NATIONAL COLLABORATING CENTRE
FOR ABORIGINAL HEALTH

CENTRE DE COLLABORATION NATIONALE
DE LA SANTÉ AUTOCHTONE

Supporting Aboriginal Parents:
Teachings for the Future

PREPARED BY KATHRYN IRVINE FOR

'MESSAGES FROM THE HEART': A SHOWCASE ON ABORIGINAL
CHILDREARING - CARING FOR OUR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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DEDICATION

To Aboriginal parents, their children and our communities
who are working to support them. It is our hope
that we will continue working together
to create the programs, services and
resources that will help us
all to flourish.

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1.0   FORWARD

Among the Anishinaabe (Original People), there is a prophecy of the Seven Fires.[1] This prophecy is encoded in the sacred Wampum belt, woven with sea shells, leather strips and seven diamonds representing the seven fires of the prophecy. The ancient prophecy tells us that during a time when people lived in peace along the eastern shores of Turtle Island (North America), seven prophets came and foretold the future. Many Elders and spiritual leaders understand that we have now entered into the time of the Seventh Fire. The Seventh Prophet who appeared was different from the other prophets – he was younger and had a strange light in his eyes. He came with a message for both the Anishinaabe peoples and the light-skinned European people.

With insight into the future, the Seventh Prophet told that a time would come when the plants and animals would become sick and die from poisoned water. The destruction of the forests and prairie trees would cause the air to lose its life-giving power. In this time of danger, the prophet of the Seventh Fire spoke of the Oshkibimadizeeg (New People) who will retrace the footsteps of their ancestors to find those things that have been lost along the way during times of pain, tragedy and disenfranchisement. This new generation of New People will approach the Elders for guidance, but the task of once again finding the stories and teachings that the Anishnaabe peoples know will not be easy.

As the New People work to restore the teachings and stories that were once lost, the light-skinned people will be faced with a choice between two pathways – the path of materialism or the path of spiritualism. To continue down the road of materialism will result in the destruction of all of humanity. By joining the Anishnaabe peoples on the spiritual pathway, old flames will be rekindled and the Seventh Fire will light the Eighth and Final Fire – the fire of the two races coming together to create a great nation of peace and harmony.

2.0 Executive Summary

The teaching of the prophecy of the Seven Fires reminds us of our responsibility in working to ensure the health and well-being of this young generation. As Charles Nelson[2] reminds us, there is work to do – it is our responsibility to pick up the work and gather our knowledge and understandings to create new visions of how we can begin to create genuinely supportive services, resources, and preventative programming that build on the strengths of Aboriginal parents by reinforcing their capacities, abilities, and potential. In turn, we might begin to ensure that the health and well-being of this young generation of Aboriginal children will flourish.

Our work began during the winter of 2008 when we determined that a better understanding was needed to address the challenges facing Aboriginal parents. In our work, we have sought to capture an overall understanding of the contemporary realities facing Aboriginal parents, as well as the forces of the past that continue to impact the ability of Aboriginal parents to access meaningful programs, resources and services. In our effort to inform the practice of those working with Aboriginal parents, we have drawn attention to five areas that work to provide a critical strengths-based analysis of the foundational knowledge needed to inform meaningful programming, resource development and service delivery:

» profiling the Aboriginal population in Canada and, as a case study, in the context of British Columbia;
» national and provincial understandings about the representation of Aboriginal children in the child welfare system;
» the residential schooling system;
» the "sixties scoop," and
» values and ethics informing the strengths of Aboriginal peoples.

Based on the information and understandings identified in these areas, we have formulated five practice implications flowing from the strengths, values and ethics of Aboriginal peoples: Learning, Self-Determination, A Structural Imperative, Wholistic Understandings, and Working from Strengths. Contemporary realities and the past experiences impacting Aboriginal parents, children and youth suggest that we can and must do better – much better by ensuring the creation of truly meaningful, culturally responsive, effective, and equivalent programs, resources and services for Aboriginal parents.

3.0   Introduction

We live in interesting times. On one level, Aboriginal peoples in Canada continue to experience persistent forces of colonialism that have attempted to destroy their cultures so that they might become productive members of the "civilized" European society. With seemingly endless waves of military, missionary and bureaucratic government interventions, Aboriginal lands, beliefs, values, ceremonies, spiritual beliefs, language, education and parenting have been ruthlessly attacked, trivialized or ignored in the attempt to prove the intellectual, cultural and moral superiority of European society. Early colonists introduced European-style warfare, kidnapping and slavery along with major epidemics of smallpox, measles and tuberculosis. Subsequent governments took proprietary rights over land, extinguished Aboriginal title to resources, criminalized cultural practices and spiritual ceremonies and forcibly imposed community relocation. We are now just beginning to understand the horrific legacies of the residential schooling system and the child welfare interventions of the 1960s.

> *Colonialism involves a relationship which leaves one side dependent on the other to define the world. At the individual level, colonialism involves a situation where one individual is forced to relate to another on terms unilaterally defined by the other.*
>
> McCaskill (1983, p. 289)

Today, the challenges facing Aboriginal peoples cannot be separated from Canada's colonial interests. In a country that is ranked among the best places to live in the world, researchers have found that if the United Nations Human Development Index was applied to Aboriginal peoples living on-reserve, Canada would rank between 68th to 80th in the world (Bennett, Blackstock & De La Ronde, 2005; Silversides, 2007; Webster, 2006).

As research and statistical data continue to paint a bleak picture of the realities facing Aboriginal peoples in Canada, many Aboriginal peoples continue to experience extreme levels of poverty, high rates of unemployment and under-employment, low levels of educational attainment, inadequate nutrition, over-crowded and substandard housing, and unsafe water supplies and sanitation systems. In addition, Aboriginal peoples experience the disproportionate burden of diabetes, epidemic rates of HIV/AIDS, higher rates of infant mortality, accidental deaths, teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol use, involvement with the criminal justice system, family violence and in some communities, tragically high rates of suicide (British Columbia Provincial Health Officer, 2003; Locust, 1999; Mussel, Cardiff & White, 2004).

For Aboriginal parents, these realities are compounded by the massive over-representation of their children and youth in the Canadian child welfare system. While the Aboriginal population is much younger and growing more rapidly than the non-Aboriginal population, modest estimates from child welfare authorities indicate that there are now more First Nations children and youth in the child welfare system today than there was at the height of the residential schooling system and the child welfare interventions of the 1960s (Blackstock, 2003). Moreover, once placed into the child welfare system, a majority of Aboriginal children and youth are placed with non-Aboriginal caregivers. Following Blackstock in her discussion with the National Council of Child Welfare (2007), it seems that we are only becoming more efficient at removing Aboriginal children and youth from their parents, communities and culture.

On another level, these historical and contemporary realities also contain narratives about the wisdom, endurance, courage, determination, resourcefulness, resiliency and strengths of Aboriginal peoples. Unfortunately, much of the literature from the helping professions tends to situate the impact of the past and contemporary realities in terms of individual dysfunction, irresponsible/inconsistent parenting, and chaotic communities. From this 'deficit lens,' interventions and programming tends to be built on what is lacking rather than supporting and building on what Aboriginal peoples already have (Greenwood, Tagalik, Joyce & de Leeuw, 2004; Waller, Risley-Curtis, Murphy, Medill & Moore, 1998; Waller & Yellow Bird, 2002).

This deficit perspective especially impacts the lives of Aboriginal parents and their ability to care for their children. As Kline (1993) notes, there is a tendency among child welfare authorities to portray Aboriginal women as "bad mothers" - blaming individual women for the difficulties they face as mothers "without recognizing the roots of those difficulties in the history and current structures of colonialism and racial oppression" (p. 318). As the evaluation of Aboriginal mothers as "bad mothers" obscures the impact of poverty, substandard housing, racism, violence and the multi-generational impacts of colonization, Kline (1993) also maintains that this deficit perspective serves to impose western child care values and practices onto Aboriginal women - effectively undermining the traditions and practices of Aboriginal parenting.

The intensity of the child welfare deficit-based scrutiny that many Aboriginal mothers experience also mirrors the treatment that many Aboriginal fathers experience. As Bell and George (2006) note, the systemic barriers created by poverty, racism and pervasive social stereotypes of Aboriginal fathers as "dead beat dads," is compounded by racist legislation and policies dictating identity and paternity within the Indian Act. Aboriginal fathers also pointed to their experiences of being fathered and becoming fathers – a process profoundly impacted by the massive disruption of intergenerational role modeling and family cohesion, along with

the transmission of cultural knowledge and skills that resulted from the residential schooling system and child welfare interventions. In addition, Bell and George's research indicates an abundance of what they refer to as "mother-centric" programs and services that tend to exclude Aboriginal stay-at-home fathers from accessing parenting programs and supportive services.

The deficit-based lens that works to construct Aboriginal mothers as "bad mothers" and Aboriginal fathers as "dead beat dads" fails to consider the efforts that many Aboriginal parents are making to deal with the day-to-day realities created by the structural inequalities of poverty, substandard housing, racism, violence and multi-generational impacts of colonization. Viewed from within the deficit lens, these structural realities tend to raise evaluations of parental irresponsibility, neglect, dysfunction and incompetence. From this perspective, programming, supportive services and resources are designed to "fix" the problems and deficits of Aboriginal parents who are frequently considered to be the helpless victims of their life circumstances.

By viewing the challenges Aboriginal parents face from a strengths-based perspective, we might begin to identify empowering services, programs and resources that reinforce individual abilities and potential along with existing community capacities. In doing so, we might begin to effectively address the structural issues that negatively impact Aboriginal parents.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to summarize and critically review the research and related literature that is significant to increasing our understandings about the need to develop truly supportive programming, services, and resources that are capable of effectively addressing the needs of Aboriginal parents. To highlight the extent of the crisis facing Aboriginal parents in Canada, we draw upon a case study of British Columbia. This province, along with Ontario, has one of the largest Aboriginal populations in Canada. It also had a high percentage of Aboriginal students attend and feel the impacts of the residential schools. It is therefore experiencing the impacts, on many levels, of the disproportionate rates at which their children are apprehended and placed in the child welfare system. There is an urgent need to design and develop new approaches to the delivery of programs, support services, and resources that will foster the strengths of, and well-being of, Aboriginal parents in BC and elsewhere. The following considerations inform our work:

» Profile the current statistical data about the Aboriginal population in Canada and in the context of British Columbia;

» Review key understandings about the massively disproportionate representation of Aboriginal children in the Canadian child welfare system with reference to Aboriginal parenting;

» Assess the impact of the residential schooling system with particular reference to the strengths of Aboriginal parents, children and youth;

» Assess the impact of the child welfare interventions during the 1960s with attention to the strengths of Aboriginal parents, children and communities;

» Identify the values and ethics that inform the strengths of Aboriginal peoples, and

» Formulate practice implications flowing from the strengths, values and ethics of Aboriginal peoples that can inform the creation of truly supportive programming, services and resources that will foster the well-being of Aboriginal parents.

