



REPRESENTATIVE FOR  
CHILDREN AND YOUTH

# Delegated Aboriginal Agencies

*How resourcing affects service delivery*



March 2017

*Front cover artist:*

Carla Joseph is of Métis and Cree heritage and is from Prince George, B.C. She has been an artist for more than 20 years and has illustrated three children's books in addition to having created many logos, murals, posters and paintings for a number of organizations. About the front cover artwork she says: "This piece represents all families. The feathers symbolize strength and protection and that being together as a family or community makes you stronger."

March 30, 2017

The Honourable Linda Reid  
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly  
Suite 207, Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4

Dear Ms. Speaker,

I have the honour of submitting the report *Delegated Aboriginal Agencies: How resourcing affects service delivery* to the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia. This report is prepared in accordance with Section 6(b) of the *Representative for Children and Youth Act*.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'B. Richard', written in a cursive style.

Bernard Richard  
Representative for Children and Youth

pc: Mr. Craig James, QC  
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Ms. Jane Thornthwaite, MLA  
Chair, Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth



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## Acknowledgement

This report would not have been possible without the valuable contributions of the many individuals who participated in its development. The Representative would like to thank the dedicated front-line child protection workers in Delegated Aboriginal Agencies who serve Indigenous children, youth and families in communities across the province. Their willingness to honestly share their experiences and observations of a complex and poorly resourced work environment provided this report with insights into the challenges of delivering essential services and supports to vulnerable children in B.C.

## Executive Summary

In October 2015, the Representative for Children and Youth released a report that examined the tremendous challenges faced by child protection social workers and their supervisors working in the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). *The Thin Front Line* concluded that inadequate staffing levels were leading to unmanageable workloads and, ultimately, to an increasing failure to meet important child welfare standards enshrined in British Columbia legislation.

Not included within the scope of that 2015 report were the experiences of those who work in B.C.'s 23 Delegated Aboriginal Agencies (DAAs) – the organizations that deliver child and youth services to many Indigenous communities and also to many Indigenous children and families living outside those communities. These 23 agencies serve nearly 1,900 of the approximately 4,400 Indigenous children in the care of the B.C. government, representing 42 per cent of all Indigenous children in care in B.C.

The report that follows delivers that additional perspective on behalf of the staff from 17 of the 19 DAAs that provide guardianship services and, in some cases, also child protection services. It finds that while DAA social workers experience many similar challenges to their MCFD counterparts, those problems are exacerbated by a number of factors unique to circumstances in a delegated agency – most notably, that the need for services is greater and more complex because of the intergenerational effects of colonial policies such as residential schools.

The result is a work environment that is often daunting for DAA staff and, even more significantly, a system that provides inequitable supports, services and protection for vulnerable Indigenous children in B.C. compared to what their non-Indigenous counterparts are likely to receive. It is a situation that the Representative believes both the provincial and federal governments must address in the currently shifting landscape of Indigenous child welfare.

This report finds that funding levels and practices – by both the federal and provincial governments – present significant hurdles for DAAs and the staff who work in them. In light of DAAs being criticized for their work in recent high-profile child welfare cases, it is important for all British Columbians to better understand these hurdles and the effects they have. The fact is, the way DAAs are funded undermines their capacity to deliver essential services to vulnerable children and their families.

A landmark 2016 decision of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) found the federal funding model for Indigenous child welfare was flawed and discriminatory and in violation of the *Canadian Human Rights Act*.

### What we found

- The federal funding models for DAAs are flawed and discriminatory, leading to more children ending up in care.
- The uncertain status of provincial planning for Indigenous child welfare, combined with inequitable and inconsistent funding to DAAs, has resulted in differences in support for children depending on where they live.
- Lack of trust and communication among DAAs, MCFD and INAC adversely affects service delivery to children, youth and families.
- Funding issues leave DAAs short-staffed and unable to provide comprehensive services that are needed.
- Child welfare practice in DAAs is undermined by funding and staffing issues.
- The capacity of DAAs to offer culturally based prevention services is limited by staffing and funding issues.

## Executive Summary

Federal funding does not account for the real needs of children and families living on-reserve in B.C.; nor does the operational funding provided by Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) adequately cover essential capital costs such as office space, computers or vehicles. Instead of promoting prevention or least disruptive measures, federal funding rules actually make it more likely that Indigenous children will be removed from their families, which undoubtedly contributes to the gross over-representation of Indigenous children in care. According to MCFD's Service Plan, an Indigenous child is nearly 17 times more likely to be in care than a non-Indigenous child. As one DAA executive director told RCY interviewers: *"Right now, we're still being funded based on the number of children in care. But if your ultimate goal is to keep children out of care, it's a backwards set up."*

Funding problems are not limited to the federal government, however. Inequitable and inconsistent funding arrangements between the B.C. government and DAAs have resulted in significant differences in the level and types of support available for B.C.'s Indigenous children, depending on where in the province they live and which DAA serves them.

Nor does MCFD have a clearly defined and transparent method for determining its funding to individual DAAs. The province has no standardized method for accounting for the unique needs of remote and smaller agencies, cost-of-living increases, issues with recruitment and retention of staff or how geography affects operational costs and social worker time required to carry out their duties.

Funding for each DAA in the province is negotiated on a one-off regional basis. The result is that funding to DAAs across the province is uneven, with agency contracts ranging from six months to two years in length, and leaving many DAAs with little ability to conduct long-term planning. DAA workers told RCY that a lack of transparency in how DAA contracts are negotiated with MCFD amounts to a *"divide and conquer"* approach by the ministry and leaves these agencies essentially competing with each other for an insufficient pool of funding.

These significant funding issues, which have been raised in a number of recent reports by the CHRT, Grand Chief Ed John, B.C.'s Auditor General and the Representative's Office, have resulted in DAAs being chronically understaffed and unable to provide services comparable to those received by children and families who are served by the ministry. Given previous RCY reports that have identified significant gaps in ministry services, this is deeply troubling.

DAA child protection staff interviewed as part of this review reported carrying an average of 30 cases at a time – 50 per cent more than is recommended by the *Aboriginal Operational and Practice Standards and Indicators (AOPSI)* guidelines by which they are supposed to operate. As interviewees for this review said, the inevitable result of such heavy caseloads, combined with a lack of sufficient clinical supervision, is an inability to comply with standards – no matter how strong the commitment by social workers to try to do so.

While standards call for social workers to complete an investigation or a family development response within 30 to 45 days of receiving a child safety report, data provided by the ministry shows that 1,266 of 1,770 – or nearly 72 per cent – of child protection files held by DAAs as of Dec. 31, 2016 had been open longer than 90 days. Said one DAA worker: *"I can count on one hand the number of files I've closed in the 'required' 30 days."*



DAA social workers are not alone in their inability to meet standards. *The Thin Front Line* showed more than 8,200 child protection incidents still left open after 90 days in ministry offices. These standards are in place to protect children and the fact that failing to reach standards has become so commonplace in B.C. child welfare is deeply troubling.

Contributing to heavy caseloads is the fact that staff recruitment and retention is made difficult for DAAs because their funding constraints mean they often cannot afford to pay equal wages or offer training and benefits comparable to what is offered by MCFD. Staffing levels in most agencies fluctuate due to high turnover, sick leave, stress leave and parental leave for which there is insufficient coverage. One DAA worker told RCY interviewers: *“There’s just not enough time; you end up putting out fires and making sure kids are safe, and the rest falls to when you can get back to it.”*

Lack of reliable or adequate funding for DAAs also means a shortage of services for children and families served by many of these agencies, especially in rural and remote areas – most notably Child and Youth Mental Health services, parenting programs and early childhood development programs.

DAA social workers, team leaders and executive directors interviewed for this report also emphasized that their ability to provide culturally based prevention services is severely limited by staffing and funding issues. Many said that a huge gap exists between the services agencies can offer, and what programs and supports are actually needed in order to keep Indigenous children out of care. Delivering culturally based services takes time, which DAA workers repeatedly told RCY interviewers they simply don’t have. Yet, these services are required by legislation.

In addition to the key issue of resources, DAA staff also told RCY interviewers that a lack of trust between DAAs, MCFD and INAC adversely affects service delivery for Indigenous children. Although there were some comments about positive developments and hope for these relationships improving, DAA workers generally complained of a lack of co-operation from MCFD and of a “paternalistic” relationship rather than a true partnership with the provincial ministry. With regard to INAC, DAA staff and leadership generally reported having a very limited relationship with their federal counterparts that, for all intents and purposes, does not extend beyond the provision of insufficient federal funding.

It is widely recognized that Indigenous families and their children struggle with the negative effects of intergenerational trauma caused by colonial policies of years past. Therefore, the goal should not be merely for DAAs to be resourced to provide services equal to those provided by MCFD. The goal should be for DAAs to be able to go beyond ministry services by offering services that address the real needs of Indigenous families in a culturally based way. Assessment of service needs cannot simply be tied to child population levels on-reserve, but rather to actual needs that take into account the devastating effects of colonial policies of the past. As one DAA worker described it: *“Families have been colonized, invaded, murdered, assimilated, and it’s as raw as it was 15 years ago.”*

There are promising signs that the provincial government intends to address these issues. MCFD has committed to implementation of many of the comprehensive recommendations of Grand Chief Ed John’s report, *Indigenous Resilience, Connectedness and Reunification – From Root Causes to Root Solutions*, released November 2016. As well, the ministry has received a significant lift in its budget for 2017/18, including for Indigenous child welfare services. But those new resources are not yet in

## Executive Summary

place and whether they will be sufficient to meet the challenge has yet to be seen. RCY will be closely monitoring progress, with the findings of this report being used as one baseline measure against which future improvements can be assessed.

In this regard, we also note that despite the commitment to new initiatives and the addition of new resources, MCFD's current Service Plan sets a performance target for a reduction of just less than one per cent in the rate of Indigenous children in care by 2019/20 and also sets a performance target that actually slightly increases the huge disproportionality in the rates of Indigenous children in care as compared to non-Indigenous children in care. The situation is dire – surely we can do better than this.

Expectations from this Office are that if the needs of Indigenous children and families are to be addressed, the findings of this report must be duly considered by both the provincial and federal governments. Given the urgent need to sort out funding practices and levels, INAC must remedy funding flaws to Indigenous child welfare services, and funding of DAAs should be part of current tripartite discussions about funding and jurisdiction. It is clear that DAAs and their workers must have the resources necessary to do their important work and to do it in a culturally based way that can better support families and prevent more Indigenous children from coming into care, while providing better services to those hopefully far fewer Indigenous children who do have to come into the system. For that to happen, endless bureaucratic and jurisdictional squabbles must be resolved once and for all and the needs of Indigenous children put first.

To continue to do less than this is clearly unacceptable.

# Scope and Methodology

## Scope

The Representative has a mandate under the *Representative for Children and Youth Act (RCY Act)* to monitor, review, audit and conduct research on the provision of designated services for the purpose of making recommendations to improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of those services, and to report publicly on findings. Under this mandate, the Representative has a particular focus on services to Indigenous children and youth. Given their significant vulnerabilities, special attention is warranted to understand how the needs of Indigenous children and youth are being met.

In B.C., child welfare services for Indigenous children and families are a provincial responsibility with services delivered by either MCFD or one of 23 DAAs. Eleven of these agencies provide full child protection services, eight provide guardianship services and four provide voluntary services (see text box on delegation for further explanation). This report focuses on front-line child protection staffing issues in the 19 DAAs that are delegated to provide full child protection services and/or guardianship services.

The scope of this review was determined by consulting key literature in the field and by conducting a jurisdictional scan of staffing practices for social workers providing child protection, child welfare and safety services for Indigenous peoples across Canada and internationally. Additionally, the Representative reviewed policies and standards set by MCFD for DAAs, as well as other documents (e.g. policies, standards, plans, funding documents) and performed an analysis of federal and provincial approaches to funding DAAs.

### What is delegation?

The level of delegation that a DAA receives from MCFD dictates the range of services it is mandated to perform under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCS Act)*, which of the *Aboriginal Operational and Practice Standards and Indicators (AOPSI)* and ministry standards it is required to follow, and which of these standards the agency will be audited against. There are three tiers of delegation that reflect the operational category of an agency:

- Category three (C3) allows for the provision of voluntary services as well as the recruitment and retention of residential resources (foster homes). This includes authority to provide support services for families, voluntary care agreements, special needs agreements and to establish residential resources for children in care.
- Category four (C4) includes all the legal authority in C3 plus additional responsibilities to carry out guardianship duties for children and youth in continuing custody. These include permanency planning, transitions out of care and managing Care Plans.
- Category six (C6) includes all the legal responsibilities of C3 and C4 plus full authority for child protection duties, including investigation of child abuse or neglect reports, placing children in care, obtaining court orders and developing safety plans.
- Adoption: To be able to perform adoptions work, agencies must be delegated under the B.C. *Adoption Act* (Sinha & Kozlowski, 2013, MCFD Delegation Matrix).

## Methodology

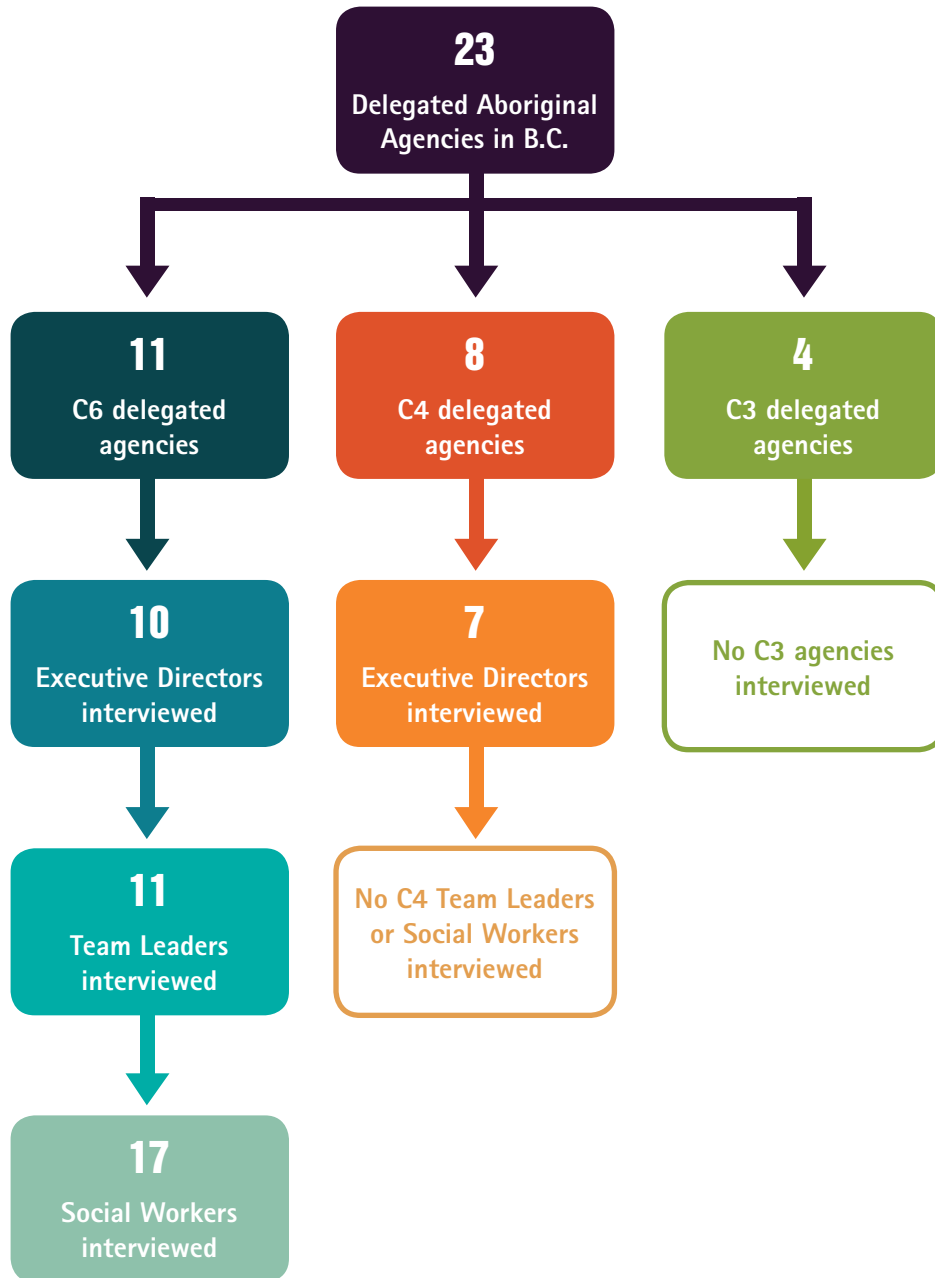
The data for this report was drawn from a number of sources, including a literature review of staffing issues in DAAs, an analysis of documents provided by MCFD, and face-to-face and telephone interviews with a number of child protection social workers, team leaders and executive directors, all of whom work for DAAs in B.C. The primary focus of this review is on staffing conditions for front-line child protection workers, thus only front-line staff from agencies providing these services were interviewed. Interviews with social workers and team leaders were conducted in 2015 and 2016 and interviews with executive directors were conducted in 2016.

