

A Framework for Social Work Practice: Usma Child and Family Services

by

Linda Lucas
B.S.W., University of Victoria, 1996

A Thesis submitted in the partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

in the faculty of Graduate Studies, School of Social Work

© Linda Lucas, 2008
University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This thesis may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy
or other means, without the permission of the author

Supervisory Committee

A Framework for Social Work Practice: Usma Child and Family Services

by

Linda Lucas
B.S.W., University of Victoria, 1996

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Leslie Brown, (School of Social Work)
Supervisor

Dr. Andrew Armitage, (School of Social Work)
Departmental Member

Dr. Susan Boyd, (Studies in Policy and Practice)
Outside Member

Dr. William McGhee, (Human and Social Development)
External Examiner

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Leslie Brown, (School of Social Work)
Supervisor

Dr. Andrew Armitage, (School of Social Work)
Departmental Member

Dr. Susan Boyd, (Studies in Policy and Practice)
Outside Member

Dr. William McGhee, (Human and Social Development)
External Examiner

Abstract

This exploratory study examines social work practice at Usma Child and Family Services and provides a descriptive understanding of social work practice within the Nuuchahnulth communities. An interpretive analysis explores participants' views about social work practice in a First Nations child welfare context. Qualitative interviewing and thematic analyses provide the basis for theme identification, which includes: Historical and political influences; Family and extended family; Building relationships; Children in care: knowing where they are from; and Helper's values. The study concludes with a discussion of Aboriginal social work practice as a decolonizing framework.

Table of Contents

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
STATEMENT OF NEED FOR THE STUDY	4
PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH	5
RESEARCH QUESTION	6
THESIS OUTLINE	7
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	9
INTRODUCTION	9
LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CONTEXT	9
THE IMPETUS FOR ABORIGINAL CONTROL OF CHILD WELFARE	16
ABORIGINAL HELPING PRACTICES	30
<i>Colonialism and Social Work</i>	31
<i>An Aboriginal Strengths Based Approach</i>	33
PREVENTION PROGRAMS AND CHILD WELFARE	39
<i>Carrier Sekani Child and Family Services</i>	41
<i>Lalum’utul’Smun’eem Child and Family Services</i>	43
<i>Tikinagan Child and Family Services: Talking Together Circle</i>	44
<i>Mi’kmaw Family and Children’s Services</i>	46
<i>Usma Child and Family Services – Preventative Services</i>	46
CONCLUSION	48
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	51
INTRODUCTION	51
QUALITATIVE DESIGN	53
SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS AND DATA COLLECTION	53
QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS.....	56
DATA ANALYSIS	56
ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	57

SITUATING THE RESEARCHER	59
LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH.....	60
CHAPTER 4: THE RESEARCH FINDINGS	62
THE PRACTICE APPROACH.....	62
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH	80
REFERENCES.....	86
APPENDIX A	97
APPENDIX B	98
APPENDIX C	99
APPENDIX D	100

Chapter 1: Introduction

I have had this vivid memory, which I have never forgotten, of walking with my grandmother on First Street in Port Alberni. I was only about 3 years old and we had recently moved from the Hesquiaht reserve to Port Alberni as my grandmother's health required specialized medical attention. As we were walking, I noticed Victor, my cousin sitting on the front steps of a house. I wanted to run to him but my grandmother stopped me. I continued to walk with her but I know Victor looked sad and forlorn that we just walked past him, without really acknowledging him. I couldn't understand why he wasn't with us or why we couldn't talk to him, after all he had moved with us from Hesquiaht to Port Alberni.

It was not until my adult life that I am became aware that Victor was in foster care and remained in foster care, bouncing from home to home until he reached 19 years of age. I also came to understand that my grandmother could not continue to care for Victor and me at the same time. In hindsight, I suppose it was either Victor or me in foster care, I am grateful it was not me, but I have lived with a sense of guilt that Victor's fate was foster care. I did not see Victor again till I was in my 30's. Victor passed away in March 2005 of AIDS and prior to his passing we were finally able to talk about that fateful day that I walked passed him as a child with my grandmother and we could not acknowledge him. It was a cathartic and emotional experience for both of us (Linda Lucas, personal memoirs).

I have started my introduction to my thesis with this short life story, which epitomizes my first experience with child welfare. As an adolescent, I used to ponder and reflect on Victor and his fate; it made me wonder and question: "Where was the family?" "Where was his mom?" "Why didn't anyone step up and take him into their home?" I could only ask these questions in my adult life and the answers were short, stoical, and

indifferent. The only answer seemed to be that this was a difficult era. I have come to an acute awareness of this era and the challenges experienced by my family and I know this was a time of transition and change. This era also included a migration from the reserve for many of my family. Also many of my extended family members, particularly my aunts and uncles and their cohort of relatives had only recently finished their term at residential school. I have heard relatives lament about their experience at the school and the recounting of their experiences. Many never understood why they were taken away as a six year old child and never allowed to speak their language, exposed to a strange environment with different food, rules, and modes of behavior. It is within this context of change and completion that the migration from the reserve seemed to be the answer and why Victor's destiny was foster care.

Although, I continued to have more experiences related to child welfare, it was not until my adult life that I have been able to put these experiences in perspective. I have had many relatives who endured residential school, foster care and adoption. There are too many to count. Some of my relatives are healthy and thriving; some of them are not and have either passed away or some I see on the streets of Victoria and Vancouver or other urban city centers in Canada.

