest of child’ when dealing with Indigenous child welfare, as this report clearly shows a need for collaboration on the part of decision makers. Not including Indigenous Elders and leaders in such decisions is the active reproduction of existing colonial structures and conditions.
Recommendations

*A tip sheet for frontline social workers can be found in Appendix B.

**Short-Term**

The first recommendation is cross-cultural workshops with the Chief Calvin Craigan and Elders of the shíshálh community, where MCFD any staff involved with child welfare at all levels are taught about shíshálh culture. This would involve immediate correspondence to develop what the appropriate timeframe, curriculum and context of such training might be. This would be an immediate way of starting some of the relationships this report sees as necessary components to begin meaningful engagement. As Chief Craigan stated “cross-cultural workshops would be a good start”. Such training should become mandatory for any current and incoming staff, this should be a regularly occurring process based training where “one and done” workshops are avoided. In other words, such training should be annual and reoccurring so as to ensure that relationship building is at the center or the project. With Indigenous leaders and community members leading this endeavour.

The second recommendation, is that social workers that are working with shíshálh Nation be required to have long-term contracts and commitments. “Long-term” is a relative term, and thus ought to be negotiated with shíshálh community members. This is to insure the reproduction of the types of negative relationships that both participants of this report described, where commitments are not followed through with and relationships are structured by formal procedures that do not suit the particular community, are avoided. The literature reviewed and key informants both clearly state the need for long-term relationship building and understanding.
This is a proactive and short-term solution to insuring social workers, and by extension MCFD, are committed to such relationship building going forward.

**Long-term**

The long-term recommendation, is for people in decision-making positions to develop healthy and cooperative relationships with each Nation under their jurisdiction. This is because the needs of each Nation are unique. Ayas Men Men has the infrastructure, but is in need of resources and staff to continue to develop and meet the needs of Squamish First Nation communities. The shíshálh First Nation, does not have as much infrastructure. Their needs are different, as are the needs of all the Nations in the Coast/North Shore and Canada in general. They have unique cultures, languages, historical conditions and perspectives that need to be acknowledged as such. Developing a comprehensive plan for each Nation, by collaborating with those nations Elders and leaders is essential to success as “It has to a complex outline done for every community, every region. I have an idea of how to do that, but then I need to be empowered, I need to be collaborated with”. Collaboration with Indigenous communities at all levels of decision-making is a necessary component to successfully developing meaningful relationships, this is a message that bares repeating. Empowering and collaborative decision making is a decolonizing method touched on by Indigenous scholars and key informants alike, thus is recommended by the authors of this report.
References


Appendices

Appendix A: Key Informant Questionnaire

Interview Questions:

1. Our research is focused on gathering traditional knowledge about dispute resolution, specifically in order to inform your local MCFD office and staff about traditional practices that might be used during disputes involving children and families. Is there anything you’d like us to know about your current relationship with MCFD? How effective are the current approaches for resolving disputes?

2. What are the traditional dispute resolution or conflict resolution practices that have been used by your Nation?
   a. What is the process?
   b. Who is involved?
   c. Where does the process take place?
   d. Is there a typical timeline for what might occur?

3. To what extent are these traditional practices in operation? In your view, are there further opportunities to put them to use?

4. What kinds of resources/supports would be helpful for your Nation to use these traditional practices? How could the Ministry better support you?

5. What would you like social workers to know before/when they come to work with/in your community?

6. Is there anything you’d like to add? Do you have any further recommendations?
Appendix B: Tip Sheet for Frontline Workers:

• Engage in a reflective, introspective process in order to better understand your own values, biases, assumptions, judgements, fears and needs. Engaging in positive self-care will help you be a better resource.

• Get to know the Elders in the community, seeking advise from family members and respected people in the community is vital to understanding the circumstances of a child’s situation.

• Learn the local language, customs, names, and culture. Seeking understanding of the world-view of the particular Nation you work with will inform what the “best interest of the child” truly is.

• Listen. Not just to Elders, but to children, family members and friends of the family. Taking the time to listen, be curious and ask questions. Being open and flexible is important, you do not know everything you need to know from school and training.

• Recognize the family as experts on themselves and work to better understand their unique values, world view, fears and how they make decisions. Seek out the family’s strengths.

• Recognize if you are not the best match for a particular family.

• Widen your awareness of who may be included as family or kin within a particular community. Honour each family and position yourself as a support and resource as much as possible.

• In the case when a family makes a plan. Use as many of the family’s own words to articulate the plan as possible, prioritize that plan and offer as much support as you can to make the plan successful.

• Be transparent. Be clear about your role and what you can provide. Overpromising support and resources can be disappointing for those in need of help.