To request interviews, the Representative's Office sent letters to DAAs that provide full child protection intake and investigation services. This request outlined the goals of the review and asked permission to interview two social workers and one team leader from each agency. Seventeen DAA social workers and 11 team leaders agreed to be interviewed for this review, representing 10 of the 11 agencies that provide full child protection services. Seven of the social workers interviewed work on specialized intake or investigation teams, while the other 10 workers provide generalist services that can include child protection and family services as well as resources and guardianship services.

Ten team leaders working at these same DAAs were also interviewed for this review. Team leaders provide supervision to either child protection social workers or to generalist teams as well as fulfilling a variety of other responsibilities. All of these workers and team leaders have a C6 delegation, meaning they have been delegated to provide voluntary, guardianship and child protection services.

To supplement the findings of these interviews, in the spring of 2016, the RCY requested interviews with all executive directors in both C4 and C6 agencies (see text box on delegation on previous page), with 17 of 19 agencies participating. Seven executive directors interviewed represent agencies that provide guardianship services and 10 executive directors represent agencies that provide full child protection services. Executive directors, most of whom work on behalf of Indigenous communities and leadership, provide general oversight to their agencies in terms of operations, delegated responsibilities, budget, staffing, policy and standards.

Figure 1: An Overview of Interviews Conducted with DAA Staff



## Scope and Methodology

The majority of interviews were conducted on-site. Interview questions were developed based on the interview guide used for the 2015 RCY project on MCFD staffing, a literature review about issues in similar Indigenous child welfare agencies, MCFD documents, and insights from key stakeholders who work in and with DAAs.

Data was analyzed by using a constant comparative method, which involves identifying key themes and issues and confirming their validity by constantly checking and comparing these findings against all interviews (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 275). To confirm the validity of initial findings, RCY prepared and distributed summaries of interview findings to all interview participants. The RCY research team then held teleconferences for interview participants in July 2016 – one for social workers and team leaders and one for executive directors. At each of these teleconferences, participants were invited to provide feedback on the preliminary findings during the teleconference or afterwards in writing. The feedback was then integrated into the findings presented in this report.

The findings of these interviews were supplemented with an analysis of approximately 150 MCFD documents, including service contracts and other funding documents, delegation agreements, standards for practice and caseload, and MCFD plans and policies related to DAAs. In addition, the reports of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada, the findings of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT 2, 2016), and federal funding documents and research literature on DAA funding in Canada were thoroughly reviewed, as was Grand Chief Ed John's November 2016 report on Aboriginal child welfare in B.C.

For the purposes of privacy, the names of interview participants and DAAs have been kept confidential.

This report uses the term Indigenous to identify peoples who are First Nations, Inuit and Métis. The term Aboriginal is used in this report when referring to children or youth in government care as defined in the B.C. *CFCS Act* and to reflect the title accorded to DAAs. Métis is used to describe people of mixed European (primarily French, British, Scottish) and First Nations ancestry who emerged as a distinct people in the 18th and 19th century in an area known as the historic Métis Nation Homeland, which includes the three prairie provinces and extends into Ontario and B.C. The Métis National Council defines Métis as “*a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry and who is accepted by the Métis Nation*” (Métis Nation, n.d.). Only self-identification, not official Métis status, is required to be considered Métis in child welfare service provision in Canada. Where this report uses the term Status Indian, it refers to a legal category of persons defined in the *Indian Act*.

## Background

### Indigenous People in B.C.

Indigenous people occupied the geographic boundaries of British Columbia for many thousands of years before the arrival of European settlers and represent diverse communities, cultures, traditions and histories. Before colonization, Indigenous peoples were self-governing and self-sufficient. Indigenous children were cared for by their families and communities according to the traditions, laws and spiritual beliefs of their people. These traditions were connected to the values of each First Nation and were expressed through world views and distinct cultures passed down through many generations. Many nations had their own cultural laws, systems and protocols to ensure the safety and well-being of their children.

Today, there continues to be a rich diversity of Indigenous peoples in B.C. with approximately 200,000 Indigenous people representing 203 distinct First Nations communities (First Nations Peoples' Language Map of BC, n.d.). Approximately 30 per cent of Indigenous people in B.C. are Métis and approximately eight per cent of Indigenous children in the province are under the age of 19 (including Métis), representing the fastest growing child population in B.C. (BC Statistics, n.d.).<sup>1</sup>

### Historical Context of Indigenous Children in Care in Canada

Largely a result of colonial history, as well contemporary federal and provincial policies and practice, Indigenous children and youth are over-represented in Canada's child welfare systems (Aboriginal Children in Care Working Group, 2015). Currently in B.C., more than 62 per cent of children in care are Indigenous (see Figure 2 for more information). This disproportionate representation of Indigenous children in the child welfare system can be attributed to the historic legacy of colonialism that includes a myriad of discriminatory government laws and policies that undermined Indigenous culture, inherent rights, custom laws, traditions and language.

The arrival of settlers and the enforcement of settler laws, policies and practices in Indigenous territories disrupted traditional child-rearing practices, forcibly removed Indigenous peoples from their homelands and undermined traditional laws and governance structures. The imposition of colonial policies such as residential schools, the Sixties Scoop,<sup>2</sup> and the B.C. *Adoption Act* resulted in the removal of thousands of children from their homes, families and nations (First Nations Leadership Council Organizations, 2012, p. 12). Colonization is not just an historical event in Canada – it has had, and continues to have, significant negative effects on the contemporary lives of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

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1 Population data on Indigenous persons is reported from the mandatory 2006 Census. The decision made by the former federal government to discontinue the mandatory Canadian long-form census in 2011 and to replace it with the voluntary National Household Survey resulted in serious gaps in demographic data. Caution should be exercised about Aboriginal child population estimates from the voluntary National Household Survey due to concerns about low response rates and resulting unreliable information.

2 "Sixties Scoop" is a term coined by Johnson, 1983 and refers to large numbers of Indigenous children removed from their homes and fostered or adopted by non-Indigenous families.

Figure 2: Indigenous Children and Youth in Care in B.C., Dec. 31, 2016

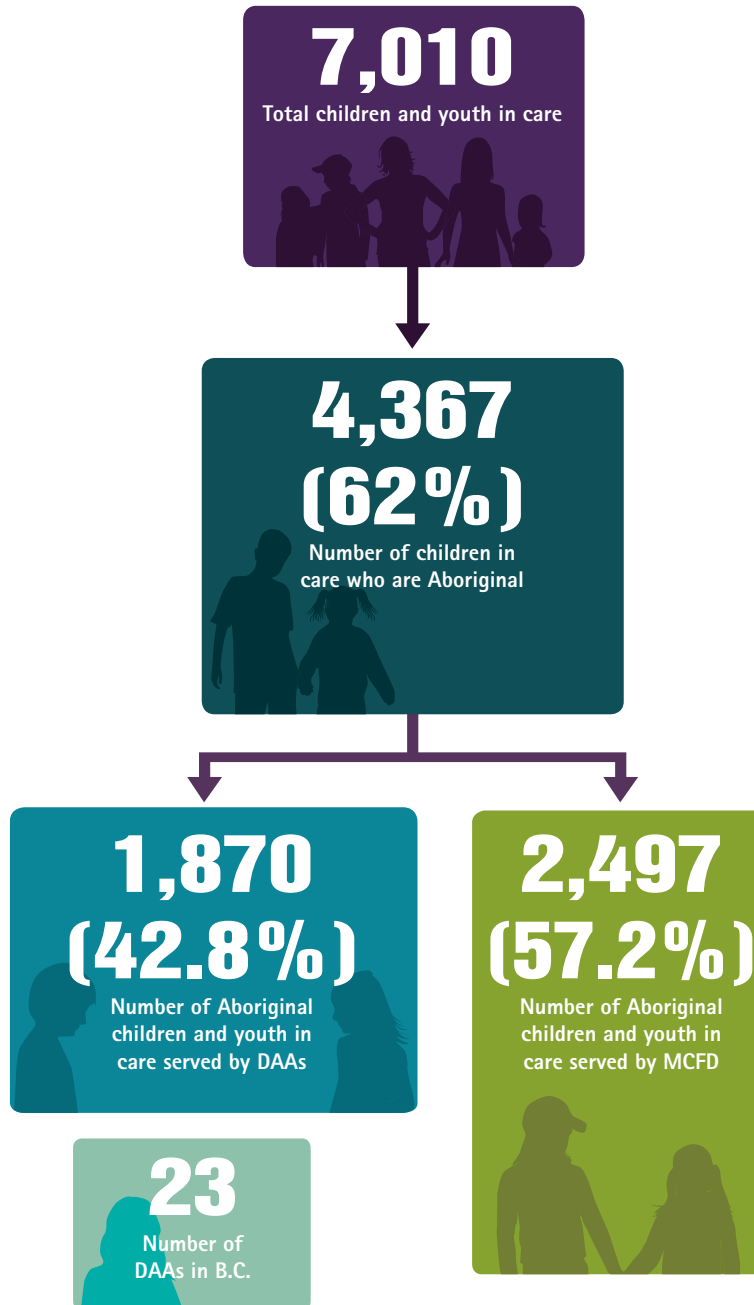
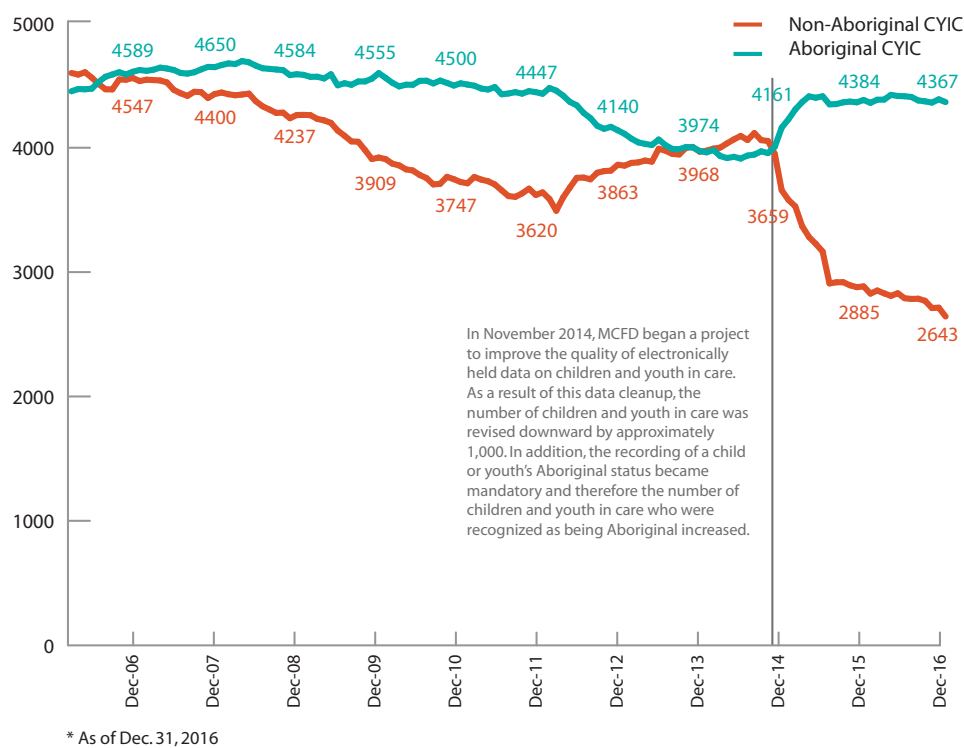




Figure 3: Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Children and Youth in Care (CYIC) 2006–2016\*



While residential schools and provincial child welfare systems had a devastating effect on the structure of Indigenous families, these schools were accompanied by the federal government's systematic efforts to gain access and control over Indigenous lands. Treaties were signed between First Nations people living in the prairie provinces, northeastern B.C. and in some of the Territories. While the terms of these treaties continue to be violated, the lack of treaties in most of B.C. has made it even more possible for government officials to reallocate and reduce reserve lands. The loss of land limited First Nations' access to fishing, hunting and trapping, and the remaining lands were insufficient to sustain agriculture or ranching. Despite resistance from First Nations communities, the loss of land combined with the attempt to eradicate culture through residential schooling severely undermined the economic and social success of many First Nations groups, as well as their ability to preserve traditional child rearing and family structures (McKenzie, et al., 2016). Also affecting this situation is the *Indian Act*, which formalizes an extensive system of colonial policies, practices and ideas directed at Indigenous people.

#### From RCY's *Growing up in B.C. – 2015*

*It is important to recognize that the disparities experienced by many Aboriginal children are a consequence of intergenerational challenges of failed government policies such as residential schools, Indian Act administration and negative stereotypes regarding the value of First Nations cultures and traditions, as well as multi-generational poverty, racism and discrimination*

— Dr. Jeff Reading, University of Toronto, Dalla Lana School of Public Health.

### The Sixties Scoop

Until the 1950s, there were no child welfare services for on-reserve Indigenous people as the *Indian Act* of 1876, Canada's oldest piece of legislation, did not address child welfare. Although a certain level of activity was undertaken by both the federal and provincial governments, there was no clear legal authority or delineation of responsibilities for child welfare. In 1951, the *Indian Act* was revised with the addition of section 88, making it possible to enforce provincial child welfare laws on Status Indians<sup>3</sup> living on-reserve. Since then, the government of B.C. has been responsible for the delivery of child welfare services for all children, including Indigenous children living on- or off-reserve (Kozlowski, et al., 2012; RCY, 2013; Sinha & Kozlowski, 2013).

The breakdown of Indigenous families was accelerated in the 1960s by the removal, sometimes in mass numbers, of children from their families. As a recent report from the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate of Alberta describes, the 1960s “*was the decade when non-Aboriginal Canadians became aware of the appalling living conditions on reserves. Instead of making reserves more livable, child apprehension workers were sent to remove children by the busload from what were deemed neglectful parents*” (OCYA, 2016).<sup>4</sup> Many of these so-called ‘scoop’ children were placed with non-Indigenous carers, in communities that were far from their original bands or reserves, resulting in the loss of their cultural and family connections (Blackstock, 2010). The consequences for these children and their families were tragic, with poor outcomes in mental health, educational and vocational success and future relationships (OCYA, 2016; Bennett, et al., 2005).

### The 1970s and Beyond

In the 1970s, as part of a larger movement for self-government and autonomy, Indigenous organizations across Canada began to lobby the government to assume responsibility for child welfare within their own communities. In 1973, the first negotiated arrangement between a government and an Indigenous group was formalized, with an employee from the Blackfoot Band of Alberta being designated by the provincial government as a child protection worker, and the federal government agreeing to reimburse the band for services to children (Libesman, 2014).

Despite numerous studies documenting the negative effects of removal of children from their families, the inordinate rate of removal of Indigenous children from their families continues in B.C. Federal and provincial child welfare funding policies described below have a significant influence on the excessively high numbers of Indigenous children coming into care. This legacy, combined with poverty and poor housing, contributes to family disruption, including child neglect – the primary reason Indigenous children are reported to child welfare authorities (First Nations Child & Family Caring Society, 2005). The high proportion of Indigenous children in contact with the child welfare system is of specific concern, given evidence showing poorer outcomes related to education, health and well-being for children and youth in care or receiving child welfare services than for the general child and youth population (Representative for Children and Youth & Office of the Provincial Health Officer, 2015). The high proportion of Indigenous children in care is also reflective of a system that discounts family as the preferred placement for children.

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<sup>3</sup> The term “Status Indians” denotes a legal definition contained in the *Indian Act*.

<sup>4</sup> See also Bennett, Blackstock & De La Ronde, 2005.

In B.C., First Nations leadership has long identified the need to assume more responsibility and authority over their children. The shifting of responsibility for Indigenous child welfare has been ongoing since 1986 with the establishment of the first DAA: USMA Child and Family Services (Nuu-Chah-Nulth Territory). In March 1996, MCFD created the Aboriginal Relations Branch and Policy Division to help support additional Indigenous groups that wished to develop delegated authority agreements (Walmsley, 2005). In the intervening years, several important agreements and developments occurred that were detailed in the 2013 RCY report *When Talk Trumped Service*.

Many of these historical efforts were about ensuring that First Nations groups could structure and control their own child welfare systems and could provide culturally based social services. This is often difficult because Indigenous cultural services must adhere to a Eurocentric provincial legislative framework. Despite extensive efforts by Indigenous leadership in B.C. to exert full authority and jurisdiction over child welfare matters to reflect community and cultural practices and policies, this has yet to occur in a successful and systematic manner (FNLC, 2016, p. 31; Rousseau, 2016, p. 46). In B.C., none of these extensive efforts has led to recognition of the inherent right of Indigenous peoples over child welfare, and all require some sort of delegated authority. This, combined with the reality that many First Nations do not have the resources to effectively deliver services in their communities, means that some groups are not in a position to fully exercise the rights of self-determination in relation to children and families (FNLC, 2016, p. 32). First Nations have, however, clearly asserted their intention to address the issue of capacity through rebuilding and reinvigorating their own traditions for the protection of children (Ibid).

## Recent Events

Numerous recent events and reports have described the urgent need to address historical wrongs associated with Indigenous child welfare in Canada. Many of these reports provide insights into the context of why DAA staff face significant challenges as outlined in the Findings and Analysis section of this report. A diagram that illustrates major Canadian and B.C. reports on Indigenous child welfare is found on page 20. Some of these reports and events are described below.