Methods

This work draws on published literature gathered from a variety of databases at the University of Manitoba and Dalhousie University libraries. We also accessed online research from the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, the National Indian Child Welfare Association, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, Pivot Legal Society, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Statistics Canada, the British Columbia Provincial Health Officer, and the British Columbia Office of the Representative for Children and Youth.

4.0   Aboriginal Peoples in Canada

As part of the first step in understanding and supporting Aboriginal parents, it is important to be aware of who is Aboriginal. However, the many different identification terms used, including Indian, First Nations, North American Indian, Native and Indigenous, complicate matters. In addition, many people identify specifically as Stó:lõ, Tlingit, Mi'kmaw, Cree or Ojibway. This has resulted in a slightly confusing situation. In part, this extends from the fact that the Canadian government has been the primary force in unilaterally dictating the criteria by which peoples can be officially recognized as "Indian."

The criteria of identity were originally set forth in the Indian Act of Canada in 1876. With its many subsequent revisions and transformations, the *Indian Act* dictates the right of the Canadian Government to define who is and who is not legally Indian. Legal recognition results in a person being "status" or "registered" in the Indian Register held by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). As no other group in Canada has their identity regulated by the government, many have argued that it is morally and legally wrong for any government to dictate the identity of its citizens.

A significant amendment to the *Indian Act* happened in 1985 with the passage of Bill C-31 which marked the attempt to redress the sexual discrimination[3] in the *Indian Act*. While the passage of Bill C-31, section 6(1), returned "status" to women who were stripped of their status for marrying non-Aboriginal men, section 6(2) created what is known as the "second generation cut-off rule," whereby "status" would be terminated after two successive generations of marriage between Indians and non-Indians.

Another major piece of legislation is the Canadian Constitution Act of 1982 which officially recognized *aboriginal peoples* as all those people of First Nations, Inuit and Métis ancestry. In this sense, *aboriginal peoples* include all those who are registered in the INAC registry and those deemed to be "non-status" Indian who have had their status rejected under the *Indian Act;* Inuit peoples who are indigenous to Canada's Arctic and sub-Arctic regions; and Métis peoples who have a mixed Indian and European ancestry.

Given the Canadian government's continual assertion of the right to dictate the identity of both Aboriginal individuals and Nations, the question of who is Aboriginal raises contentious assertions and questions. In this project, we have chosen to use the term Aboriginal peoples. While the term Aboriginal is often used as an adjective, we have chosen its capitalized form to mark the fact that it sometimes represents a statement of identity. We use peoples in its pluralized form to guard against the illusion of a hegemonic group or monolithic entity. Certainly there is no single Aboriginal person, parent, family or community.

Towards a Population Profile

With a total Canadian population of 32,976,000, Statistics Canada (2008) data from the *Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in 2006: Inuit, Métis and First Nations, 2006 Census* reported that the Aboriginal population in Canada had reached 1,172,790. This accounts for 3.8% of the total population in Canada (Figure 1).
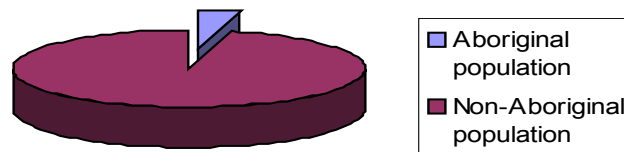
FIGURE 1: *ABORIGINAL AND NON-ABORIGINAL POPULATION IN CANADA*

As Statistics Canada (2008) notes, the actual number of Aboriginal peoples in Canada is likely much higher than 1,172,790 as a result of incomplete and/or interrupted enumeration on reserves and in settlements, lack of participation in the Census, and prohibited Census enumeration. However, Statistics Canada is the only source of demographic and socio-economic information about Canada's Aboriginal population. Here, enumeration is based on four concepts (Statistics Canada, 2006b):

> » ethnic/cultural origins of a person's ancestors;
> » self–identification with an Aboriginal group (North American Indian/First Nations, Inuit or Métis);
> » legal Indian status according to the *Indian Act* and,
> » membership with a First Nations.

As Statistics Canada (2008) data shows in Figure 2, an estimated 698,025, or 59% of the total Aboriginal population, identified as First Nations peoples; 389,785 (33.2%) identified as Métis, and 50,485 (4.3%) reported Inuit identity. Those who reported more than one Aboriginal identity and those who are registered and/or community members without reporting an Aboriginal identity represent 34,500 (2.9%).

FIGURE 2: ABORIGINAL POPULATION BY IDENTITY

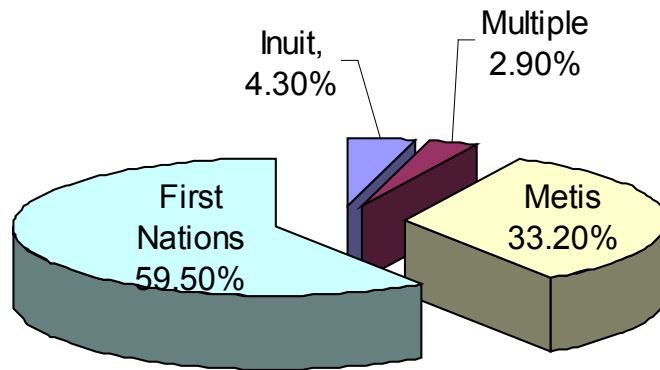Although Aboriginal peoples represent a relatively small percentage of the total Canadian population, Census data indicates that between 1996 and 2006, the Aboriginal population increased 45%, or almost six times faster than the 8% growth rate in the non-Aboriginal population in Canada during the same period of time (Statistics Canada, 2008).

In part, the growth of the Aboriginal population can be attributed to the variance in reproductive patterns. Drawing on Health Canada data from 2000, Stout and Kipling (2003) explain that 55% of Aboriginal mothers are under 25 years of age and 9% are under 18 years of age. In addition to the relative youthfulness of Aboriginal mothers, Statistics Canada (2006a) reported that the fertility rate, on average, among Aboriginal women was 2.6 compared to the rate of 1.5 among all Canadian women.

In addition to a growing population, statistics show that the Aboriginal population in Canada is, on average, 27 years of age, 13 years younger than their non-Aboriginal counterparts (Statistics Canada, 2008). As Figure 3 shows, this difference is highlighted in the cohort of youth and children aged 14 and under. Here, Census data reports that 30% of the Aboriginal population is 14 years of age and under, as compared to just 17% of the same cohort among the non-Aboriginal population (Statistics Canada, 2008).

The youthfulness of the Aboriginal population is also evident in the data for children and young people age 24 and under. Here, children and youth make up almost half (48%) of the Aboriginal population, compared with 31% of the non-Aboriginal population (Statistics Canada, 2008).
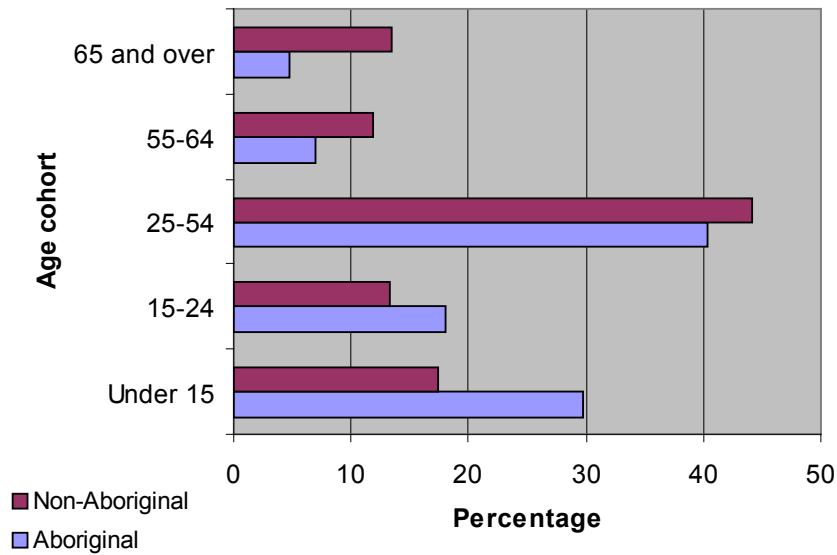
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FIGURE 3: ABORIGINAL AND NON-ABORIGINAL POPULATIONS BY AGE
(Source : Statistics Canada, 2006 Census, catalogue #97-558-XCB2006006)

While the numerical data rendered into words and graphs underscore the need for services, resources and supports for a growing population of Aboriginal parents, the statistics also create a very vivid picture of the realities facing Aboriginal parents. Here, Census data reveals that First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples are almost four times as likely as non-Aboriginal people to live in over-crowded homes, and this reality has remained unchanged since the 1996 Census of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. Aboriginal peoples in Canada are also two to three times as likely to live in homes in need of major repairs, and this figure has only marginally decreased from eight percent in 1996 to seven percent in 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2008). In Statistics Canada's (2008) analysis of this situation, over-crowded and substandard housing results in myriad problems, including the increased likelihood of transmitting infectious diseases (tuberculosis and hepatitis), along with increased risk for injuries, mental health difficulties and family violence (Statistics Canada, 2008).

Indicative of the profound poverty underscoring over-crowding and substandard housing as documented by Statistics Canada (2008), Aboriginal children are much more likely to live with only one parent. In 2006, 29% of Aboriginal children 14 years of age and under lived with lone-parent families headed by Aboriginal women compared to 14% of non-Aboriginal children (Statistics Canada, 2008). During the same time period, 6% of Aboriginal children aged 14 and under lived in lone-parent families headed by fathers compared to 3% of non-Aboriginal children.

The British Columbia Context

In this section, we present a case study of British Columbia because it highlights the extent of the problem facing Aboriginal parents in Canada today. British Columbia has a large Aboriginal population and one of the highest percentages of Aboriginal children that attend residential schools. It is therefore experiencing, at many levels, the impacts of attending residential school and the disproportionate rate at which Aboriginal children in BC are apprehended into the child welfare system. While national Census data gives us an overview of the Aboriginal population in Canada, as well as the importance of creating and maintaining supportive services, resources, and preventative programming capable of genuinely responding to the needs of Aboriginal parents, the realities facing Aboriginal parents, children and youth in British Columbia create a much different understanding of the urgency surrounding the need to effectively support Aboriginal parents.