• Attend First Nations events in the community. The need to develop relationships and trust is important. You need to participate and be known by the community you are serving.
### Traditional ways of knowing- Chief Craigan (CC)

| Historically the way it was in my community that if the young parents weren’t taking care of the children than the aunties and uncles, grandfathers and grandmothers took control of the children |
| So that those children are brought up by the entire community and with the understanding that they were still living in a community they were still learning their culture they were still living the life of their culture and that’s the way it should be. |
| A lot of it is spiritual. I understand the spirit end of it, because I am a spirit worker a spirit dancer so I understand that. |

### Traditional ways of knowing- Steve Kozey (SK)

| So there's variety in those, so who is involved? We always, I actually work with a couple of elders, and I meet with these elders all the time, cause this is an ongoing process of reintroduction, in our case of Squamish knowledge, so there's a lot of it and uh, there's a lot of it, and it takes time to learn all of that and so on, so this, this is neat because I have a couple of hours each week with this elder who talks about stories from the past and so on, there's always this infusion of new information eh? of Squamish stories, historical, really need stuff ya know? |
| Using some of the old cultural practices that used to work ya know? And one of them was the circle, so our, NEEOHNATEWAY, its called, our circle, purpose of collaborative practice, joint-decision making, and uh, and so the, in this case, back to your question, what did the Squamish do? What do the elders tell us? That's what they did. Whenever there was a family matter, they would sit in circle, and they would call it NEEOHNATEWAY which means to seek council. |
| Used the word Indiginist, Indiginist thinking, so Indiginist it's uh, Indigenous history defined by an an Indigenous person, and uh you know, and taught by an Indigenous person, and controlled by an indigenous person. |
| Ayes Men Men means in Squamish, "Peace to our children" |

### Current practices-CC

| We’re just establishing healing circles right now. So healing circles are, they start off with two to three people. But they generally end up going into a bigger circle where it involves the entire family. |
| In a circle that calls for respect from not only the aunties and uncles and grandmothers and grandfathers, but all the other children are brought into the circle. So that circle will grow, it’ll grow like from family to family and then the end result is that maybe annually there will be a huge circle and the whole community in the longhouse just to celebrate that that young mother is successful in the year, then that whole community celebrates that. |
Those are the kind of principles we are teaching, and again I'm collaborating, I have collaborated with the bank Manager.

And the Elders are helping in that effort too. You know, counselling those young mothers, helping them to live that good life, not just for themselves but for the children.

And I know the person who helped to develop those centers she actually works at the help center here at the local MCFD and she's the one I've collaborated with and that's Shannon Wood.

I went and reconciled with the banker and the banker with my word and with their word gave them a loan and got their house back. Those are the kind of efforts I do in the community. So again, the whole community takes up responsibility.

Cause I've been doing it for a long, long time. And I do it own my own in own time. In my efforts, and it's effecting it.

Current practices-SK

Called a (NEO-NATE-WAY) family circle. So, of course as you know, you probably know the origin of the whole family group conferences, came from New Zealand.

So ours is somewhat different, you know, cuz we're using, at least I am, indigenous approaches, so for us, um, for us is, it's more flexible, each family case is different.

this is a key word, our circles are uh we're using them as a process, and here is the key difference between this and the ministry, uh, because typically you use it for for an output or a product, to arrive at a care plan eh? Working with the family to arrive at a care plan for a child. So what tends to happen in the ministry in history is that you have one of these circles and that pretty much ends it, and then there's the plan for the workers to follow.

using the circle for other purposes, like for uh, not just placement, maybe we have a caregiver in Chilliwack and they're non-Aboriginal, and and uh, and our Squamish child is not coming to events, they're not learning about their culture, they're not learning about their family, and so we use it for connections. We put the heat on the caregiver, and say hey look at, part of your contract is to engage the child with the community, and family, and we have lots of events, as you can imagine in a large community, so we'll have a circle for that, ya know, and bring the caregivers and the family together, ya know? because that's also a good place for them to meet.

We're now introducing circle anytime a child comes to this agency's attention, there's a circle. Anytime a child ages out at 19, there's a celebratory ceremony.

like today we're having a giant circle with the ministry and uh, so in this case I'm facilitating, sometimes they're facilitating and I'm facilitating, and we co-facilitate as well.

we have our own process, so that we, we have our own form, like an intake form, and uh, I may have one here, so we, the ministry is aware of the form, and so is all our staff, and uh, and so they will fill out our form because we like to keep a record, and its sort of like a referral, it's like a ref doc, kind of like the ministry has, its, we need to
update it, because we'd like to have more room for what the problem is, but so, we have a referral process

the first person I always interview is the referring source. So if it's the ministry, the first person I talk to is that worker, because we want to make sure we're right on the purpose of the circle and the key points and usually, ya know, there's three or four key things you get out of it, so I want to be correct, so we start there and always the next person is the parent or the significant adult of the child, so I do that and then uh, always keep in touch with the key referral person to make sure we're on target

NEEOHNATEWAY is, is it embodies and incorporates all the aspects of western definition, so we assess a need, ya know, uh, the people would sit in a circle, but they would talk about it and assess the need and then they would talk about well, okay, what are some solutions, well how are we going to apply this, how are we going to help, ya know, little Sara there, and then they would have another circle you know, maybe a few weeks later, and so well how did it go, so really, even though that one word embodies so much, it also embodies the guidelines, there's not cross-talk, there's confidentiality, nobody nobody talks about what happened there, you know?