### *When Talk Trumped Service*

The release of the 2013 RCY report *When Talk Trumped Service* examined MCFD's oversight of funding for First Nations governance and child welfare issues. The report included a detailed overview of funding to DAAs and other Indigenous groups. When the report was released, it drew criticism from some Indigenous groups and created a media firestorm because of the incorrect assumption that the purpose of the report was to criticize Indigenous people for spending money without full accountability and without adequate service delivery to children, youth and their families. It was not the intention of the Representative to ignore or negate Indigenous child welfare governance approaches. In fact, *When Talk Trumped Service* was primarily meant to challenge the provincial government to establish a framework for progress on Indigenous child welfare issues and to have a plan for working with First Nations, DAAs and others toward an Indigenous child welfare system. Following the release of this report, MCFD cancelled funding initiatives related to governance and child welfare, and developed tighter mechanisms for reporting that, according to interviewees in this report, have had negative impacts on services for Indigenous children and their families.

### **Aboriginal Children in Care: Report to Canada's Premiers**

In July 2015, the Council of the Federation of Premiers released a report on the over-representation of Aboriginal children in care across Canada. This report, prepared by the Aboriginal Children in Care Working Group, examined the root causes of over-representation, noting the harmful and enduring impacts of colonial policies in the form of poverty, lack of food security, lack of stable and secure housing and mental health and substance use challenges, among others. This report noted the important role of prevention and early intervention programs in preventing Indigenous children from coming into care.

The report profiled culturally-based and/or prevention focused promising practices from across the country. These programs highlight the importance of Indigenous engagement, including community involvement, in services that have focus on strengthening and preserving families. It called for provincial and territorial governments, along with the federal government, to work with Indigenous leadership to create a system of care that includes a supported, skilled and informed workforce (Aboriginal Children in Care Working Group, 2015).

### **Closing the Circle**

In 2015, the BC Government and Service Employees' Union (BCGEU) released *Closing the Circle: A case for reinvesting in Aboriginal child, youth and family services*, which supplemented its 2014 report on staffing issues at MCFD. *Closing the Circle* took a closer look at workers providing Indigenous services either through MCFD or through one of the 23 DAAs in B.C. Its findings highlighted problems with high workload, lack of sufficient training, retention, lack of trust between agencies, MCFD and families, and insufficient funding for culturally based services for Indigenous children, youth, families and their communities.

Some of *Closing the Circle's* recommendations focused on developing and implementing a comprehensive Indigenous child and youth policy framework, establishing a core MCFD business area for Indigenous services, convening a strategic planning roundtable and developing an Operational Performance and Strategic Management Report that focuses on outcomes for Indigenous children and families.

The report called on the B.C. government to acknowledge the right of B.C. Indigenous communities to fully exercise jurisdiction over their own children and concluded that B.C.'s Indigenous child welfare system needed significant investments if it was to be more than a patchwork of underfunded services (p. 20). Following the release of BCGEU's 2014 report on MCFD staffing issues, the ministry announced that it would add 200 more workers to its roster. However, no similar announcement for Indigenous services resulted from the 2015 follow-up report, *Closing the Circle*. The ministry has not reported to the DAAs on the status of the recommendations from this report that would directly impact these agencies.

### **Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC)**

The TRC was created in 2008 under the terms of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, reached in 2006 and approved by courts in 2007. The purpose of the Commission was to reveal the truth about church-run residential schools, to collect the stories of survivors, to honour the courage and resilience of survivors and to document the individual and collective harms of these schools. The TRC was also created to “*guide and inspire a process of truth and healing, that could lead to reconciliation within Indigenous families, and between Indigenous people and non-Indigenous communities, churches, governments and Canadians more generally*” (TRC, 2015a).

The reports of the TRC (2015a, 2015b) show that the mass incarceration of Indigenous children in residential schools led to multi-generational impacts that have had a profound and lasting effect on Indigenous peoples, communities and families. These schools were a “*systematic, government sponsored attempt to destroy Aboriginal cultures and languages and to assimilate Aboriginal peoples so they no longer existed as distinct peoples*” (TRC, 2015b, p. 107).

Residential schools were also part of a national effort to conform Indigenous families to European settler notions of family and community (McKenzie, et al., 2016). These schools were aimed at separating Indigenous children from their parents and communities and resulted in many broken family connections and generations of Indigenous children growing up without parental support or the support of their extended family and community. Children sent to these schools were often subject to strict regimes of discipline, as well as physical and sexual violence that had long-lasting effects on families. The direct result for many children was the loss of family, community, culture, language and identity.

To address the legacy of residential schools and to advance the process of reconciliation, the TRC made a series of calls to action on child welfare, education, language and culture, health, justice and the process of reconciliation (TRC, 2015c). The TRC’s recommendations on child welfare are included below.

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#### **From the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC, 2015, p. 5).**

*In its dealing with Aboriginal people, Canada did all these things:*

- *Canada asserted control over Aboriginal land. In some locations, Canada negotiated Treaties with First Nations; in others, the land was simply occupied or seized. The negotiation of Treaties, while seemingly honourable and legal, was often marked by fraud and coercion, and Canada was, and remains, slow to implement their provisions and intent.*
  - *On occasion, Canada forced First Nations to relocate their reserves from agriculturally valuable or resource-rich land onto remote and economically marginal reserves.*
  - *Without legal authority or foundation, in the 1880s, Canada instituted a “pass system” that was intended to confine First Nations people to their reserves.*
  - *Canada replaced existing forms of Aboriginal government with relatively powerless band councils whose decisions it could override and whose leaders it could depose. In the process, it disempowered Aboriginal women, who had held significant influence and powerful roles in many First Nations, including the Mohawks, the Carrier, and Tlingit.*
  - *Canada denied the right to participate fully in Canadian political, economic, and social life to those Aboriginal people who refused to abandon their Aboriginal identity.*
  - *Canada outlawed Aboriginal spiritual practices, jailed Aboriginal spiritual leaders, and confiscated sacred objects.*
  - *And, Canada separated children from their parents, sending them to residential schools. This was done not to educate them, but primarily to break their link to their culture and identity.*
-

### *The Thin Front Line*

The 2015 RCY report *The Thin Front Line* reviewed budgeting and staffing practices at MCFD to assess the capacity of front-line child protection social workers to respond to child protection concerns in a timely manner. This report found that because of long-standing budget pressures at MCFD, the ministry does not have an adequate number of front-line child protection social workers. These staffing problems are made worse by heavy workloads, lack of coverage for vacancies and problems with recruitment and retention, particularly in rural areas. As a consequence of these conditions, supervisors do not have enough time to provide supervision or mentorship and front-line workers reported that it is very difficult to meet the timelines set out in ministry standards. *The Thin Front Line* found that these problems take a toll on workers and often prevent them from building relationships with the families they serve.

### 2015 Plecas Report

On July 24, 2015, MCFD announced that it would conduct a review of concerns arising from a case where, in 2009, four children were removed from the care of their mother based on the mistaken belief that she was suffering from a mental illness. In August 2015, retired government deputy minister Bob Plecas was appointed as a Director in order to allow him to conduct the internal ministry review. Due to procedural delays resulting from court appeals and applications to the Information and Privacy Commissioner related to the case, Mr. Plecas' terms of reference were amended to allow him to write an "interim report on the comparative analysis of applicable legislation, policy, standards and practice and recommendations for the improvement of ministry and other systemic processes" (Plecas, 2015, p. 11). This interim report was released to the public on Dec. 14, 2015. Part two of Mr. Plecas' review was slated to be released in spring 2016 although, to date, it has not been released.

The Plecas report offered "wide ranging commentary, perspectives and recommendations on various aspects of the ministry, its staffing and organization, its funding, its operations and its expectations of its staff" (Representative for Children and Youth, 2016). The Plecas report went on to offer options for moving forward, including a multi-year plan entailing significant changes described by Plecas as a "roadmap" for the years ahead. The Plecas report lacks an Indigenous perspective and excludes input, analysis and recommendations from the DAAs. It is discussed in more detail in the Findings and Analysis section of this report.

### Canadian Human Rights Tribunal

In 2007, the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations filed a complaint under the *Canadian Human Rights Act* with the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) (First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada et al. v. Attorney General of Canada [for the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada]). The foundation of the complaint was that INAC's provision of services to Indigenous children and families living on-reserve and in the Yukon was discriminatory, on the basis of race and/or ethnic origin, because of inequitable federal funding to these services in comparison to funding of services for children living off-reserve (CHRT 2, 2016). After a number of unsuccessful attempts by the Canadian government to have the case dismissed, and after almost nine years of litigation, in January 2016 the CHRT found that the complaint was substantiated and that INAC's funding practices were in violation of the *Canadian Human Rights Act* (CHRT 2, 2016). More discussion of the specific findings of the Tribunal is included in the Findings and Analysis section of this report.

## 2016 Leadership Forum

Following on commitments made at the 2015 B.C. Cabinet and First Nations Leadership Gathering, in May 2016, the B.C. First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC), with support from the provincial government, held a gathering about First Nations child welfare. This gathering included elders, chiefs, advocates, experts, child-serving agencies, representatives from MCFD, B.C.'s Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, INAC, RCY and community members for a discussion of issues facing First Nations child welfare in B.C. The gathering was meant to “*increase understanding of root causes and opportunities in order to ‘chart a new way forward’*” in child welfare (FNLC, 2016, p. 2).

As a result of this meeting, B.C. government officials acknowledged the need to take action at the local level to ensure that social workers collaborate with Indigenous communities in an effort to let them know where their children are. The B.C. government committed to working with Indigenous leadership and the federal government to address child welfare funding issues and to participating in a working group on the governance of child welfare issues. MCFD has also reported that the proceedings of the gathering have influenced the development of its Multi-Year Action Plan released in early 2017.

## Grand Chief Ed John's Report

In September 2015, MCFD appointed Grand Chief Ed John as special advisor on Indigenous child welfare in B.C. Grand Chief John was asked to advise and report to the B.C. government on three areas related to Indigenous child welfare:

- Focus on improving permanency options and rates of Indigenous children in care, particularly for those with Continuing Custody Orders (CCOs)
- Work to identify next steps for B.C. following the release of the Council of the Federation's July 2015 report, *Aboriginal Children in Care – Report to Canada's Premiers*, and
- Assist the Minister of Children and Family Development in developing advice to Cabinet on these matters as necessary (John, 2016, p. 8-9).

Grand Chief John's report, *Indigenous Resilience, Connectedness and Reunification – From Root Causes to Root Solutions*, released in November 2016, described many of the root causes for the over-representation of Indigenous children in care as well as the complex funding arrangements for Indigenous child welfare. He noted the importance of recent events, such as the release of the 2015 reports of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the report of the Council of the Federation of Premiers in 2015 and the 2016 CHRT decision, for the future of Indigenous child welfare in B.C.

To improve Indigenous child welfare, Grand Chief John recommended that governments and Indigenous leadership work together to address root causes such as poverty, lack of safe housing and the intergenerational effects of racist government policies and laws. Grand Chief John also recommended specific short-term actions that should be taken to improve legislative and administrative measures in child welfare. All recommendations contained within the report were grounded in the recognition of the inherent rights of Indigenous children and youth.

Grand Chief John's report highlighted the poor relationships that often exist between communities and MCFD, as well as between DAAs and the communities they serve, and recommended that nation-to-nation protocols be established to support more respectful and cooperative relations going forward.

## Background

The report also recognized the larger context of poverty and intergenerational trauma wrought by the history of colonialism, and appealed to government to make an effort to address structural issues such as poverty, housing and income supports. Grand Chief John's discussion of federal funding for child welfare foreshadowed the findings of this report, including the flaws in federal funding formulas and the lack of funding for prevention services. Grand Chief John also heard from communities and DAAs that existing DAAs were originally designed to be an interim measure as part of the transition to full Indigenous jurisdiction in child welfare, but that little progress has been made on moving toward this goal (p. 169). More discussion of the implications of Grand Chief John's recommendations is included in the Findings and Analysis section of this report.

**Figure 4: Not Much has Changed: 16 Years of Major Reports on Indigenous Child Welfare**



## Delegated Aboriginal Agencies in B.C.

MCFD has legal authority under the *CFCS Act* and responsibility for the child welfare service needs of all children and their families in B.C. The B.C. Provincial Director of Child Welfare at MCFD negotiates and enters into delegation agreements with agencies. Through these delegation agreements, the “Provincial Director gives authority to Aboriginal agencies, and their employees, to undertake administration of all or parts of the *CFCS Act*. The amount of responsibility undertaken by each agency is the result of negotiations between the ministry and Aboriginal community served by the agency, and the level of delegation provided by the minister” (MCFD, 2017a).

There are currently 23 Aboriginal agencies operating under a DAA model in B.C. As Figure 5 notes, DAAs across the province are delegated under the *CFCS Act* for one of three different levels of responsibility (voluntary services, guardianship, child protection). Eleven agencies are delegated to perform all child protection work, including investigations of child safety reports; eight can provide guardianship services to children and youth already in care; and four agencies provide only voluntary services. Two of the 23 agencies, Lalum’utul’Smun’eem and Métis Family Services, are also delegated to perform adoptions under the *Adoption Act*. One of these 23 agencies provides services to Métis children and families (MCFD, 2016a; Bennett, 2015). As of Dec. 31, 2016, DAAs were responsible for approximately 43 per cent of Indigenous children and youth in care, which is just under 1,900 children (MCFD, 2016i).



Figure 5: Location Map: Delegated Aboriginal Agencies



## Background

There are two types of DAAs in B.C.: band or tribal council operated. These DAAs are part of a band or tribal structure. The other type of DAA is society operated and guided by an independent board. Societies can operate both land-based First Nation DAAs as well as urban-based DAAs.

Two sets of standards apply to DAA social workers: ministry child welfare standards and the *Aboriginal Operational and Practice Standards and Indicators* (AOPSI), both of which set out minimum standards of practice for DAA-based voluntary, guardianship and child protection services (MCFD, 2005).

Quality assurance activities in DAAs are carried out by the ministry through case practice audits that check for compliance with AOPSI and other relevant ministry practice standards.<sup>5</sup> The audit process is intended to highlight areas of improvement for practice, provide a baseline measure for future reviews and identify strengths. The ministry also conducts periodic operational and financial compliance reviews (MCFD, 2016h).

## Services for Métis Families and Children

The Daniels Decision, a 2016 Supreme Court of Canada ruling, declared that Métis and non-status Indians are “Indians” under s.91 (24) of the *Canadian Constitution*. This means that the federal government has legislative jurisdictional responsibility to address Métis peoples’ rights, interests and needs. This ruling does not mean that the Métis are entitled to the same benefits as Status Indians but allows for future discussion on the needs of Métis. It is unclear how the Daniels Decision will impact child welfare.

The federal government has not acknowledged any responsibility for provision of child welfare services for Métis children and families (Aboriginal Children in Canada Working Group, 2015, p. 9). In fact, federal responsibilities towards Métis peoples in general are not well-defined. This general lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities has resulted in a mix of funding models and reporting structures for Métis services across the provinces and territories (Canada’s Premiers, p. 8). As of 2016, INAC does not provide funding to Métis child welfare services. Funding for off-reserve child welfare services is the responsibility of provinces (Sinha & Kozolowski, 2013).