In absolute terms, Ontario and British Columbia are the provinces with the largest Aboriginal populations, comprising 242,495 and 196,075 respectively (Statistics Canada, 2006a). With a population of 4,380,300, British Columbia's Aboriginal peoples represent 4.5% of the provincial population, slightly above the 3.6% representation of Aboriginal peoples in the total Canadian population (Figure 4).
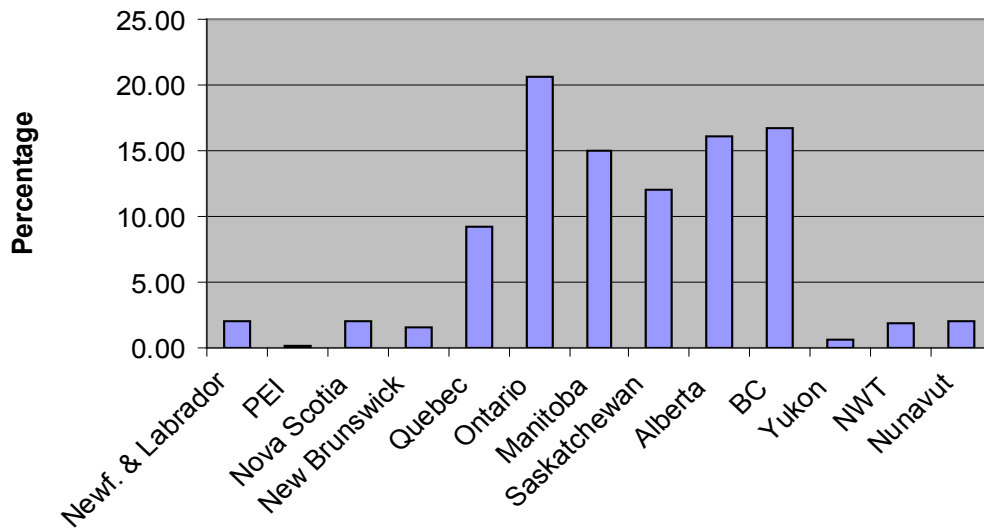

FIGURE 4: ABORIGINAL POPULATION BY PROVINCE/TERRITORY
(Source : Statistics Canada, 2008. 2006 Census, catalogue\ #97-558-XCB2006006)

In British Columbia, data indicates there are 973,429 children and youth 19 years of age and under (British Columbia Government, 2007). Of this provincial subset, 75,195 of these are Aboriginal children and youth, representing 38% of the total Aboriginal population. This same cohort of non-Aboriginal children and youth 19 years of age and under represents 21% of the total non-Aboriginal population. Put another way, 2 in 5 Aboriginal children and youth in British Columbia are 19 years of age and under compared to 1 in 5 non-Aboriginal children and youth.

In the British Columbia context, the need to provide Aboriginal parents with supportive services, resources, and preventative programming is especially important given the relatively large and youthful population. By providing supportive services, resources and preventative programming for Aboriginal parents, the health and well-being of Aboriginal children will follow. However, provincial data from the Ministry of Children and Family Development (2008) suggests that the dominant form of services available for Aboriginal parents is the apprehension of their children into the child welfare system.
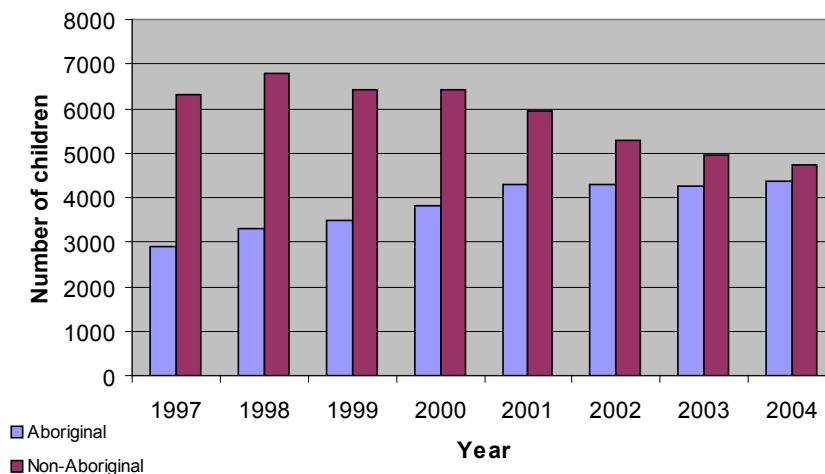
FIGURE 5: CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN BC'S CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM, 1997 TO 2004
(Source: Adapted from Hughes, 2006, p. 51)

In an overview of child welfare in British Columbia, Gough (2007) notes that during 2006/2007, an average of 9,204 children and youth up to the age of 19 were in the child welfare system. Of this average total number of children and youth, 4,648 (50.5%) were Aboriginal and 4,556 (49.5%) were non-Aboriginal. While these numbers are almost equal, 2006 Census data for British Columbia indicates that of the 973,429 children and youth under the age of 19 in the province, there were only 75,195 Aboriginal children and youth compared to 898,234 non-Aboriginal children and youth. To provide an illustration of the extent that Aboriginal children are over-represented in the child welfare system, we

can contrast the number of children in the welfare system using Gough's data with the population counts for British Columbia derived from the 2006 Census data. We must caution readers first about the tendency for Statistics Canada Census data to under-represent Aboriginal people because of a combination of factors that include incomplete enumeration and the non-participation of some Indian reserves and settlements (Statistics Canada, 2006b). Nevertheless, this comparison shows that in 2006, 0.5% of non-Aboriginal children and youth were in the provincial child welfare system compared to 6.2% of Aboriginal children - which is 12 times the rate. *That is, an Aboriginal child in British Columbia is 12 times more likely to be in the child welfare system than a non-Aboriginal child.*[4] In addition, the Child and Youth Officer for British Columbia (2006) reported that Aboriginal children and youth are younger, more than twice as likely to be in continuing care rather than temporary care, and stay in the child welfare system longer than their non-Aboriginal cohort.

Thinking about Aboriginal Parents, Children and the Child Welfare System

Findings from the Gove Inquiry in 1992 (Gove, 1995), the Hughes Report (2006), delegation agreements with Aboriginal child welfare agencies, and the November 2006 appointment of Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond as British Columbia's Representative for Children and Youth are just some of the indicators that the situation of Aboriginal children in British Columbia's child welfare system has not gone unnoticed. In addition, British Columbia is currently the only province in Canada to approve a private Member's Bill backing *Jordan's Principle* in December 2007. More recently, the submission of *Amanda, Savannah, Rowen and Serena: From loss to learning* by the Representative for Children and Youth (2008) and the publication of *Strong, safe and supported: A commitment of B.C.'s children and youth* by the Ministry of Children and Family Development (2008) suggest that the province is continuing with its efforts to create a better and safer child welfare for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children and youth. However, it seems that while provincial community leaders, government officials, educators, social service workers, and grassroots community organizations recognize that something must be done to help Aboriginal parents, the reasons for the massively disproportionate representation of Aboriginal children in the child welfare system are still poorly understood (Blackstock & Trocmé, 2005; Blackstock, Tromé & Bennett, 2004).

As one of the most consistent statistics across the Canadian provinces, reasoning about the disproportionate rate at which Aboriginal children are placed in the welfare system compared to their representation in the population often evokes negative stereotypes about Aboriginal parents being 'bad' or 'incompetent.' It seems to follow from this kind of thinking that if Aboriginal children and youth in British Columbia are being apprehended into the child welfare system at about 12 times the rate of non-Aboriginal children and youth, then

Aboriginal parents must be consistently violating the accepted norms of social responsibility to protect their children. Therefore, Aboriginal children are removed in order to be protected. However, research suggests a very different line of reasoning.

The analysis of national data on Aboriginal families and children reported to welfare authorities in the Canadian Incident Study on Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (1998 and 2003 cycles) reveals that investigations of parental maltreatment among Aboriginal families are two and one half times more likely to be substantiated than among non-Aboriginal families. Here, maltreatment primarily involves parental neglect in the forms of physical neglect and failure to supervise. However, further analysis reveals that factors contributing to the substantiation of parental neglect among Aboriginal parents are poverty, substandard housing, and substance use (Blackstock, Prakash, Loxley & Wien, 2005; Blackstock, Trocmé & Bennett, 2004; Trocmé, Knoke & Blackstock, 2004). That is, Aboriginal children are not removed from their parents because of higher rates of physical, sexual or emotional forms of abuse; it is the persistent systemic and structural factors of poverty, substandard housing, and substance use pervasively impacting the lives of many Aboriginal parents that underwrites the assessment of parental neglect and subsequent removal of their children. As Blackstock notes, "even if a non-Aboriginal family has these same factors, the Aboriginal child is still more likely to go into child welfare care. So race has continued to play a role in child removal" (as cited in National Council of Child Welfare, 2007, pp. 87-88).

In British Columbia, findings from the Pivot Legal Society's (2008) publication, Broken promises: Parents speak about B.C.'s child welfare system, mirror those laid out in the national data analysis. Here, Pivot Legal Society reports that the apprehension of children is likely to result from the systemic and structural factors of poverty, mental health issues, domestic violence, and substance use.

But what does all this mean in a province where Aboriginal children 19 years of age and under are removed from their parent and placed into the child welfare system at 12 times the rate of their non-Aboriginal counterparts? As Pivot Legal Society (2008) and Shangreaux (2004) note, what happened to 'least disruptive measures' along with supportive services and preventative planning that work to preserve families?

In British Columbia, Pivot Legal Society (2008) suggests that the answers to these kinds of questions raise a slightly contradictory tension. That is, on one level, there is a growing awareness of the systemic and structural inequalities and injustices impacting Aboriginal families. At the same time, families continue to be treated on an individual basis that fails to consider the systemic and structural nature of the inequalities and injustices impacting their lives (Pivot Legal Society, 2008). The fact that less than 16% of all Aboriginal children and youth 19 years of age and under who were removed from their homes during

2007 were placed with Aboriginal caregivers also points to the idea that the maintenance of kinship and cultural attachments must be more strongly supported within the child welfare system (Pivot Legal Society, 2008).

In addition, heavy case loads plague British Columbia social workers. Family situations are complex, and time is needed to fully assess the situation and explore alternatives to apprehension (Pivot Legal Society, 2008). On this note, Wharf (2007) maintains that child welfare workers in British Columbia face a difficult situation:

Child welfare staff are typically so harried and preoccupied with investigations and paperwork that they have little time to provide support and counselling. Their response is to refer clients to voluntary agencies that provide short-term programs such as parent education, anger management, and budget preparation. Although they are well-intentioned, such referrals mean that clients are spun like tops between the staff of a number of agencies when what they need is a constant, reassuring, friendly, and practical person in their lives. It is also typical that clients are referred to such programs because they exist and have to be used, not because they are always, or even usually, configured to meet the needs of the clients (p. 7).

However, as Pivot Legal Society (2008) maintains, even when social workers have time, there is a lack of supportive services, resources and preventative programming available for families. According to Pivot Legal Society, this results in an untenable situation:

The lack of supportive and preventative services is not only a violation of the provisions of the CRCAS [Child Family and Community Services Act], it is indicative of a short-sighted, crisis driven style of child protection that fails to support the integrity of families or the best interests of children (p. 3).