I continue to personally experience the trials and tribulations of extended family involved in the child welfare system. At times, I feel helpless, angry, and overwhelmed because there is such a frequent occurrence of family involvement in child welfare. A recent situation highlights my frustration. A 15 year old cousin and her 2 year old toddler were living in a foster home in the same community where I live. It was not until the young teen was placing her daughter for adoption that we were contacted or notified that

she was living in the same community. It was too late, the adoption process was started. All that I could do was to express my frustration to the social worker for not broadening his search for meaningful involvement of extended family. These experiences are not infrequent but I believe the point is clear: Most if not all First Nations people are affected by the child welfare, including the history of residential schools.

I can see the historical impact of residential school as one aspect of the colonization process. This, for me, has been meaningful to put it into a contextual framework, but does not negate the impact. I am continually flabbergasted, at times, about how to help my family and extended family, who draw on my skills and knowledge of the 'system.' There have been times in my social work practice that I don't have the answers or know the best way to help children, families, and communities in crisis. I am in a constant state of where the 'personal becomes political.'

I must admit, I did not go into the field of child welfare as a first choice of occupation, rather it seemed rather happenstance. Walmsley (2005) suggests that Aboriginal social workers have different motivations for entering into the field of child welfare than non-Aboriginal practitioners. "There is a personal experience base and a desire "to make a difference" among Aboriginal practitioners that is not evident among non-Aboriginal practitioners" (Walmsley, 2005, p. 33). It was while completing my undergraduate course at the University of Victoria, that I became involved in practicum placements which entailed a child welfare policy perspective and a front line practicum in child protection. Prior to completing my degree, I worked in various capacities providing support services to First Nations families. Since completing my degree, I have worked in various organizations including a fully delegated First Nations child and family service

agency, the Ministry for Children and Family Development, and currently as an Executive Director of the Caring for First Nations Children Society. The society provides professional development and training to Aboriginal child welfare agencies, and is involved with policy development with the federal and provincial governments. I have an opportunity to travel to almost every First Nations child and family service agency in the province of BC meet their staff, and develop an understanding of their programs.

In these various occupations in the field of child welfare, I have heard first hand stories and observed social work practices which have not benefited families, children or communities. Rather, the practices have been coercive and are a detriment to families. I view this as being more prevalent within mainstream social work practices as opposed to First Nations child and family service agencies. I have also observed in my current employment capacity how these practices are played out. They are reinforced by the Ministry for Children and Family Development's policies and in the culture of the organization which focuses on the 'protection paradigm.' It is within this context that I have chosen to complete my research in the field of Aboriginal child welfare as I believe that First Nations child and family service agencies are able to provide child welfare services differently than the BC Ministry for Children and Family Development (MCFD).

Statement of Need for the Study

There is a lack of research about First Nations child and family service agencies within British Columbia and how delegated First Nations social workers are practicing within the confines of legislation and policy. This may seem surprising given that in BC half of the 10,000 children in care are of First Nations ancestry (Data Services Branch, 2007, p. 10). The lack of research in the area of First Nations child welfare is problematic

for a number of reasons. Despite the limitations of the delegated authority to deliver child welfare services, there has been an increase in the development of First Nations child and family service agencies (herein referred to as FNCFSAs) in BC. Although there is an increase in First Nations¹ communities assuming responsibility for providing community based child welfare services, there is very little academic research or documentation about social work practice within the various communities or FNCFSAs providing the services. The insufficient research is apparent in all facets of social service delivery that provide services to Aboriginal populations on reserve.

This became obvious to me as I completed research for this thesis specifically about First Nations social work practices; however, there are a few exceptions (see Green & Thomas 2007; Brown, Haddock, & Kovach, 2005; Macdonald, 2004) specific to BC. This is a concern, as Aboriginal ways of helping are not being highlighted in research and neither is it clearly defined as to what constitutes effective practice with Aboriginal people. Further, defining helping practices from an Aboriginal perspective are not recognized by mainstream social workers or service providers and this is problematic considering the number of Aboriginal children and families involved in child welfare within BC.

Purpose of the Research

In conducting the research for this thesis, I hoped to gain insight and define a framework of social work practice from a First Nations perspective. From my own experience, I believe the social work practice in a First Nations community is different from the norm of the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development. I have observed and heard from FNCFSAs who have been able to provide alternatives to child

¹ For clarity the term First Nations or Aboriginal is used to indicate 'status Indian' populations.

apprehensions and who are providing culturally appropriate services for communities. I would also suggest that despite the limitations imposed by federal funding, and provincial legislation and policy, FNCFSA are adapting a framework or model of social work delivery with the children, families, and communities they serve.

Defining the nuance and highlighting effective social work practice in a First Nations context has only recently been acknowledged as a focus of research (see Green & Thomas, 2007). It is important from my perspective, as a First Nations person, to bring attention to and define a framework of social work practice specific to First Nations child welfare. As well, I believe this will generate positive knowledge about First Nations social work practice in communities. Defining a framework of social work practice in a First Nations context would be an addition and an asset to the knowledge base regarding the recent emergence of First Nations child and family service agencies and hopefully benefit the Ministry of Children and Family Development practitioners, who continue to work with First Nations children and families.

Research Question

I approached Usma Child and Family Services, a program administered by the Nuu chah nulth Tribal Council, to explore the potential of completing research at the agency. My reasoning for approaching this particular agency, as opposed to other First Nations child welfare agencies is that I wanted to give something back to the communities and to the agency. As a member of the Hesquiaht Nation, which is affiliated with the Nuu chah nulth Tribal Council, I have a vested interest in supporting and completing research at Usma. As part of the outcome of this research, I offered to provide a synopsis of the thesis to the agency that could be used as an introduction to practice for new staff. The agency

willingly agreed. It is with these aspirations that I approached Usma Child and Family Services (herein, referred to Usma C&FS) about completing research with the agency staff. The intent of the research project is to discover and define the framework of social work practice at Usma C&FS. To accomplish this, I met with social workers employed by Usma C&FS and asked questions which were intended to generate discussion about social work practice with Nuuchahnulth children, families and in the communities (see Appendix A).