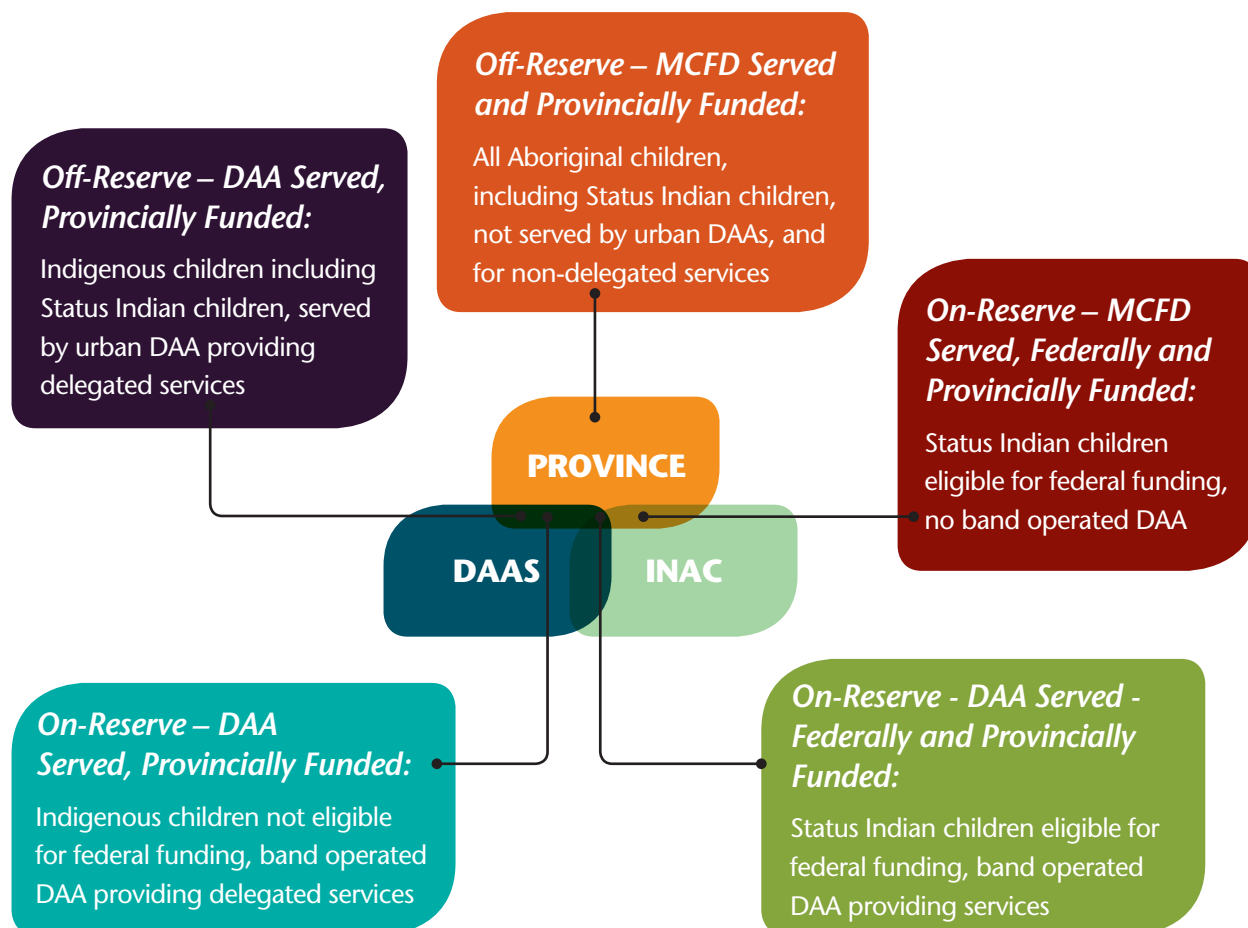
## Funding for Delegated Aboriginal Agencies

How DAAs are funded can vary from agency to agency depending on a number of factors and, because of this, can have a significant impact on DAA staffing. How and who funds DAAs depends on a child’s legal status, where a child lives (on- or off-reserve), the existence of a DAA in the community, that agency’s level of delegated authority and the financial resources of the applicable MCFD service delivery area. Funding for DAAs thus involves a complex mix of sources and rules. A diagram summarizing funding arrangements is included in Figure 6.

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5 For examples of case practice audits of DAAs see: <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/datamonitoring-quality-assurance/reporting-monitoring/accountability/aboriginal-case-practice-audits>

Figure 6: Indigenous Child Welfare Service Delivery and Funding Structure



Source: Adapted from *When Talk Trumped Service: A Decade of Lost Opportunity for Aboriginal Children and Youth in B.C.*, 2013 report of the B.C. Representative for Children and Youth. This diagram was also included in Grand Chief Ed John's 2016 report.

### Funding Arrangements On-Reserve

The federal government funds First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) on-reserve and in the Yukon through INAC. Child and family service agencies located on-reserve must adhere to relevant provincial or territorial laws in order to receive federal funding.

Across Canada, the federal FNCFS applies four different child welfare funding approaches:

- 1) funding arrangements with provinces and territories
- 2) Directive 20-1
- 3) the Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach (EPFA), and
- 4) the 1965 Indian Welfare Agreement in Ontario.

## Background

Of these funding approaches, only Directive 20-1 applies in B.C. (see text box). Services are only funded when they are provided on-reserve, limiting the number of available options for children and families in smaller communities. This directive does not adequately cover the costs of prevention, family support or least disruptive options, such as placing a child with a relative (CHRT 2, 2016, para. 385). More discussion of Directive 20-1 and its impacts on Indigenous child welfare is included in the Findings and Analysis section of this report.

### When MCFD Provides Services on-Reserve

INAC reimburses the province for the delivery of child and family services to certain First Nations communities on-reserve where there are no FNCFS agencies or an agency is not fully delegated. Eighty-four First Nation communities in B.C. receive services under the *Service Agreement Regarding the Funding of Child Protection Services of First Nations Children Ordinarily Resident on Reserve* (John, 2016, p. 32).

The funding provided to B.C. under this agreement is not based on population levels or assumptions about children in care and families in need. Rather, the province is reimbursed for the actual costs or an agreed-upon share of the maintenance costs for children in legal care, for operational expenses for providing child and family services on INAC's behalf. Included in this agreement are adjustments for inflation and increases in the costs of services, whereas DAAs do not receive these adjustments (CHRT 2, 2016, p. 119). In 2015/16, INAC agreed to reimburse the province \$29.1 million for eligible MCFD employee costs, MCFD operational and maintenance costs, purchases services, operations, etc. (John, 2016, p. 110).

### Funding Arrangements Off-Reserve

Child welfare services may also be provided to children and families living off-reserve. When this is the case, funding is solely the responsibility of the B.C. government, regardless of whether a child is a Status Indian or not. These services may be provided by either the ministry or a DAA. While many DAAs provide child and family services to children and families living either on- or off-reserve, in B.C. three DAAs provide services solely to off-reserve Indigenous children and families. Consequently, these three agencies receive only provincial funding.

### Federal Funding Formula: Directive 20-1

The federal government funds Indigenous child welfare through INAC. Of the four funding approaches used by INAC, Directive 20-1, which is only applicable to children who both live on reserve and are registered as status Indians under the *Indian Act*, is the only formula that applies to B.C. It has two main funding streams – maintenance and operations. Maintenance funding includes eligible reimbursable costs for children in care and some out of care options. Operational funding includes eligible costs of supporting the operations of an agency. The amounts provided in the operational funding formula are based on assumptions made in the early 1990s that on average, six per cent of the on-reserve child population will be in care, and that 20 per cent of families living on-reserve will require child and family services (CHRT 2, 2016, para. 128). There is no upward adjustment for agencies with more than six per cent of children in care.

Of the four funding formulas used by INAC, Directive 20-1 provides the lowest level of funding. This formula is population-based, meaning the amount of operational funding received by agencies is dependent on the number of Status Indian children resident on a reserve. This formula does not provide funding for reserves where there are fewer than 250 Status Indian children. There are also substantial reductions in operational funding (up to 75 per cent) where fewer than 1,000 registered children are on-reserve (FNCFS, 2016b).

## Literature Review: Staffing Issues in Indigenous Child Welfare Agencies

The following is a brief review of existing literature on staffing issues in Indigenous child welfare agencies, organized by issue.

**Lack of culturally sensitive training and learning opportunities:** Approaches used by mainstream child welfare agencies may not be appropriate for all Indigenous families and children (Libesman, 2014). Thus, culturally based training and development opportunities are crucial to providing services to Indigenous families and to avoid loss of cultural identity for children placed outside of their families and communities (Libesman, 2004). These training opportunities can be limited at DAAs due to budget restrictions (Cemlyn, 2009; Pivot Legal Society, 2009; Southern First Nations Network of Care, 2010). As DAAs operate independently of one another, training opportunities that are available in one office may be impossible to obtain in another. At the same time, training needs are often not based on nation-specific principles and values.

**Competing child protection standards:** Research shows that Indigenous social workers are often guided in their work by strong value-based motivations rooted in culturally based worldviews. These values and worldviews can be at odds with provincial child protection standards which may minimize significant cultural differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous families and limit workers' ability to interpret child protection policies in ways that are consistent with Indigenous traditions and practices (Rousseau, 2016; Walmsley, 2005; Bennett and Zubrzycki, 2003).

**Challenges associated with working in one's own community:** Although providing child welfare services in rural and remote areas is not unique to DAAs, social workers in Indigenous communities are more likely than other child protection staff to face challenges related to working in their own communities in rural areas. These challenges can lead to workers feeling highly visible in small, tight-knit communities; being under continued scrutiny from members of those communities; facing possible conflicts between being a social worker and being a friend/member of the community they serve; and being privy to information gained informally within the community that may conflict with information learned through official channels (Schmidt, 2008). Community members may also be wary and suspicious of social workers because of the social work profession's complicity in historic and ongoing oppressive practices toward Indigenous communities (Rousseau, 2016). For these reasons, trust between social workers and community members is extremely important to ensure the success of child welfare agencies (Southern First Nations Network of Care, 2010).

**Limited community resources:** Some DAAs may be located in or near urban centres, where public transportation is frequently available and specialized services such as mental health or special needs programs are available. While the intention is to use standardized assessment tools and response times, interviewees reported that even in urban areas there can be long wait times for mental health services. Other DAAs may serve very rural and remote communities where there is no public transportation, where specialized services have extensive wait-lists, and where children and youth must travel outside their communities to receive assistance (BCGEU, 2015). These challenges can be further complicated by the reality that DAAs have limited access to funding for clients who must travel to receive support services.

## Background

**Lack of wage and benefits parity:** Although some DAA social workers who are fully delegated receive salaries that are comparable with their counterparts in government, the range of benefits offered to DAA staff, such as maternity, extended health, disability and education leave, is generally inferior because of a lack of funding (BCGEU, 2015). Other social workers who are not fully delegated do not have wage parity. Lack of wage and benefits parity can contribute to challenges with recruitment and retention of qualified staff.

**High workloads:** The level of complexity associated with cases tends to be much greater for workers in DAAs than for other workers because of the complex issues facing Indigenous families and the time commitments related to culturally based practice. Workloads can be higher for DAA staff because they often use a relational approach that includes extended family and community members in child safety planning. Their work can also involve more extensive service referrals and more time may be spent navigating protocols or coordinating with bands or other DAAs (BCGEU, 2015).

BCGEU's 2015 report *Closing the Circle* identified workload as the No. 1 issue affecting DAA social workers' abilities to perform their duties. *Closing the Circle* found that nearly two-thirds of DAA social workers believed that their offices were not adequately staffed or resourced, with almost 40 per cent "strongly" believing that this was the case. The report also found that staffing issues were leading to staff burnout, stress or physical ailments, resulting in high rates of sick leave. Because of a lack of backfill for short-term leaves and delays in filling vacancies, workers reported covering caseloads of colleagues who were on leave or on vacation, leading to unmanageably large workloads. These workload issues were compounded by shortages of administrative staff, resulting in social workers covering administrative duties rather than working in the field (BCGEU, 2015; Schmidt, 2008).

## Findings and Analysis

Research, DAA staff interviews and analysis conducted for this report has led to a number of findings regarding service delivery to Indigenous children, youth and their families in B.C.

### What we found:

- The federal funding models for DAAs are flawed and discriminatory, leading to more children ending up in care.
- The uncertain status of provincial planning for Indigenous child welfare, combined with inequitable and inconsistent funding to DAAs, has resulted in differences in support for children depending on where they live.
- Lack of trust and communication among DAAs, MCFD and INAC adversely affects service delivery to children, youth and families.
- Funding issues leave DAAs short-staffed and unable to provide the comprehensive services that are needed.
- Child welfare practice is undermined by funding and staffing issues.
- The capacity of DAAs to offer culturally based prevention services is limited by staffing and funding issues.

## Details

### Finding: *The federal funding system for DAAs is flawed and discriminatory, leading to more children ending up in care*

Funding for DAAs is determined by a complex and uneven combination of factors that includes delegation level, status of child and location of service provider. In addition to discriminating against Indigenous children and youth, INAC's funding of Indigenous child welfare has not kept pace with inflation or other cost pressures, leading over time to shrinking pots of money available to provide services to children and families, particularly for prevention programs.

### The Ruling of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal

The ruling of the CHRT, released in January 2016, found that INAC's funding practices for Indigenous child welfare agencies and programs are in violation of the *Canadian Human Rights Act* because of the racially discriminatory effects of the federal government's approach to this funding. Even before the CHRT's ruling, the federal government had been criticized for under-funding services for Indigenous children and not funding preventative and support services for families of children not in care, thus contributing to the over-representation of Indigenous children in care (Sinla & Kozlowski, 2013, p. 14). In fact, in 2008, the Auditor General of Canada found that federal funding formulas for Indigenous child welfare do not accurately reflect the work done by, or the actual costs associated with, the work of DAAs.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> INAC's FNCFS program has been the subject of numerous reviews and reports: the *First Nations Child and Family Services Joint National Policy Review* (2000), the *Wen:De* reports (2004-2005), and two reports by the Auditor-General of Canada (2008, 2011).

The central finding of the CHRT was that INAC's FNCFS program uses funding formulas such as Directive 20-1 that are racially discriminatory and outdated.

One of the most damning findings of the CHRT is that INAC's funding mechanisms actually incentivize the removal of Indigenous children from their families (CHRT 2, 2016; FNC&FCS, 2016b). Directive 20-1 provides operational funds for agencies based on a fixed and flawed population-based approach that does not account for the real needs of children and families living on-reserve. But funding for costs related to taking and maintaining children in care are reimbursable at cost. If agencies lack the operational funds to provide services to support families to keep their children at home, they are forced to bring children into care to ensure their safety. In effect, this funding formula does not promote prevention or least disruptive measures for children and families, but rather promotes the removal of children from their homes.

**From Grand Chief Ed John's Report (2016)**

*"The result of Directive 20-1 has been the emergence of a child welfare system that places Indigenous children in care to access services, rather than providing services to promote Indigenous families staying together." (p. 108)*

As one executive director reported, *"Right now, we're still being funded based on number of children in care. But if your ultimate goal is to keep children out of care, it's a backwards set up."*

This report found many of the same difficulties with the current funding mechanisms as identified by the CHRT. Federal funding models do not take into account socioeconomic circumstances, the impact of historical trauma, individual characteristics of communities and severely disadvantaged agencies that serve communities with small numbers of children. Some agencies reported that they are continually under threat of losing their federal funding because of declining child populations on the reserves they serve.

**DAA Voices**

*"Even a small decrease in the numbers of children resident on-reserve can result in large funding decreases."*

*"It [Directive 20-1] has a tremendous negative impact on our agency and that is due to the size of the communities that we serve. We serve four communities and our child population count hovers tenuously close to the 250 mark."*

Interviewees also echoed the CHRT's findings that operational funding provided by INAC does not account for core funding issues such as infrastructure costs, legal costs, vehicles, technology or administrative staff. Nor does funding adequately cover supervised visits between parents and children in care or the time and costs of addressing the unique geographic challenges faced by some agencies.

The lack of funding to cover cost-of-living increases along with increases in the cost of services has hampered the ability of these agencies to offer salaries, benefits and training competitive with non-Indigenous child welfare agencies.

Alarming, Directive 20-1 provides no funding for informal care arrangements, an essential part of the service toolkit for DAAs. These arrangements support placing a child in the home of a relative and/or in the community without a court order, effectively serving as a least disruptive measure and ensuring cultural continuity for children. Agency representatives confirmed that they either have inadequate or no



funding for informal care arrangements.<sup>7</sup> Lack of operational funding to support informal care arrangements puts pressure on DAA staff to take children into legal care to address child safety concerns.

The B.C. *CFCS Act* promotes the use of least disruptive measures that support families to safely care for children at home before considering removal, and mandates child welfare agencies to preserve kinship and a child's Aboriginal identity (*CFCS Act*, 2.b and 2.f). Because Directive 20-1

### From Grand Chief Ed John's Report

*In B.C., the Director's decision to remove an Indigenous child, and a subsequent court order for that child's placement in care, triggers federal funding payments. Alternative placements, where there is no court order, with extended family or the community for example, are not funded. In practice this has seen more children removed, and more court orders issued (p. 31).*

### From the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruling

*A failure of governments to invest in a substantial way in prevention and least disruptive measures is a false economy – the choice is to either invest now and save later or save now and pay up to 6–7 times more later (World Health Organization, 2004 as quoted in CHRT 2, 2016, p. 59).*

provides prevention and least disruptive measures on a fixed-cost basis, and without sufficient funding, it is nearly impossible for DAAs to comply with provincial legislation. These funding deficiencies effectively result in an inequitable opportunity for Indigenous children to remain and/or be reunited with their families compared to non-Indigenous children.

Finally, the CHRT also found that funding for prevention services and for culturally based services in Directive 20-1 is negligible and has not increased in 25 years. This lack of prevention funding also does not align with the intention of the DAAs, which is to offer culturally based preventative supports to families and children

The CHRT's ruling ordered INAC to cease its discriminatory practices and reform its FNCFS program immediately, and to provide a comprehensive report indicating how it was addressing the findings in the Tribunal's decision (CHRT 2, 2016).

Further, in September 2016, the CHRT ordered INAC to take additional measures, including determining "budgets for each individual FNCFS agency based on an evaluation of its distinct needs and circumstances, including an appropriate evaluation of how remoteness may affect the FNCFS Agency's ability to provide services" (p. 45). INAC was also ordered to cease the practice of reducing funding to agencies serving fewer than 251 eligible children and to fund these agencies based on an assessment of actual numbers of children in care and of families in need of services. INAC was told to produce a rationale that shows how it has adjusted funding approaches so that its approach to funding is not flawed and discriminatory (CHRT 16, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> In some cases, the costs of caregivers for informal care arrangements can be billed to INAC, but these agencies receive no operational funding to cover staff time to find suitable informal care arrangements. This forces agencies to use funding from other programs to support keeping children out of care.