Again, we give options to the family, we have in our communities here, we have halls, we have our boardroom here, we have church basement, we have a rec centre with five rooms, we have about half a dozen different places to hold this, and for me I usually ask the family where are you comfortable having your circle?

but you know once a year we'll have a circle in somebody's home because they want it there. So, we're really flexible about where it takes place. And then sometimes if the boardroom here is booked so obviously we can't have it here, but uh, timelines I think we kind of covered that, but the actual circle itself, those can vary from, like you'll seldom have a circle that's under and hour and a half, ya know, usually, we always have a meal with it.

And the circle, typically is about two to three hours, but they can go to four hours. But usually not more, ya know, people get tired after four hours. Pretty intense so...

We're really focusing in on these follow ups now, and these follow ups are uh, part of the process is that any decisions that are made are sort of highlighted and they're sent around and we try to put them into a spreadsheet that says who's going to do it, when and so on. so it's really specific, can always target, if things didn't happen, we can always know where ... ya know? Where and why kind of thing

when I mentioned the flexibility of the circle, and some recent changes we've uh, we've uh how do you call, responded to some of these opportunities, like having the circle as soon as a new child comes to the agency's attention. This didn't happen even a year ago.

I get called in, we do mapping, of a case, and the issue will arise in a placement, sometimes its really difficult to know, what do we do, this placement isn't working out, or the caregiver, we need to move, so we put the key people together and then we have in a sense, a family case planning conference, uh, but its sort of our style, Squamish style, which is uh, really no different than what the ministry might do, but we talk about, strategize how we're going to resolve a particular issue, eh? So that's a
further use of the circle, so then I'm brought in then and more or less fulfill that function, of you know, recording, you know, so we get a quick recording, we have a quick get-together, here's an example [gestures to flipcharts hanging on the wall], we get together, and we get some ideas together there, and we flush them out, and so there's like three numbers on the board, see those, there's three actions we're going to follow up. so, when it's all over, I quickly put those three ideas down and send them to the people involved eh?

And along with that comes the trust, and uh, because you're a visitor, and outsider and people, the local people, they need to see you more than just a couple of workshops. They need to be with you a year and then they'll say ok, this person is our helper, ok, and you become accepted as part to the local service network if you will.

**Importance of Relationships - CC**

- it has to a complex outline done for every community, every region. I have an idea of how to do that, but then I need to be empowered, I need to be collaborated with.
- what they need to understand about a community is the actual profile of that community. Their way of life needs to be understood. By that social worker and having that understanding of that community is the main part of it.
- in some trust factors, not just with the community but with that families there has to be a trust built before their going to effect these families in a positive way.
- the biggest challenge right there is to earn and get that trust that’s going to be needed to provide authentic counselling for these families through that cultural workshop they get to understand which families are moving forward and which are falling behind. And only certain people in the community are aware of that.
- So someone has to bring you in and point that out. That there are two sets of healing that needs to happen.
- no one coming in from the outside will ever come in and then be aware of that. The problems are humungous, are complex.
- And to be able to fulfill those promises you make when you step into the community. Too many government programs that have started something and never finished, that has cause an ill-effect. So that’s the kind of understanding you need to have.
- Well I think they have to do research before the even get to the community right? Research what language they speak, research what kind of resources are available to the community like um all those things, elements that I talked about like education and opportunities they have to be understood by that social worker.

**Importance of Relationships - SK**

- its got to the point where now only about a quarter of all of our circle are from the ministry. You know? most of them are from our own, because we know.
- NEEOHNATEWAY, it means 'to seek council'
it's about three or four years now, a new referral started, which is exactly what we want to achieve, which is self-referrals. That's really neat, cause people will notice in the community, they'll say ya know, I think we better have a circle for my sister here her kids are really, really need some attention, and uh and so, that's really neat when you have, I mean it's sort of the ultimate prevention hey? when people ask for help.

the first person I always interview is the referring source. So if it's the ministry, the first person I talk to is that worker, because we want to make sure we're right on the purpose of the circle and the key points and usually, ya know, there's three or four key things you get out of it, so I want to be correct, so we start there and always the next person is the parent or the significant adult of the child, so I do that and then uh, always keep in touch with the key referral person to make sure we're on target

, I know a lot of the families, ya know? so, I'm quite comfortable putting together something really quick, and I know who you ask for stuff.