Nationally, Blackstock and Trocmé (2005) suggest that the preponderance of Aboriginal child welfare cases assessing parental neglect based on poverty, substandard housing, and substance use raises two important points. First, does the assessment of parental neglect based on the key drivers of poverty, substandard housing, and substance use suggest that parents have the resources and supports to change these systemic and structural factors that place a child at risk? (Blackstock & Trocmé, 2005). It seems to follow that if we can acknowledge the fact that urban and on-reserve Aboriginal peoples have persistently been among the poorest of the poor in Canada, how can poverty be changed without social supports, resources and advocacy? (Blackstock & Trocmé, 2005). Second, while the issues of parental substance use are arguably more within the realm of personal agency, addressing this challenge would seem to require available, responsive and accessible treatment services, culturally meaningful programming, collateral family supports based on clinical needs and

sustained follow-up. While there is a need for these services across urban Canada, there is a significant dearth of these kinds of services for both urban Aboriginal peoples and those living on-reserve (Blackstock & Trocmé, 2005).

One challenging question posed by provincial and national research concerns the extent to which the child welfare system is contributing to developing and sustaining the supportive services, resources, and preventative programming that are needed to effectively address the unique systemic and structural forces impacting the lives of Aboriginal parents. Is the current situation the best that we can do? Both national and provincial research maintains that the urgency of this question is compounded and complicated by the very recent past of the profoundly debilitating residential schooling system and the misguided interventions of the child welfare system of the 1960s. By briefly considering both the residential schooling system and the "sixties scoop" as two systemic attempts to assimilate Aboriginal peoples into Canadian European society, we might begin to understand the current realities facing Aboriginal parents caring for their children and consider the ways that we can do better – much better.

We recognize that the systems of education and child welfare have had a profoundly devastating impact on Aboriginal parents and traditional child-rearing practices that cannot be ignored. At the same time, we respectfully submit that since time immemorial, the strengths of Aboriginal peoples have ensured the continuance of the cultures for thousands of years. The following section outlines the impact of the residential schooling system and the child welfare intervention of the 1960s in the lives of Aboriginal parents across Canada. In doing so, we view these colonial systems of assimilation in terms of the strengths of Aboriginal parents and children.

5.0   The strengths of Aboriginal peoples

Despite the historical and contemporary colonial assaults upon Aboriginal peoples, Waller and Yellow Bird (2002) maintain that insight into Aboriginal culture offers us "a vibrant, colorful tapestry of strengths" (p.50). However, the diversity among Aboriginal peoples suggests that it is not possible to generalize these strengths across cultures. For example, in British Columbia, the province with the greatest diversity, there are 198 First Nations with 11 unique language families containing more than 30 distinct languages (Cook & Howe, 2004). In addition to provincial and national linguistic diversity, urban, rural and remote Aboriginal populations across Canada have rich, diverse and distinct historical, political, social and economic experiences. However, Waller and Yellowbird (2002) suggest that by providing an overview of the strengths of Aboriginal peoples, we might begin to frame understandings for those working with Aboriginal parents so that they can draw upon existing strengths and discover many more.

Aboriginal Families & Residential Schooling

To begin framing our understandings about the strengths of Aboriginal parents, it is important to consider the cultural understanding of both the child and family. While not all Aboriginal cultures are the same, Little Bear (2000) explains that the understanding of children as valued and sacred gifts of the Creator is a commonality across Aboriginal cultures. And as sacred gifts of the Creator, families, friends, relatives and members of Aboriginal communities have been caring for and safeguarding their children since time immemorial (Cross, 1986; Fournier & Crey, 1997; Greenwood, 2003, 2005; Greenwood, & De Leeuw, 2006).

The interdependence of child-rearing shared among the parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, cousins and community members, ensures the safety and well-being of Aboriginal children. As Herberg (1989) explains, the interdependence of Aboriginal family structure supports the whole community (as cited in Thomas & Learoyd, 1990):

The native family structure begins with the elders of the family, and extends not just vertically to include their children and grandchildren, but laterally as well, embracing adult siblings, and cousins and their spoux`ses and children. Even close friends are enrolled as honorary members who routinely are involved in family activities. Members of the Native family participate in the mutual-aid and exchange relationships that bind all the members into an intimate, solitary unit benefiting all generations and members (p.1).

This network of care also forms the intricate system of children's education (Connors & Maidman, 2001; Cross, 1986; Glover, 2001). Here, the transmission of children's knowledge about their culture, personal and community identity, language, history, values, customs, spiritual beliefs and the environment around them is shared among members of the extended family.

As a process that began in the earliest moments in a child's life, education was transmitted orally in the tradition of stories, legends, myths, games, dances, songs and from the specific teachings of Elders, grandparents and extended family members. In the oral traditions of teachings, the intergenerational transmission of language was actualized, while foundational knowledge and understandings about culture, personal and community identity, values, customs, history and spiritual beliefs were realized.

With the oral traditions of teaching, children were taught the importance of listening along with verbal and non-verbal forms of communication. Modeling behaviours taught children the importance of observation. Here, modeling provided children with practical skill development, as well as explicit understandings about the expectations and consequences surrounding behaviour, and the responsibilities guiding relationships among family members, extended kin, Elders, and the larger community (Cross, 1986; Glover, 2001). Among the Inuit, Stairs (1995) relates that *Isumaqsayuq* denotes a wholistic and thematic process of learning through observation and imitation. As a "circle of learning," *Isumaqsayuq* is the way children's skills are learned, and knowledge is passed on about language, community values, relationships and social structures (Stairs, 1995).

The listening and observing that characterizes Aboriginal children's learning depicts a natural and systematic process of education. As Little Bear (2000) explains, children's education was done "in a sea of love and kindness" (p. 81). While the educational process had clear expectations and consequences that indicated structure and discipline, physical punishment was seldom used (Johnston, 1983; Little Bear, 2000; Pimento, 1985). Instead, proper behaviour was acknowledged and praised, while humour, teasing, and a stern "talking to" were used to correct behaviour (Johnston, 1983; Little Bear, 2000; Pimento, 1985). However, by the 1920s, the traditional ways of educating Aboriginal children radically altered with the introduction of mandatory attendance at residential schools across Canada.

The Residential Schooling System

Residential schools began operating as early as the 1800s, however attendance became compulsory for children aged 7-15 in 1920 (AFN, nd). The objectives of these schools transformed over time. Beginning as church run institutions primarily emphasizing religious indoctrination, the focus began to shift towards assimilation in the 1840s and '50s

with the Bagot Commission report of 1842 and the passing of the *Gradual Civilization Act* in 1857. With the release of the Davin Report of 1879, assimilation of Aboriginal children into mainstream society became more clearly articulated (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2002).

The system of residential schooling was designed to transform the 'savage' Indian into a contributing member of Canada's civilized and Christian European society. This tragically misguided attempt to civilize Aboriginal peoples hinged on 'saving' Aboriginal children from the 'depraved' influence of their parents, extended family members, Elders, and community members (Milloy, 1999; Stout & Kipling, 2003). The principal instruments of assimilation were through education and the removal of children from the influences of their parents by sending them to industrial, boarding or residential schools. According to Indian Agent, Duncan Scott, the intent of the residential schooling system was to "kill the Indian in the child" by obliterating the inferior Aboriginal culture, languages, values, and spiritual beliefs (Milloy, 1999). To prepare Aboriginal children for life in 'modern' Canadian society, they were taught the English language, religion, values, and work skills relevant to Canadian society at the time.

The number of residential schools peaked at 80 in 1931 (AFN, nd). During the 1940s, the segregation-based residential school system was discarded in favour of a policy of integration through attendance at regular public schools By the 1970s, the Government of Canada began to initiate a process for the eventual transfer of education management to Aboriginal peoples by establishing the Blue Quills Residential School (Legacy of Hope foundation, nd). The last residential school closed in the 1990s (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2002).[5]

Not all Aboriginal children attended residential schools and not all had bad experiences. Some regions such as the North, British Columbia, and the Prairies had higher percentages of Aboriginal children attending residential schools (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2002), while others such as New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland had no experience with residential schools (Legacy of Hope Foundation, nd). In all, approximately 150,000 Aboriginal, Inuit and Métis children were forcibly taken from their communities to attend residential schools. Some schools had dedicated, good people working in the system who imparted useful skills and knowledge to children. However, they often were subjected to conditions of considerable stress, working in isolated and distant establishments and in closed communities where there was potential for strained interpersonal relationships, and receiving low remuneration for long hours of work (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2002). These types of conditions made residential schools become 'opportunistic sites of abuse' (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2002).

Many Aboriginal children suffered from a painful disconnection from their families, communities, and themselves resulting from forcibly being removed from their parents, separation from their siblings, and placement in educational institutions run by the churches. Children were exposed to the denigration of their parents, grandparents and Elders as "savages" and told that their own bodies were "dirty" (Chansonneuve, 2005). By forcing adherence to the Christian religion or suffering the consequences of eternal damnation, children were further disconnected from their spiritual beliefs. To ensure that Aboriginal children acquired the superior English language skills, the speaking of Aboriginal languages was forcibly prohibited. As the knowledge of culture, identity, worldview, values, and customs is transmitted through language, the loss of language further disconnected children from their culture.

Testimonies of those who endured residential schools also point to the fact that in addition to the multiple layers of disconnection, too many endured and/or bore witness to unmitigated physical violence, sexual assaults, psychological abuse, verbal denigration, along with experiences of profound hunger, loneliness and internalized self-hatred. Schools were often poorly constructed and overcrowded, leading to high mortality rates ranging from 15-24% (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2002). These and many of the atrocities experienced by those who endured residential school are more fully dealt with in the works of, for example, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation's research series (1999-2008), Chrisjohn, Young and Maraun (1995), Cote & Schissel (2002), Fournier & Crey (1997), Furniss (1995), Grant (1996), Ing (1991, 2000), Knockwood (1992), Miller (1996), and Milloy (1999).

While residential schools cannot alone be responsible for the current conditions that affect Aboriginal lives, they do play an important role. For many, it denied the opportunity for individuals to develop parenting skills; it alienated children from family, community and from themselves; it contributed to the destruction of Aboriginal language and culture, and thus to the destruction of individual and collective sense of identity (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2002); and it has left a legacy of trauma that extends intergenerationally, producing conditions that place many Aboriginal children at risk within their own homes.