**Finding:** *The uncertain status of provincial planning for Indigenous child welfare, combined with inequitable and inconsistent funding to DAAs, has resulted in differences in support for children depending on where they live*

The lack of both prudent planning and an overall provincial funding model for Indigenous child welfare persists in B.C., despite MCFD’s commitment in its Service Plan to “*improve safety and well-being outcomes for Aboriginal children, youth and families*” (MCFD, 2016e). Specifically, research conducted for this review showed that:

- MCFD does not have a clearly defined method for determining the funding of DAAs based on an evaluation of the number of Indigenous children, youth and families in need of services.
- The ministry does not have a rationale for addressing the distinct needs and circumstances of Indigenous children, families and their communities.
- There is no standardized method for accounting for the unique needs of remote and small agencies, increases to inflation/cost of living, changes to provincial standards, the need for comparable salaries, benefits, training or other key operational costs.

Ministry funding to the DAAs is provided in a similar manner to other contracted service providers – through time-limited contracts with specific deliverables – and is based on regional funding already decided by the ministry. Funding for each agency is negotiated on a regional basis between senior level regional ministry representatives and the executive directors of the DAAs, resulting in different contracts between regions.

The Representative’s analysis of current funding contracts between MCFD and DAAs reveals that funding is allocated in an uneven way across the province, with contracts ranging from six months to two years. The results of differing contracts and their varied length impairs DAAs’ capacity to conduct long-term planning and is most notable in rural areas where a lack of funding, combined with few available community-based programs, continues to perpetuate inequities.

**DAA Voices**

Workers interviewed for this report decried the lack of transparency in how contracts are negotiated with MCFD, describing the approach as “*divide and conquer.*”

Exacerbating the problem is the lack of standardization in how funding is allocated in MCFD regions. For example, the ministry funds some of the costs of children in care under DAA supervision, but these costs can be allocated either by block funding or by per diems per child – an entirely different approach that makes it difficult to compare one DAA’s funding to another. In addition, different agencies are funded based on varying salary grids and different operational costs (CHRT 2, 2016, p. 124). In fact, some DAAs receive MCFD funding based on the number of children in their legal care, potentially creating the same problems as experienced with federal funding identified by the CHRT, i.e., incentivizing bringing children into care.

The findings of this review echo the Representative's 2013 report *When Talk Trumped Service*, as well as a 2008 report from B.C.'s Auditor General – namely that, while MCFD espouses visionary plans and high-level commitments to Indigenous child welfare, there is a disconnect between how the ministry plans for and supports Indigenous child welfare and how it supports actual service delivery.

Furthermore, as in the 2008 report, this report finds that MCFD continues to lack the data it needs to determine both the service needs of Indigenous children and families and the staff resources required to provide appropriate levels of culturally based services. Nor does the ministry have an articulated model of service delivery that can address the unique experiences of diverse Indigenous populations in B.C. including on- and off-reserve and urban and rural communities.

Several DAAs noted different, inequitable funding between their offices and MCFD offices regarding supplemental supports for foster parents, such as training, support, recruitment and retention. As one executive director said, *“All the extra supplemental help and relief funds that foster parents get with the ministry, the ministry does not give us any of that funding.”* While MCFD, for example, provides training for potential caregivers, most DAAs lack the funding to offer their own culturally based foster care training to potential caregivers.

MCFD's Aboriginal Service Innovations (ASI) is an example of a funding program that is meant to strengthen the capacity of agencies to offer culturally based services. The goals of this funding initiative include improving outcomes for Indigenous children in care and safely returning Indigenous children in care to their parents or, where that is not possible, finding temporary or permanent placements for them with relatives and/or community members. To date, this funding has been used in a variety of ways, including supporting family finders, kinship care and other culturally relevant support services (MCFD, 2016b).

However, ASI is a time-limited proposal-based initiative without guarantees for future continued funding. Interviewees confirmed that while ASI has been important for supporting initiatives that would not otherwise be possible, it is still time-limited funding for programs that are essential to supporting the needs of Indigenous children and families. As Grand Chief John's recent report on Indigenous child welfare in B.C. said, *“There are no guarantees that ASI funds will be available for the following year, which severely jeopardizes program sustainability”* (John, 2016, p. 171). A proposal-driven process also favours larger agencies that have the human resources to develop grant applications.

## Provincial Planning

A review of MCFD's 2016 Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework (AP&P) (MCFD, 2016f), reveals that the framework contains little in the way of specifics for DAAs. This framework – while a promising description of the important values that must underscore Indigenous child welfare practice – was not accompanied by strategic planning for funding and governance of Indigenous child welfare in B.C., or the role that DAAs will play in delivering services. MCFD has indicated that it plans to work with contracted service providers to implement this framework over a three-year period but, unfortunately, implementation has been devolved to the individual divisions of MCFD, potentially introducing fragmentation of efforts into this process (MCFD, 2016g).

Without an overarching plan, government has yet to make specific commitments regarding how the values and Indigenous approaches to service provision identified in the AP&P can be implemented in front-line service provision.

MCFD's recently released Multi-Year Action Plan makes more significant commitments to Indigenous child welfare that are promising but still in their early stages (MCFD, 2017b). The implementation of programs and services related to this plan and to Indigenous child welfare could be an important turning point. The extent of the changes and of their impact on the number of Indigenous children in care, will be key factors in determining the success of MCFD's recent commitments.

Both the December 2015 Plecas report and the November 2016 Grand Chief John report also highlight the confusing status of provincial planning for DAAs.

Plecas' report was received with alarm by a cross-section of Indigenous groups in B.C. who expressed deep concern that recommendations contained in his report would be the basis for sweeping reforms at MCFD. The report was prepared with no engagement or input from Indigenous groups, or DAAs, despite the fact that Indigenous children comprise the majority of children in care. While Plecas recommended an increase in front-line MCFD staff, he made no parallel recommendation for staffing in the DAAs. In fact, MCFD announced in the spring of 2016 that it would be adding 120 new workers as a result of Plecas' recommendations, with no analogous commitments for DAAs (MCFD, 2016g).

In May 2016, MCFD announced the appointment of an Advisory Panel with members external to government to oversee the implementation of the recommendations of Plecas' report (MCFD, 2016c). However, criticism of the membership of this Advisory Panel was swift, with both the Representative and the First Nations Leadership Council criticizing the lack of consultation with First Nations groups and lack of Indigenous representation among the members of the panel (RCY, 2016b). In July 2016, MCFD announced that the Advisory Panel would be disbanded and the ministry would seek broader consultation and feedback on the implementation of changes recommended by Plecas (MCFD, 2016d).

In contrast to the Plecas report, Grand Chief John's report acknowledged the contributions of DAAs to child welfare, including their valuable experience and their evolving capacity to support community-based solutions to the roll-out of "*effective child welfare services delivered in a culturally appropriate manner*" (p. 171). While many of the findings and recommendations in the John report have previously been brought forward to MCFD and First Nations leadership by DAAs, John's report included details not seen before about provincial funding to DAAs, although it was short on recommendations for these agencies. In particular, John recommended that funding for child welfare be devolved to Indigenous control, but did not clearly specify the role that current DAAs would play in such a devolved funding arrangement.

## **Finding:** *Lack of trust and communication among DAAs, MCFD and INAC adversely affects service delivery to children, youth and families*

Research and interviews conducted for this report indicate that a lack of trust exists between MCFD and DAAs, and that DAAs have a limited relationship with INAC. The issue of underfunding to DAAs, coupled with poor communication and strained relationships, were found to affect the ability of DAAs to respond to the needs of vulnerable children, youth and families.

Although some workers reported that they find relationships with MCFD to be mostly functional, and sometimes even positive, this was not the case for the vast majority of interviewees. Many interviewees commented on a range of issues that reflect deep-seated problems between MCFD, INAC and DAAs.

Many executive directors commented on an absence of trust between MCFD and DAAs, particularly related to decisions about how to respond to the needs of families and children. Respondents described the hierarchical relationship that often emerges when differences of practice arise related to families, and that MCFD does not treat them as full partners.

Some executive directors described MCFD's approach as more punitive and judgmental of families and less focused on family reunification. DAA social workers also reported a general lack of cooperation with DAAs and a paternalistic attitude toward DAA staff.

Several executive directors commented that any positive working relationship with MCFD is the result of extensive efforts at relationship-building by DAAs.

One of the key findings of the 2015 RCY report, *The Thin Front Line*, was that there is a high turnover of MCFD social workers across many offices. Many DAA executive directors confirmed that staff turnover in local MCFD offices presented significant challenges to the continuity and stability of the relations between the two offices. This can be particularly challenging in rural areas where MCFD social workers are continually changing because of the ministry's difficulties with staff retention.

Many executive directors reported that relationships with MCFD's provincial office were, at best, difficult and, as they went up the management chain at MCFD, the relationship became more strained. Others commented that this relationship can also be unpredictable, with the provincial office at times inconsistent in its decision-making and insensitive to the demands it places on DAA staff.

Relationships are also affected when MCFD issues changes to policy and procedures but does not provide adequate training resources to the DAAs to support the implementation of these changes. This lack of training is particularly concerning given the reality that DAAs, under federal legislation, must conform to provincial legislation and standards.

### **DAA Voices**

*"I think when it becomes a bit more challenging is when push comes to shove and we're not in agreement, then the ministry does pull power – and then they often do shut the door on us, they communicate less, they involve us less, and they tend to then have more meetings without us with families."*

While MCFD claims that its relationship with DAAs is based on a partnership, the reality on the ground is different. Overall, DAA executive directors described MCFD provincial office staff talking down to DAA staff or failing to appreciate the unique contributions that DAAs make to child welfare. Several DAAs also noted that the ministry does not take them seriously and often overrules child welfare decisions they make.

Some noted that the relationship with MCFD declined even further after the release of the December 2015 Plecas report because of the lack of any reference to the DAAs and the issues facing Indigenous families and children.

On the federal side, most DAAs reported having a very limited relationship with INAC, describing their frustrations with INAC staff turnover in B.C. Other executive directors said: *“I don’t even know who my advisor is down there. One hasn’t been assigned to me.”* Some agency directors reported that INAC asks for their feedback and participation on committees, but rarely does this work go anywhere. Executive directors also noted that the relationship with INAC is not a trusting one. In fact, most executive directors were quite pointed about not only their lack of trust in INAC, but the lack of any meaningful contact they have with this federal department.

### DAA Voices

*“I don’t know how many [INAC] funding service officers I’ve had in the last three years. I can’t even count ... it’s probably over 10? No – not a good relationship [with INAC]. It has never been a good relationship.”*

*“We’ve done all this work [with INAC] and it’s sitting there doing nothing. Exceptional Costs Committee, I sat on that. It’s doing nothing. The Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach. I spent tons of time on that and there were people doing that long before I came along. And every time [INAC] realized it was costing them more money, they just shut the door.”*

*“Federally, there’s a lack of trust, there’s a lack of collaboration, there’s a lack of partnership because they make a decision in Ottawa that adversely affects us and then there’s nothing that we can do. It’s very paternalistic.”*

## **Finding: Funding issues leave DAAs short staffed and unable to provide the comprehensive services that are needed**

DAAs reported that they do not receive enough funding from INAC or MCFD to adequately cover required staffing and costs of service delivery to children, youth and families. This lack of funding results in clear repercussions for recruitment and retention of qualified staff, in part because of wage and benefits disparities with MCFD. Agencies are forced to cope with this situation in a number of ways, sometimes by redeploying funding from urban-based programs, limiting staff wage and benefit increases or reducing service levels. Insufficient staffing also leads to high workloads, which in turn can lead to staff departures.

## Staffing levels and coverage

Interviewees for this report clearly indicated that staffing levels in their agencies were insufficient to adequately address all incoming reports of child safety concerns in a timely manner. Compounding this challenge is the reality that staffing levels in most agencies fluctuate due to staff leaves, staff turnover and one-time project funding. All social workers reported that they provide coverage for absent colleagues and that there is insufficient staff coverage for sick and maternity leaves. In addition, few inflation-related funding increases from INAC mean that staffing levels in some agencies have declined over the years, leaving more work distributed among fewer colleagues. Small agencies feel the pinch the most since even just one staff member being away greatly impacts a team. As one interviewee said:

*“There needs to be a contingency plan for when people leave, otherwise cases stay open for a long time as they go from worker to worker and it’s hard to find out where all the documentation is.”*

## Recruitment and retention issues

Executive directors and their staff reported that recruitment and retention of experienced delegated workers is a considerable challenge for most DAAs. Turnover in these agencies appears to be high, and in several cases, interviews for this report took place just after or during a time when teams were going through significant changes in personnel, particularly at the team leader level.

Recruitment and retention is made more difficult by funding challenges, with most executive directors unable to offer new and existing staff comparable wages and benefits to those offered by MCFD offices. Because the majority of social workers are women, DAAs find themselves in a doubly difficult position as they cannot match the maternity benefits offered by MCFD. Recruitment problems are compounded for smaller agencies located in rural areas, who generally have less funding flexibility to offer competitive wages. Agencies located in rural areas can also experience recruitment challenges because these areas can be seen as less desirable. Team leaders in small rural agencies echoed the difficulties of recruitment, noting that it can take up to six months to fill a vacant social worker position.

### Aboriginal Operational and Practice Standards and Indicators (AOPSI) Caseload Guidelines

The 2009 AOPSI caseload guidelines address the maximum number of cases a worker should be allowed to carry at one time for voluntary, guardianship and child protection services. These guidelines must be weighted by severity of risk, geography, need for travel, remoteness and accessibility.

The AOPSI standards suggest that:

- workers providing voluntary services not have more than 25 files at any one time
- workers providing guardianship services not have more than 20 files at any one time
- workers providing child protection services not have more than 20 files at any one time.

AOPSI includes the following caveat on these standards. *“Note: This standard has been included at the request of the FNFCs agencies. The First Nations Director of Child Welfare regards these as guidelines rather than standards.”* During interviews for this report, DAA social workers were each asked to estimate the size of their current caseload. The reported average was 30 cases each, suggesting that agencies have caseload pressures exceeding the recommended guidelines.

Executive directors described how some social workers use DAA employment as a stepping stone or shortcut to get their delegation before obtaining employment at MCFD. The lack of parity in wages and benefits is even more noticeable when MCFD workers are seconded to fill vacancies in DAAs, as they continue to receive higher wages and benefits than what agency employees are earning for the same work. This lack of parity in wages and benefits creates unnecessary competition between the DAAs and MCFD to meet their staffing needs.

Because of recruitment challenges, executive directors noted that they often hire inexperienced and undelegated staff and support them through their training and delegation processes. These workers require more support from team leaders and more experienced colleagues, adding further pressure. The continuous cycle of hiring, training, and mentoring new workers only to lose them to employment in the ministry or elsewhere is exhausting for most agency employees.

While the 2015 RCY report on staffing issues at MCFD noted similar findings, the situation for DAAs is not the same as at the ministry. Executive Directors reminded the RCY that the vision for most agencies, along with the expectation of their communities, is that social workers practice in a culturally based manner as well as provide mentorship and training opportunities for community members. These expectations place even more pressure on agencies to provide training and work in ways that do not easily accord with ministry approaches to practice.

### High workloads and caseloads

Interviewees told the Representative that challenges with workload are part of the everyday life of DAAs as they routinely deal with a steady flow of incoming child safety reports. Because child safety concerns must be dealt with immediately, these reports take priority, forcing other responsibilities to the side of the desk.

Child safety reports are particularly demanding as social workers must visit and properly assess several families, sometimes seeing multiple families in one day.

Workers were not the only ones to report heavy workloads; team leaders can work up to 10 hours a day and then be faced with doing paperwork after hours to catch up.

#### DAA Voices

*"Some people leave the agency because they have to pay their own MSP premiums and it is very expensive"*

*"MCFD has perks that the DAA can't afford such as Pacific Leaders and MSP."*

#### DAA Voices

*"There's just not enough time; you end up putting out fires and making sure kids are safe, and the rest falls to when you can get back to it."*

*"I'm coming to work to put out fires for that day, until another one starts tomorrow."*

*"[It is] phone call after phone call. I would just get off the phone and there would be another."*

*"I would like to plan but there are too many emergencies. I often go out on cases [visiting families] and they turn out to be more than I expected."*



## Geography impacts workload

Many rural DAAs serve multiple communities, some only accessible by rough roads, air or water. Interviewees noted that traveling time to visit families from numerous small and geographically spread-out communities has a huge impact on workload. As one social worker said, speaking for many: *“I can fit three or four visits into the day in urban areas, whereas one rural visit can take the whole day.”* Many agencies have small child protection teams, and this, combined with long travel times, results in children and families getting fewer visits. The impacts on staff include not only increased workload but also increased levels of exhaustion, particularly as visiting remote communities means long work days. Urban-based agencies are not necessarily immune to these challenges as they often serve both rural and urban communities.

A routine part of a child protection social worker’s responsibilities includes appearing in court to support applications for Temporary or Continuing Custody Orders. In remote communities, courts can be located up to three hours away and this can compound workload beyond any worker’s capacity to plan.

## ICM and too much paperwork

Workers and team leaders alike offered some of their most pointed criticism for the Integrated Case Management (ICM) computer system, and commented on how unnecessarily complex it is in terms of data input. ICM is often difficult to access in rural areas and connections are slow or are often dropped in the middle of a session. Family visits can also be challenging for workers when ICM fails in the middle of an assessment, sometime resulting in the loss of work.