Yeah, we have a case manager here, she's been here 45 years, so I can ask her and I get an idea immediately, ya know, where to go

so there's variety in those, so who is involved? We always, I actually work with a couple of elders, and I meet with these elders all the time, cause this is an ongoing process of reintrodcution, in our case of Squamish knowledge, so there's a lot of it and uh, there's a lot of it, and it takes time to learn all of that and so on, so this, this is neat because I have a couple of hours each week with this elder who talks about stories from the past and so on, there's always this infusion of new information eh? of Squamish stories, historical, really need stuff ya know?

then they talk about which families are connected in origin so I get that infusion always from the elders. Where do the process, and who is involved, so typically, I'm not Squamish, but I've been around here this is my fourth time back, I'd go off working somewhere and then I'd come back, but you know once a year we'll have a circle in somebody's home because they want it there. So, we're really flexible about where it takes place. And then sometimes if the boardroom here is booked so obviously we can't have it here, but uh, timelines I think we kind of covered that, but the actual circle itself, those can vary from , like you'll seldom have a circle that's under and hour and a half, ya know, usually, we always have a meal with it.

in a sense, if you keep sticking with the same people, then you can, really assess why didn't things happen or what do we need to adjust so that this happens? You know we know our people better simply because we live with them, you know the lived experience, we're living with them and as long as we uh, so you need, there needs to be inclusion, and uh, so for the ministry, they uh, it would be useful for them to allow that to happen, to allow each First Nation to articulate its process, you know?

we need to move from the western way of learning about communities and so on which is somewhat superficial, its sort of like we'll hold some workshops, and we'll give you some stuff to read and we'll and you'll learn about the people, but that doesn't, you know, it doesn't work that well, what really works well, is uh, if you get in the community, be patient, keep your eyes open and participate.
we have longhouse activities here and so on, you need to attend that, you know, if you've never been to you know, if you've never been to these things, it can seem quite interesting, it's new, it's been really, you gotta wonder, the first, what's this all about and how are things happening, and how are they making decisions, you need to hang around for some months, and for the first year, and uh, participate in them, that's how, that's how you need to, that's how you learn about the community and the people in it.

And along with that comes the trust, and uh, because you're a visitor, and outsider and people, the local people, they need to see you more than just a couple of workshops. They need to be with you a year and then they'll say ok, this person is our helper, ok, and you become accepted as part fo the local service network if you will

we've had that with some outside agencies, who say like, we need to get, we see non-aboriginal agencies you know everyone's grasping for knowledge about Aboriginal people, well how do you guys do it, what do you do you know? And that, we've seen that happen a lot, well can you have some workshops for us, and its just its more than that, you have to become involved with the people you work with

there's a more meaningful word and that is centred, community centred, it mean the people, local people, were really there, they have involvement in decision making, they play an actual role, its like just some of the things, I'm glad that I learned

used the word Indiginist, Indiginist thinking, so Indiginist it's uh, Indigenous history defined by an an Indigenous person, and uh you know, and taught by an Indigenous person, and controlled by an indigenous person.

right there's the difference between lived experience and not, like I've been around here so long, I know, I know what families think, a little more, I'm a little more sensitive to that, but I would tell them to uh, to really uh, not worry so much about what you have to do there, and how long it's going to take, and try and get that family involvement hey?

A ministry worker, a ministry facilitator wouldn't necessarily know that, so I already know the people, that's the other thing, is that facilitators, I think the ministry should be supporting, they should be supporting or providing the resources for the local people, providing the money for local facilitators, that's a key thing.

Need for inclusion of Indigenous people in Decision Making-CC
"there’s legislation and the province gives authority to the courts. Then the courts decides where those native children are placed and we disputed that we wanted to change that be apart of the decision making"

it has to a complex outline done for every community, every region. I have an idea of how to do that, but then I need to be empowered, I need to be collaborated with.

And I'll continue to work with the Justice Institute because of that factor that I need to gain more knowledge and more understanding of how I think this is going to come together.

there has to be a system that is developed with the leadership of that community.
Whereby the leadership is given that authority to either place the young family into counselling and try to find solutions for that young family.

And I think that has to returned, that authority, has to be returned back to that community. Having that authority, say with the Chiefs council, I’m not too sure. But there has to be some sort of authority given back to the community.

that counselling and that last word actually comes from the elders

We need to share that authority, we need to share that jurisdiction and we need to share the resources so that we can plan out for say a decade for rehabilitating all these young people.

the whole community takes up responsibility, but we need those resources that are been denied all the wrong things that have been done over the last hundred and fifty years.

instance I would like to sit with the people who are sitting in authority to help to make those changes for the long-term.

And share or at least develop an understanding of how that outline can be brought together for the short-term and for the long-term.

the government and the MCFD would really profit from sharing that knowledge and the understanding and that has to happen.

Well whoever provides that training is from the community and shares that information with the workers so that they can get an understanding of where the community is at with their culture, language and the different complexities about all the other families.

through that cultural workshop they get to understand which families are moving forward and which are falling behind. And only certain people in the community are aware of that.

