

RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS AND KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION



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Nurturing Indigenous families and communities through child welfare: from vision to action

What you need to know:

In British Columbia, Indigenous children are 15 times more likely to end up in foster care. This overrepresentation is rooted in various causes, such as a lack of child protection legislation that supports varying cultural contexts. To keep Indigenous children safe with their families, child welfare must take proactive steps to support families in overcoming challenges.

What is this research about?

The British Columbia (BC) Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) envisions Indigenous children in BC living in nurturing families with strong community connections. To support this vision, the Ministry must reduce the numbers of Indigenous children in foster care. Child welfare programs need to proactively ensure Indigenous children stay safe with their families. With this project, the researcher set out to find programs that can meet these goals.

What did the researcher do?

Using the question, “what early intervention and prevention practices can reduce the risk of Indigenous child removal from their families?” the researcher collected examples from academic and field-based sources. The sources were research databases, documents featuring Indigenous voices and beliefs, and interviews with key informants.

Examples of early intervention programming came from Canada, the United States, and Australia. Using this information the researcher created a basis for further research and changes to child welfare programs.



GS 505 student Paulina Gornicki presents research on early intervention and prevention practices for Indigenous families (Photo credit: UVic staff, with permission).



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What did the researcher find?

The researcher found that programs for Indigenous families in Canada, the United States, and Australia result in unequal numbers of Indigenous children in foster care. Based on access to wealth and knowledge, the researcher concludes that these countries can improve Indigenous child welfare. The researcher suggests a broad shift in early intervention and prevention programs to reduce the risk of Indigenous child removal from their families.

To do this the researcher recommends the following:

- Reviewing child welfare laws
- Creating policies on cultural sensitivity
- Involving Indigenous people in changes
- Improving living conditions for Indigenous families
- Supporting Indigenous community values
- Holding staff accountable to the ministry's goals
- Researching, evaluating and improving early intervention and prevention programs

How can you use this research?

Child welfare ministries can use this research to improve programs for Indigenous families. Researchers can use this project to guide more research on child welfare. This research offers Indigenous communities examples of good programs to implement or request. Community organizations can look to this research when matching program and advocacy ideas with Indigenous clients' needs.

About the researcher

Paulina Gornicki is a University of Victoria (UVic) graduate student. This project was completed as part of the [Graduate Studies \(GS\) 505](#) course and supervised by instructors Drs. Gord Miller and Wayne Mitic. 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

Indigenous child welfare; early intervention; child and family; children in care; prevention

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