Workers reported that entering data into ICM is time-consuming and falls victim to high workloads. Workers often have to choose between getting the paperwork done and seeing families, reporting that paperwork is so extensive that *“it doesn’t allow for enough home visits.”*

Some interviewees also described how documenting so much information about a family in ICM is an obstacle for working culturally in the oral form, where healing and changes can happen with families.

### DAA Voices

*“The paperwork has grown. You now have to put the assessments in the computer and also do vulnerability assessments, safety assessments, plans etc. Paperwork takes up 60 per cent of my time.”*

*“There’s too much paperwork. It keeps me and my admin staff here until 7 at night to get it finished.”*

*“We are just paper pushers. Time with families is becoming less and less important in our work.”*

*“I would rather spend three days a week with families than trapped at my desk trying to make ICM work.”*

*“We’re spending more time here [in the office] than we are with the families.”*

The high level of reporting required by MCFD can also be an obstacle, as described by one interviewee: *“... when I spend most of my time informing MCFD policies and writing reports so that we can maintain our funding, then in my opinion they need to start paying my wage because I’m doing their work for them, and they’re not providing any additional resources for agencies to do their work, to inform their policies, to educate their employees.”*

### Lack of training

Social work is a constantly evolving field of professional practice. Workers need to stay current on new standards and policies, as well as the evolving and dynamic field of culturally based practice. Many executive directors, social workers and team leaders in both rural and urban agencies described the difficulties of accessing training that is often only available in the Lower Mainland, and were deeply troubled about how lack of training negatively impacts their work with families. Some interviewees also reported that they are invited to local ministry training events at the last moment or not at all. Smaller rural DAAs have even more challenges accessing training because of lack of funding, long travel times, and lack of staff coverage.

### Impacts on staff

The impact of these staffing issues on staff was apparent in the interviews. Workers talked about working long hours, feeling stressed about workload and never being able to get caught up. Some workers reported that lack of access to supervision, along with turnover and lack of more experienced colleagues, adds to their stress levels. All of these factors combine to create enormous pressure on workers. One worker summed up her challenges in this way:

*“I want to be more effective but when I’m like this, how can I be effective with the families I’m working with? The pressure to do well, and I’m behind on paperwork ... and I’m so far behind it weighs on my mind. I strongly believe our people come first and paperwork should come last.”*

Workers commented on how the cycle of stress and burnout leads to more stress, which can lead to medical leave. In turn, many agencies find it very challenging to provide staff coverage for medical leaves, or they must use auxiliary or float workers who are not delegated and cannot carry out all child safety responsibilities. As a result, the work continues to pile up, putting more stress on the remaining workers.

### Finding: Child welfare practice in DAAs is undermined by funding and staffing issues

The quality of on-the-ground DAA-based child welfare practice is undermined by a lack of funding, inadequate staffing and challenges with workload. The challenges of DAA staff to meet the expectations of the communities they serve as well as comply with ministry standards are evident in social workers’ concerns about a lack of adequate supervision and clinical advice.

## Problems with supervision

Clinical consultation is an important part of child welfare practice and is even more important in agencies using Indigenous approaches to child safety. These skills are not often taught in university based social work schools and are a rapidly evolving approach to social work practice. This means that it is even more crucial that team leaders have the time to work with social workers to develop these skills. The interviews for this report show that the continuous cycle of recruitment and high workloads contributes to insufficient quality supervision. This was evident in the reality that, while most social workers reported that they had daily contact with their team leaders, few team leaders had time to provide scheduled clinical supervision sessions.

Less experienced social workers often turn to more senior colleagues for help, but even these supports are limited by workload pressures. One social worker summed up the sentiments of many interviewees about lack of clinical consultation with colleagues: *“Even if social workers could get together and talk about cases, it would be more helpful as everyone would know what was going on with each caseload. There are hardly any team meetings.”* Most team leaders confirmed that they use an *“open door”* approach with staff to provide required approvals and to respond to questions and concerns about cases. At the same time, team leaders are in a constant cycle of training and mentoring due to turnover of staff or because workers are inexperienced and require more support, and they reported that their capacity to offer one-on-one supervision is compromised by heavy workloads.

## Complying with standards

Almost all executive directors readily agreed that average caseloads carried by workers were too high and in almost all cases exceeded the required standards.

Because of high caseloads, social workers have difficulty meeting timelines set out in standards. Social workers repeatedly told RCY interviewers that the timelines required by child protection standards had to be negotiated depending upon workload and staffing levels. Travelling to remote locations, sometimes by boat or float plane, contacting families living in remote areas and completing all necessary assessments are made increasingly difficult when positions are vacant and staff are on leave.

### DAA Voices

*“The work is not about the standards, it’s about the kids – the work is always happening, but the documentation may be delayed.”*

*“I can count on one hand the number of files I’ve closed in the ‘required’ 30 days.”*

No social workers or team leaders reported that they can readily meet timelines required by standards, although they certainly emphasized that they try to do everything they can to make sure children are safe. Executive directors, too, admitted that timelines are difficult to meet given the combination of factors such as understaffing, workload, and geography. Challenges with meeting required standards are evident in the number of child safety incidents open beyond the required timelines (see below).

**Figure 7: Open Incidents\* By Days Open, Dec. 31, 2016**

Social workers must complete an investigation or a family development response within either 30 or 45 days of receipt of a report of a child safety concern. The data in the following table was provided by MCFD and shows the number of DAA child safety incidents open on Dec. 31, 2016. As the table shows, there were 1,266 incidents open at this time (71.5% of open incidents) for more than 90 days.

<b>Table X: Open Child Protection Incidents by Days Open, Dec. 31, 2016</b>		
<b>Days open</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
30 or fewer	162	9.2
31 to 90	342	19.3
91 to 180	307	17.3
181 to 365	378	21.4
366 to 732	184	10.4
More than 732	397	22.4
<b>Total Open Incidents</b>	<b>1,770</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: MCFD

\*Social workers screen all reported child safety concerns to determine whether the report requires a protection or non-protection response. If a report is deemed to require a protection response, the assessment phase must be completed within 30 days of receiving a report. This time line can be extended with the supervisor’s approval. If the incident is deemed to require a family development response, a family plan is developed with 15 days of completing the assessment.

Other work-related tasks can also contribute to heavy workloads. Some social workers, for example, described participating in agency fund-raising activities to support children in care and youth who are about to transition out of care; child protection social workers reported covering for absent administrative staff or guardianship or resource workers.

## Impacts of child welfare practice: lack of appropriate and available resources

Social workers and team leaders alike often mentioned the issue of insufficient support services in their communities, including mental health services and respite and foster placements for children in their care. In fact, the shortage of foster homes was one of the most often-reported work stressors. The lack of equity in the funding for informal care arrangements was also reported to be a barrier to the recruitment and retention of respite care homes. The need to respond immediately to child safety reports can limit workers' ability to respond to other pressing child welfare matters. Guardianship responsibilities such as visiting with children in care or with foster parents can be pushed aside, resulting in fewer supports for these children and lack of both oversight of, and support for, foster parents.

Some agencies reported that they simply don't have the funding that would help retain foster homes, and that resources to support DAA foster families are not as readily available as they are for MCFD foster homes. Many agencies also worried about the lack of funding to train foster parents, particularly for culturally based training. They also emphasized that this training must be nation-specific, and designed and delivered by the agency and community. Despite these challenges, social workers said they continue to do what they can to find family members who can take in children when child safety issues arise.

### Lack of CYMH and other services

Social workers expressed deep concerns about the lack of CYMH services in their regions. As one worker said, *"We can't get CYMH services for our youth; either [the youth] are too young or they don't qualify or we can't get hold of CYMH services."* Another noted that CYMH had prohibitively long wait times for accessing services or *"... youth were turned down because they had to deal with other issues first e.g. alcohol and drug use."* One worker described a commonly noted problem with lack of resources in small communities:

*"There are three [mental health] counsellors in town who are supposed to be dealing with youth. Not one of them is a female. And that's a huge barrier, because we have these young girls that are cutting, and a lot of it is related to abuse at the hands of a man. How are they going to feel going to a man and talking about this stuff? So we've got kids that are screaming for help."*

Many interviewees confirmed the CHRT findings that DAAs lack sufficient resources to provide adequate prevention and early intervention programs, including parenting programs and early childhood education supports such as daycare. For small agencies, the challenges are even greater because of a lack of funding to cover basic supports. While a few agencies have been funded by MCFD to provide CYMH services, many are not. Compared to DAAs located in large urban centres, smaller, more remotely located agencies were more likely to report that family and child services are often limited in their local area. This lack of services in small communities make it much more difficult for parents to access support services that could help them keep their children out of care.

#### DAA Voices

*"If we want to support families, we have no money to do so. Even providing them with a swim pass or giving them food – it's only for kids who are in care."*

*"We'd love to be able to offer an intensive parent support service that's an in-home-based kind of service that's highly tailored to individual needs and is not time-limited."*

## **Finding: *The capacity of DAAs to offer culturally based prevention services is limited by staffing and funding issues***

The *CFCS Act* identifies the family as the best environment for children and, where needed, section 5 of the Act gives an MCFD Director the power to engage a range of services for families to prevent children from coming into care. The preservation of a child's positive Indigenous identity is also a stated goal in the *CFCS Act*, and DAAs are committed to achieving this goal. However, current funding and staffing issues present insurmountable barriers to meeting the requirements of legislation and also offer culturally based prevention services. This is particularly the case for smaller and/or more remotely located agencies.

Interviewees for this report confirmed what numerous reports and rulings have already found: that a huge gap exists between the services agencies can offer, and what programs and supports they need to keep children out of care. Almost all agencies identified both community level services and intense family preservation<sup>8</sup> work as key to addressing the historical effects of colonialism, and they stressed that prevention services for Indigenous families must be culturally based to be most effective.

The goals of culturally based services include supporting and fostering a child's positive Indigenous identity, and enhancing family and community strengths and healing through programs that involve community participation and control (e.g. naming ceremonies, homecoming ceremonies, puberty rights). DAA workers described school-based programs, early childhood education, parenting programs and more supports for parents

### **What are culturally based practices?**

Culturally based practices focus on enhancing a child's Indigenous identity, culture and heritage. These practices enrich community strengths and healing, often through programs that involve community participation and control. In the absence of funding to work at the community level, Indigenous child welfare organizations have created a range of initiatives to support cultural connections and positive cultural identity for children in care. Some of these initiatives include:

- Cultural plans: these plans go beyond MCFD requirements for care planning and take into consideration how children's connections with birth families and communities can be maintained from the first contact with the child welfare system.
- Life books that record memories and key life events as children and youth in care move to different placements. These books might include photos of birth families and siblings, information about home communities, nations and language.
- Materials on cultural traditions and teachings specific to a child's community.
- Welcome home feasts and celebrations for children in care from around the province when returning to home territories.
- Involving children in care in cultural events and teachings, including culture camps.
- Where funding is available, Indigenous child welfare agencies will offer services such as family preservation workers who help keep children and youth connected to home communities and birth families

<sup>8</sup> Family preservation work focuses on keeping families together and strengthening children's positive sense of self and belonging. This work can include prevention, early intervention, and reunification services. It acknowledges the importance of tradition, customs, relationship with the land and language, along with the role of elders, extended family and tribal relations.

who want to address domestic violence and/or substance use issues as essential to preventing children from coming into care.

One executive director reminded interviewers why culturally based services should not just focus on individual parents and children, but must also address the needs of a community:

*“Certainly over the past couple of years we’ve definitely been able to establish more comprehensive ways of growing together. I call it growing together because as [our First Nation] we never lose sight of each other, that we’re living together from birth to death.”*

Many interviewees reported that working in a culturally based manner relies on relational forms of practice that include extended family members and community. Workers must have the time to get to know families and communities, including bands, because bands have so much to offer in terms of knowledge of families. One worker reported that *“you need to be present in communities and develop trust.”* Another worker said it is important to make the time to do this work, especially at places such as schools where they can normalize the presence of social workers. Most team leaders described extensive efforts to attend community events to get to know people in the communities they serve.

Workers also described how getting to know families in a deeper way helps acknowledge and address the historical effects of colonization. Interviewees resisted the *“deficit-based”* and reactive approach to parenting often taken by mainstream child welfare services that focuses too much on what is going wrong for families. Deficit-based approaches can also blame parents for structural issues beyond their individual control such as poverty, poor housing, racism and multi-generational impacts of colonialism. At the same time, respondents insisted that social workers must not misrepresent Indigenous families as helpless victims; instead, they spoke about appreciating the strengths families and communities have developed to cope with structural inequalities.

#### DAA Voice

*“Provincially, there needs to be acknowledgement about working with Aboriginal families and extended families and communities. It takes more time to do the same thing than if you’re working with a local nuclear family. It takes more time to build the relationships, the one-on-one relationships with the parents or with the youth, but also the bigger relationships with extended family, community, the territory. So it’s time-intensive. And there needs to be recognition [of that].”*

Executive directors almost universally agreed that family preservation work needs to mitigate risk but must also build on the strengths that families and communities already have. But, as many pointed out, strengths-based family preservation work takes time and requires that social workers are available to families.

Social workers described the unique time commitments that working with Indigenous families and communities requires, and one described the impacts of colonialism on Indigenous families in the following terms: *“Families have been colonized, invaded, murdered, assimilated and it’s as raw as it was 15 years ago.”* This worker described how she *“walks softly”* with families to address these issues.

Several workers commented that one of the original intentions of AOPSI was to acknowledge and support the unique time commitments required for working with Indigenous families.

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### Promising Practices: Integrating Traditional Practices into Health and Wellness Counselling

One agency reported working within a cultural framework to integrate traditional practices into its assessment and treatment services. Staff members receive training on the unique cultures, dialects and histories of each of the nations served by the DAA, in order to better understand the potential effects of harmful factors in a child or youth's environment. In particular, the agency's Intensive Family Preservation Service program offers crisis intervention and family counselling designed to keep children and families safe and prevent unnecessary out-of-home placement of children.

This program was designed specifically for families with children or youth who are at imminent risk of placement outside the home. Services typically last for four weeks and clinicians spend eight to 10 hours per week working with a family, with extended hours available if needed. The program is tailored to each family's unique needs and provides opportunities to learn new skills (e.g., emotion management or enhanced communication skills), as well as offering additional supports such as connection with other resources, positive parenting skills, and relapse prevention strategies.

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### Promising Practices: Creating Family-Based, Community-Based Solutions to Child Safety

*"It is possible to deliver child welfare services in a better and more creative way."*

During the interviews conducted for this report, an executive director of a DAA with full child protection delegation told a story that illustrates the depth and complexity of the work this DAA undertakes to keep Indigenous children and youth connected to their communities.

In this example, the agency received several child safety reports indicating that a group of siblings from one family might be living in unsafe conditions. A typical response to these situations is to investigate safety reports, possibly resulting in removal of children from their family home and placing them in temporary foster care. In many cases, Indigenous children end up in non-Indigenous homes without sufficient connection to their families and their communities. These moves can initiate a tragic cycle of loss, both of connection to family and of positive cultural identity.

In this case, DAA child protection workers chose to collaborate with local nations to find extended family members who could care for these children, rather than putting them into government care in non-Indigenous foster homes. To achieve this goal, DAA social workers hosted large family circles. These circles brought together family, extended family and members of the community in a supportive environment to solve problems, and to work together to develop Care Plans that help maintain a child's connection to family, culture and community. Family circles are built on traditional values that recognize the importance of extended family and the larger community in addressing the needs of children.

Because of the discussions that took place in the family circles, relatives agreed to move into the family home with the children. The parents agreed to stay elsewhere while they addressed their own traumatic past experiences and developed new parenting skills. Other members of the children's extended family agreed to share in the care of the children.

These alternative arrangements were possible because of the DAA's good relations with local nations, and because of the multi-faceted programs and skilled staff at this DAA.

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Interviewees reported that culture is an integral foundation of the DAA service delivery model and is not a discrete or time-limited intervention.

One interviewee described how MCFD child apprehensions are sometimes done without adequate culturally based care planning and without consideration of family and community connections, consultation or consideration:

*“One of the things I think would be crucial for young people in care, is that the ministry needs to take more accountability and responsibility for these Aboriginal children they removed when they were little and have them in care for years and years and years, many of them bouncing around with very little culture connections and family connections. And then by the time our agency gets these kids, all we get is the foster parent money. That’s not good. That’s not showing any caring for the kids. A lot of these kids are not in school. They have all kinds of learning deficits. They have all kinds of behavioural problems. And then they [MCFD] dump them on the agencies with just the foster parent money.”*

Interviewees emphasized the importance of supporting the development of positive Indigenous identities for children and youth, but they worried that lack of resources made it difficult to offer these supports.