I can take to a house and show you, and you’ll see it right away. That family has a different set of problems and you have to understand that. So those are the kind of cross-cultural things that need, have to happen.

And I think that has to returned, that authority, has to be returned back to that community.

As long as they have that authority and as long as they have those resources and the tools that they need to rebuild those families again.

Need for inclusion of Indigenous people in Decision Making-SK

it's about three or four years now, a new referral started, which is exactly what we want to achieve, which is self-referrals. That's really neat, cause people will notice in the community, they'll say ya know, I think we better have a circle for my sister here her kids are really, really need some attention, and uh and so, that's really neat when you have, I mean it's sort of the ultimate prevention hey? when people ask for help.

purpose of collaborative practice, joint-decision making, and uh, and so the, in this case, back to your question, what did the Squamish do? What do the elders tell us?
That's what they did. Whenever there was a family matter, they would sit in circle, and they would call it NEEOHNATEWAY which means to seek council.

There's a more meaningful word and that is centred, community centred, it mean the people, local people, were really there, they have involvement in decision making, they play an actual role, it's like just some of the things, I'm glad that I learned too often we're somewhere at the end where the local people are not really involved, and so that's what we're trying to do with the circle. That's the whole purpose is to, it's to, and I have to, I always remind the families, this is a family circle.

Right there's the difference between lived experience and not, like I've been around here so long, I know, I know what families think, a little more, I'm a little more sensitive to that, but I would tell them to uh, to really uh, not worry so much about what you have to do there, and how long it's going to take, and try and get that family involvement hey?

Each Nation is unique-CC

"All that has to be taken into consideration for the well being of those children and those young families really has to be thought out in almost every region and every community because every region and every community has something different, they have different dimensions within their communities that have to be taken into consideration"

It has to a complex outline done for every community, every region. I have an idea of how to do that, but then I need to be empowered, I need to be collaborated with.

But I think the real essence of that is that someone has to go into a territory and begin working not only with the Native community but with the entire community that totally involves the education system and all those things that I mentioned before and then an outline can be developed to suit different regions.

So it's not just a one off that has to be developed, it has to a complex outline done for every community, every region

Each Nation is unique-SK

So ours is somewhat different, you know, cuz we're using, at least I am, indigenous approaches, so for us, um, for us is, it's more flexible, each family case is different, we have our own process, so that we, we have our own form, like an intake form, and uh, I may have one here, so we, the ministry is aware of the form, and so is all our staff, and uh, and so they will fill out our form because we like to keep a record, and its sort of like a referral, it's like a ref doc, kind of like the ministry has, its, we need to update it, because we'd like to have more room for what the problem is, but so, we have a referral process.

The Ministry needs to support these kinds of initiative, in this case we're talking about the Squamish, but I think they need to support it in all the First Nations because that's what's familiar, that's what they're familiar with.
we know our people better simply because we live with them, you know the lived experience, we're living with them and as long as we uh, so you need, there needs to be inclusion, and uh, so for the ministry, they uh, it would be useful for them to allow that to happen, to allow each First Nation to articulate its process, you know?

And along with that comes the trust, and uh, because you're a visitor, and outsider and people, the local people, they need to see you more than just a couple of workshops. They need to be with you a year and then they'll say ok, this person is our helper, ok, and you become accepted as part fo the local service network if you will that would be a good way of developing more Nations have their own, and then those people work closely with the Ministry as well, but I think it would be more genuine, getting a lot of feedback because those people would know, so I think there's a lot of room to do things, but government and the ministry don't offer enough opportunities for that, it always has to be through the eyes of them you know, through the eyes of the ministry, and you know patrolled by them, directed by them, and it still could be but I, the difference would be, I would see it as a joint thing.

**Long-Term collaborative planning-SK**

when we first started we would actually get some feedback that said that well the circles don't really work eh? Because look at, the parents didn't go to treatment, and we look at it differently, we'll have another circle when we kind of find out why. And sometimes we'll have three or four, uh, but it's always done in a respectful way, we're always engaging that same family, the same parents come in and we talk, and um, in most cases, when you get to the third or fourth circle they will agree with us, or we'll mutually go, well, I guess we can't, I guess we can't really look after all the needs for our kids, but we're really happy to that aunt so-and-so is going to take the kids and we can see them every day. For example ya know? So it's kinda process based, we don't give up.

, we made an adjustment and we got approval, and funding for two years, and uh fine, so we were getting the referrals from the ministry and uh and then when the two years of funding ran out we were on our own and we had like an amount of half a salary, uh, no we didn't have anything actually, the agency took on itself, they said this is valuable, so we'll just keep it on, and so they funded it. The Nation itself funded it.