Thesis Outline:

The thesis is structured in the following manner:

Introduction, Chapter 1: Literature Review, Chapter 2: Methodology, and Chapter 3: Research Findings. The thesis concludes with a discussion about the Implications for the research. Each of these sections will be discussed.

The introduction provides an overview of my interest in this area of study. It also discusses the need, rationale of the research and highlights the purpose of the research focus. The literature (Chapter 1) review draws attention to critical aspects of history and the colonial practices and policies which continue to impact First Nations communities. As well, there is a section pertaining to the rationale for the evolution and increase in FNCFS, which also includes an exploration of the current context of FNCFS. This is followed by a section about Usma C&FS and the rationale for the emergence of this program. The literature review also covers Aboriginal helping practices and examines it within the context of current research. The final section of the literature review examines a number of Aboriginal child welfare prevention programs in Canada, including Usma C&FS. The review of prevention programs is intended to highlight significant programs

that support children, families, and communities, and to situate Usma C&FS within the context of child welfare.

The methodology section (chapter 2) explains the choice of the interpretive approach and discusses it in the context of an Indigenous perspective. It includes a review of the qualitative design and data analysis including the development of themes. This section also gives consideration to selection of participants, ethical considerations and situating the researcher, and concludes with the limitations of the study. The outcomes of the study are discussed in the findings section (chapter 3) and bring attention to specific aspects of the interviews that are relevant to the research question. Usma C&FS evolved as a result of the colonial history and child welfare practices and the findings reveal that Usma C&FS incorporates a decolonizing framework for social work practice. The decolonizing framework acknowledges the historical and political influences; maintains a focus on children in care and maintaining involvement of the family, extended family and the community; and it also recognizes the importance of relationships. The final section of this chapter outlines the implications of the research and discusses the researcher's views on social work practice within the delegated model.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Many aspects of social welfare have had an enormous impact on First Nations communities. In attempting to understand First Nations child welfare in its current context, it is important to review the historical era of the colonizing governments' legislation, policies and practices, and their relationship to Aboriginal families, children and communities. This will provide a causal explanation for the rise in FNCFS, which is apparent in many First Nations communities in BC and across Canada. Further, the social costs and effects of these past policies of assimilation on Aboriginal children and communities continue. They take the form of social control mechanisms such as the *Indian Act (1876)*, and the fact that Aboriginal communities must continue to adhere to policies regulated and enforced by the federal government. Mathias and Yabsley note that “[t]he consequences of this legislation in terms of economic well being, political power, cultural integrity and spiritual strength are immeasurable” (1991, p. 35).

Legislative and Policy Context

The policy era of Indian affairs and federal legislation, provided a legal framework for Aboriginal people to become ‘wards’ of the state, which also denied access to political or self governing authority. The *British North America Act* of 1867 provided a mechanism and opportunity under section 91(24) for the “... federal governments’ exclusive legislative authority for ‘Indians and Lands Reserved for Indians’ ” (Morse, 1999, p.18). However, the government enacted the *Indian Act (1876)* and made laws of general application applicable to First Nations, and this also negated First Nations governance and jurisdiction. Under the auspices of the *Indian Act (1876)*, all aspects of Aboriginal life, including education, came under Federal government

control and through the various policies of assimilation the government sought to civilize the 'Indian.'

Shewell and Spagnut (1995) outline stages in government policy in reference to First Nations in Canada. In the first stage, all government responsibility for Aboriginal peoples fell under the Royal Proclamation of 1763 which treated Aboriginal people as separate and sovereign nations under the protection of the British crown. In the second stage, following Confederation in 1867 the federal government "... continued the policy of 'civilization' and assimilation under laws carried forward from the colonial legislatures" (Shewell & Spagnut, 1995, p. 2). The third stage, from the 1900's on, all policy was directed toward 'assimilation' and 'subjugation' of First Nations people.

As Milloy (1999) notes:

Indeed, to discover the roots of the Canadian residential school system, we must make recourse to the history of the pre-Confederation period of Imperial control of Indian affairs. It was in that earlier era that the assimilative policy took shape with the design of programs for the "civilization" of the Indian population of Upper Canada. The policy was then given a final legislative form, in the first decade after Confederation, with the determination of the constitutional position of Indian First Nations expressed in two early Indian acts: 1869 and 1876 (p. 8).

Milloy is referencing the *Enfranchisement Act* which was passed in 1869 and it included a provision about the marriage of Aboriginal woman outside of their culture. As referenced in the *Enfranchisement Act* (1869):

Provided always that any Indian woman marrying any other than an Indian, shall cease to be an Indian within the meaning of this Act, nor shall the children issue of such marriage be considered as Indians within the meaning of this Act. Provided also, that any Indian woman marrying an Indian of any other tribe, band or body shall cease to be a member of the tribe, band or body to which she formerly belonged, and become a member of the tribe, band or body of which her husband is a member, and the children, issue of this marriage, shall belong to their father's tribe only.

In addition, the *Indian Act* (1876) gave broad regulatory power to a single department and through the administration of the Indian agent to implement, oversee, and enforce compliance with the Act (Gibbons, 1997, p. 21). Morse (1999, p. 18) notes that the federal government utilized its powers to create a statutory definition of an ‘Indian’ under the *Indian Act* (1876), rather than allow First Nations to self define and self regulate membership. While there are many discourses for referencing the ‘Indian,’ they are primarily the “...interpretation by the dominant or colonizer in which the dominated or colonized are styled as ‘Other’ (Slowey, 2000, p. 2). Further, the “...institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles” support this process of othering (Smith, 1999, p. 3).

