

Aboriginal Policy *and* Practice Framework *in* British Columbia

A PATHWAY TOWARDS RESTORATIVE POLICY *and* PRACTICE
THAT SUPPORTS *and* HONOURS ABORIGINAL PEOPLES'
SYSTEMS *of* CARING, NURTURING CHILDREN *and* RESILIENCY.



ABORIGINAL POLICY *and* PRACTICE FRAMEWORK *in* BRITISH COLUMBIA



“**THE TREE** represents Aboriginal families, First Nation and Aboriginal communities, Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) and Delegated Aboriginal Agencies (DAAs), who provide safety, support, culture, structure, consistency and balance to those in need.

With the freedom and ability to bridge worlds, the Eagle provides strength, courage and healing.

THE WATER WAVES represent challenging times that may arise. They also provide nourishment to the living species of Mother Earth.

THE WHALE represents the children as carriers of history. The positioning showcases the Aboriginal children who have gained tools, passion for life, and have found their soul's path.”

GENEROUSLY SHARED *by the* ARTIST JAMIN ZUROSKI *of the* NAMGIS FIRST NATION.

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*“... strengthening RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH SHARING,
collaborating AND STRIVING FOR COMMON understanding...”*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework* is an overarching framework intended to improve outcomes for Aboriginal children, youth, families and communities through restorative policies and practices. It applies to policy and practice involving Aboriginal children, youth and families on and off reserve regardless if they are being served by a Delegated Aboriginal Agency or the Ministry of Children and Family Development¹. Restorative policies and practices are culturally safe and trauma-informed, supporting and honouring Aboriginal peoples' cultural systems of caring and resiliency. The framework's model for restorative policy and practice is *Child, Youth, Family and Community-Centred; Culture-Centred; Inclusive, Collaborative and Accountable; and focused on Resilience, Wellness and Healing*.

The framework identifies the Circle process as a strength-based and holistic way to support policies and practices to be restorative. The Circle process ensures the right people are brought together to collectively plan, make decisions and commit to actions that ensure the well-being of Aboriginal children, youth, families and communities. The Circle process applies to policies, practices and services that impact Aboriginal children, youth and families. Through inclusive collaborative approaches that emphasize striving for common understanding and collective decision making, relationships will be strengthened.

In this framework, the Circle process is represented by a series of interconnected circles: *Gathering the Circle; Listening, Assessing and Finding Solutions; Creating Security, Belonging and Well-Being; and Keeping the Circle Strong*.² These circles centre on Aboriginal children, youth and families.

The *Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework* also recognizes the restorative process of the Circle and the ability to bring key partners, service providers and practitioners together to effectively support Aboriginal children, youth and families. Utilizing the Circle process, the framework exemplifies a holistic approach that is grounded in the distinct aspects of Aboriginal values and foundations to ground policy and practice improvements.

Restorative policies and practices support and honour Aboriginal peoples' cultural systems of caring, wellness and resiliency at the community, family and individual level. The framework provides a unique opportunity to develop and implement a service delivery approach based on Aboriginal cultures and traditions.

¹ Inclusive of MCFD contracts with organizations providing services to Aboriginal children, youth and families.

² These interconnected elements are reflective of many aspects of the *AOPSI Redesign*, which is based upon extensive community consultations, and the guiding principles and service delivery principles in the *Child, Family, and Community Service Act*.

INTRODUCTION

A PATHWAY TOWARDS RESTORATIVE POLICY *and* PRACTICE THAT SUPPORTS *and* HONOURS ABORIGINAL PEOPLES' SYSTEMS *of* CARING, NURTURING CHILDREN *and* RESILIENCY.

The *Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework* identifies a pathway towards restorative policy and practice that supports and honours Aboriginal peoples' cultural systems of caring and resiliency. The framework applies to all policy³ and practice involving Aboriginal children, youth and families in British Columbia, living on reserve or in urban communities, who receive services from a Delegated Aboriginal Agency (DAA) or the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD)⁴. The framework will impact practice and services delivered to Aboriginal children/youth and families through MCFD contracted services. The framework applies to all of MCFD's six service lines⁵:

- ▶ Early Years;
- ▶ Children and Youth with Special Needs;
- ▶ Child and Youth Mental Health;
- ▶ Child Safety, Family Support and Children in Care;
- ▶ Adoption; and
- ▶ Youth Justice



³ While it is not possible to identify the full scope of work undertaken by policy leads, this framework applies to the development and revision of all common policy, service delivery specific policy, specialized cross-program policy, support services policy, and practice guidelines, practice directives, standards, service delivery plans, provincial level cross ministry policy initiatives, provincial level protocols, and MCFD contracts impacting Aboriginal children, youth and families to ensure direct service delivery supports and honour Aboriginal peoples' cultural systems of caring and resiliency.

⁴ Inclusive of MCFD contracts with organizations providing services to Aboriginal children, youth and families.

⁵ These service lines are subject to change (current as of March 2015).



The *Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework* identifies the Circle process as a strength-based and holistic way to support policies and practices to be restorative. Restorative policies and practices are culturally safe and trauma-informed, supporting and honouring Aboriginal peoples' cultural systems of caring and resiliency.

THE CIRCLE *as a* RESTORATIVE PROCESS: The Circle process, which is grounded in our shared context, our values and our foundations, provides a pathway towards improved outcomes for Aboriginal children, youth, families and communities through restorative policy and practice. The Circle process brings people together to collectively plan, make decisions and commit to action that will ensure the well-being of Aboriginal children, youth, families and communities. The Circle process – with Aboriginal children, youth, families and communities at the centre – includes *Gathering the Circle; Listening, Assessing and Finding Solutions; Creating Security, Belonging and Well-being; and Keeping the Circle Strong*. If the Circle process is followed and grounded in all the framework's components, it will lead to a model that is: *Child, Youth, Family and Community-Centred; Culture-Centred; Culturally Safe; Inclusive, Collaborative and Accountable; and focused on Resiliency, Healing and Wellness*.

In order to support understanding and implementation of the Circle, the framework also includes important components regarding our shared context, values, foundations and collective responsibility:

OUR SHARED CONTEXT: The context that we must understand, including the impact of colonial history and its ongoing influence on the present, to support responsive action to current and past realities.

OUR VALUES: The values we uphold to support working together and to build an inclusive community which supports positive outcomes for all children, youth and families.

OUR FOUNDATIONS: Significant conceptual foundations, or the key educational objectives, that we must intimately understand to effectively champion the Circle process, and ensure policy and practice is restorative.