. And, and so over time, this is we're talking 2007 until now, so almost 10 years, those started to be increased so anytime there's a problem, we would know first because our workers would be working with them, so we would have circles. Right?

we might be somewhat unique, but we've been working together for twenty years, and so whenever there's a Squamish child, we're always included. They will never make a decision on a Squamish child without our involvement or our circle, uh even though at times they are present eh? And they need to be present when the complaint comes through their office, eh? Which is the case today.

so there's variety in those, so who is involved? We always, I actually work with a couple of elders, and I meet with these elders all the time, cause this is an ongoing
process of reintroduction, in our case of Squamish knowledge, so there's a lot of it and uh, there's a lot of it, and it takes time to learn all of that and so on, so this, this is neat because I have a couple of hours each week with this elder who talks about stories from the past and so on, there's always this infusion of new information eh? of Squamish stories, historical, really need stuff ya know?

in a sense, if you keep sticking with the same people, then you can, really assess why didn't things happen or what do we need to adjust so that this happens? You know we know our people better simply because we live with them, you know the lived experience, we're living with them and as long as we uh, so you need, there needs to be inclusion, and uh, so for the ministry, they uh, it would be useful for them to allow that to happen, to allow each First Nation to articulate its process, you know?

then they talk about which families are connected in origin so I get that infusion always from the elders. Where do the process, and who is involved, so typically, I'm not Squamish, but I've been around here this is my fourth time back, I'd go off working somewhere and then I'd come back,

, we have longhouse activities here and so on, you need to attend that, you know, if you've never been to you know, if you've never been to these things, it can seem quite interesting, it's new, it's been really, you gotta wonder, the first, what's this all about and how are things happening, and how are they making decisions, you need to hang around for some months, and for the first year, and uh, participate in them, that's how, that's how you need to, that's how you learn about the community and the people in it.

And along with that comes the trust, and uh, because you're a visitor, and outsider and people, the local people, they need to see you more than just a couple of workshops. They need to be with you a year and then they'll say ok, this person is our helper, ok, and you become accepted as part fo the local service network if you will

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Long-Term collaborative planning-CC

"There has to be a comprehensive program outlined to help all of these people, because it does effect the children in the long-term so that they become really good citizens providing for themselves."

It’s a big job, it will probably take a decade I think where we can produce something that’s going to work for the communities.

If you’re bringing in a government program that’s going to end in a year. That does very negative things to that family. Whereas a social worker will come in and make all kinds of promises and then the end result is that social worker just leaves the community and just leaves them holding the bag, right? And that causes more ill-effect than anything else I think. If your going to step into a community and provide
counselling, healing and try to redevelop that family than you have to come in with the resources that are going to be long-term.

Too many government programs that have started something and never finished, that has cause an ill-effect. So that’s the kind of understanding you need to have.

I see that happening as the entire community taking responsibility for not only developing the outline but following through with the protection and the raising of these children.

So its not just a one off that has to be developed, it has to a complex outline done for every community, every region

That’s what’s needed. It has to be into a long-term transition.

We think we can reform the programs over the next ten year period, in my mind anyway in my community.

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<th>Institutional Racism-CC</th>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;So the people lost control of their children many, many generations ago through the missionaries and residential schools and in a different way and a different manner that still continues today ah through the MCFD and because there’s legislation and the province gives authority to the courts.&quot;</td>
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<td>And it has to be a discipline, a discipline that was there way before the white man came and effected that, right. With the residential schools and homelessness, the drugs and alcohol.</td>
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<td>So you know the TRC thing that came out of Ottawa, they made all these promises that they would put all these resources back in to the communities. Well you know were still waiting. And we know. We know they are paying the province millions of dollars, but they are not providing the work and the resources we need.</td>
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<td>So, for far too long now. Generations have been effected by government and legislation in all. The term, The meaning of not only the protection of children but looking after the will of the people was um... forgotten.</td>
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<td>Then the courts decides where those native children are placed and we disputed that we wanted to change that be apart of the decision making about how our children are being not only protected but how they were given the type of care that was decided by the courts. Not just during the foster period, but even the after care that really effected these children was never taken into consideration.</td>
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<td>Developing a lifestyle, a lifestyle that was taken from them. A lifestyle that was lost through these systems.</td>
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<td>they can receive the resources they have been denied in the past. And they were denied by the government right? And that needs to change, so those resources got to be given not only to the community but the aunties and uncles who are putting in the time</td>
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<tr>
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| So again, the whole community takes up responsibility, but we need those resources
that are been denied all the wrong things that have been done over the last hundred and fifty years

Institutional Racism-SK

their approach, they will stick exactly to the structure, they will put up on the board 10 or 20 or so outlines, sheets of paper, then they start the process and fill in all of those, ya know?

we uh put in a proposal, it was all prevention based, we wanted to teach the kids culture and so on, and we wanted to engage families in the circle work and stuff, and that was rejected, because the ministry said you must this must be tailored to children in care with the ministry