Concerning First Nations people in Canada, the categorizations and terms are profuse: First Nations, Aboriginal, Native, Métis, metis, Inuit, Indian, and Indigenous. However, one must recognize that the *Indian Act* (1876) has narrowly defined who is an ‘Indian.’

The *Indian Act* as federal legislation defines an Indian as:

[a] person who, pursuant to this *Act*, is registered as an Indian or is entitled to be registered as an Indian. To be eligible to receive benefits under the *Indian Act*, individuals must be registered in the Indian Register, which is maintained by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. The recognition by the federal government of persons registered under the *Indian Act* is referred to as Registered Indian Status (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1999, p. 6).

The Canadian Bar Association (cited in Four Arrows newsletter) regards the *Indian Act* as a “racist piece of legislation.” They also state that “[t]he *Indian Act* is, fundamentally, a piece of 19th Century legislation that is based on 19th Century precepts of race and ethnic and national origin, which are very much at odds with our modern 20th Century and 21st Century views of individual human rights” (2007, p. 1). This is

exemplified in that there are a number of categories for defining a Status Indian person under the act. Further, membership benefits do not apply to Non-Status Indians, including Métis and Inuit, or individuals of First Nations ancestry who are not eligible to be registered under the *Indian Act* as an ‘Indian’ because of defining criteria. Thus, they are denied ‘registered Indian status’ and membership in a First Nations community.

Aboriginal women have criticized the *Indian Act* for its discriminatory aspects. For instance, the intent of Bill C -31, an amendment to the Indian Act in 1985, was to eliminate discrimination of women. However, Sayers and MacDonald note that the colonizing effects of the *Indian Act* results in “...the effective denial of many First Nations women, and their offspring, to the right of membership in their respective First Nations communities and their right to Indian Status” (2001, p. 11). Prior to this amendment, if a status woman married a non-status man, the woman would ‘lose’ her Indian status. Thus, she would not be eligible for membership in her community or “disenfranchised” from any of the social, political, and cultural connections to community (Sayers and MacDonald 2001, p. 11). The opposite was the case for a status Indian man – if he married a non status woman (Caucasian or other race), she would gain Indian status. Bill C-31 effectively created more categories of Status Indians and eligibility for attaining status is applied to the woman’s children. Joseph (1991) also suggests that the amendment to the Indian Act may have removed discriminatory clauses, and gave First Nations more authority to citizenship rights but it also created more classifications:

Bill C-31 has proven to be a modernized and more sophisticated instrument for the advancement of the age-old crusade of government to assimilate Indian people into Euro-Canadian society. Restoration of equality rights is limited by both the restrictive government policies and by discriminatory provisions maintained within the Act. The concept of equality is further undermined by “class distinctions” under the membership section of the revised Indian Act. Prior to 1985, government classified Indian people as

being either “status” or “non-status.” Following the Act amendments, Indian people fall into one of four classifications: Status with Band Memberships, Status only, Non-Status Band Members, or Non Status Indians (p. 66).

Residential Schools

One of the tools of assimilation and civilization of First Nations people was the residential school system, administered by the Indian agents, the Indian Affairs administration, and the churches. Given that the *Indian Act* (1876) gave regulatory powers to the administration, this provided the “...context and rationale for the development of residential schools, which in turn constituted part of the most extensive and persistent colonial system - one that marginalized Aboriginal communities within its constitutional, legislative, and regulatory structure ...” (Milloy, 1999, p. 9). The primary objective of these schools was to eliminate any sign of Aboriginality replacing it with a Euro-western culture, knowledge and spirituality. “As Aboriginal parents would seldom voluntarily send their children to these often distant schools, the Government of Canada amended the *Indian Act* to force Indian parents to send their children aged 5-15 years to the schools” (Sinclair, Bala, Lilles, Blackstock, 2004, p. 206).

Although the initiation of education and Christianity into Aboriginal life, as a tool of assimilation, has a long history it should be noted that the historical partnership of church and state lead to the increase and proliferation of residential schools across Canada. Despite the federal government’s growing awareness of the failures (i.e., high death rates, health related problems, minimal education or skills) of the residential schools, “[t]he cumulative onslaught of criticism did little to deter Canada’s complicity with the churches in obscuring the schools’ failures until well into the 1960s” (Fournier and Crey, 1997, p. 50).

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), a national inquiry into Aboriginal issues, was instrumental in documenting the effects of residential school on attendees, as well as highlighting its effects on successive generations of children, families, and communities. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (RCAP) heard first hand testimony from Aboriginal people about the effects of the residential schools. The testimonials attributed family breakdown, suicide, addictions, domestic violence, and the loss of parenting and language skills to the residential schools, and highlighted multigenerational effects. A submission to the RCAP (1996) describes the multigenerational impact of residential schools:

The residential school system led to a disruption in the transference of parenting skills from one generation to the next. Without these skills, many survivors have difficulty in raising their children. In residential schools, they learned that adults often exert power and control through abuse. The lessons learned in childhood are often repeated in adulthood with the result that many survivors of residential schools system often inflict abuse on their own children. These children in turn use the same tools on their children (p. 379).