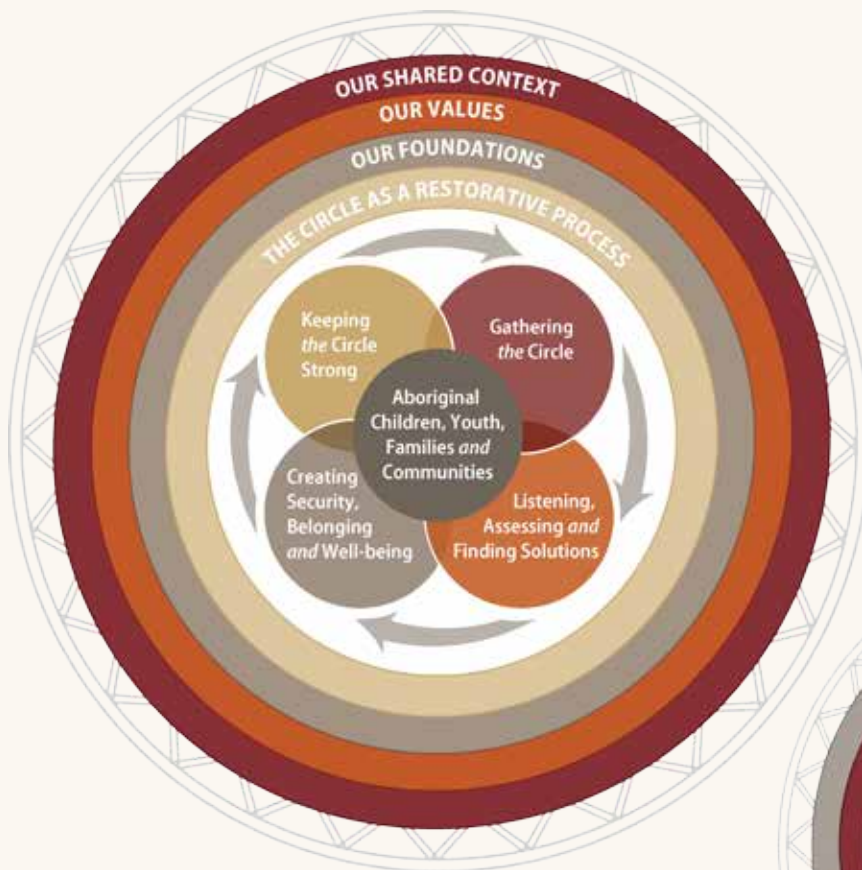
OUR COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY: The collective responsibility and accountability for improved outcomes for Aboriginal children, youth and families through restorative policy and practice.

A pathway towards restorative policy⁶ and practice undeniably requires a multi-generational journey towards reconciliation. It calls for continuous and conscious efforts by all peoples, organizations and governments to strengthen, revitalize and ensure equity and inclusion in all relationships and partnerships.

⁶ To further support implementation of the framework, policy leads may apply the Aboriginal Equity and Inclusion Policy Lens (see Appendix B).

ABORIGINAL POLICY *and* PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

“ IT IS WITH URGENCY THAT WE ARE ASKED TO *understand* OUR SHARED CONTEXT, *embrace* OUR VALUES AND OUR FOUNDATIONS, *implement* THE CIRCLE PROCESS AND *go forward* AND SHARE IT WITH OTHERS.”



IT IS OUR COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY to work together with an in-depth understanding of our shared context, values and foundations to implement the Circle as a restorative process to support a model of policy and practice that is *Child, Youth, Family and Community-Centred*; *Culture-Centred*; *Inclusive, Collaborative and Accountable*; and focused on *Resiliency, Healing, and Wellness*.



OUR SHARED CONTEXT

ABORIGINAL WORLD *views* AND VALUES ARE EMBEDDED IN *stories* AND LEGENDS THAT PASS ON KNOWLEDGE AND *teaching* FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION. WITHIN *stories* AND LEGENDS THERE ARE *teachings* THAT CAN BE FOUND FOR EACH OF US.

THE FOLLOWING EXCERPT IS FROM A *story* SHARED BY A STO:LO ELDER THAT HELPS US TO *listen and learn*. WHAT DOES THIS STORY MEAN TO YOU?

She put her hand on her chest and she said “[*shxweli*]* *is inside us here.*” She put her hand in front of her and she said “[*shxweli*] *is in your parents.*” She raised her hand higher and said “*then your grandparents, your great- grandparents, it is in your great-great-grandparents. It is in the rocks, it’s in the trees, it’s in the grass, it’s in the ground. [Shxweli] is everywhere.*”

BE OF GOOD MIND, 2007

*SHXWELI *has been interpreted to mean ‘SPIRIT.’*

This framework identifies a pathway towards improved outcomes for Aboriginal children, youth and families through restorative policy and practice. It does this by providing an Aboriginal specific model for policy and practice based upon shared values, foundations and processes. This model shapes and enriches the way we work with Aboriginal children and families.

Embarking on a pathway towards restorative policy and practice is impossible without understanding the shared history of colonization and the attempted destruction of Aboriginal cultures. This history continues to intergenerationally impact the lives of Aboriginal children, youth, family and communities today and continues to contribute to a climate of mistrust and divisiveness.

For centuries, Aboriginal peoples practiced their own dynamic systems and models of caring for and nurturing their children. These systems were connected to the values of each Nation; expressed in a variety of ways and based on unique world views, distinct cultures and traditions. Aboriginal peoples were also self-determining and self-sufficient, with traditional governing systems and structures.

Since contact, Aboriginal peoples have experienced the impact of colonial institutions, systems and world views. Colonization resulted in health and economic disparities, racial discrimination, loss of emotional security and family connections, and many other complex and negative effects associated with assimilation and cultural devastation. Aboriginal peoples have been subject to the loss of land and languages and disruptions to spiritual and traditional governing systems. Aboriginal peoples continue to experience disproportional levels of unemployment and poverty, sub-standard housing and sanitation, social exclusion and culturally unsafe⁷, inaccessible, inequitable and/or non-existent levels

⁷ Culturally unsafe services may be considered to “diminish, demean or disempower the cultural identity and well-being of an individual” (Nursing Council of New Zealand 2002, p. 9).

of services. Policies and practices of assimilation and other colonial legacies have also led to trauma which touches the lives of many generations in areas such as high rates of children in care, suicide, domestic violence, alcoholism and substance use. This 'history of loss' has had dramatic and destructive impacts on children, youth, families and communities, as well as on Aboriginal peoples' cultural systems of caring.

In particular, the effects of residential schools and the 'Sixties Scoop' have had devastating impacts on Aboriginal peoples' cultural systems of care. Residential schools segregated Aboriginal children from their families, with the explicit objective of assimilating and indoctrinating them into Euro-Canadian and Christian worldviews.⁸ The 'Sixties Scoop' describes the mass removal of Aboriginal children from their families, communities and culture, into the child welfare system in the 1960s. These Aboriginal children were taken from their homes, frequently without the consent of their families or communities. The 'Sixties Scoop' led to an accelerated and drastic over-representation of Aboriginal children in government care – a trend that continues today.

Current statistics in British Columbia reveal the distinct situation of Aboriginal children, youth and families and the challenges they face. The Aboriginal population overall is younger than the non-Aboriginal population – Aboriginal children and youth make up over 9% of the total population of children and youth.⁹ The median age of First Nations peoples (28) and Métis peoples (32) is much younger than that of the non-Aboriginal population (42).¹⁰ Within the province of British Columbia, Aboriginal youth represent the fastest growing demographic. In September 2015, there were 8,164 children and youth in care in British Columbia, and 4,399 (61%) of those were identified as Aboriginal. Approximately half (2,049) of the Aboriginal children and youth in care were served by a Delegated Aboriginal Agency, with the other Aboriginal children and youth in care served by MCFD. These and additional statistics reflect a collective responsibility shared by all practitioners and policy leads to support better outcomes for Aboriginal children, youth and families.

8 "Two primary objectives of the residential school system were to remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture. These objectives were based on the assumption Aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal. Indeed, some sought, as it was famously said, 'to kill the Indian in the child.' Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country." (Prime Minister of Canada, official apology, June 11, 2008)

9 Statistics Canada, National Household Survey, 2011, Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: First Nations People, Métis and Inuit.