Parental Resistance

Given the overwhelmingly inhumane excesses of the residential schooling system, it does not seem surprising that both parents and children undertook various forms of resistance. As Miller (1996) relates, Aboriginal parents actively resisted the residential schooling system by outright refusing to allow their children to be taken, withholding their children from attending, withdrawing their children from the school, lodging complaints against Indian Affairs officials, and/or publicly protesting the treatment of their children to school

principals and missionary bureaucrats. In her study of the Kamloops residential school (1893-1977) in British Columbia, one participant informed Haig-Brown (1988) about the anger parents expressed at the cruel treatment of a female student by a music teacher who split her head open with a harmonica. Community Chiefs successfully demanded the resignation of the teacher. Knockwood (1992) reveals that the parental tactic of frequently visiting the Shubenacadie residential school in Nova Scotia ensured the better treatment of their children. In northern British Columbia during 1917, parents opposed the distance of the residential school from the community. Miller (1996) relates that mothers asserted relentless pressure on their community Council to petition officials to move the school from Fort St. John to the reserve. As a result of parental pressure, a new school was established closer to the community in Lejac. Miller (1996) also relates that the Ojibwa at Shoal Lake in northern Ontario resisted the cultural practices that the residential schooling system was designed to eradicate in the first place. Here, parents inserted a contractual agreement with the Presbyterian school missionaries that enabled children to attend ceremonies with their parents.

Perhaps the most dramatic form of parental resistance occurred at the Blue Quills residential school in the summer of 1970 when Blue Quills became the first locally-controlled school in Canada. Established in 1931, Blue Quills residential school embodied what Persson (1986) calls "a total institution," where a formal administration controlled a large number of people in a setting cut off from the larger society (p. 152). Designed to house 200 students from nine reserves, the Oblate Order imparted what Milloy (1999) calls the government's standard version of residential school education where "discipline was curriculum and punishment was pedagogy" (p. 44).

By the summer of 1970, residents of the Saddle Lake First Nation expressed their long-standing dissatisfaction with the government and church control at Blue Quills. In solidarity with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal supporters, more than 300 parents, community leaders and Elders marched to Blue Quills and held a month-long sit-in demanding that the school be turned over to Aboriginal control, thereby ensuring the right of parents to guide the education of their children (Bashford & Heinzerling, 1987). As discussions with the Department of Indian Affairs faltered, protestors demanded a meeting with then Minster for Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Jean Chrétien. While support for the sit-in increased, a delegation met with Chrétien in Ottawa and secured their demand for Aboriginal control of education.

Since 1971, Blue Quills First Nations College (BQFNC) has been a locally controlled Aboriginal education centre providing education and training needs for people from all cultures. Today, BQFNC is a vibrant and innovative centre of learning grounded in Nēhiyawēwin (Cree) culture, values, knowledge, and traditions.

Student Resistance

For many Aboriginal children, simply surviving residential school and the multiple layers of disconnection it caused can be viewed as one kind of resistance. In a memoir about nine years of his life at St. Peter Claver residential school (that became Garnier residential school in 1945), Johnston (1988) relates one classmate's comment: "We toughed it out, didn't we? They couldn't break us down, could they?" (p. 243). However, looking beyond sheer survival, many other forms of resistance took place. As Grant (1996) notes, while punishment for disobedience could be harsh in the residential schooling system of brutality, many students resisted in a number of imaginative ways within a system designed to render them powerless.

Like the myriad ways that their parents protested, so too did the students register their objections to the ways they were treated in an effort to change the conditions of their lives. Despite their vulnerability to brutal punishment, Miller (1996) notes that the more direct acts of children's protest included daring escape attempts, physically resisting corporal punishment, arson, "acting out," and non-cooperation. In some instances, Miller explains the irony of the situation in which the misbehaviour of students and their lack of cooperation resulted in expulsion from school for being "incorrigible" or because they were reported to have an "inaptitude" for studies (p. 361). At St. George's residential school in Lytton, British Columbia, the male students directly threatened the principal that they would steal food if better meals were not provided, and were pleased when their overt protest had succeeded (Miller, 1996).

Food also became a channel of children's resistance (Iwama, 2000). Residential schools consistently provided food that was foreign, of substandard quality, and frequently rationed in portions that seemed designed to keep them ravenous. As George Manual explains (as cited in Grant, 1996):

> *Hunger was both the first and the last thing that I can remember about the school. I was hungry from the day I went to school until they took me to the hospital two and half years later. Not just me. Every Indian student smelled of hunger* (p. 115).

Given the prevalence of profound hunger, food often became the focus of children's resistance. Testimonies of those who endured residential school recount individual acts of stealing food, as well as cooperative and elaborately complex systems for pilfering and distributing it. While stolen food supplemented the substandard and meager residential school meals, it was also used to share with smaller children who were too young to take part in the operation (Haig-Brown, 1988).

Some students deliberately cooperated within the residential schooling system, pragmatically surviving a reality in which they had very few choices (Grant, 1996). Others sought to establish justice in a cruel and unjust system. As one participant in Haig-Brown's (1988) work explains:

I became a kind of an advocate for some of the people who I thought couldn't help themselves. I often become too outspoken in helping a person out of a jam. In trying to rationalize why they did it, why one was caught with carrots in his shirt, I had to explain he was hungry, somebody took his meat or his porridge away from him. So he was punished and, I suppose because I challenged the supervisor in front of the whole group, I was punished with him (p. 95).

In addition to solidarity with and advocacy for as acts of resistance, children also exercised resistance by speaking their language. Although speaking any language other than English was severely punished, many students routinely spoke their language in clandestine conversations or practiced their language in imaginary conversations with family and friends. Language games among students at the expense of the teachers also denote a form of resistance. Nicknames and the audacity of public wordplays provided sources of hilarity at the expense of the unknowing nuns and priests[6] (Knockwood, 1992; Miller, 1996).

Children also resisted the oppressive regime in intensively private ways. As Haig-Brown (1988) relates, stifling emotional responses to severe punishment proved to be a powerful act of resistance:

And the thing I remembered when she used to strap me ... I knew I was going to get five or ten straps on each hand and I knew it was going to draw blood – but I would remind myself, "It's not going to hurt. Just so I can make you angry, I'm not going to let you know it hurts" ... and I would just stare at her in the face ... and I wouldn't even let a drop, a tear come down. God, that used to make her mad. She'd even take me and shake my head and say "The devil is in you so strong. How am I going to beat the devil out of you?" (p. 92).

The insight and understandings conveyed in this child's resistance to brutal punishment exemplifies what Knockwood (1992) considers the most powerful form of resistance:

Perhaps the most important form of resistance was inside our heads even though it produced little outward sign at the time. Once when Wikew[7] told us, "Don't you dare move a muscle," I was wiggling my toes under the blanket thinking, "You ain't my boss and I'll wiggle all I want." At the same time I was looking straight at her wearing the Indian mask which I had discovered over the years she couldn't read (p. 125).

The Strengths of Resistance

In *Indian school days*, Johnston (1988) relates that residential school was synonymous with "penitentiary, reformatory, exile, dungeon, whippings, kicks, slaps, all rolled into one" (p. 6). Testimonies of those who endured the brutality of the residential schooling system clearly point to its tragic legacy reverberating across generations of Aboriginal parents. At the same time, the testimonies of those who endured residential school contain narratives about the incredible strengths of Aboriginal parents and children – evident in the wisdom, endurance, courage, determination, kindness, sharing, humour and resourcefulness that made their resistance possible in the first place. These strengths are evident today among Aboriginal peoples, parents, children and communities, and are closely connected to the foundational values that have sustained Aboriginal peoples since time immemorial. And with each new colonial assault, these values have been refined and strengthened.

In the following section, we continue to trace the strengths of Aboriginal parents and children in the context of what has become euphemistically known as the "sixties scoop." By outlining this very recent event, we highlight the strengths of Aboriginal peoples with a view to examining values that have continued to protect Aboriginal families and children since time immemorial.

Aboriginal Parents & Child Welfare: The "Sixties Scoop"

Gradually, as education ceased to function as the institutional agent of colonization, the child welfare system took its place. It could continue to remove Native children from their families, devalue native custom and traditions in the process, but still act "in the best interest of the child." Those who hold to this view argue that the Sixties Scoop was not coincidental; it was a consequence of fewer Indian children being sent to residential schools and of the child welfare system emerging as the new method of colonization. (Johnston, 1983, p. 24)

As segregated education became increasingly unfashionable during the late 1940s, amendments to the *Indian Act* in 1951 provided legal authority to extend child welfare services to all Aboriginal children in each province, including those living on reserves. Attempting to make its mark, the new profession of social work began to remove Aboriginal children from their parents, communities and culture en masse and without parental consent or community consultation.

Guided by a European value system diametrically opposed to Aboriginal worldviews, social workers believed that they were sincerely "acting in the best interests of the child" by removing thousands of Aboriginal children from their parents, siblings, families and communities, then shipping them off for adoption with non-Aboriginal, middle-class families

across Canada, the United States and Europe where they had little, if any, contact with their parents, siblings, family members or culture (Crey, 1991; Kimelman, 1985). For those children and youth not deemed candidates for adoption, their childhoods and teenage years were frequently spent in a series of foster homes or shuffling between group homes and locked facilities. After removal from their families, parents were all too often never informed about the whereabouts of their children.

> *With the closing of the residential schools, rather than providing the resources on reserves to build economic security and providing services to support responsible parenting, society found it easier and cheaper to remove the children from their homes and apparently fill the market demand for children in Eastern Canada and the United States ... One gets an image of children stacked in foster homes as used cars are stacked on corner lots just waiting for the right "buyer" to stroll by.* (Kimelman, 1985, p. 330, 348)

In a system dominated by non-Aboriginal frontline workers, supervisors, managers and lawyers, removals were deemed necessary in order to "protect" Aboriginal children from maltreatment in the now familiar form of parental neglect resulting from poverty, substandard housing, and substance use. Rather than addressing these underlying causes of maltreatment, Kimelman (1985) maintained that it was just "cheaper and easier" to remove the children from their parents (p. 348). These massive removals, adoptions, foster and group home placements that began in the 1960s and lasted well into the 1980s became euphemistically known as the "sixties scoop," a term coined by a long-term employee of the Ministry of Human Resources in British Columbia and cited by Johnston in 1983.

With the massive expansion of child welfare services during the 1960s, the incredibly disproportionate representation of Aboriginal children in the child welfare system became consistent across Canada. For example, Lederman (1999) draws our attention to the fact that during 1980, less than 1% (0.96%) of all children in Canada were in the child welfare system. However, during this same year, status Indian children in the child welfare system represented 4.6% of all children - four and a half times the national average (Lederman, 1999). While Johnston (1983) points to the lack of reliable child welfare data during the 1950s and 1960s, he suggests that the provincial data compiled in British Columbia paints a vivid picture of what was happening across Canada to Aboriginal parents and their children.

In British Columbia, Johnston (1983) notes that in 1955, there were a total of 3,443 children in the provincial child welfare system (excluding data from the city of Vancouver). Of this total provincial child welfare population, about 29 children (less than 1%) were of Aboriginal ancestry. However, by 1964, there were 1,446 Aboriginal children and youth in the provincial child welfare system. That is, within nine years, the representation of Aboriginal children in the provincial child welfare system had gone from less than 1% to 34.2% - an increase of 3,400%.