In addition, Fournier and Crey (1997) suggest that “[n]owhere in Canada was the instrument of the residential school used more brutally and thoroughly than in British Columbia, where despite relatively late settlement by Europeans, the schools endured longer than anywhere else” (p. 50). British Columbia also had the highest concentrations of residential schools in the country. Numerous writers and reports have documented the forced removal of children from communities under the guise of education (Assembly of First Nations, 1995; Chrisjohn, 1993; Furniss, 1991; Nuu chah nulth Tribal Council, 1996; Olsen, 2001). A report by Dr. Bryce, Chief Medical Health Officer for the Government of Canada, 1907 found that the death rate at the schools from preventable disease was a shocking 24% per annum increasing to 46% if the children were tracked over a three year

period (RCAP, 1996). Bryce's report was released to the government and published in the media, however, the only response the government had to the report was to eliminate the Chief Medical Health Officer position. The schools continued to operate under these conditions for decades with many schools opening cemeteries on school grounds to bury the children (Milloy, 1999).

It is clear that one of the goals of the schools was the elimination and negation of culture. Children were routinely punished for speaking their language or expressing their culture, traditions, and customs. Haig Brown (1998, p. 16) refers to her father, "...who attended Alberni Indian Residential School for four years in the twenties, was physically tortured by his teachers for speaking Tsehaht: they pushed sewing needles through his tongue, as routine punishment for language offenders." The Nuu chah nulth Tribal Council's (1996) study, which is specific to residential schools located within their traditional territory, documents the affects on attendees. The personal stories speak to the 'loss' of family ties, culture, language, and the physical and sexual abuse, and a mistrust in the present systems designed to support Nuu chah nulth children, families, and communities. Further, the study brings attention to how the schools failed to prepare the students for life outside of school, while stripping the children of their cultural knowledge. The current focus for many attendees is healing from the residential schools and this has taken the form of recovering cultural pride through language, traditional activities, and community involvement in therapeutic counseling.

Despite knowledge of the failure of residential schools and the 1948 federal government policy that recommended the closure of all residential school, they persisted for another four decades, but what replaced it "...became part of a wider approach to the

question of child welfare services” (Milloy, 1999, p. 211). In considering the historical impacts of residential school, and the concerns in communities, it is not surprising in the context of child welfare that we are seeing an increase in First Nations assuming authority over child welfare to their communities.

The Impetus for Aboriginal Control of Child Welfare

It is critically important to understand the shifts in ideological perspectives concerning First Nations and the care of children from a residential school model to a provincial child welfare model of service delivery. During the 1940’s the Department of Indian Affairs was re-evaluating its program for First Nations people and reform included the ‘integration’ scheme, but the churches continued the management of residential schools. In part, this ideological shift occurred because of the Canadian Child Welfare Council’s submission to the Senate. According to Johnson, “[i]n essence the council condemned the practice of residential schools and contended that First Nations children should have access to the same programs and services, and that Indian children who are neglected lack the protection afforded under social legislation available to white children in the community” (1983, p. 3). Historically, there was no organized approach to providing child welfare services on reserve.

Thus, Ottawa amended the *Indian Act* in 1951 and made section 88 – laws of general application – applicable to reserves. This included the extension of all program areas that were the jurisdiction of the provinces, including education, health, and child welfare. The extension of provincial child welfare services to First Nations communities and the impact of the transfer from federal to provincial jurisdictions have been well documented (Armitage, 1993; Hawthorn, 1981; Johnson, 1983).

The initial transfer of provincial program areas for First Nations people to the provinces did not have an immediate or negative effect – at least in the area of child welfare. However, as the residential schools were closing and provincial child welfare legislation was implemented on reserve, there were significant changes in the child welfare landscape for First Nations communities. The publication of *Native Children and the Child Welfare System*, by Patrick Johnston (1983), created awareness of the child welfare injustices perpetuated against First Nations communities. Johnson is credited with coining the phrase the ‘sixties scoop’ and highlighting a phenomenon that refers to the significant number of Aboriginal children removed from First Nations communities and placed in care of provincial child welfare authorities. In the report, Johnson references the significant increase of Aboriginal children removed from their families.

In 1955 there were 3,433 children in the care of B.C.’s child welfare branch. Of that number, it was estimated that 29 children, or less than 1 per cent of the total, were of Indian ancestry. By 1964, however, 1,446 children in care in B.C. were of Indian extraction. That number represented 34.2 per cent of all children in care. Within ten years, in other words, the representation of Native children in B.C.’s child welfare system had jumped from almost nil to a third. It was a pattern being repeated in other parts of Canada as well (Johnson, 1983, p. 23).

Other researchers also identify a similar pattern. According to Armitage (1993), the statistics reveal that “[i]n the 1950s the number of status Indian children per 1,000 in the care of provincial child welfare agencies had been so low that statistics were not kept, but by the mid-1960s the number was substantially increasing until the mid-1970s” (p. 146). However, by 1978-79, the statistics reflect that 40% of the children in care were status Aboriginal children (Armitage, 1993, p. 148). Aboriginal children were placed in non Aboriginal foster homes or placed for adoption. “Aboriginal parents rarely had access to lawyers, and these apprehensions and adoptions were invariably rushed through the courts

without any type of meaningful judicial review” (Sinclair, Bala, Lilles, Blackstock, 2004, p. 206). The rationale for and increase in the development of FNCFS is critically important and linked to the devastating consequences of extending provincial child welfare legislation to First Nations people on reserve.

Specifically, the child welfare field has had, and continues to have a detrimental effect on many First Nations people and communities. The impacts of child welfare are a result of colonization and administration by government. Further, through the process of colonization, the various policies and political directives of the federal and provincial governments continue to be a dominant force in the lives of First Nations people. The increase in child and family service agencies controlled by Aboriginal people has been a priority “...given the devastating effects of government-run child welfare programs ... no other government program destroyed the lives, hearts, and minds of Aboriginal people [and] ...the harmful consequences linger today” (Durst, 1999, p. 187).