10 Ibid.



WHY IS B.C. UNIQUE?

B.C. is home to the second largest population of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, with distinct and diverse cultures, values and languages, including 34 distinct languages making up 60% of the First Nations languages in Canada. Within B.C., there are over 129,000 First Nations peoples, with more than 200 distinct First Nations bands (that's one-third of all First Nations in Canada), more than 59,000 Métis people and nearly 800 Inuit peoples. As well, more than 50% of this Aboriginal population lives in urban centres. In B.C., the Federal and Provincial Governments and First Nations share responsibility for providing both health and social services on reserve and, in the absence of federal policies, provincial policies apply.



WHAT CAN I DO?

TO SUPPORT ABORIGINAL CHILDREN, YOUTH, FAMILIES and COMMUNITIES in a RESPECTFUL, RESPONSIVE and CONSISTENT MANNER?

Acquire the lived experiences necessary to learn the skills, attitudes and knowledge to work effectively with Aboriginal peoples in a respectful and responsive way. This is a lifelong journey that requires dedication and consistency. For example, this could mean policy leads and practitioners participate in Indigenous Cultural Competency Training. However, this is one example and many more actions will need to be undertaken in order to support Aboriginal children, youth and communities in a respectful, responsive and consistent manner.

This framework is a response to these current and past realities, which are the distinct and unique history and context of Aboriginal children, youth, families and communities across British Columbia. It recognizes that while Aboriginal peoples have faced many challenges, they have also demonstrated immense resiliency and unique strengths, and many are actively restoring and revitalizing their languages and cultural systems of caring for their children. The framework also recognizes that achieving well-being for Aboriginal children, youth and families means that practices and policies must be culturally safe, trauma-informed and inclusive of Aboriginal cultures, world views, knowledge and values.

This framework is grounded in community input,¹¹ recognized research, national and international law, and provincial commitments:

- ▶ Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia have unique world views, distinct cultures, values and ways of life, and a range of traditions and practices that are fundamental to supporting the well-being of their children and families. Research, evidence and learning demonstrate that when Aboriginal cultures, values and world views inform and shape culturally safe child, youth and family practice, outcomes are improved.¹²
- ▶ Section 35¹³ of *The Constitution Act, 1982* and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*¹⁴ recognizes and affirms particular Aboriginal rights. Section 15 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* confirms equality before and under the law and equal benefit without discrimination. As well, children and youth have rights that are recognized and protected by the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.¹⁵

11 This framework builds upon the community voices gathered by an extensive community consultation process that took place between 2009 and 2011 for the *Aboriginal Operational and Practice Standards and Indicators (AOPSI) Redesign Project*.

12 Chandler & Lalonde (2004). *Cultural Continuity as a Moderator of Suicide Risk Among Canada's First Nations*. p. 26.

13 Section 35 of the *Constitution of Canada* states: "The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed."

14 The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* was affirmed by Canada in 2010 and recognizes in particular "the rights of indigenous families and communities to retain shared responsibility for the upbringing, training, education, and well-being of their children, consistent with the rights of the child".

15 The *Convention on the Rights of the Child* was signed by Canada in 1990.

- ▶ Formal commitments, such as the *New Relationship with First Nations and Aboriginal Peoples*, the *Transformative Change Accord* and the *Métis Nation Relationship Accord*, compel the Province of British Columbia to work together with Aboriginal peoples to strengthen relationships and support shared actions to close the socio-economic gap between Aboriginal people and other British Columbians.
- ▶ Legislation in British Columbia, such as the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* (CFCSA), recognizes the guiding principles that “kinship ties and a child’s attachment to the extended family should be preserved if possible” and “the cultural identity of Aboriginal children should be preserved.”¹⁶ As well, a service delivery principle ensures that “Aboriginal people should be involved in the planning and delivery of services to Aboriginal families and their children.”¹⁷ Under both the CFCSA and the *Adoption Act*, “if the child is an Aboriginal child, the importance of preserving the child’s cultural identity must be considered in determining the child’s best interest.”¹⁸



DID YOU KNOW?

MCFD HAS AN ABORIGINAL EQUITY and INCLUSION POLICY LENS

(see Appendix B) to support equity and inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives in policy development? Policy leads are expected to develop policy in a manner that supports “equity and inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives,” recognizing the importance of “ensuring past challenges are acknowledged, Aboriginal perspectives are gathered and incorporated and [that] equitable and culturally safe policies are essential to improving Aboriginal children, youth and families” (Aboriginal Equity and Inclusion Policy Lens).



¹⁶ *Child, Family, and Community Service Act*, R.S.B.C. 1996, c.46, s.2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, s.3.

¹⁸ *Child, Family, and Community Service Act*, R.S.B.C. 1996, c.46, s.4, and *Adoption Act*, R.S.B.C. 1996, c.5, s.3.

OUR VALUES

THERE ARE *key cultural values* THAT ARE NEEDED TO SUPPORT A PROCESS OF *reconciliation*,¹⁹ ENGAGEMENT WITH ABORIGINAL PEOPLES, MEANINGFUL POLICY AND PRACTICE AND SHARED *accountability*.

THE VALUES THAT MUST GUIDE *and* INFORM POLICY *and* PRACTICE ARE:¹⁹

RESPECT: To hold esteem, recognition and regard for the knowledge, traditions, distinct cultures, languages and processes of Aboriginal children, youth, families and communities, and to be informed of Aboriginal histories and current experiences.

HOW DO I DEMONSTRATE *Respect*?

Recognize your own context and limitations in cultural understanding; appropriately observe and learn; seek out knowledge and feedback from those you are serving and working with; be transparent in what you are doing and why you are doing it; and recognize and affirm the unique aspects of the context you are working within, including histories of colonization, discrimination and abuses of power at all levels. Recognize the uniqueness of every family – and the particular knowledge and expertise they bring to situations involving members of their family. When being offered a story or example be sure to respect the narrative way of sharing and providing information.

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INCLUSION: To involve and engage Aboriginal peoples, including working with families and communities in partnership, with an emphasis on a spirit and practice of collaborative and inclusive decision making.

HOW DO I FACILITATE *Inclusion*?

Listen to all perspectives as part of finding solutions and contribute to a climate of inclusiveness by building upon the strengths of individuals, families and communities. Recognize that Aboriginal people are entitled to equal access to child and family services that are responsive to their needs and based on their Indigenous knowledge and culture.

¹⁹ The Values reflect aspects of the "Guiding Principles", and aspects of the "Principles for Practice" developed as part of the *AOPSI Redesign*. The "Principles for Practice in the *AOPSI Redesign*" are: "Culturally Safe and Family-Centred;" "Collaborative and Participatory;" "Holistic and Relationship-based;" "Strengths-based and Proactive;" and "Transparent, Open and Honest."

TRUTH TELLING: To listen and share in an honest and open way, beginning with Aboriginal children, youth and families.

HOW DO I DEMONSTRATE *Truth Telling*?

Create the spaces to have open exchanges that involve both listening and sharing in such a way that fosters respect and builds authentic relationships. Support opportunities to understand, while being mindful and acknowledging experiences.

.....

WISDOM: To know that culturally significant knowledge, the teaching of histories and experiences are relevant and must guide choices, actions and decisions.