For some, apprehension into the child welfare system meant being shuffled from foster home to foster home, subjected to multiple adoption breakdowns, or placed in a series of group homes or juvenile detention facilities. The result of many of these placements has been a multitude of testimonies about experiences with racism, sexual abuse, physical violence, emotional and psychological trauma, fractured self-identity, cultural dislocation, fear, and unmitigated outrage (for example, Fournier & Crey, 1997; Kimelman, 1985; Milner, 2001; York, 1990). For some, patterns of self-destructive behaviours led to them becoming what Kimelman (1985) called the "permanent residents of the province's correctional institutions" (p. 295). For some, involvement in substance use and prostitution characterized their lives upon leaving the system. For others, the confusion, pain, and violence they experienced in a foreign culture resulted in suicide.[8]

In a report to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Executive Director of Native Child and Family Services in Toronto, Kenn Richard (1997), succinctly traces the tragic connection between residential school and the "Sixties Scoop:"

> Most of our clients – probably 90% of them are, in fact, the victims themselves of the Child Welfare System. Most of our clients are young, sole support, mothers who very often were removed as children themselves. So we are dealing with perhaps the end product ... of the sixties scoop ...The other interesting note is that while the mother may have been in foster care, the grandmother – I think we all know where she was. She was in residential school. So we are into a third generation (cited in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996). Round 2, pp. 53-55).

> *It would be reassuring if blame could be laid to any single part of the system. The appalling reality is that everyone involved believed that they were doing their best and stood firm in their belief that the system was working well. Some administrators took the ostrich approach to child welfare problems – they just did not exist. The miracle is that there were not more children lost in this system run by so many well-intentioned people. The road to hell was paved with good intentions, and the child welfare system was the paving contractor.*

> Kimelman (1985, p. 276).

Resistance

By the early 1980s, some had realized that the "sixties scoop" had been a terrible mistake. For Johnston (1983), a significant factor contributing to what he calls "the wholesale apprehension" of Aboriginal children was a clash of cultures and values in which well-intentioned, mostly white middle-class, child welfare workers assumed that poor parents were "unfit" parents. As Johnston (1983) explains, being poor parents does not mean a child

is unloved, unwanted or neglected. Aboriginal leaders protesting the disappearance of their children into the child welfare system, and the subsequent erasure of their cultural identity, called the "sixties scoop" an act of cultural genocide.[9]

In 1982, York (1990) explains that increasing pressure from Aboriginal leaders across Canada and the Canadian media resulted in the Manitoba government placing a moratorium on the practice of exporting Aboriginal children outside of the province. Kimelman (1985), a Manitoba family court judge, was appointed in early 1982 to head an inquiry into the child welfare system. Conducting a series of hearings throughout Manitoba, Kimelman heard from Aboriginal leaders, parents, community members, frontline workers, social service workers, child welfare supervisors, and from those who survived the child welfare system. In a painstaking review of the Manitoba child welfare system, and despite both private and public criticism, Kimelman stated "unequivocally that cultural genocide has been taking place in a systematic, routine manner" (p. 329).

While many have echoed Kimelman's (1985) understanding that child welfare agencies across Canada were practicing cultural genocide by forcibly exporting Aboriginal children and youth to groups outside their culture, many veterans of the "sixties scoop" have established loving partnerships, become mothers or fathers, and many have reconnected with their language and culture to become fire keepers, pipe carriers, students, teachers, authors, and artisans. For some, repatriation (re-uniting) with birth families has been made possible through the formal work of the United Native Nations, Gitxsan Reconnection Program, Wet'su wet'en Repatriation Program and the Southern Manitoba First Nations Repatriation Program. Some have re-established community connections and Treaty rights without reconnecting with their birth parents. Many others are still slightly amazed that they survived in the child welfare system in the first place.

Strengths: Surviving & Flourishing

Compared with the body of work documenting the experiences of those who endured the residential schooling system, there is a relative dearth of literature relating the Aboriginal children and youth's experiences of the "sixties scoop." However, Sinclair (2007) notes that despite the horrifically abusive experiences that many Aboriginal children and youths experienced in the child welfare system, many are leading meaningful and fulfilling lives. In a roundtable discussion with Aboriginal adults who had been adopted, four participants spoke of a range of experiences including anger, painful struggles with identity, and too many experiences that closely parallel the atrocities experienced by residential school students (Milner, 2001). At the same time, and despite the many deeply painful experiences, the strengths of those who survived the child welfare system are evident in their ability to join

together with others in discussion, support each other, share their dreams and hopes for the future, and explore reconnections with their spirituality (Milner, 2001).

These strengths, and the strengths of those who endured the residential schooling system, are closely connected to the values held within many Aboriginal cultures. By looking at these values, we might begin to shape models of service delivery and frameworks for responsive programming and resources that truly support Aboriginal parents.

6.0 FROM STRENGTHS TO VALUES

By situating the strengths of Aboriginal peoples, families and children within the context of both the residential schooling system and the "sixties scoop," we have attempted to outline a framework of understanding about the past. As the Spanish-American philosopher, George Santayana (1905), reminds us, by studying and remembering the past, we will not be condemned to repeat it.

Examining the past also helps us to frame our understandings about the current realities facing Aboriginal parents. By situating the extremely disproportionate representation of Aboriginal children in our provincial child welfare system within the context of both the residential schooling system and the "sixties scoop," we might begin to more fully understand that Aboriginal parents did not wake up one day and simply decide to be among the poorest people in Canada or choose to live in substandard housing, nor did many decide to misuse alcohol and drugs. Here, formulating understandings about the historical and past atrocities has the potential to provide a social and cultural context for the realities facing Aboriginal parents.

In our overview of the past, we have also created an opportunity to view the experiences of the residential schooling system and the "sixties scoop" within the context of Aboriginal peoples' strengths. Rather than positioning these events of the past as an inventory of the problems, issues and deficits of individuals, we have looked at the strengths of Aboriginal peoples that are closely connected to the values that have sustained Aboriginal peoples since time immemorial. By laying out these values, we might begin to understand how they can be integrated into our practice, programming, and resource development in ways that meaningfully address the needs of Aboriginal parents.

Values

Given the linguistic, social, economic, political, historical, and geographical diversity among Aboriginal cultures in Canada, the differences among Aboriginal families seem to complicate matters slightly. While each family has its own culture, there are also enormous differences, including those families who adhere to traditional spiritual teachings and beliefs, those who embrace Christianity, bicultural families, and families that do not hold to any particular belief system (Cross, Earle, Echo-Hawk & Manness, 2000).

While this rich diversity seems to suggest a lack of consensus regarding almost every aspect of Aboriginal culture, Cross, Earle, Echo-Hawk and Manness (2000) state:

There are values shared by most, if not all, Indian nations, tribes and communities. Even in the communities struggling with great pain and in enormous states of distress, these traditional values persist. (p. 16)

These traditional values are the foundation of Aboriginal cultures and work to form the strengths that have enabled Aboriginal peoples to endure ongoing colonial assaults. The importance of these values in the continuation of Aboriginal peoples is paramount. Consider this: carbon-dating evidence indicates that Aboriginal peoples have lived on the lands considered to be Canada for more than 10,500 years and parenting more than 525 generations of children (Blackstock & Trocmé, 2005). While many of these values are shared among other cultures, Gaywish (2000) notes that despite the commonality of values across cultures, traditional Aboriginal values remain philosophically distinct to Aboriginal cultures.

By developing our understandings about these traditional values and their uniqueness within an Aboriginal worldview or "philosophy," we might use our knowledge about the past, our understandings about the contemporary realities facing Aboriginal peoples, along with our critically reflexive practice skills, to ensure that genuinely supportive services, programming, and resources are designed in ways to meet the needs of Aboriginal parents. In turn, we might begin to create a justice-oriented practice with Aboriginal parents.

According to Frankena (1963), values depict what is desirable, good, preferable, worthwhile, and what should be done. Values help us decide among choices of action, define who we are as people, and help us determine our membership in a group. Across Aboriginal cultures and across the changes of time, cultural values are best understood within the understanding of an Aboriginal worldview that is symbolized across Aboriginal cultures in the medicine wheel or Sacred Circle (Figure 6).

While there is no one version of the medicine wheel, the circle symbolizes the foundational cultural understandings of wholeness, interconnectedness, and balance. As Regnier (1994) explains, wholeness makes possible the interconnectedness:

> Whenever one stands in the world, there are always four equal directions. Without all the directions, the world is incomplete and cannot be. It is the unity of these directions that makes the wholeness of reality. Each direction relies on the existence of the other directions for its own identity as a direction. Each direction reflects differences in the world (plenitude) and sets out the possibility for interconnectedness (p. 132).
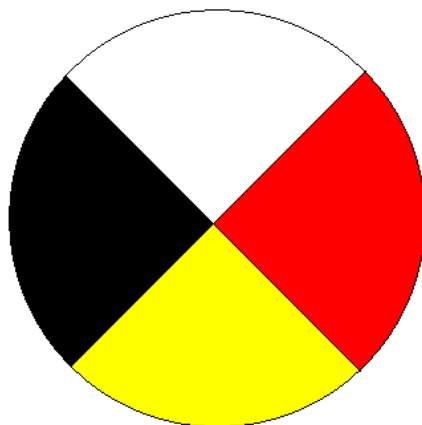
FIGURE 6: *MEDICINE WHEEL/SACRED CIRCLE*
(Source: http://nativecircle.com/MedicineWheel.GIF)

In the medicine wheel, the four directions are represented – north, east, south and west, and the four colours depict the four human races. The mental, emotional, physical and spiritual aspects of humanness are represented along with the four seasons, the four primary elements of earth, air, fire and water, and the four stages of human life. All these aspects form the whole of the medicine wheel. While achieving balance requires constant adjustment, Hart (2002) explains that:

> [b]alance occurs when a person is at peace and harmony within their physical, emotional, mental and spiritual humanness; with others in their family, community and nation; with all other living things, including the earth and natural world (p. 41).

Among the Ojibwa Anishinabe, Dumont (1996) suggests that the original understandings of wholeness, interconnectedness and balance symbolized in the medicine wheel depict eight persistent and primary values (Figure 7):

As Dumont (1996) explains, the capacity for holistic vision enables one to move beyond the boundaries of the physical world and recognize "the interconnectedness of all things and the totality of its interrelatedness" (p. 23). In turn, this vision fosters respect. Dumont notes that while many other cultures have the same values of, for example, sharing and kindness, the uniqueness of Aboriginal values is the understanding of these primary values as the gifts of holistic or total vision which forms the attitude of respect.