We need to move from the western way of learning about communities and so on. Which is somewhat superficial, its sort of like we'll hold some workshops, and we'll give you some stuff to read and we'll and you'll learn about the people, but that doesn't, you know, it doesn't work that well, what really works well, is uh, if you get in the community, be patient, keep your eyes open and participate.

we've had that with some outside agencies, who say like, we need to get, we see non-aboriginal agencies you know everyone's grasping for knowledge about Aboriginal people, well how do you guys do it, what do you do you know? And that, we've seen that happen a lot, well can you have some workshops for us, and its just its more than that, you have to become involved with the people you work with

there's a more meaningful word and that is centred, community centred, it means the people, local people, were really there, they have involvement in decision making, they play an actual role, its like just some of the things, I'm glad that I learned too often we're somewhere at the end where the local people are not really involved, and so that's what we're trying to do with the circle. That's the whole purpose is to, it's to, and I have to, I always remind the families, this is a family circle.

a slight difference between uh, ours and the ministries, in the circles, is that we're more, and I've heard this mentioned, that the ministry circle is more facilitator directed, our circle is more family facilitated, I focus, as long as no one is upset, I might allow more family interaction, sometimes we don't know exactly what's going on, and I've found that the Ministry is more, the facilitator, like I mentioned in the beginning with the chart and so on, the facilitator, uh, kind of directs it, ok, now we move on to this, now we move on... I do the same as well, but I'm always more, I'll let a conversation go a little longer, if I think its helpful,

that would be a good way of developing more Nations have their own, and then those people work closely with the Ministry as well, but I think it would be more genuine, getting a lot of feedback because those people would know, so I think there's a lot of room to do things, but government and the ministry don't offer enough opportunities for that, it always has to be through the eyes of them you know, through the eyes of the ministry, and you know patrolled by them, directed by them, and it still could be but I, the difference would be, I would see it as a joint thing,
but I see centers being located in the communities where the children and the
grandfathers and the grandmothers can go to a place of not security, but to a place
where they can receive counselling, they can receive the resources they have been
denied in the past.

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<th>Solutions-CC</th>
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| so those resources got to be given not only to the community but the aunties and
  uncles who are putting in the time, who are putting in and taking on responsibility.
  They can't work without any of those resources. Like travel, different things,
  counselling, education. |
| programs set up that provide counselling to the single-mothers or you know broken
  families, so everybody gets some sort of resource happening in the community
  whether it be counselling or teaching to ways of culture or just mainly just teaching
  them how to parent. |
| that young family should be with all those things, all those elements and resources
  nutrition, education, counselling all those things. |
| They need the resources of people who are able to lead, lead them in a cultural way
  but also able to provide some sort of counselling to get them started. |
| what they need to understand about a community is the actual profile of that
  community. Their way of life needs to be understood. By that social worker and having
  that understanding of that community is the main part of it. |
| Well I think they have to do research before the even get to the community right?
  Research what language they speak, research what kind of resources are available to
  the community like all those things, elements that I talked about like education and
  opportunities they have to be understood by that social worker. |
| There has to be a comprehensive plan brought in before she or he even steps into the
  community. |
| Too many government programs that have started something and never finished, that
  has cause an ill-effect. So that's the kind of understanding you need to have. |
| For instance, I would like to sit with the people who are sitting in authority to help to
  make those changes for the long-term. |
| the government and the MCFD would really profit from sharing that knowledge and
  the understanding and that has to happen. It has to happen soon. I can do that. I can
  share everything I've learned over the last 10-20 years. |
| cross-cultural workshops would be a good start. |
| Well whoever provides that training is from the community and shares that
  information with the workers so that they can get an understanding of where the
  community is at with their culture, language and the different complexities about all
  the other families. |
| through that cultural workshop they get to understand which families are moving
  forward and which are falling behind. And only certain people in the community are
  aware of that. |
| I can take to a house and show you, and you'll see it right away. That family has a
  different set of problems and you have to understand that. So those are the kind of |
but we do is we will have, and just because you had one circle, doesn't mean that everything works out, ya know? for example one of the conclusions is that parents will go to treatment say, so we check back six months later; they didn't go to treatment when we first started we would actually get some feedback that said that well the circles don't really work eh? Because look at, the parents didn't go to treatment, and we look at it differently, we'll have another circle when we kind of find out why. And sometimes we'll have three or four, uh, but it's always done in a respectful way, we're always engaging that same family, the same parents come in and we talk, and um, in most cases, when you get to the third or fourth circle they will agree with us, or we'll mutually go, well, I guess we can't, I guess we can't really look after all the needs for our kids, but we're really happy to that aunt so-and-so is going to take the kids and we can see them every day. For example ya know? So it's kinda process based, we don't give up.