HOW DO I DEMONSTRATE *Wisdom*?

Acknowledge and find expertise within Aboriginal families and communities. Informed practice also speaks to working with Aboriginal children, youth, families and communities in proactive ways that prevent issues and challenges from becoming more complex or even arising in the first place. Informed practices are wise practices that utilize the traditional knowledge base, and are appropriate and relevant to the context one is working in.

.....

BELONGING: To support caring and nurturing relationships where Aboriginal children, youth and families have a positive sense of family and community, feel valued and safe and have a positive sense of place and belonging.

HOW DO I FACILITATE *Belonging*?

Recognize that all people, including children and youth, have a place in the Circle with their own unique strengths, and deserve to be loved and have a positive sense of family and community belonging. Draw on the intrinsic and distinct strengths of Aboriginal cultures, traditions and languages to enhance understanding and to connect individuals with information and supports in a respectful manner. Acknowledge strengths and support positive relationships that foster a positive sense of self.



OUR FOUNDATIONS

“...MORE EMPHASIS IS REQUIRED ON ENSURING AN *appreciation* FOR THE STRENGTHS *of traditional practices* AND HOW WE CAN INCLUDE THEM MOVING FORWARD.”

There are core foundations that practitioners and policy leads need to understand in order to build their capacity to support the development and delivery of meaningful policy and practice, and to work effectively with Aboriginal children, youth, families and communities.

By intimately understanding the *Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework's* significant conceptual foundations, policy leads and practitioners can foster cultural safety for Aboriginal children, youth and families. Acquiring these learnings can support policy leads and practitioners to move beyond cultural awareness which acknowledges cultural differences and cultural sensitivity which recognizes the importance of respecting these cultural differences.

These foundations are of critical importance when building staff cultural competency, or specific cultural skills, knowledge and attitudes, which in turn supports fostering a culturally safe environment where “power imbalances, institutional discrimination, colonization and colonial relationships [are analyzed] as they apply to social policy and practice.” In this way, culturally safe policies and practices should also be trauma-informed, including the psychological and social impacts of the intergenerational trauma experienced by Aboriginal children, youth, families and communities. Importantly, cultural safety “enable[s] safe services to be defined by those who receive the service[s].” It necessitates “a transformation of relationships where the needs and voice of the child, youth and family take a predominant role” and involves actively exploring and challenging complex power relationships.

Learning is a lifelong journey, acquiring the knowledge and cultural competency for safe services is a continual process. More emphasis on cultural competency is required in order to ensure strengths-based and inclusive practices are incorporated in services for Aboriginal children, youth and families. Recognition that Aboriginal peoples have their own policy and practice decision-making processes that have and continue to be successful within their own communities is essential to providing culturally safe, holistic and proactive service provision.

The *Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework* supports an in-depth understanding of the following foundations to guide and inform policy and practice:²⁰

20 The foundations reflect in some ways the “Guiding Principles” developed as part of the *AOPSI Redesign*, which is based upon extensive community consultations. Those Guiding Principles are: “Children are precious;” “Cultural traditions and language are the foundation to healthy individuals, families, nations, and communities;” “A holistic approach is key to healthy children, families and communities;” and “Self-determination is paramount.”

ROLES of ANCESTORS, COMMUNITY, ELDERS, FAMILY and EXTENDED FAMILY in UPHOLDING the SACREDNESS

of CHILDREN: Aboriginal cultures honour the sacred link between past generations and their responsibilities for current and future generations. For many Aboriginal peoples, children are considered sacred gifts from the Creator, with their place in the centre of the Circle.²¹ Of equal importance in the Circle are youth, young adults, family and community (inclusive of extended family and traditional family systems), and organizational and governing structures each have a role and share an important responsibility to uphold and support children, youth and families within the Circle.

The family, including extended family, is recognized as the expert in caring for their children. Elders and traditional knowledge keepers also hold an important role in sharing the traditional values and sacred teachings of caring for and nurturing children.

Roles of Ancestors, Community, Elders, Family and Extended Family in Upholding the Sacredness of Children – As policy leads and practitioners we must understand and value traditional approaches and cultural systems of caring.

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CULTURAL SAFETY: A “sacred space where culture can be freely expressed, shared, learned and supported”.²² Cultural safety is a theory and practice that takes into account power imbalances, institutional discrimination, colonization and colonial relationships as they apply to social policy and practice”.²³ Cultural safety involves actively exploring and challenging complex power relationships²⁴ including the way that bias, stereotyping, discrimination and racism manifest in these contexts.

Role of Witnesses in Aboriginal Ceremony – The role of a witness in Aboriginal ceremony is an important concept in most Aboriginal communities in British Columbia. To bear witness to an event like naming, knowledge transfer and various other celebrations is common place and is a key feature of the Aboriginal oral tradition. This is how oral traditions record-keep and validate important cultural work.

Witnesses may be selected prior to the commencement of the cultural event, or the witnesses may present as hereditary chiefs who are asked to speak. In either case, the witnesses will be paid and asked to share their experience, reflection and connection to what has transpired. In both cases, the speaking will happen at the end of the cultural event.

21 “Children are at the centre of all circles” Creating Pathways ~ An Aboriginal Early Years Five Year Strategic Plan, 2009, p. 1.

22 Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society, p. 22.

23 Aboriginal Equity and Inclusion Policy Lens. (2013).

24 This requires policy makers and practitioners to critically reflect on their own values, as well as those of the system, to become aware of inequities.





A third type of witness has all participants as the witness. Small gifts, fruit or other items may serve as payment. Witnessing has many features and it is important to learn the method used in the territory you work.

As policy leads and practitioners, it is important to understand that it is an honour to be called as a witness. The Master of Ceremonies will provide clear instruction on what is expected from a witness. Important advice: it is culturally appropriate to accept the payment provided, without questioning the host.

CULTURE, TRADITION, VALUES, LANGUAGE and IDENTITY: The roles of culture, tradition, values and language are essential to the well-being of Aboriginal children, youth and families, and are fundamental to healthy processes of identity formation. The way in which services are delivered – and the way in which Aboriginal children, youth and families are engaged with these services – must reflect and respect their particular cultures, language, traditions and values.

Role of Culture, Tradition, Values, Language and Identity – As policy leads and practitioners we must consider community protocol on how individuals are approached, who needs to be involved, the process of involving them, the language used and when translators, Elders or cultural persons are required. Traditional decision-making processes must be considered to strengthen the inclusion of culture, tradition, values and language and to support positive identity formation.

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INTERCONNECTEDNESS and RELATIONSHIPS: A pivotal element of Aboriginal cultures and worldviews is that “all living things and the environment are interconnected and interdependent.”²⁵ Children, youth and families cannot be viewed in isolation from their extended family, their communities and the mental, physical, environmental, social and spiritual realms of their lives. Indeed, everything must be viewed through the lens of “relationships,” both past and present.

Interconnectedness and Relationships – As policy leads and practitioners we must seek an understanding of the interconnectedness of relationships. Consideration must be given to how relationships are respected and how certain actions may strengthen relationships for the well-being of Aboriginal children, youth and families.