Mawhiney suggests that “[b]ecause government policies have had far-reaching and negative consequences for the welfare of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, it is particularly important that social workers understand the historical context for the current development of culturally-appropriate services provided in First Nations and other Aboriginal communities” (2001, p. 153). This has led to and provided the impetus for the development of social programs and services, which are under the control and authority of First Nations governance. In an effort to mitigate against the provincial child welfare authorities damaging effects, many First Nations communities in BC have or are in the process of developing child welfare programs.

Emergence of First Nations Child Welfare

During the 1980's, the Spallumcheen Nation and the Nuu chah nulth Tribal Council developed child and family service programs in response to concerns about the extension of provincial child welfare jurisdiction to their communities. The Spallumcheen Nation was the first Aboriginal community in British Columbia to initiate and develop a child welfare program. The Spallumcheen's child delivery program is unique in that it operates under a 'band bylaw' under the Indian Act. They are not obligated to adopt provincial legislation or standards, rather they have created their own program standards and procedures based on community needs. They were the first and only community in BC and Canada with such an arrangement between the provincial and federal governments as the federal government denied any further programs of this nature to develop. Essentially, the Spallumcheen Nation created enough media attention by what is commonly referred to as the 'Child Welfare Caravan' to convince the government of the time that they could deliver their own child welfare services. The Spallumcheen agreement with the province gave the band the authority to deliver child welfare services to their members. MacDonald notes that the following hand written agreement was signed by the province and the Spallumcheen Nation:

The Minister Human Resources agrees to respect the authority of the Spallumcheen Band Council to assume responsibility and control over their children. The Minister of Human Resources agrees to the desirability of returning Indian children of the Spallumcheen Band presently in the care of the Minister of Human Resources to the authority of the Spallumcheen Band and both parties agree to work out an appropriate plan in the best interests of each child presently in care, assuming that the Spallumcheen Band will develop necessary resources in negotiation with the federal government (1985, p. 76).

This was also the era that First Nations communities and their respective governments began asserting their authority to provide child welfare services to their membership. The Nuu chah nulth Tribal Council and the affiliated communities

subsequently expressed an interest in developing a child welfare program. The initial child welfare agreement signed by the provincial government and Nuu chah nulth Tribal Council was on November 7, 1985 and Usma Child and Family Services² became operational. The mandate for the provision of child welfare services was assumed by the Nuu chah nulth Tribal Council and delegated by the provincial Director of Child Welfare. “The Usma’s program authority was established through two bilateral agreements; one with the Federal Government for funding and the second with the Province for the delegation of authority over child and family services” (First Nations Summit, 1992, p. 12).

The initial “Agreement between the Superintendent of Family and Child services of British Columbia and the Nuu Chah nulth Tribal Council” was two pages (with 3 pages of appendices) in length. The recently negotiated Delegation Confirmation Agreement is up to 15 pages (with 10 pages of appendices). This does not include the fact that some of the Usma C&FS social workers are delegated under the *Adoption Act* (1996) and this could require the agency to develop a Delegation Agreement with the Director of Adoptions. As articulated on the website of Usma, Child and Family Services (Website, accessed 2007) the mission of the agency is:

- To support parents, extended families, and communities in protecting their children from abuse and neglect.
- To recognize and strengthen Nuu chah nulth culture and identity.
- To strengthen and maintain the extended family system. To ensure the healthy growth and development of all children within Nuu chah nulth families and communities.

² Usma translated means “Precious Ones.”

- To provide protective services to families living on Nuuchahnulth reserves by investigating reports of child abuse and neglect and ensuring the safety and support of children who are victims of abuse and neglect.

The Usma C&FS jurisdiction extends to fourteen Tribes on Vancouver Island within the Nuuchahnulth territory. The meaning of “Nuuchahnulth” refers to the geographical terrain and mountainous region occupied by the Nuuchahnulth people. The Nuuchahnulth territory covers the West Coast of Vancouver Island from Brooks Peninsula north of Kyuquot to Sheringham Point south of Port Renfrew and includes the Makah Nation (see Map Appendix C). Each community is governed by its own Chief and Council, and “... all 14 councils sit together on the Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council” (Read, 1995, p. 299). The following 14 Nations come under the mandate of Usma Child and Family Services with the exception of the Pacheedaht Nation (located in Port Renfrew, British Columbia), and the Makah Nation (located in Makah, Washington).

1. Che:k:tl̓es7et'h/ Ka:'yu:'k't'h' First Nation
2. Ehattshaht First Nation
3. Nuchatlaht First Nation
4. Mowachaht/Muchalaht Nation
5. Hesquiaht First Nation
6. Ahousaht First Nation
7. Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations
8. Ucluelet First Nation
9. Toquaht Nation
10. Tseshahht First Nation

11. Huu-ay-aht First Nation
12. Hupacasath First Nation
13. Uchucklesaht Tribe
14. Ditidaht First Nation

For Usma C&FS staff, travel to the 14 communities is accessible by logging road, sea plan or boat. This can appear to be a barrier to engaging families and the communities, but since its inception Usma C&FS has developed unique approaches to meeting the needs of the various communities it serves.

Primarily, the negative effects of the BC provincial child welfare legislation and practices spurred the evolution of Usma Child and Family Services.

The history of forcibly removing children from First Nations communities for placement in residential schools and adoption in non Aboriginal communities lead the Usma Child and Family Services to develop alternative child welfare practices, acknowledging and affirming community capacity to care for children instead of taking them away” (Foxcroft & Blackstock, 2003, p. 108).