### DAA Voices

*“As a DAA, we say we work in a different and a better way. With one heart and one mind. Working together. I feel like this agency is not at that point as a whole team. We are fragmented. I don’t know if it’s because of all the changes, but I’m hoping that, once things are settled, it will go back to where I feel supported and where I’m a valuable employee. We’re always under pressure. ‘You need to be doing the care, safety plan, vulnerability assessment.’ But I’m out there talking to the families. This is what we’ve always said; our people come first. This is how we work in a better and different way. We hold more family meetings and Indigenous families are large. Along with that there comes lots of stuff. It’s different than the way MCFD works.”*

*“We have a system where it’s finally coming full circle, what I mean is we have different programs that are set in place that allow us to offer services for parents whose [children] don’t need care, but need extra support. Maybe it’s just a parent group. Maybe it’s just a young mom needing to go to a parent group and be role modelled by others. So we have programs for the early years.”*

*“We want to work in a different way than MCFD. So we are always thinking outside the box. Trying to listen to families and bring back to the team leader and say ‘this is what families are willing to do and we have to have something we are willing to do.’”*

*“One of the resource homes wanted to get some tapes of their child in care’s native tongue for her to listen to and the social worker was able to connect them with a family member who recorded not only words, but put the words into phrases and then explained them in English so that the child would understand where the words came from and how they were used. There was also a handout so that the child could see what the words looked like on paper.”*

*I think that there needs to be a specific budget line for culture. You know, it’s not something that we just do as an add on; it’s who we are and how we live and needs to be embedded throughout everything and not just be a milestone [in care planning].”*

*“I would like to be able to offer ongoing cultural workshops for children and youth. I’m not visualizing getting together and having a workshop to make drums. I’m visualizing having kids going out on the land with elders and learning about traditional medicines ... those sorts of grassroots activities.”*

Some agencies resisted pan-Indigenous approaches that do not sufficiently acknowledge and appreciate the diversity of Indigenous cultures. They emphasized that individual nations have their own traditions and approaches to child well-being that must be integrated into their work. As one said: *“I think that there needs to be more ability to meet the unique needs of each individual nation and the territory they’re in.”*

Some executive directors noted that MCFD’s ASI funding had been helpful for establishing more culturally based prevention programs, including hiring family cultural connections workers. But ASI is time-limited and it continues to be difficult for the agency to keep good people because *“there’s no guarantee for the work from year-to-year.”*

Respondents astutely pointed out that the solution was not to create parity with MCFD programs, but to move all parties to a preventative model of child welfare practice. They emphasized that family preservation work is already helping to keep children out of care and has ultimately saved the ministry money both in the short- and long-term.

Interviewees suggested that DAAs need more resources to support the integration of traditional healing practices, cultural connections and language supports into child safety and guardianship work, including ceremonies such as healing circles, elder visits and language programs. In this vein, some agencies reported having elders on staff to support parents. One said: *“We do ceremonies for all kinds of events – coming of age, leaving care, and as part of permanency plans. We do a lot of ceremony and it makes a difference.”*

Several workers described the benefits of having elder-led practices that support not just families who are struggling, but also the workers on their teams. One worker reminded the interviewer that elder-based programs are preventative: *“We need the resources for working with families as things are happening rather than taking care of the aftermath of it all.”* A team leader echoed this concern: *“There needs to be more in communities to focus on prevention including role models and positive mentorship for youth ... we need preventative work to break the cycle.”* Another executive director expressed hopes for funding to support custom adoption: *“Instead of bringing children into care, we would be applying the cultural practices of custom adoption and have that as a strong culture piece. But we need funding for that, and I want INAC to fund that.”* Some agencies receive MCFD funding for elder-led programs, but most do not.

### Promising Practices: Indigenous Cultural Safety in Child Welfare

The San’yas Indigenous Cultural Safety Training Program was developed by the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) Aboriginal Health Program. One of the training programs offered by San’yas is the core Indigenous Cultural Safety Program – Child Welfare for Non-Aboriginal Child Welfare Professionals. This program has a specific focus on child welfare issues for professionals working with Indigenous children and is intended as introductory training for social workers and others.

Many executive directors reported that MCFD training does not support culturally based work. Instead, they suggested that training programs need to occur in their communities and with a broad range of partners (e.g. elders, staff):

*“We want to bring the training to [our community] so we can train the family care workers in the communities, and the family preservation workers at our agency, and the health workers, and have everybody on the same page. But again, it costs thousands of dollars to bring someone in and there’s no money for that.”*

Workers talked about the challenges of having to accommodate policies from the dominant society into working with Indigenous families. One social worker reported that her clients face unique challenges with family courts: *“[Parents] are already in a bad place and they have to go to court and tell everyone they are in a bad place. It’s very demeaning and, from a cultural perspective, that’s not appropriate. I think this needs to change.”*

As workers noted, attending court can be traumatic for families and usually does little to help increase child safety. Court attendance can include extended family members and courts are not necessarily set up to accommodate Indigenous family structures: *“It’s not just two parties when we go to court. There’s the agency, there’s the family, mom and dad, aunts, bands for mom, bands for dad and there may be other parties. It adds to the complexity because there are all these parties to the proceedings.”*

Another worker offered a cultural critique of the assessment tools she must use in her work:

*“SDM [Structured Decision Making]<sup>9</sup> tools aren’t calibrated to identify real risk. The tools don’t reflect real risk for families and don’t help identify safety areas that workers need to work on ... The SDM tools don’t ‘talk about history’ in terms of what works and what doesn’t, how the family has grown/ increased resilience ... If I did a vulnerability assessment on myself, I would be rated high. Sometimes history can raise risk level and this makes it not culturally appropriate.”*

MCFD’s SDM tools were noted by many interviewees to be frustrating: *“The Structured Decision Making tools*

### DAA Voices

*“There’s just all kinds of gaps in service that we’d like to address if we had the funding. You know, even getting kids home for cultural events and activities. Our staff fundraised to pay for our culture camp every year, which has gotten really huge and continues to grow. We don’t just restrict it to kids who are in our care, but we open it up to their families who live in community because that’s the purpose of the camp, is for kids to come home. We opened it up to kids who have been adopted out, and we want them to maintain contact and we want them to come back. And, of course, there’s no funding for any of this, so our staff are busy fundraising all year so we can provide that service to the families and not just to kids.”*

*“There’s very little dollars for culture. It’s trying to deal with crisis management all the time and not having the luxury of saying, okay we’re going to have ROOTS workers or we’re going to have smaller caseloads so our social workers can go home – and take the kids more to community.”*

*“I know that for a while we were offering Active Parenting – it’s a great program, but it wasn’t relevant for our folks. When you look at the videos they’re white middle class people sitting in their white middle-class homes, and our parents can’t relate to that stuff at all. We need the resources to offer a traditional parenting program.”*

*“The culture permanency planning team we have funded through the ASI dollars is an example of working the right way because we’re getting a lot of kids reunited to community, and reconnecting with their families and we can use more out-of-care options. So that’s how we get the kids back connected.”*

*“Right now the funding models [both MCFD and INAC] are based on what provincial practice is ... it doesn’t look at what is the best interest of the child ... it [funding] should be more holistic ... for example, the intensive family preservation programs ... .”*

9 Structured Decision Making (SDM) tools are used in the MCFD child protection response model to assess areas of concern in a systematic and standardized manner. See MCFD (2015) for more information.

*obviously don't fit from a First Nations perspective. They put First Nations people at higher risk on the scoring."* Some C6 agencies described using a combination of ministry assessment tools and Signs of Safety (see text box), an alternate and strengths-based approach to risk assessment.

## Indigenous staff

Workers and executive directors alike identified the availability of fully trained and delegated Indigenous staff as inextricably intertwined with culturally appropriate practice. One executive director described the importance of having Indigenous staff:

*"... there's a perception on the part of the client that the worker that they're engaged with is going to recognize that they come from the same history and that they will truly understand how important it is for them to be safe within the child welfare system."*

Another worker linked the need for Indigenous staff to the type and complexity of work required by DAAs:

*"We want this agency to be staffed by Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people in general have experienced many issues. The ones that are going to work here are resilient and they work to a very high standard in their community. It's not the same as MCFD standards. They may not get the safety assessment done on time because they had to go see someone else who is feeling suicidal. Because they have experienced trauma, they have health issues. There's also lots going on in the community like graduations and awards days and everyone goes to the funerals ... so people who work here attend these events to build community relationships."*

Findings from the interviews show that DAAs struggle to hire Indigenous staff and that, in some cases, DAAs are primarily staffed by non-Indigenous individuals. Sometimes families who want to work with an Indigenous staff member must wait longer for services. Executive directors also noted that it can be difficult to hire fully delegated Indigenous staff when wages and benefits are better at the ministry.

## Promising Practices: Signs of Safety

The Signs of Safety approach was created over a number of years in Western Australia, as a result of collaboration between more than 150 child welfare front-line practitioners. Created by Andrew Turnell and Steve Edwards, Signs of Safety takes a strengths-based approach to child protection work and allows front-line social workers to build partnerships with parents and children during child abuse investigations, in order to improve the child's situation, while still dealing effectively with immediate child protection issues (Signs of Safety, 2015).

Three core principles at the foundation of the Signs of Safety framework are: constructive working relationships, critical thinking and using first-hand experiences to produce realistic guidelines for use in everyday practice (Government of Western Australia, 2011).

Since working with Signs of Safety, agencies in Alberta have seen improvements in the morale and work satisfaction of child welfare social workers, increases in family satisfaction with services, and reductions in the number of children who enter the care system (Alberta Human Services, 2016).

## Impacts on families

Agencies reported that funding and practice issues create a myriad of effects on families:

*“All of these shortages in staffing significantly impact the community, significantly impact the ability for families to stay together and therefore placements to be maintained.”*

The lack of consistency in how DAAs are funded across the province means families get different treatment depending on where they live in B.C. Said one worker: *“We have families who come from one city and who get X, Y and Z for services and they come out here [our city] and they get nothing.”*

Many respondents confirmed what the CHRT found – that the lack of support services for families results in children staying in care longer than necessary.

The realities of workload and travel mean that families do not always get the service they need to ensure child safety. Workers again used terms like *“putting out fires”* and *“emergency management”* to describe their practice with families. Generalist social workers (carrying both child protection and guardianship responsibilities) were pointed in their comments about what falls to the wayside when workload is high, and others talked about how workload impacts social work practice. Some workers also noted that they get less time to spend with children in care. In turn, children and youth in care do not get the skills and resources they need to be successful in the long-term. Because many workers spend the majority of their time reacting to crises, these pressures leave little time to work with families on a one-to-one basis. Others talked about *“letting families down”* because they cannot spend more time with them.

One interviewee for this report spoke about the positive impact their Indigenous agency staff have in helping communities to heal from residential school trauma. Many of the psychologists, counsellors, and support workers hired by the DAA have experienced residential schools themselves and are able to share in the healing journeys of the families they are working with. This hard work on the part of the agency was directly linked to a decrease in the number of children in care: *“I think that’s one of the reasons why ... the numbers of our children in care kept on going down, and down, and down ... all those services for our families.”*

Many workers emphasized that despite these challenges, they still enjoy working with families and that *“kids always come first”* regardless of other priorities. The interviews also highlighted the passion that many workers and executive directors have for their work, particularly in Indigenous communities where some are able to work in a culturally based way to support families. Many workers expressed the feeling that solutions to these challenges are possible and that, with more staff at the front line, individual workers could do more in-depth work that would keep families together.

### DAA Voices

*“Families don’t get the up-front support so new incidents occur which further contributes to heavy workload.”*

*“We have clients calling and saying ‘my worker never calls me back’ or not knowing who their worker is.”*

*“Being generalist – my child service and less urgent cases fall to wayside due to other priorities – care plans are not up to date and I don’t see children as often as I should.”*

*“I like things to be successful and some families take more time than others but it’s a rush because of time limits and lack of staffing – it makes our caseloads overwhelming.”*

## Conclusion

Numerous reports during the past 15 years have drawn similar conclusions to this one – that both the planning and the funding for Indigenous child welfare are woefully inadequate. However, this report offers one of the few explorations of how these issues impact front-line staffing and service delivery in DAAs and what needs to be done to address these issues.

The report confirms what the CHRT found – that the current funding structure leaves DAAs struggling to cover operational costs including salaries and benefits, as well as culturally based services. In addition, the funding structures do not account for the need to address the intergenerational effects of egregious Canadian policies such as the Indian Residential School system. Prevention through strengthening community and family supports is a vital and urgent part of Indigenous child welfare services, given the well-documented intergenerational effects of residential schools on healthy family functioning.

In fact, the 2015 reports of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada recognized that the over-representation of Indigenous children in contemporary child welfare systems is directly connected to the unaddressed harmful legacy of residential schools.

More than 10 years ago, the Hon. Ted Hughes, and, more recently, Grand Chief Ed John, described the historical conditions that led to the over-representation of Indigenous children in care, with both recognizing that addressing social conditions such as poverty, poor housing and economic opportunities are crucial to creating strong communities that can keep children safe (Hughes, 2006; John, 2016).

In addition to problems with INAC funding, this report finds that how MCFD plans for and funds DAAs remains inadequate, as found in earlier reports released by this Office. MCFD documents reveal that an overall assessment of the needs of Indigenous families and children, combined with a plan for meeting those needs, remains unaddressed in B.C. Recent commitments made by the ministry to implement the comprehensive recommendations of Grand Chief Ed John's report and a significant enhancement to the budget, including for Indigenous child welfare services, are heartening. But those recommendations have yet to be implemented and may take several years.

This report also finds that how DAAs are funded in B.C. is unduly complex and spans multiple jurisdictions, including the federal and provincial governments, and then across MCFD regions. The majority of DAAs receive some or all of their funding from the federal government, but many also receive funding through a patchwork of MCFD contracts that vary from agency to agency and region to region. This leaves DAA staff in the position of navigating and reconciling the requirements of two levels of government.

MCFD funding to the DAAs remains piecemeal and funding contracts have no overriding logic or consistency. This lack of planning creates a fragmented ministry approach to the DAAs that results in short-term and proposal-driven funding, leaving agencies without the necessary long-term commitments that would assist the DAAs in addressing key issues such as recruitment and retention of qualified staff.

Although MCFD professes to a “partnership” relationship with DAAs, this review finds that DAAs are still viewed as contractors who must bid against each other for essential funding for children and families. Added to this is the reality that relationships remain strained between DAAs and some of their local counterparts at MCFD, as well as with the ministry's provincial office. These strained relationships have direct impacts on staffing issues, making it more difficult to advocate for the needs of families.

What this report also finds is that funding issues stemming from both INAC and MCFD negatively impact the capacity of front-line social workers in the DAAs to carry out their responsibilities in an effective and culturally based manner. Indeed, given the lack of planning for and assessment of the needs of Indigenous families in B.C., the funding provided by both INAC and MCFD does not address the needs of these children and families in a way that is equivalent to its commitments to other children. But even parity with MCFD services would not necessarily address the needs of Indigenous children. As the findings of numerous reports from this Office show, children and youth in MCFD's care do not fare as well as their peers in the general population and Indigenous children in care do not fare as well as non-Indigenous children in care.

Despite the passage of 10 years, this review shows that DAAs still struggle with needs identified by Hughes in 2006, including basic operational costs, lack of access to training, remoteness, small size and problems with Internet access. Added to this are issues with staffing vacancies that contribute to workload, problems with recruitment and retention and lack of wage and benefits parity with MCFD social workers. All of these issues combine to make it difficult to comply with standards. These findings echo the findings in the Representative's 2015 report on staffing issues in MCFD. The DAAs, however, do not have an infrastructure that comes anywhere near the size of MCFD's, meaning challenges with staffing have an even bigger impact on both employees and the families they serve.

The CHRT ruling reminds us that Canada is a party to important international legal instruments including the *International Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination*, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR), the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC) and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP). Canada has also signalled that compliance with these legal instruments, and the UNCRC in particular, cuts across all governments at every level in Canada (Parliament of Canada, N.D.). The UNCRC's international monitoring body has stressed the importance of culturally appropriate services for Indigenous children (CHRT 2, 2016, p. 158). This monitoring body has also expressed concerns about the continuing high number of removals of Indigenous children from their families and communities and has stressed the importance of ensuring that services to Indigenous children are comparable in quality and accessibility to the services available to other children (CHRT2, 2016, p. 159).

Canada's recent adoption of the UNDRIP reinforces its obligations at every level to improve the well-being of Indigenous Canadians, particularly through Article 2, which stresses the equality of Indigenous peoples with all others in Canada. What respondents in this review told the Representative is that addressing these larger social conditions must go hand-in-hand with well-designed and well-supported culturally based services. These services are an essential part of addressing some of the intergenerational harms of residential schools and the damage done to communities by the process of removing children from their homes. However, for most DAAs, their capacity to offer prevention services, including culturally based family preservation work, is severely limited.

It was also abundantly clear that many DAA staff interviewed for this report were guided in their work by value-based motivations such as healing, reconciliation, justice, family and community. These respondents rejected the reactive and risk management-oriented approaches of mainstream child welfare, insisting instead on a supportive and caring approach that is more in line with Indigenous world views and values. They described the difficulties with using ministry assessment tools that tend to individualize problems and to push to the background the historical and structural factors that contribute to Indigenous child safety issues.

## Conclusion

In B.C., for example, the Signs of Safety approach (see text box on page 48) has not been universally adopted, but a number of DAAs have integrated the principles of Signs of Safety into their practice. The collaborative, strengths-based method of addressing family needs during the child protection process advocated by Signs of Safety mirrors the relationship-building approach to service that DAA workers believe is vital. However, with a lack of financial and policy support for the program from MCFD, social workers from DAAs who wish to be trained in the Signs of Safety approach must use their own initiative in order to integrate the principles into their practice.