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DIVERSITY, SELF-DETERMINATION and AUTONOMY: There is vast diversity amongst Aboriginal peoples and communities, and it is critical to support the aspirations of all Aboriginal peoples to lead the development of policy and practice, as well as decision making regarding their children. It is vital to acknowledge that “Aboriginal peoples have primary responsibility and a necessary role in child welfare and the well-being of their children and families,”²⁶ and similarly have primary responsibilities and necessary roles across all service lines.

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²⁵ AOPSI Redesign, p. 14.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 14.

Diversity, Self-determination and Autonomy – As policy leads and practitioners we must approach work with a learning attitude and openness to diverse approaches and aspirations while consistently checking one's personal, professional and societal assumptions. They must also recognize that Aboriginal peoples are in the best position to make decisions that affect their children and youth, as well the important role of children and youth in decision making.

ADDITIONAL IMPLICATIONS of THESE FOUNDATIONS for POLICY DEVELOPMENT and IMPLEMENTATION INCLUDE:

- ▶ Ensuring that policies are developed in an integrative manner that reinforces the interconnected dimensions of health and wellness for Aboriginal children, youth and families.
- ▶ Ensuring that Aboriginal knowledge, world views and values inform policy development and are reflected within policies and how they are used.
- ▶ Confirming the space for the multiplicity of roles and responsibilities to be played in the care and well-being of Aboriginal children.
- ▶ Promoting the development of systems, standards and practices that respect and reflect the pivotal place of culture, tradition, values, language and identity.
- ▶ Supporting service providers to work in partnership and collaboration with Aboriginal peoples in regards to well-being of children and families.

ADDITIONAL IMPLICATIONS of THESE FOUNDATIONS for PRACTICE INCLUDE:

- ▶ Carefully considering who must be engaged, how they must be engaged and what cultural and community protocols must be respected.
- ▶ Developing understanding of traditional approaches and cultural systems that are related to the context within which one is working.
- ▶ Adopting a learning orientation and stance in all working relationships in order to collaborate in partnership.
- ▶ Considering what it means to be in strong relationships with those one is seeking to serve and how to strengthen those relationships in a way that promotes health and wellness.
- ▶ Recognizing one's own limitations, and the knowledge, experience, orientation and understanding needed to meaningfully and appropriately practice in this context.



THE CIRCLE *as a* RESTORATIVE PROCESS

THE CIRCLE PROCESS “HONOURS THE *rebuilding* OF TRADITIONAL SYSTEMS INTO MODERN PRACTICE BY *connecting* AND/OR REBUILDING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN CHILDREN, FAMILIES/EXTENDED *families* AND COMMUNITY.” (AOPSI Redesign, p.15)

The Circle is a sacred and restorative process that is strength-based and holistic. It focuses on the “whole” person and their unique strengths, where all aspects of their life are relevant, including their physical, emotional, mental and spiritual well-being.²⁷ This process considers a person as a strand in a web of relationships, and the role of those relationships informs decision making.

For many Aboriginal peoples, the Circle speaks to the vital importance of strengthening relationships through sharing, collaborating and striving for consensus in collective decision making. Diverse perspectives and needs can be shared and respected where equality exists. The Circle is the sacred space where healing can occur, interconnectedness and interdependent relationships with one another are emphasized and unity respectful of our diversity may be found.

Grounding the Circle process in our shared context, our values and our foundations, provides a pathway towards improved outcomes for Aboriginal children, youth, families and communities through restorative policies and practices. Restorative policies and practices are culturally safe, trauma-informed and support and honour Aboriginal peoples’ cultural systems of caring and resiliency.

In this framework, the Circle process is represented by a series of interconnected circles: *Gathering the Circle; Listening/Assessing and Finding Solutions; Creating Security, Belonging, and Well-Being; and Keeping the Circle Strong.*²⁸ These circles centre on Aboriginal children, youth and families. If the Circle process is followed,²⁹ we should see a model emerge that supports policy and practice to be *Child, Youth, Family and Community-Centred; Culture-Centred; Inclusive, Collaborative and Accountable; and Resiliency, Healing and Wellness focused.*

²⁷ As defined by Aboriginal peoples.

²⁸ These interconnected elements are reflective of many aspects of the *AOPSI Redesign*, which is based upon extensive community consultations, and the guiding principles and service delivery principles in the *Child, Family, and Community Service Act*.

²⁹ As well as grounded in an in depth understanding of our shared context, our values, and our foundations.

THE CIRCLE *as a* RESTORATIVE PROCESS

FOR MANY ABORIGINAL PEOPLES, *the Circle* SPEAKS TO THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF *strengthening* RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH SHARING, COLLABORATING, AND STRIVING FOR CONSENSUS IN *collective* DECISION MAKING.



GATHERING *the* CIRCLE

*Gathering the Circle*³⁰ speaks to the need to ensure that engagement with Aboriginal children, youth, families and communities is appropriate by ensuring the right people are involved, the necessary knowledge and understandings are being sought and the context for appropriate decision-making is set.

As well, appropriate engagement acknowledges and considers how time may be valued differently, and when additional time may be required to fully support Aboriginal children, youth, families and communities.

KEY POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Some of the implications for policy development and implementation of *Gathering the Circle* include ensuring that the language, content and implementation of policies:

- ▶ **Acknowledge** and create the space for the multiple roles and responsibilities that must be played by different members of families and communities;
- ▶ **Reflect** Aboriginal knowledge, world views and perspectives through meaningful inclusiveness;
- ▶ **Establish** a context for partnership, strong relationships and collaboration in decision-making; and
- ▶ **Include** all people that must be heard when engaging in policy development.

KEY PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

Some of the key practice implications of *Gathering the Circle* that also reflect the foundations and values include:

- ▶ **Learning** who needs to be involved from the family and community including Elders and traditional knowledge keepers;
- ▶ **Building** respectful and listening relationships with those who are to be involved;
- ▶ **Gathering** those who must be involved in a culturally safe manner and setting;
- ▶ **Seeking** understanding about the cultural and community context of the matter and how that should guide decisions and actions;
- ▶ **Viewing** the matter from a perspective that considers spiritual, mental, emotional and physical dimensions;
- ▶ **Considering** strengths that can be built upon and how to take proactive steps.

³⁰ *Gathering the Circle* reflects many aspects of the AOPSI *Redesign*, which is based upon extensive community consultations.

LISTENING, ASSESSING *and* FINDING SOLUTIONS

*Listening, Assessing and Finding Solutions*³¹ speaks to the spirit of collaboration, sharing, respect and learning that should characterize how one works with Aboriginal children, youth, families and communities, and is a part of a process that is focused on ensuring that the most culturally safe approaches and solutions can be found.

KEY POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Some of the implications for policy development and implementation of *Listening, Assessing and Finding Solutions* include ensuring that the language, content and implementation of policies:

- ▶ **Are responsive** to the unique context and challenges facing Aboriginal children, youth, families and communities;
- ▶ **Promote** and support proactive efforts and support a strength-based practice;
- ▶ **Reflect** the necessity for culturally safe solutions to be found;
- ▶ **Encourage** broad engagement in a culturally competent and safe manner.

KEY PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

Some of the key practice implications of *Listening, Assessing and Finding Solutions* that also reflect the foundations and values include:

- ▶ **Actively** seeking out and listening to the child's and family's perspective about what the concern is, with whom the child feels safe, what is working well and what needs to change to ensure the child's safety and well-being;
- ▶ **Ensuring** the assessment process is inclusive, collaborative, holistic and focuses on the child, youth and family's spiritual and cultural needs and other aspects of safety and well-being;
- ▶ **Starting** with consideration of strengths, including: what is working well; what are the child's, parents', family and community strengths; and how can these strengths be incorporated into the planning for the child's safety and well-being;
- ▶ **Working** collaboratively so that the child, parents, family, caregivers, social workers and other community members and service providers are all "on the same page" about what needs to happen to support the child, youth and family.