Usma C&FS staff also identified that Nuuchahnulth children raised in “...white foster homes lose their sense of who they are, who their family is, and where they come from” (Ha-Shilth-sa, May 1988, p. 5). For Usma C&FS staff, attempting to repatriate children back to their First Nations communities of origin was problematic as children had been disconnected from their families and communities for the duration of their time in care. “It became apparent to the social workers that children who had been in care of the provincial government had experienced long term foster care placement with a multitude of placements, and they had no contact with extended family and experienced significant social and emotional problems” (Ha-Shilth-sa, May 1988, p. 5). Usma C&FS identified important considerations at the development of their program which they incorporated into

their service delivery model and particularly significant is the emphasis on maintaining extended family contact with children in care.

The concerns noted by Spallumcheen and Usma C&FS about placement and services for children and families involved with the provincial child welfare system were not an isolated matter. Rather other First Nations communities across BC raised alarms about the extension of provincial child welfare jurisdiction into their communities and began the process of developing a FNCFSA. Currently, in BC the statistics reflect that Aboriginal children in care of the provincial government are disproportionate compared to the rest of the population. As of June 2007, the MCFD Data Services Branch reveals that there are 9,274 children in care of the Director of Child Welfare (p. 10). Of the total number of children in care, 4,739 are of Aboriginal descent or 51.1% of the children in care are Aboriginal. Further, 85% of the Aboriginal children identified are of First Nations ancestry and have status as defined under the Indian Act and the majority of the Aboriginal children in care are affiliated with a First Nations community within British Columbia. Approximately, 1,400 of the children in care of the Director of the MCFD are in care of the delegated authority of FNCFSA. The statistics have remained relatively static considering Armitage's (1993) analysis and the current landscape of Aboriginal children in care.

The Ministry of Children and Family Development's Delegated Aboriginal Child and Family Service Agency list (January 2008) indicates that there are 24 Aboriginal Child and Family Service Agencies (not including Spallumcheen). These agencies are currently providing child and family services to 127 First Nations communities out of the 198 Aboriginal communities in British Columbia, including the Nisga'a Lisims Government.

In addition, there are a total of 3 FNCFSA in start up and planning for delegated authority representing 8 First Nations communities.

The following Table 1 outlines the numbers of agencies with delegation, including Spallumcheen, providing services to their respective communities and the agencies in the various developmental phases (Startup, Voluntary Services, Guardianship, and Child Protection) that are intent on building capacity and the infrastructure for the eventual ability to provide child welfare services to their communities and membership. This also includes the 3 Urban Aboriginal Agencies providing services to greater Vancouver, Surrey and Victoria (respectively - Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society, Métis Family Services, and Surrounded by Cedar), which receive their funding from the provincial government and are providing support and services to a substantial number of Aboriginal people living in urban areas.

Table 1: First Nations Child and Family Service Agencies and Developmental Stages

Delegation Level	Total # Agencies	# of Communities Served
Full Protection	8 FNCFSA	65
Guardianship Services	11 FNCFSA	52
Voluntary Services	3 FNCFSA	9
By law - Spallumcheen	1	1
Total	23 FNCFSA	127

Total # of Agencies in Development	2 Developmental FNCFSA	8
TOTAL	25	128

In many respects the increase in FNCFSA delivering or planning to deliver child welfare services indicates a level of financial commitment by the federal government and a commitment by the provincial government to First Nations governance and authority for child welfare. Despite the bureaucratic layers a FNCFSA must 'jump through' to become operational or at a level of program readiness, there has been an increase in FNCFSA and this has increased dramatically since Spallumcheen implemented their program in 1985. The interest and assertion by First Nations communities and their governments to provide child welfare authority culminated with the increasing awareness of the ineffectiveness of provincial child welfare authorities and the increase of Aboriginal children in care of provincial governments. This is evident considering that the Nuu chah nulth Tribal Council signed their original Agreement in 1985 and the most recent agency to sign a delegation agreement to provide Voluntary Services is Nezul Be Hunuyeh Child and Family Services in 2002.

Funding Model: Directive 20-1

In 1986 Indian and Northern Affairs Canada placed a moratorium on the development of FNCFSA across Canada, while it undertook a study of child and family services on reserve. According to MacDonald and Ladd (2000) the moratorium was initiated due to the variety of ad hoc child welfare arrangements made between the provincial and federal governments and First Nations. It also became apparent that there

were inconsistencies in funding and child welfare arrangements were not clear. As well, it became obvious to the Indian Affairs that “[b]y the mid 1980s the cost for services had increased significantly” (Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1995, p. i).

In 1989, when the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) lifted the moratorium and issued the Directive 20-1 funding formula it was to ensure ‘equity, comparability, and flexibility’ for FNCFSAs on a national scale. The formula provides funding for FNCFSA operations and reimbursement of actual maintenance costs (i.e., foster care payments and any other costs associated with children in care) for the children in care. The intent of Directive 20-1 is “to ensure that Indian children and families living on-reserve have access to culturally –sensitive child and family services in their communities and that these services are comparable to those available to other provincial residents in other circumstances” (DIAND, p. i, 1995).

Funding is based on the numbers of children under the age of 19, living on reserve and of those identified as ‘status Indians.’ Higher population counts of children less than 19 years of age are preferable as the FNCFSA has more economies of scale and capacity to deliver and receive maximum funding for a child welfare program. Further, Directive 20-1 (Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1991) recommends, “[e]ach organization should if possible serve at least 1,000 children (0-18 years of age)” (p. 5). The minimum number to be eligible for funding is 250 children living on reserve. The defining criterion for eligibility has been difficult to implement in BC given the small size of many First Nations communities. Hence, one will observe First Nations communities

amalgamate, not necessarily from the same tribal or cultural group, to develop a child welfare agency to increase the population being served and the viability of the agency.