FIGURE 8: *FOUR DIRECTIONS AND SEVEN VALUES*

(Adapted from Dumont, 1996, p. 20).

| - Honesty | - Humility | - Kindness | - Bravery |
| - Sharing | - Honour | - Strength | - Wisdom |
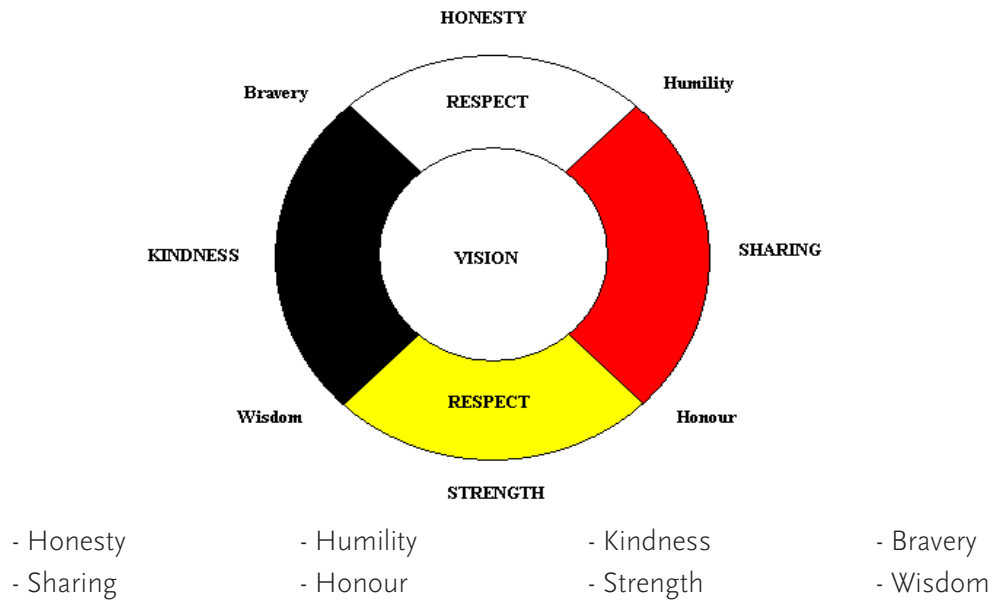
According to Cajete (1999), the core values among Aboriginal peoples include a holistic orientation, spirituality, cooperation, patience and respect for individual differences. Among the Anishinaabe peoples, Hart (2002) states that wisdom, love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility and truth are the cherished values. According to Hart, adhering to these inter-connected values that guide human relations among Aboriginal peoples creates a pathway to what the Cree call *mino-pimatisiwin* – the good life.

The values held in common across Aboriginal cultures not only guide human actions and interaction, but form cultural imperatives or what Brant (1990) refers to as cultural ethics or rules of behaviour. In their discussion about Aboriginal peoples and the justice system, Hamilton and Sinclair (1991) explain the value system informing cultural rules of behavior:

> The value systems of most Aboriginal societies hold in high esteem the interrelated principles of individual autonomy and freedom, consistent with the preservation of relationships and community harmony, respect for other human (and non-human) beings, reluctance to criticize or interfere with others, and avoidance of confrontation and adversarial positions (p. 36).

Ethics

According to Brant (1990), eight distinct cultural imperatives or rules of behaviour have worked to ensure the continuation of Aboriginal culture:

» non-interference	» concept of time
» non-competitiveness	» attitude toward gratitude and approval
» emotional restraint	» protocol
» sharing	» teaching by modeling

While cautioning against universal or indiscriminant application across the diversity of Aboriginal cultures, Brant (1990) maintains that the first four principles or ethics of behaviour (non-interference, non-competiveness, emotional restraint and sharing) are the core principles that have ensured the cooperative and harmonious continuance of Aboriginal cultures and community living despite ongoing colonial assaults. Among these four primary principles, Brant holds that the ethic of non-interference is the most widely accepted of principle guiding behaviour among Aboriginal peoples. It is also perhaps one of the most misunderstood.

Flowing from the values of cooperation, respect, and harmonious relationships, Brant (1990) notes that the ethic of non-interference "promotes positive interpersonal relationships by discouraging coercion of any kind, be it physical, verbal or psychological" (p. 535). Here, attempts to persuade, instruct, or coerce another person are viewed as "bad behaviour." While this widely held ethic guides adult relationships, it also extends to adult relations with children. Here, the cultural values that inform the ethic of non-interference in parenting stand in stark contrast to the accepted practices among western society.

As Hamilton and Sinclair (1991) explain, the ethic of non-interference as it plays out in relationships between Aboriginal parents and their children clashes most frequently and severely with the "accepted" practices of western parenting (p. 31). That is, in western culture it is typical that children are expected to do what they are told, when they are told, and are informed about what the consequences will be if they do not follow parental commands (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991). As Hamilton and Sinclair explain, "Children are expected to conform, rather than to experiment, and to learn by rote rather than by innovation" (p. 31). From the perspective of a non- Aboriginal person, Ross (1992) maintains that the ethic of non-interference is most perplexing in the context of Aboriginal parenting, "... and it is precisely here that a white person finds it most difficult to believe that there is any ethic working at all" (p. 16).

In the context of Aboriginal parenting, the ethic of non-interference is grounded in the inter-dependence of child-rearing within a network of care that extends both vertically and laterally to include Elders, children and grandchildren, as well as adult siblings in the family, cousins, spouses and family friends. For example, the ethic of non-interference in this context suggests that rather than telling a child when to go to sleep, forcing a child to attend school, commanding that a child do their chores, or taking a kicking and screaming child to the dentist against their will, children will make decisions based on their choices. From a non-Aboriginal worldview, Ross (1992) considers this notion of choice: "Freedom of choice for an eight-year-old? In my eyes that was tantamount to an abdication of parental responsibility, a sure sign of a lack of care" (p. 17). However, as Ross relates, in his process of learning about Aboriginal culture, worldview, values, and the ethic of non-interference, his perceptions and understandings of Aboriginal parenting shifts:

> For the moment, though, I only wish to underline how perilous it is to judge the motives, goals and desires of people from another culture. Our child care workers ... regularly see behaviour which, to them, is a clear signal of lack of parental concern. When they see children consistently left to their own devices, apparently free of adult supervision and control, they cannot help but be drawn towards the conclusion that nobody cares. When that conclusion is joined with other culture-specific judgments such as over-crowding (and there is a painful shortage of houses in most communities), the temptation to put the matter before the courts is strong; their duty, after all, requires that they do exactly that when they see a child who, in the words of legislation, is "in need of protection." If, within other culture, however, care and concern are demonstrated in different fashions, such a conclusion may well be false (pp. 18-19).

The understandings that Ross (1992) conveys about the ethic of non-interference also depicts the wider process of his learning about Cree and Ojibway peoples. Intimately assisted by the guidance of Aboriginal Elders and teachers, Ross relates how he slowly came to understandings about the culture, parenting traditions, values, ethics of behaviour and worldviews, ideals, and aspirations through learning to listen, observe and be silent. As Ross explains, stories from Elders gave nuanced insights and choices rather than sharp criticism of his many blunders and mistakes. In many ways, it seems that the experiences Ross had in the administration of justice within Aboriginal communities helped him to discover bridges of understandings across cultures – from the western culture's punitive and adversarial criminal justice that focuses on punishment to an Aboriginal legal system that seeks to restore harmony and peaceful relations through rehabilitation. In turn, Ross embarked on a process of learning that informed and helped to alter the administration of western justice.

The learnings and understandings that Ross (1992) gained suggests that we too can work to learn and better understand Aboriginal cultures and parenting and, in doing so, transform the inequity of the top-down design and delivery that often plagues the

implementation of programs, resources, and services for Aboriginal parents. As Blackstock (2006/2007) suggests, we can keep dreaming of a better world for all of us or we can work to make that dream come true by becoming knowledgeable social innovators drawing on the practice principles that will make a real difference.

7.0   IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Throughout our work, we have maintained that past experiences and current realities suggest that we can and must do better – much better for Aboriginal parents and their children. By ensuring that Aboriginal parents have access to supportive services, resources, and preventive programming, we might ensure that the unique systemic and structural forces that so negatively impact the lives of Aboriginal parents are authentically addressed. Our belief that we can and must do better for Aboriginal parents and their children is a starting point – simply a starting point until the knowledge about the current realities Aboriginal parents are facing, along with understandings about the past, can be translated into practice principles that will work to ensure the creation of truly culturally responsive, effective and equivalent services for Aboriginal parents.

In this section, we outline how understandings about the past, as well as the current realities facing Aboriginal parents, children and youth, carry direct implications for practices capable of improving interventions, supportive services, and programming with Aboriginal parents. Here, we highlight five principles to guide work with Aboriginal parents: Learning, Self-determination & Collaboration, a Structural Imperative, Wholistic Understandings, and Working from Strengths.

Learning

Once again drawing from the writings of the Spanish-American philosopher George Santayana, those who forget the lessons of the past are condemned to repeat them. Learning the truths about the past legacy of the residential schooling system and the child welfare interventions of the 1960s are critical in developing the foundational knowledge needed to ensure the development of practices to better serve Aboriginal parents. As Blackstock, Brown and Bennett (2007) explain, "this 'backwards' reflection is often necessary before we can more forward" to create new realities (p. 72). While our work outlines some of the realities of both the residential schooling system and the "sixties scoop," we have also included additional resources and materials to support understandings about the past (Appendix A).

Learning or gaining the knowledge needed to create and sustain culturally responsive, effective, and equivalent services for Aboriginal parents also involves identifying and critically considering current strategies designed to address inequalities impacting Aboriginal parents. For example, British Columbia is currently the only province in Canada to approve *Jordan's Principle* through a private Member's Bill in December 2007. In addition, the Ministry of Children and Family Development's (2008) recent publication of *Strong, safe and supported:*

A commitment to B.C.'s children and youth introduced five pillars "that form the key elements of an effective child, youth and family development service system" (p. 5). Here, the fourth pillar, *The Aboriginal Approach*, works in conjunction with the pillars of *Prevention, Early Intervention, Intervention and Support,* and *Quality Assurance.* Guided by the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*[10] and the 62 guidelines set out by Hughes (2006) in the *BC Children and Youth Review,* the Ministry hopes to establish, among other goals, sufficient and equitable resources; increase services and supports for Aboriginal children and youth in their own language, tradition and culture; as well as support Aboriginal parents while closing the many other gaps that separate Aboriginal peoples from the rest of British Columbians. However, at the federal level, the Final Report of the Standing Committee on Human Rights (2007) noted that consecutive federal governments had failed to keep the promises made upon ratification of the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.* With the leaders in child welfare testifying before the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights during 2006, it has become painfully clear that insofar as it applies to Aboriginal children and youth, Canada stands in gross violation of the Convention.

Learning about the current strategies designed to address and rectify the inequities Aboriginal parents, children, and youth currently experience, and critically considering if and how these strategies can or will positively impact Aboriginal parents, children, and youth, is part of the first step in developing the foundational knowledge needed to develop practices to better serve Aboriginal parents.