³¹ *Listening/Assessing and Finding Solutions* reflects many aspects of the AOPSI Redesign, which is based upon extensive community consultations.

CREATING SECURITY, BELONGING *and* WELL-BEING

*Creating Security, Belonging and Well-Being*³² recognizes the central significance and importance of cultural connection and identity to a child's well-being, and the need for this to be nurtured and maintained. Actions taken must be planned in a manner that ensures the child's cultural connection is strengthened. This requires the inclusion of ancestors, Elders, community, family and extended family in the planning for a child's well-being. These actions must be trauma-informed and acknowledge and understand the resiliency of Aboriginal peoples in remaining connected to, and expressing, their cultures.³³

KEY POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Some of the implications for policy development and the implementation of *Creating Security, Belonging and Well-Being* include ensuring that the language, content and implementation of policies:

- ▶ **Ensure** there is sufficient time, resources, opportunity and capacity to support the strengthening of cultural connections;
- ▶ **Place** emphasis on the importance of cultural identity and the knowledge and supports needed to nurture that identity;
- ▶ **Reflect** trauma-informed approaches, including the impact of intergenerational trauma on Aboriginal children, youth, families and communities.

KEY PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

Some of the key practice implications of *Creating Security, Belonging and Well-Being* that also reflect the foundations and values include:

- ▶ **Seeking** out and facilitating family, extended family and community participation;
- ▶ **Working** together in a way that honours and respects all perspectives, works to maintain inclusiveness and recognizes the sharing of decision-making and responsibilities;
- ▶ **Ensuring** there is shared access to information in a transparent manner;
- ▶ **Recognizing** the importance of connections to community and culture, and encouraging and facilitating those connections;
- ▶ **Utilizing** trauma-informed approaches and understanding the impact of inter-generational trauma on Aboriginal children, youth, families and communities.

³² *Creating Security, Belonging and Well-Being* reflects many aspects of the AOPSI Redesign, which is based upon extensive community consultations.

³³ Nurturing and maintaining the strengths and connections that support that resiliency is integral to creating security, belonging and well-being.

KEEPING *the* CIRCLE STRONG

*Keeping the Circle Strong*³⁴ speaks to the importance of working in an engaged and holistic manner that recognizes that the health and well-being of relationships is essential to the health and well-being of a child and youth over the long term.

Trust, open communication and maintaining connections, are pivotal to ensuring the well-being of children, youth and families into the future. The Circle process should remain in place beyond immediate solutions being found.

KEY POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Some of the implications for policy development and the implementation of *Keeping the Circle Strong* include ensuring that the language, content and implementation of policies:

- ▶ **Promote** true partnerships in decision-making, monitoring, evaluating and learning lessons for the future;
- ▶ **Reflect** the importance of building strong relationships and nurturing those relationships into the future;
- ▶ **Establish** clear directions for accountability, transparency and communication.

KEY PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

Some of the key practice implications of *Keeping the Circle Strong* that also reflect the foundations and values include:

- ▶ **Openly acknowledging**, listening and learning from a child, youth, family and community's experience of the Circle process and reflecting on what that learning might mean for actions and decisions into the future;
- ▶ **Sharing** perspectives and developing actions together that will build on the strengths of the Circle process and its achievements, including identifying long-term plans and goals that will advance health and well-being;
- ▶ **Supporting** children, youth and families to be empowered, self-sufficient and independent;
- ▶ **Staying** connected to those involved in the Circle process into the future, and continuing to strengthen relationships.



³⁴ *Keeping the Circle Strong* reflects many aspects of the AOPSI Redesign, which is based upon extensive community consultations.

ABORIGINAL POLICY *and* PRACTICE MODEL

When the Circle process has been followed,³⁵ we see a model emerge that supports policy and practice to be *Aboriginal Child, Youth, Family and Community-Centred; Culture-Centred; Inclusive, Collaborative and Accountable; and Resiliency, Healing and Wellness focused*.

CHILD, YOUTH, FAMILY *and* COMMUNITY-CENTRED: supporting the involvement of children, families, the extended families, traditional family structures, Elders, traditional knowledge keepers and communities in decision making, inclusive of traditional processes, protocols, ceremonies, values and sacred teachings for caring and nurturing children, youth and families.

CULTURE-CENTRED: ensuring that all practice and policy supports cultural safety, those working with children, youth and families are culturally competent, and the role of culture is considered central to the well-being of children, youth and families.

INCLUSIVE, COLLABORATIVE *and* ACCOUNTABLE: emphasizing the inclusiveness of practice and policy processes, the role of the community, the importance of hearing and listening to all perspectives, recognizing that solutions are found through the efforts and input of many and transparency, openness and honesty must be present in all communications. Restorative practice requires meaningful collaboration with family, community and across service providers.

RESILIENCY, HEALING *and* WELLNESS FOCUSED: ensuring that practice and policy supports building on the strengths of individuals, with culture as one of many protective factors during adverse or difficult times. As well, ensuring practice works proactively to promote harm reduction and a context of health and wellness is increased.



³⁵ That must be grounded in our shared context, our values, and our foundations.

OUR COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

We all have a role in ensuring the accountability of the *Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework*, and we all have a personal and collective role in ensuring the implementation and promotion of this framework. It is with urgency that we are asked to understand our shared context, embrace our values and our foundations, implement the Circle processes and go forward and share with others. It is important to find our personal role in improving outcomes for Aboriginal children, youth and families.

Together, we can realize a future where policies and practices support and honour Aboriginal peoples' cultural systems of caring and resiliency. There is no limit to our commitment to improving policy, practices, services and supports impacting Aboriginal children and youth, families, communities, practitioners and systems as a whole.

We offer opportunities for shared commitment to improve the safety and well-being of Aboriginal children, youth and families including:

- ▶ Strengthening of identity for Aboriginal children, youth and families;
- ▶ Physical, emotional, spiritual and cultural safety for Aboriginal children, youth and families;
- ▶ Children, youth and families engaging in learning and the skills needed to care for one another;
- ▶ Deep connection and active involvement of Aboriginal children and youth with their families, communities and cultures;
- ▶ Stable environments that are responsive to the particular needs and contexts of children, youth and families;
- ▶ Patterns of staying together in healthy relationships;
- ▶ Access to culturally safe services so that needs can be met;
- ▶ Transparent, informed, engaged and accountable decision-making that actively involves children, families, communities and practitioners;
- ▶ Constructive connections and relationships between practitioners and those they are seeking to serve;
- ▶ Cultural competence and awareness for all practitioners and at all levels within the system;
- ▶ Integrated and culturally appropriate services that are accessible and supported equitably and sufficiently;
- ▶ A system working in a preventative and proactive manner.



IT IS MY RESPONSIBILITY...

