

# RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS AND KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION



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## The lived experiences of Indigenous grandparents raising their grandchildren

### What you need to know:

Indigenous grandparent caregivers represent an important part of their grandchildren's cultural upbringing. Supporting Indigenous grandparents in the care of their grandchildren is of benefit to the grandparents, the grandchildren, and the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), as it keeps children safe, well-cared for, and connected to their communities.

### What is this research about?

The British Columbia (BC) Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) initiated this research in order to learn about emerging social networks of Indigenous grandparents raising their grandchildren, in order to gain a deeper understanding of these networks and how to support them. This research expanded to also explore the lived experiences of grandparents raising their grandchildren, who the networks are meant to serve.

Indigenous grandparent caregivers represent an important part of their grandchildren's cultural upbringing. Supporting Indigenous grandparents in the care of their grandchildren is of benefit to the grandparents, the grandchildren, and the Ministry,

in that it keeps children safe, well-cared for, and connected to their communities at large.

### What did the researcher do?

The researcher performed a literature review exploring grandparent support networks and Indigenous grandparents raising grandchildren and their lived experiences. The researcher used Google, the University of Victoria (UVic) Library database and the University of British Columbia (UBC) Library database to search for academic articles and grey literature.

The researcher added additional sources to the review from the reference lists of selected articles and from recommendations of Dr. Sandrina de Finney, Associate Professor at UVic. The researcher reviewed the literature to identify key themes and relevant data.



UVic researchers explored literature on grandparent caregiver networks and the lived experiences of Indigenous grandparents raising their grandchildren (Photo credit: 41330 from Pixabay).



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## What did the researcher find?

This review included literature on both Indigenous grandparents raising their grandchildren and grandparents raising their grandchildren in general in Australia, Canada, and the United States.

The analysis of the literature focused on the following themes:

1. Grandparent caregivers: who they are and how they enter the caregiving role
2. Benefits of grandparents raising their grandchildren
3. Support available to grandparents raising their grandchildren
4. Gaps in support

Key resources:

- Parent Support Services Society of British Columbia (PSSSBC) [website](#) and [grandparents support circles](#)
- Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Resource Booklet (available at BC Friendship Centres)
- [Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Legal Guide](#)

Key recommendations:

- Expand formal support systems to account for extended views of kinship care in an Indigenous context
- Continue training of practitioners in Indigenous communities' histories and cultures
- Increase consultation with grandparent caregivers and support circles
- Address gaps in the literature with more comprehensive research

Suggestions for future research:

- Conduct long-term studies in order to gain a deeper understanding of the benefits of grandparents raising grandchildren
- Broaden demographics to include experiences of grandfathers, multi-generational households with grandparents, and grandchildren and adult children residing together
- Conduct strengths-based research on the benefits of grandparent and intergenerational caregiving

## How can you use this research?

This research will help practitioners, policymakers and other stakeholders develop policies and resources for grandparents raising their grandchildren. The research is also applicable to grandparents who are raising their grandchildren.

### About the researchers

Darren Paterson is a UVic graduate student. This project was completed as part of the [Graduate Studies \(GS\) 505](#) course and supervised by instructors Dr. Sibylle Artz and Ms. Thais Amorim. Facilitated by UVic [Research Partnerships and Knowledge Mobilization](#), GS 505 is a partnership between MCFD and UVic. This project was prepared on behalf of MCFD.

### Keywords

Grandparents; grandchildren; grandparents raising grandchildren; grandparent caregivers; grandfamily or grandfamilies; skip-generation households

### Citation

Paterson, D. (2019). *Grandparents raising grandchildren*. Victoria, BC: University of Victoria.

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Content for this Research Snapshot was co-created by [UVic's Research Partnerships and Knowledge Mobilization unit](#), Darren Paterson, Dr. Sibylle Artz and Thais Amorim.

### Territory acknowledgement

We acknowledge and respect the lək'wəŋən peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands, and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

*We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Children and Family Development.*