Self-Determination & Collaboration

In 1982, Section 35(1) of the Canadian Constitution Act acknowledged and affirmed the right of Aboriginal peoples to self-government. Implicit in the understanding of self-government is the view that self-determination will flow in the creation and implementation of effective and responsive policy-making, programs, resources, and supportive services. In the context of our work, self-government supports the view that Aboriginal parents are the best people to determine their own needs, identify their priorities, and map out ways to address the challenges they face. Regrettably, many of the limited programs, resources, and service initiatives designed to assist Aboriginal parents are delivered under the auspices of a top-down governance structure that determines what is needed to "fix" the problems Aboriginal parents' experience.

Increasing Aboriginal parents' involvement in the planning, decision-making, design, and implementation of programs, services, and resources will assist in effectively responding to their needs, increasing their choices, and ensuring that connections to culture, language, communities, and traditions are respected. In the spirit of Bishop (2002), becoming an

ally and working in cooperation and collaboration with Aboriginal parents to realize self-determination will also foster understandings about the need to design programs, services, and resources capable of addressing the structural inequities that so negatively impact their lives.

A Structural Imperative

Research has shown that the consistent justification for the removal of Aboriginal children from their parents is parental neglect in the form of poverty, substandard housing, and substance use (Blackstock, Prakash, Loxley & Wein, 2005; Blackstock, Trocmé & Bennett, 2004; Trocmé, Knoke & Blackstock, 2004). Without designing and implementing programs, resources, and services that are capable of addressing these structural issues, it is unlikely that the removal of Aboriginal children from their parents, culture, and communities will be stopped. In *Reconciliation in child welfare: Touchstones of hope for Indigenous children, youth and families,* we are reminded that the ability to distinguish between structural risks and family risks that impact children and youth will ensure the creation and implementation of meaningful responses to both (Blackstock, Cross, George, Brown & Formsma, 2006).

As Johnston (1983) reminded us 25 years ago, the poverty many Aboriginal parents experience does not mean that their children are unloved, unwanted or neglected. Today, following Blackstock, Cross, George, Brown and Formsma (2006), a structural imperative holds that "[i]mpoverished families must be provided with the economic and social supports necessary to safely care for their children and youth" (p. 11).

The interrelated challenges surrounding substance use also demand structural responses. Here, responsive prevention and effective programs, resources, and services must be created and implemented to address the issues of neglect extending from parental substance use. The creation of these types of programs, resources, and services requires wholistic understandings of the many structural factors that contribute to substance use among Aboriginal parents including chronic poverty, social isolation, exposure to violence, social and institutional prejudice, as well as the intergenerational impacts of the residential schooling system and past experiences of child welfare interventions.

Wholistic Understandings

Adopting a wholistic approach in working with Aboriginal parents requires that programs, services, and resources seriously consider the interconnection of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being in the lives of parents. In considering cultural dimensions of the whole being, we can begin to wholistically support Aboriginal parents to help their children flourish.
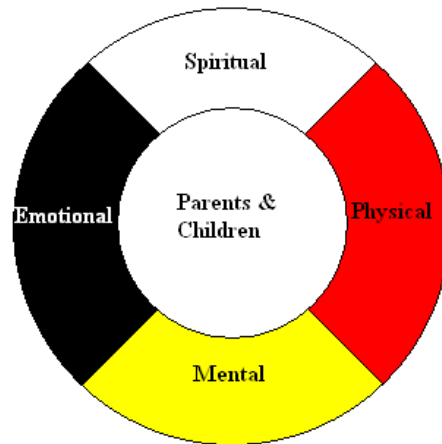
A wholistic understanding that captures the dimensions of the whole being is also capable of capturing the understanding that each person is shaped by their culture, language, and an intricate web of social relationships. Chandler and Lalonde's (1998) research affirmed that this continuity of culture fosters resiliency and positively impacts the health and well-being of Aboriginal peoples. As Blackstock, Cross, George, Brown and Formsma (2006) note, this suggests that meaningful programs, resources, and services for Aboriginal parents recognize "and give due consideration to both short- and long-term impacts of interventions" (p.11).

Working from Strengths

Although the experiences of Canada's tragically painful colonial interventions of the past and contemporary realities have frequently cast Aboriginal peoples into the roles of helpless and/ or passive victims of negative life circumstances, our summary of the residential schooling system and child welfare interventions has attempted to draw attention to the strengths and resiliency that have made possible the continuation of Aboriginal cultures.

While the impacts of residential schooling and child welfare have often reverberated across generations, the deep-rooted values and ethics that support the strengths of Aboriginal peoples have acted, and have the potential to act, as protective factors. Here, strengths-based programs, resources and services have the potential to provide the external supports needed to affirm the development of, and build on existing, strengths. From a strengths-based perspective, programming, resources, and services might begin to create new opportunities to enhance the capacities and abilities of Aboriginal parents and set into place a positive orientation that strives to help people flourish.

8.0 Appendix A

Residential School & Child Welfare Resources

In addition to the literature on residential schools referenced in this section, a wealth of resources are available to help better understand both the past and contemporary impact of this system of education.

BOOKS

Alexie, R. (2002). Porcupines and china dolls.
Don Mills, ON: Stoddart Publishing.

Highway, T. (2000). Kiss of the Fur Queen.
Toronto, ON: Doubleday Canada

Jack, A. (Ed.). (2007). Behind closed doors: Stories from the Kamloops Indian residential school (rev. ed.).
Penticton, BC: Theytus Books.

McKegney, S. (2007). Magic weapons: Aboriginal writers remaking community after residential school.
Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press.

Olsen, S., with Morris, R., & Sam, A. (2002). No time to say goodbye:
Children's stories of Kuper Island residential school.
Winlaw, BC: Sono NIS Press

Sterling, S. (2002). My name is Seepeetza.

Toronto, ON: Douglas McIntyre.

VIDEOS

Beyond the shadows (1992)
Violation of trust (2004)

INTERNET RESOURCES

Hidden from history: The Canadian holocaust
http://www.hiddenfromhistory.org/

Indian Residental School Survivor's Society
http://www.irsss.ca/

Where are the children? Healing the legacy of the residential schools
http://www.wherearethechildren.ca/en/home.html

Indian Residential Schools Settlement – Offical Court Website
http://www.residentialschoolsettlement.ca/English.html

Pelican Falls Residential School Gathering by Cal Kenny
http://media.knet.ca/node/1161

In addition to the literature about the "Sixties Scoop" referenced in this section, a number of resources are available to help better understand children and youth's experiences in the child welfare system.

BOOKS

Bensen, R. (2001). Children of the dragonfly: Native American voices on child custody and education. Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press.

Culleton, B. (1983). April Raintree. Winnipeg, MB: Peguis Publishers Ltd.

Stolen Generations. (2003). Book of voices: Voices of Aboriginal adoptees and foster children. Winnipeg MB: Stolen Generations.

Wagamese, R. (1994). Keeper'n me. Scarborough, ON: Doubleday Canada Ltd.

VIDEOS/MOVIES

Richard Cardinal: Cry from a diary of a Métis child (1986)

Rabbit-proof Fence (2002)

INTERNET RESOURCES

National Youth in Care Network
http://www.youthincare.ca/

Native Child and Family Services of Toronto & Budgell, J. (1999).
Repatriation of Aborginal families – issues, models and a workplan. Toronto, ON: Author.
http://www.nativechild.org/uploads/rep_rpt(1).pdf

Southern Manitoba First Nations Repatriation Program
http://www.wrcfs.org/repat/services.html

9.0 NOTES

1   The Prophecy of the Seven Fires, Ojibway culture, history and philosophy is also explained by Edward
     Benton-Banai (1988) in *The Mishomis Book: The voice of the Ojibway.* Hayward, MI: Indian Country Communi-
     cations, Inc.

2   Charles Nelson from Rousseau River, Manitoba in the 1996 *Report on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal
     peoples,* Vol I, Part III, *Building the foundations of a renewed relationship* (Chpt. 15).

3   The sexual discrimination of the *Indian Act* refers to the time prior to Bill C-31 when an Indian woman who
     married a non-Indian man would automatically lose her status along with the status of her children. How-
     ever, if an Indian man married a non-Indian woman, the woman and children would gain status.

4   Another way to look at this massively disproportionate representation of Aboriginal children and youth in
     British Columbia is to apply one population to the other in order to understand the real numbers of children
     and youth in the child welfare system. In this instance, if the rate of Aboriginal children and youth in the
     child welfare system were applied, there would be 53,690 non-Aboriginal children and youth in the child wel-
     fare system instead of 4,630. Conversely, if non-Aboriginal rates were applied, there would be 363 Aboriginal
     children in the system rather than 4,450.

5   According to Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, the Gordon residential school in Saskatchewan was the
     last federally run residential school in Canada – closing in 1996. In British Columbia, St. Mary's residential
     school was the first to open in 1863 and the last one in the province to close in 1984. Indian and Northern
     Affairs Canada. (2004). *Indian residential schools in Canada: Historical chronology.* Retrieved October 12, 2006
     from http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/gs/schl_e.html

6   As Miller (1996) relates, the use of derisory nicknames for teachers and childcare workers provided great
     amusement for students. Knockwood (1994) also recalls the sometimes elaborate and obscene Mi'kmaw
     wordplays transformed the Latin hymns in ways that "even the holy ones had to laugh" (p.124).

7   At the Shubenacadie residential school in Nova Scotia, Knockwood (1994) explains that the greatly feared nun
     in charge of the girl's side, Sister Mary Leonard, was called, "Wikew" – which translates from Mi'kmaw as
     "fatty" (p. 32).

8   In a system that had strangely gone awry, the profoundly disastrous results the "sixties scoop" is especially
     evident in the in the life of Richard Cardinal was a 17-year old Métis youth from Fort Chipewyan, Alberta who
     committed suicide after having been placed in 16 foster homes, twelve group homes, shelters and locked
     faculties throughout Alberta from the time he was 4 years of age. The story of Richard Cardinal life has been
     recorded in: Obomsawin, A. (Writer & Director). (1986). *Richard Cardinal: Cry from the diary of a Métis child*
     [Video]. Ottawa, ON: National Film Board of Canada or at http://www.nfb.ca/enclasse/ doclens/visau/index.
     php?mode=view&language= english&filmId=16327

     See Appendix A for additional resources related to the "sixties scoop."

9   The word genocide was coined by Raphael Lemkin in 1944. The word is rooted in *genos* (Greek for family,
     tribe, race) and *–cide* (Latin – *occidere* or *cideo* – meaning to massacre*).* The United Nations Convention on the
     Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide was adopted by the General Assembly on December 9,
     1948 with Canada signing on in 1949. The definition of genocide as put forth by the United Nations states:

     »   In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with the intent to
          destroy in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group such as:
     »   Killing members of the group;

» Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
» Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
» Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
» Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

[10] The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was adopted on November 20, 1989, entered into force on September 2, 1990 and was ratified by Canada on December 13, 1991. Available at: http://www.unhchr.ch/ html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm

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