- » *To understand our shared history and its ongoing influence on the present*
- » *To implement a restorative approach to policy and practice*
- » *To ensure policies, practices and services effectively meet the needs of Aboriginal children, youth and families*
- » *To utilize the Circle as a restorative process*
- » *To understand key cultural values in order to promote cultural reintegration*
- » *To recognize the strength of aligning traditional processes and approaches in current and future practice*
- » *To actively seek and embrace partnerships that support Aboriginal children, youth and their families*
- » *To build on the strength in Aboriginal children, youth, families and communities*



The *Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework* compels us to work together, as part of our collective responsibility, on a pathway towards improved outcomes for Aboriginal children, youth and families through restorative policy and practice. With an in-depth understanding of our shared context, values and foundations, we can implement the Circle as a restorative process leading to a model of policy and practice that supports and honours Aboriginal peoples' in British Columbia.³⁶



³⁶ This model of policy and practice is *Child, Youth, Family and Community- Centred, Culture- Centred, Inclusive, Collaborative and Accountable, and Resiliency, Healing and Wellness Focused*.

HISTORY

IT IS EXPECTED THAT THE *Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework* WILL CONTINUE TO BE *strengthened* THROUGH FURTHER SHARED *dialogue* AND INCREASED *understanding*.

Since 1999, the Aboriginal Operational and Practice Standards and Indicators (AOPSI) have guided Delegated Aboriginal Agencies (DAAs) in the provision of services to Aboriginal children, youth and families. AOPSI represented the minimum expectation for performance of the DAAs, and where AOPSI was silent, the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) policies and standards applied.

In 2009, the AOPSI Redesign Project was initiated to review AOPSI based on Indigenous models of caring and legislative requirements, with the goal of developing redesigned Aboriginal Practice Standards applicable to Delegated Aboriginal Agencies. This framework builds on the strengths of the AOPSI Redesign Project, specifically a draft report developed by the Nota Bene Consulting Group entitled “Starting from a Traditional Place: Aboriginal Operational and Practice Standards and Indicators” (May 2012). This draft report includes themes that emerged as a result of extensive community consultations with First Nation communities and Aboriginal community members consulted during the development of AOPSI Redesign. Between 2009 and 2011, consultations were held with First Nations and Aboriginal communities with over 600 Aboriginal participants, including Elders, youth, parents, community members, Aboriginal leaders, Delegated Aboriginal Agency service practitioners, First Nations and Aboriginal staff, MCFD partners and Indigenous scholars.

In July 2013, the focus of the AOPSI Redesign Project shifted and it was proposed that an overarching Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework, applicable to DAA's, Contracted Agencies and MCFD – including all service lines – be developed to guide policy and practice. The goal was to ensure Aboriginal children, youth and families in BC could expect to receive the same practice and have the same policies apply regardless of whether they were served by a DAA or MCFD.

It is widely acknowledged that this framework would not be possible without the voices from those earlier dialogues with the various First Nations and Aboriginal community members who have grounded this framework in the values of community, informing a pathway towards restorative policy and practice.

We would like to sincerely thank those who shared their visions for Aboriginal children, youth and families in B.C., worked together to honour the community voices in AOPSI and collaborated to develop this framework.

It is expected that the *Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework* will continue to be strengthened through further shared dialogue and increased understanding.



APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY *of* TERMS

ABORIGINAL: Aboriginal peoples as defined in the 1982 Constitution refers to Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada. The term Aboriginal does not identify the uniqueness and diverse cultures of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples and is often viewed as a “pan-Aboriginal” approach. The current *Child, Family and Community Service Act* broadly defines ‘Aboriginal child’ (over 12 years of age) to include anyone who has Aboriginal ancestry and considers themselves to be Aboriginal.³⁷

ABORIGINAL KNOWLEDGE: Local, traditional knowledge belonging to Aboriginal peoples that is culture- and context-specific, dynamic, adaptive and holistic; non-formal knowledge that is orally transmitted and generally not documented.³⁸

AOPSI REDESIGN: The redesign of the Aboriginal Operational Practice Standards and Indicators (AOPSI) was inaugurated in 2011. The AOPSI was first developed and adopted in the late 1990s as a starting point for a First Nations Audit and Review process initiated by MCFD. An initial review in 2001 was designed to enhance the quality of social-work practice that would be more culturally appropriate, achievable and sound. It was understood at the time that future reviews would be needed to continue to strengthen the standards. Caring for First Nations Children Society led subsequent AOPSI review processes in 2003, 2005 and 2009. In 2011, a full redesign of AOPSI was inaugurated, again with the leadership of CFNCS, including the goal of “a new model developed from an Indigenous world view and accountable to the First Nations Director of Child Welfare.” The AOPSI Redesign included extensive First Nations engagement and participation.

CHILD: A child, children or youth(s) up to 19 years of age.

CIRCLE: Refers both to a group and to a process whereby a group of people come together as a Circle to collectively plan, make decisions and commit to action that will ensure the safety, support and well-being of the child, parents and family. In some communities, the traditional decision-making process will inform who participates in the Circle along with the family and social worker.

³⁷ *Aboriginal Equity and Inclusion Policy Lens* (2014)

³⁸ *Ibid.*

Traditionally in Aboriginal communities, more than one type of Circle can come together and different Circles can each have a unique purpose. For example, there are: *Talking Circles*, where the emphasis is on inclusion, sharing information and ideas, respectful listening and open discussion and *Healing Circles* where Elders and spiritual leaders are involved in a more formal way to address family issues. In relation to the new Aboriginal Operational Practice Standards and Indicators, the type(s) of Circles gathered and their role(s) may vary according to community and in response to the varying issues requiring consideration. The family will decide the nature of the Circle, i.e., *Talking Circle, Healing Circle, etc.*³⁹

CULTURE: A broad and expansive term that refers to the way of life of a group of people, including systems of knowledge, beliefs, behaviours, values, experiences, meanings and modes of communication. There is a wide array of distinct and different Aboriginal cultures. Culture encompasses Aboriginal worldview and describe a society at a particular time.

CULTURAL COMPETENCY: An educational phase where one grows in competence by applying cultural understanding to one's work; the integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into specific standards, policies, practices and attitudes.⁴⁰

CULTURAL SAFETY: A transformation of relationships where the needs and voice of the child, youth and family take a predominant role. Moves beyond cultural competence in that it analyzes power imbalances, institutional discrimination, colonization and colonial relationships as they apply to social policy and practice.⁴¹

DELEGATED ABORIGINAL AGENCY: An Aboriginal Child and Family Serving Agency that employs social workers to provide mandated child welfare services in accordance with the Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA). DAAs enter into a formal agreement with the Director under section 93 (1) (g) (iii) of the CFCSA to provide necessary infrastructure and support for their employees, who in turn may receive delegation from the Director under section 92 of the CFCSA. Only delegated social workers are able to act under the CFCSA.

39 AOPSI Redesign

40 Aboriginal Equity and Inclusion Policy Lens (2014)

41 Ibid.





POLICY: Policy sets out expectations for practice and serves as the basis for consistent decision making and practice. Policy interprets, reflects and/or is informed by: legislation; evidence; values and principles; promising practices; Indigenous perspectives; and child, youth and family perspectives.

PRACTITIONER: A person providing direct services on behalf of MCFD or a Delegated Aboriginal Agency in relation to one of MCFD's six service lines.

RESILIENCY: The quality and power of withstanding and recovering from difficult conditions and circumstances, including enduring and maintaining the original or traditional form or meaning of something.