Many DAA front-line workers spend a significant amount of time learning about the communities they serve, developing relationships with family members and the broader community, and attending cultural events and ceremonies. The time needed to ensure trust and support in the community is considerable. When time and resources are limited, interactions with the community and preventative culturally based practice can take a back seat behind dealing with incoming child welfare reports. The effect of these challenges is to create an unacceptable level of risk for families and children in everyday social work practice. These risks can be successfully mitigated, however, by appropriate resourcing, training and other supports for Indigenous child welfare. More than this, the cultural needs of Indigenous children and youth need to be woven into the fabric of service delivery and resourced accordingly.

Despite these limitations, participants in this review bore witness to the numerous successes they have working with families and keeping children out of care and in their communities. The challenges for these participants were not so much that their approaches do not work, but that the daily pressures of their work lives prevents them from doing more of what works.

Taken together, the findings of this report highlight issues of great concern for the delivery of child welfare services to Indigenous children, youth and families in B.C. – issues that cannot be accepted as “just the way it is.” Change and improvement are not only possible; they are imperative if we are to live up to our responsibility as a signatory to the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Addressing the current situation will take commitment and action: INAC must remedy its funding flaws to Indigenous child welfare services; planning in B.C. for Indigenous child welfare must address the distinct needs and circumstances of children, families and their communities; and funding by both levels of government must be equitable and clear, and must take into account needs based on the intergenerational effects of colonialism. It is through these actions that staff in DAAs will better be able to support and strengthen Indigenous families, resulting in fewer Indigenous children coming into care.



## Acronyms

AOPSI:	Aboriginal Operational and Practices Standards and Indicators
AP&P:	Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework
ASI:	Aboriginal Service Innovations
BCGEU:	B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union
CCO:	Continuing Custody Order
CFCS Act:	Child, Family and Community Service Act (B.C.)
CHRT:	Canadian Human Rights Tribunal
CYMH:	Child and Youth Mental Health Services
DAA:	Delegated Aboriginal Agency
EPFA:	Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach
FNC&FCS:	First Nations Child & Family Caring Society
FNCFS:	First Nations Child and Family Services Program (INAC)
FNLC:	First Nations Leadership Council
ICM:	Integrated Case Management system
INAC:	Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada
MCFD:	Ministry of Children and Family Development
OCYA:	Office of the Child and Youth Advocate (Alberta)
PHSA:	Provincial Health Services Authority
RCY:	Representative for Children and Youth (B.C.)
TRC:	Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
UDHR:	United Nations Declaration of Human Rights
UNCRC:	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNDRIP:	United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous Persons

## Glossary

**C3 Delegation:** Category three (C3) delegation allows social workers to provide voluntary services and oversee the recruitment and retention of residential resources (foster homes). It includes authority to provide support services for families, voluntary care agreements and special needs agreements and to establish residential resources for children in care.

**C4 Delegation:** Category four (C4) delegation includes all the legal authority in C3 plus additional responsibilities to carry out guardianship duties for children and youth in continuing custody. These include permanency planning, transitions out of care and managing Comprehensive Plans of Care (CPOCs).

**C6 Delegation:** Category six (C6) delegation is the highest level of delegation and includes all the legal responsibilities of C3 and C4 plus full authority for child protection duties, including investigation of child abuse or neglect reports, placing children in care, obtaining court orders and developing safety plans.

**Caseload:** The actual number of active files or cases assigned to a social worker at a given point in time.

**Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCS Act):** Legislation enacted in 1996 governing child protection in British Columbia.

**Child Protection Social Worker:** A child protection social worker collects information, responds to child protection reports, conducts FDRs and investigations, removes children if needed, attends court, works with families, and plans for the return of children or for continuing custody.

**Child or Youth in Care:** A child or youth who is in the custody, care or guardianship of a Director (*CFCS Act*) or the Director of Adoption (*Adoption Act*).

**Continuing Custody Order (CCO):** A child or youth who is under a Continuing Custody Order is under the permanent guardianship of the Director of MCFD (or their delegates) and the Public Trustee becomes the guardian of the estate of the child or youth.

**Culturally Based:** Culturally based practices focus on enhancing a child's Indigenous identity, culture and heritage. These practices enhance community strengths and healing often through programs that involve community participation and control.

**Delegated Aboriginal Agency (DAA):** Through delegation agreements, the Provincial Director of Child Welfare gives authority to Aboriginal agencies, and their employees, to undertake administration of all or parts of the *CFCS Act*. The amount of responsibility assumed by each agency is the result of negotiations between the ministry and the Aboriginal community served by the agency, and the level of delegation provided by the Director.

**Family Development Response (FDR):** The preferred approach when an alleged incident involving a child/youth is of lower severity and when parents are able and willing to participate in collaborative assessment and planning. FDR involves family members in the response process and builds on their strengths in order to safely care for the child/youth.

**Family Preservation Services:** Family preservation work focuses on keeping families together and strengthening children's positive sense of self and belonging. This work can include prevention, early intervention and reunification services. It acknowledges the importance of tradition, customs, relationship with the land and language along with the role of Elders, extended family and tribal relations.

**Generalist Teams:** Teams of social workers who investigate child welfare reports, are involved with ongoing family services and guardianship services and may assist with residential resources or adoptions.

**Guardianship Worker:** A social worker who is delegated at a C4 level to provide guardianship services for children and youth in continuing custody, including permanency planning, transitions out of care and managing Comprehensive Plans of Care (CPOCs).

**Hughes Review:** In 2006, the Honourable Ted Hughes conducted an independent review of B.C.'s child protection system. The review contained 62 recommendations for changes to the child welfare system, including the creation of the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth.

**Incident:** Social workers screen all reported child safety reports to determine whether the report requires a protection or non-protection response. If the report requires a protection response, it becomes an incident. Social workers conduct an assessment of the report immediately if the child/youth appears to be in a life threatening or dangerous situation. In all other cases, an assessment takes place within 24 hours of receiving the report.

**Integrated Case Management System (ICM):** Computerized system designed to assist social workers to record assessments and other tools completed in the course of a child protection investigation.

**Intake:** A process by which child protection reports and requests for service are introduced into a ministry office. Child Protection Response standards provide guidelines for how these reports are to be handled.

**Investigation Response:** Child protection workers use investigations to respond to screened-in child protection reports that meet the following criteria: the circumstances involve severe physical abuse or severe neglect; the parent(s) are unable or unwilling to participate in collaborative assessment and planning; or there is an open file on the family and at least one child/youth is out of the home for protection reasons.

**Jordan's Principle:** Jordan's Principle is a federal policy developed after the 2005 death of a five-year-old First Nations child named Jordan Anderson, and was created to deal with jurisdictional disputes involving the care of Aboriginal children. Its intent is to ensure that services are provided to children without delay. By following the principle, the government responsible for the services first provided to a child pays for those services, and jurisdictional disputes can then be settled at a later date. B.C. formally endorsed Jordan's Principle in 2008.

**Least disruptive measures:** Measure taken by delegated social workers before considering removal of a child or youth from parental care.

**Non-Protection Response:** When a report or incident of a child safety concerns is screened by a social worker as requiring one of the following responses: no further action, referral to community support services, voluntary services or youth service response.

**Protection Response:** When a report or incident of a child safety concern is screened by a social worker as requiring one of the following responses: a Family Development Response, a youth service response or an investigation. This determination must be made within five calendar days after receiving the child safety report.

**Prior Contact Check:** Carried out in the initial stages of a Child Protection Response to help identify immediate family members and highlight any past involvement in child protection services.

**Representative for Children and Youth:** In May 2006, B.C. passed the *Representative for Children and Youth Act*, establishing the Legislative Assembly's authority to appoint a new officer of the Legislature as the Representative for Children and Youth. The Representative supports young people and their families in dealing with the provincial child welfare system, provides oversight to this system and makes recommendations to improve it. The Representative is a non-partisan, independent officer of the Legislature, reporting directly to the Legislative Assembly.

**Service Delivery Areas (SDAs):** Child welfare services are delivered by MCFD in B.C. across 13 Service Delivery Areas. Each SDA is further divided into Local Services Areas (LSAs). There are 47 LSAs in total.

**Sixties Scoop:** The breakdown of Indigenous families was accelerated in the 1960s by the removal, sometimes in mass numbers, of children from their families. The term 'Sixties Scoop' was coined to describe these mass removals. Many of the 'scoop' children were placed with non-Indigenous carers, in communities that were far from their original bands or reserves.

**Structured Decision Making (SDM) Screening:** The process by which social workers responding to child protection reports assess areas of concern systematically and in a standardized manner.

**Team Leader:** A supervisor of a team of social workers.

**Voluntary Services:** Preventive and support services offered to children/youth and their families on a voluntary basis, including: mental health, education and ancillary services; residential resources; support to assist in the resolution of family disputes; voluntary care agreements; and special needs agreements.

**Workload:** The amount of time that must be devoted to various tasks (visiting families, interviewing children, completing assessment tools, documenting work processes, etc.) to respond to reports of child safety concerns regardless of the complexity of cases.

**Youth:** A person is considered a youth under the *CFCS Act* if he or she is 16 years of age or older but younger than 19 years of age.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Demographic Information about Social Workers and Team Leaders

Descriptive Information on Interviewees: Social Workers	
Social Workers	Number
Number of generalist workers	7
Number of child protection workers	10
Total number of workers	17
Average years of experience	8.5
Average number of years with MCFD/DAA	6.5
Average years in current position	3
Delegation Level	C6
Average number of years since C6 delegation	6.5

Descriptive Information on Interviewees: Team Leaders	
Team Leaders	Number/Average
Number interviewed	11
Average years of child welfare experience	12.5
Average years with MCFD/DAA	12.5
Average years as a team leader	4
Average years with current team	2
Delegation level	All C6

Descriptive Information on Executive Directors (Agencies with C6 Delegation)	
Executive Directors	Number/Average
Number interviewed	7
Average years as executive director	6

Descriptive Information on Executive Directors (Agencies with C4 Delegation)	
Executive Directors	Number/Average
Number interviewed	10
Average years as executive director	7*

\*Not all interviewees provided information. Average based on 7 respondents.

## Appendix 2: Information about DAAs

Delegated Aboriginal Agencies (C6)					
Agency Name and Location	Date Operations/ Delegation Began	Services Provided On/Off Reserve?	Receives 20-1 Funding?	Receives MCFD Funding?	Affiliated Communities
<b>Fraser Valley Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society (East Fraser)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial agreement signed Nov. 26, 1993</li> </ul>	On/Off	Yes	Yes	Aitchelitz Chawathil Cheam Kwantlen Leq'a:mel Popkum Shxw'owhamel Shx:wha:y Village Skawahlook Skowkale Skwah Soowahlie Squiala Sumas Tzeachten Yakweakwoose Yale First Nation
<b>Knucwentwecw Society (Thompson Cariboo)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial agreement signed Oct. 13, 1995</li> </ul>	On/Off	Yes	Yes	Canim Lake Soda Creek Stswecem'c/ Xgat'tem Williams Lake
<b>Ktunaxa/ Kinbasket Child &amp; Family Services (Kootenays)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial agreement signed July 27, 1999</li> </ul>	On/Off	Yes	Yes	Columbia Lake/ ?Akisq'nuk Lower Kootenay Shuswap St. Mary's Tobacco Plains Métis E. Kootenay Region
<b>Kwumut Lelum Child &amp; Family Services (North Vancouver Island)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial agreement signed Dec. 8, 1997</li> </ul>	On	Yes	Yes	Stz'uminus First Nation Halalt Lake Cowichan Lyackson Malahat Nanoose Penelakut Qualicum Snuneymuxw

Delegated Aboriginal Agencies (C6)					
Agency Name and Location	Date Operations/ Delegation Began	Services Provided On/Off Reserve?	Receives 20-1 Funding?	Receives MCFD Funding?	Affiliated Communities
Lalum'utul' Smun'eem Child & Family Services (South Vancouver Island)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial agreement signed Jan. 22, 1993</li> </ul>	On	Yes	Yes	Cowichan
Métis Family Services (South Fraser)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial agreement signed April 11, 2001</li> </ul>	Off	No	Yes	Métis (South Fraser/ Simon Fraser)
Nlha'7kapmx Child & Family Services Society (Thompson Cariboo)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial agreement signed Sept. 22, 1994</li> </ul>	On	Yes	Yes	Cook's Ferry Kanaka Bar Lytton Nicomen Siska Skuppah
Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council USMA Family and Child Services (North Vancouver Island)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial agreement signed Feb. 12, 1987</li> <li>Received C6 delegation in 1989</li> <li>First Aboriginal agency to obtain C6 delegation</li> </ul>	On/Off	Yes	Yes	Ahousat Ditidaht Ehattesaht Hesquiaht Mowachaht/ Muchalaht Hupacasath Nuchatlaht Tla-o-qui-aht Tseshaht <b>Maa-nulth Treaty:</b> Huu-ay-aht Ka:'yu:k't'h'/ Che:K:tlés7et'h Toquaht Uchucklesaht Ucluelet
Scw'exmx Child & Family Services Society (Thompson Cariboo)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial agreement signed May 31, 1994</li> </ul>	On	Yes	Yes	Coldwater Lower Nicola Nooaitch Shackan Upper Nicola

Delegated Aboriginal Agencies (C6)					
Agency Name and Location	Date Operations/ Delegation Began	Services Provided On/Off Reserve?	Receives 20-1 Funding?	Receives MCFD Funding?	Affiliated Communities
<b>Secwepemc Child &amp; Family Services Agency (Thompson Cariboo)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial agreement signed March 6, 2000</li> </ul>	On/Off	Yes	Yes	Adams Lake Bonaparte Kamloops Neskonlith North Thompson Skeetchestn Whispering Pines
<b>Vancouver Aboriginal Child &amp; Family Services Society (Vancouver/ Richmond)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial agreement signed Sept. 20, 2001</li> </ul>	Off	No	Yes	Vancouver Urban (Vancouver/ Richmond)

Delegated Aboriginal Agencies (C4)					
Agency Name and Location	Date of Delegation	Services Provided On/Off Reserve?	Receives 20-1 Funding?	Receives MCFD Funding?	Affiliated Communities
<b>Ayas Men Men Child &amp; Family Services (Squamish Nation) (Coast/ North Shore)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial agreement signed April 28, 1993</li> </ul>	On/Off	Yes	Yes	Squamish
<b>Carrier Sekani Family Services (North Central)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial agreement signed Jan. 29, 1998</li> </ul>	On/Off	Yes	Yes	Burns Lake Cheslatta Lake Babine Nadleh Whut'en Nee Tahi Buhn Skin Tyee Stella'ten Saik'uz Takla Lake Wet'suwet'en Yakooche
<b>Gitxsan Child &amp; Family Services Society (Northwest)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial agreement signed June 3, 1999</li> </ul>	On	Yes	Yes	Kispiox Glen Vowell Gitsegukla Gitwangak Gitanyow



Delegated Aboriginal Agencies (C4)					
Agency Name and Location	Date of Delegation	Services Provided On/Off Reserve?	Receives 20-1 Funding?	Receives MCFD Funding?	Affiliated Communities
Nezul Be Hunuyeh Child & Family Services Society (North Central)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial agreement signed July 31, 2002</li> </ul>	On	Yes	Yes	Nak'azdli Tl'azt'en
NIL/TU,O Child & Family Services Society (South Vancouver Island)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial agreement signed March 5, 1999</li> </ul>	On	Yes	Yes	Beecher Bay Pauquachin Songhees Tsartlip Tsawout T'sou-ke Tseycum
Nisga'a Child & Family Services (North West)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial agreement signed May 5, 1997</li> </ul>	On/Off	Yes	Yes	Citizens of the Nisga'a Lisims Government including villages of: Gingolx (Kincolith) Gitlaxt'aamiks Laxgalts'ap Gitwinksihlkw
Northwest Inter-Nation Family & Community Services Society (North West)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial agreement signed Feb. 8, 1999</li> </ul>	On	Yes	Yes	Gitga'at (Hartley Bay) Haisla (Kitamaat) Gitxaala (Kitkatla) Kitselas Kitsumkalum Lax-Kw'alaams Metlakatla
Surrounded by Cedar Child & Family Services (South Vancouver Island)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial agreement signed May 24, 2005</li> </ul>	Off	No	Yes	Victoria Urban

Delegated Aboriginal Agencies (C3) – No C3 Agencies Interviewed					
Agency Name and Location	Date of Delegation	Services Provided On/Off Reserve?	Receives 20-1 Funding?	Receives MCFD Funding?	Affiliated Communities
<b>Denisiqi Services Society (Thompson Cariboo)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial agreement signed June 23, 2005</li> </ul>	On	Yes	Yes	Alexandria Alexis Creek (Tsi Del Del) Anaham (Tl'etingox) Nemiah (Xeni Gwet'in) Stone (Yunesit'in) Toosey (Tl'esqotin) Ulkatcho
<b>Haida Child &amp; Family Services Society (Northwest)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial agreement signed April 1, 2006</li> </ul>	On	Yes	Yes	Old Masset Village Council Skidegate Band
<b>Heiltsuk Kaxla Society (Coast/North Shore)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial agreement signed March 31, 2000</li> </ul>	On	Yes	Yes	Heiltsuk
<b>K'WAK'WALAT'SI ('Namgis) Child and Family Services (North Vancouver Island)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial agreement signed Jan. 28, 2005</li> </ul>	On	Yes	No	'Namgis Tlowitsis- Mumtagalia

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