using the circle for other purposes, like for uh, not just placement, maybe we have a caregiver in Chilliwack and they're non-Aboriginal, and and uh, and our Squamish child is not coming to events, they're not learning about their culture, they're not learning about their family, and so we use it for connections. We put the heat on the caregiver, and say hey look at, part of your contract is to engage the child with the community, and family, and we have lots of events, as you can imagine in a large community, so we'll have a circle for that, ya know, and bring the caregivers and the family together, ya know? because that's also a good place for them to meet.

this is a key word, our circles are uh we’re using them as a process, and here is the key difference between this and the ministry, uh, because typically you use it for for an output or a product, to arrive at a care plan eh? Working with the family to arrive at a care plan for a child. So what tends to happen in the ministry in history is that you have one of these circles and that pretty much ends it, and then there's the plan for the workers to follow.

it's about three or four years now, a new referral started, which is exactly what we want to achieve, which is self-referrals. That's really neat, cause people will notice in the community, they'll say ya know, I think we better have a circle for my sister here her kids are really, really need some attention, and uh and so, that's really neat when you have, I mean it's sort of the ultimate prevention hey? when people ask for help.

like today we're having a giant circle with the ministry and uh, so in this case I'm facilitating, sometimes they're facilitating and I'm facilitating, and we co-facilitate as well

we have our own process, so that we, we have our own form, like an intake form, and uh, I may have one here, so we, the ministry is aware of the form, and so is all our staff, and uh, and so they will fill out our form because we like to keep a record, and its sort of like a referral, it's like a ref doc, kind of like the ministry has, its, we need to update it, because we'd like to have more room for what the problem is, but so, we
I try to interview all participants before Circle. And the more time you have and the more, we call it prep, circle prep, preparation, the more preparation the better product you have, so you, you want to get to the point where there are no surprises for anyone, where everyone's relaxed, and I emphasize it's a voluntary process, somebody doesn't agree with circles, fine, we don't have one, and you know, it's kind of their loss, seldom, I haven't had anybody yet, uhh, not for years now, it's happened a few times, particularly young uh, young couples where they're involved in drugs, and their family doesn't, they don't want to have us, so one young fellow says well, I don't want my family to know. I don't want my family to know what I'm doing, No I'm not coming to a circle.

then they talk about which families are connected in origin so I get that infusion always from the elders. Where do the process, and who is involved, so typically, I'm not Squamish, but I've been around here this is my fourth time back, I'd go off working somewhere and then I'd come back,

when I mentioned the flexibility of the circle, and some recent changes we've uh, we've uh how do you call, responded to some of these opportunities, like having the circle as soon as a new child comes to the agency's attention. This didn't happen even a year ago.

we know our people better simply because we live with them, you know the lived experience, we're living with them and as long as we uh, so you need, there needs to be inclusion, and uh, so for the ministry, they uh, it would be useful for them to allow that to happen, to allow each First Nation to articulate its process, you know?

we need to move from the western way of learning about communities and so on which is somewhat superficial, its sort of like we'll hold some workshops, and we'll give you some stuff to read and we'll and you'll learn about the people, but that doesn't, you know, it doesn't work that well, what really works well, is uh, if you get in the community, be patient, keep your eyes open and participate.

we've had that with some outside agencies, who say like, we need to get, we see non-aboriginal agencies you know everyone's grasping for knowledge about Aboriginal people, well how do you guys do it, what do you do you know? And that, we've seen that happen a lot, well can you have some workshops for us, and its just its more than that, you have to be involved with the people you work with

there's a more meaningful word and that is centred, community centred, it mean the people, local people, were really there, they have involvement in decision making, they play an actual role, its like just some of the things, I'm glad that I learned

used the word Indiginist, Indiginist thinking, so Indiginist it's uh, Indigenous history defined by an an Indigenous person, and uh you know, and taught by an Indigenous person, and controlled by an indigenous person.

a slight difference between uh, ours and the ministries, in the circles, is that we're more, and I've heard this mentioned, that the ministry circle is more facilitator directed, our circle is more family facilitated, I focus, as long as no one is upset, I might allow more family interaction, sometimes we don't know exactly what's going
on, and I've found that the Ministry is more, the facilitator, like I mentioned in the beginning with the chart and so on, the facilitator, uh, kind of directs it, ok, now we move on to this, now we move on... I do the same as well, but I'm always more, I'll let a conversation go a little longer, if I think its helpful,

there should be more money from the Ministry for local communities, for that specific purpose, and also with the resources should include that help for the facilitators, let each community sort of figure out who, or do a staffing action or whatever, and have that you know, maybe have people that have, people like me that have experience, put on session for those others who are new at it.

that would be a good way of developing more Nations have their own, and then those people work closely with the Ministry as well, but I think it would be more genuine, getting a lot of feedback because those people would know, so I think there's a lot of room to do things, but government and the ministry don't offer enough opportunities for that, it always has to be through the eyes of them you know, through the eyes of the ministry, and you know patrolled by them, directed by them, and it still could be but I, the difference would be, I would see it as a joint thing,