SELF-DETERMINATION: The *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* signed and ratified by Canada states that "All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right, they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development." *The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* adopted by Canada affirms the right of self-determination, which includes the right "to freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development" (Article 3). Article 4 affirms Indigenous peoples' right "to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs," and Article 5 protects their right "to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions."

Self-determination also is a fundamental concept and principle at the level of the individual, family and community. In this context, self-determination may be understood as "the right of parents, caregivers and First Nations, either individually or collectively, to determine all aspects of the care of First Nation children consistent with customs, traditions, laws and standards for the best interests of the child, his/her parents and his/her nation, as determined by the First Nation" (Joe, 2011).⁴²

42 AOPSI Redesign

SERVICE LINES: The six service lines of MCFD include: Early Childhood Development and Child Care Services; Services for Children and Youth with Special Needs; Child and Youth Mental Health; Child Safety, Family Support and Children in Care Services; Adoption Services; and Youth Justice Services.⁴³

TRADITION: The handing down of statements, beliefs, legends, customs, information, activities and practices that have been passed down from generation to generation, especially by word of mouth or by practice.

TRAUMA INFORMED APPROACH: "... incorporates three key elements: (1) REALIZING the prevalence of trauma; (2) RECOGNIZING how trauma affects all individuals involved with the program, organization, or system, including its own workforce; and (3) RESPONDING by putting this knowledge into practice. A program, organization or system that is trauma informed realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for healing; recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in staff, clients and others involved with the system; and responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, practices and settings [1]. SAMHSA. *Trauma Definition: A Trauma Informed Approach*. Available from: <http://www.samhsa.gov/traumajustice/traumadefinition/approach.aspx>

WORLD VIEW: The overall perspective from which one sees and interprets the world; a collection of beliefs about life and the universe held by an individual or a group; a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart about the basic construction of reality that provides the foundation on which one lives and moves and has their being.⁴⁴

WISE PRACTICES: A way of approaching Aboriginal community practice and knowledge exchange which utilizes the traditional knowledge base of Aboriginal peoples and acknowledges the relevant and dynamic contextual nature of Aboriginal peoples' and communities' experiences and contemporary approaches.⁴⁵

43 These service lines are subject to change (current as of March 2014).

44 *Aboriginal Equity and Inclusion Policy Lens* (2014)

45 Ibid.



APPENDIX B: APPLYING *the* ABORIGINAL EQUITY *and* INCLUSION POLICY LENS

THE ABORIGINAL EQUITY *and* INCLUSION POLICY LENS supports equity and inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives in policy development by ensuring past challenges are acknowledged, Aboriginal perspectives are gathered and incorporated, and that equitable and culturally safe policies are created, all of which are essential to improving outcomes for Aboriginal children, youth and families. This Policy Lens is specific to the Ministry of Children and Family Development and builds on the B.C. government's Aboriginal Policy Lens, Aboriginal Engagement Guidelines and Aboriginal Relations Behavioural Competencies.



APPENDIX B: APPLYING *the* ABORIGINAL EQUITY *and* INCLUSION POLICY LENS

YOU HAVE *the* LENS, BUT YOU'RE NOT SURE HOW *to* IMPLEMENT IT.
Incorporate these actions into your work to ensure your policy reflects our
Aboriginal communities.



APPENDIX B: ABORIGINAL EQUITY *and* INCLUSION POLICY LENS

“IMAGINE HOW *differently* POLICIES WOULD LOOK
IF WRITTEN FROM AN *Indigenous* WORLDVIEW *perspective*”
(Malcolm Saulis, 2012)

▶ ABORIGINAL

Aboriginal peoples, as defined in the 1982 Constitution, refers to Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada. The term “Aboriginal” does not identify the uniqueness and diverse cultures of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples and is often viewed as a “pan-Aboriginal” approach. The current Child, Family and Community Services Act broadly defines ‘Aboriginal child’ (over 12 years of age) to include anyone who has Aboriginal ancestry and considers themselves to be Aboriginal.

▶ CULTURAL AWARENESS

The acknowledgment that your culture and behaviour are different from that of another individual.²

▶ INDIGENOUS WORLD VIEW

The overall perspective from which one sees and interprets the world; a collection of beliefs about life and the universe held by an individual or a group; a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart about the basic construction of reality that provides the foundation on which one lives and moves and has their being.

▶ EQUITY

The state, quality or ideal that recognizes individuals and groups have different circumstances which may require different treatment in order to ensure obstacles and barriers are overcome so that everyone may access the resources, opportunities, power and responsibility they need to lead full and healthy lives.

▶ CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

A basic knowledge of the diversity, world views, spiritual and cultural values of Aboriginal peoples, and the historical and contemporary issues that influence Aboriginal peoples.³

▶ INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

Local traditional knowledge belonging to Indigenous peoples that is culture and context specific; dynamic, adaptive and holistic non-formal knowledge that is orally transmitted and generally not documented.

▶ INCLUSION

Based on the notions of belonging, acceptance and recognition, inclusion entails the realization of full and equal participation in economic, social, cultural and political institutions. Respecting and acknowledging diversity and engendering feelings of belonging by increasing social equality and participation of diverse groups.¹

▶ CULTURAL COMPETENCY

An educational phase where one grows in competence in applying cultural understanding to one's work. The integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into specific standards, policies, practices and attitudes.⁴

▶ WISE PRACTICES

A way of approaching Aboriginal community practice and knowledge exchange which utilizes the traditional knowledge base of Aboriginal peoples and acknowledges the relevant and dynamic contextual nature of Aboriginal peoples' and communities' experiences and contemporary approaches.⁶

▶ POLICY LENS

The Policy Lens is a series of interconnected elements critical to improving outcomes. Each element features a series of questions which help to facilitate the incorporation of these elements in the policy development process. It supports a more integrative and collaborative approach to policy development and promotes equity and inclusion of Aboriginal peoples in the development and evaluation of policies.

▶ CULTURAL SAFETY

A transformation of relationships where the needs and voice of the child, youth and family take a predominant role. Moves beyond cultural competence in that it analyzes power imbalances, institutional discrimination, colonization and colonial relationships as they apply to social policy and practice.⁵

1 York Institute of Health Research “What is Social Inclusion” webpage.

2 JOGC, June 2013, Chapter 8, page S39.

3 Winnipeg Health Region Aboriginal Cultures Awareness Workshop description.

4 JOGC, June 2013, Chapter 8, page S39 and MCFD Aboriginal Cultural Competency Framework draft.

5 JOGC, June 2013, Chapter 8, page S39 and National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO) Fact Sheet April 2009.

6 Aboriginal Relations Behavioural Competencies Dictionary, BC Public Service Agency, 2012. *May 2014*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

“THE *framework* IS BUILT UPON EXTENSIVE COMMUNITY *consultation* HELD ACROSS THE PROVINCE AS PART OF THE *Aboriginal* OPERATIONAL PRACTICE STANDARDS AND INDICATORS (AOPSI) *redesign review...*”

THE ABORIGINAL POLICY *and* PRACTICE (APPF) WORKING GROUP wishes to acknowledge all the collaborative efforts of those who provided expertise and direction to the development of this framework.

The Aboriginal Policy and Practice (APPF) Working Group owes the most gratitude and thanks to all those community members / leaders, working group members, consultants and scholars who worked directly with the communities in the original drafts for the AOPSI Redesign.





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