While Directive 20-1 funding model is designed for all FNCFSA on a national scale it is challenging to apply a generic model of federal funding across cultural and provincial jurisdictions. It does not support or take into consideration variations in provincial legislation, regional, geographical, territorial or cultural differences. McDonald and Ladd (2000) note the contradictory nature of the funding as it does not support provincial legislative change nor does it support the principle of Directive 20-1 in that the “DIAND commitment to the expansion of services on reserve comparable to the services provided off reserve in similar circumstances”(p. 11).

For example, in BC the Directive 20-1, until recently, did not support a variety of legislated responsibilities under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* (1996) or the *Adoption Act* (1996). In September 2007 INAC announced funding would be made available for FNCFSA to deliver what is commonly referred to as ‘Out of Care Options.’ FNCFSA are now able to provide for:

- Section 7- Special Needs Agreements;
- Section 8 – Agreements with child’s kin and others;
- Part 2.1 Youth Transitional and Support Services and Agreements (all sections);
- Section 54.1 Transfer of custody to a person who is not a parent;
- Custom Adoption under the *Adoption Act*, and
- Post Adoption Assistance, which provides financial as well as other support services (counseling, psychological/educational assessments etc) for adoptive children and parents.

The eligibility and funding criteria affect the ability to deliver the full range of family and child services effectively including the least disruptive measures, and preventative services so children do not have to be brought into care.

The Directive 20-1 references the provincial role (section 6.5 and 12.0) in developing agreements with First Nations and federal counterparts for the delivery of child welfare services. In BC the model of delegated authority for First Nations to provide child welfare services on reserve is limited by the province and legislation (as are other provincial jurisdictions). The *Child, Family, and Community Service Act* (1996) identifies the 'Director of Child Welfare' as the primary person responsible for fulfilling the powers and duties articulated in the act. The Director is designated by the Minister of Children and Family Development to administer the legislation and to function as the Director of child welfare. Recently, the minister designated five additional Directors in the MCFD regions as a means to provide for more autonomy and local decision making and "as a critical step on the path towards regional governance" (Hughes, 2006, p. 73). However, for the FNCFSA, the reporting relationship is with the provincial Director as opposed to a regional Director. The *Child, Family and Community Service Act* (herein, referred to as CFCSA 1996) also defines the Director's authority to delegate his authority to individual social workers to perform their duties under the Act.

Essentially, section 92 (1) (2) of the CFCSA identifies how social workers' responsibilities are delegated under the Act. In addition, the Director of Child Welfare requires these responsibilities in writing. The delegation of authority for a FNCFSA to provide child welfare services is confirmed through a Delegation Enabling Agreement or a Delegation Confirmation Agreement and is subject to the Minister's authority under

section 90 of the CFCSA (see Appendix B). However, prior to becoming operational a FNCFSA must complete three stages (pr-planning, planning, and startup) of program development. This provides the FNCFSA an opportunity for capacity building in each stage of program development and it is prior to the delegation of social workers and signing a Delegation Enabling Agreement (Aboriginal Operational Practice Standards and Indicators, 1999). The initial agreement is referred to as a Delegation Enabling Agreement (DEA), which have a review date of 5 years, and any subsequent agreements that are negotiated are referred to as a Delegation Confirmation Agreement (DCA).

The DEA or a DCA is a negotiated tripartite agreement with the federal and provincial governments as well as First Nations governance bodies. The DEA or DCA provides the FNCFSA the authority to provide child welfare services to their membership on reserve. There are some FNCFSA currently negotiating to provide off reserve services to their membership as well as the broader Aboriginal community; however, the logistics and financial details are not yet finalized. Without a signed DEA or DCA by the federal, provincial and First Nations governments, the FNCFSA are non-functional. These agreements have become more legalistic, complicated, and accountability driven as time has passed. While the majority of First Nations communities in BC have articulated an agreement with the provincial and federal governments, and there are concerns about service delivery within the funding framework, many are implementing unique programs. The next section will examine Aboriginal Helping Practices that promote culture, relationships, and focus on the strengths within families and the culture. It also examines prevention programs designed and developed by FNCFSA that emphasize cultural support,

and family engagement in planning so children do not have to be in foster care or removed from their families or communities.

Aboriginal Helping Practices

In the review of the historical context of legislation, policy and social work practices that have and continue to have a destructive effect on Aboriginal communities, it is not surprising that there is an emergent body of literature about Aboriginal ways of knowing and helping. Although it may appear to be a relatively new phenomenon, some authors maintain Aboriginal knowledge about helping practices have been kept hidden because of their sacredness (Nabigon & Mawhiney, 1996, p. 20). Other authors contend that Aboriginal helping has been invisible to the outsider because it was viewed from a 'different paradigm' or 'western worldview' (Nelson, Kelly & McPherson, 1985, p. 232; Nabigon & Mawhiney, 1996, p. 18). Further, the western worldview of creating knowledge is seen as legitimate and civilized, and until recently, the Aboriginal world view was negated and minimized.

This section will examine Aboriginal ways of helping, which share similarities with a 'strengths based perspective.' However, an Aboriginal helping perspective takes into account and gives consideration to:

- Colonization and the historical and current impacts; and
- the importance of healing from the effects of colonization; and
- opportunities for creating wellness in communities, and
- a resurgence of an Aboriginal world view, traditions, and values; and
- the importance of family relationships as critical to the formation and transfer of identity and values for children and youth.

In addition, to reviewing elements of helping within an Aboriginal context, consideration will be given to helping in the context of programs currently being developed or offered in BC and nationally. These programs are based on a preventative model of Aboriginal practice within the child welfare paradigm.

Colonialism and Social Work

The analyses of colonialism and the impacts for First Nations children, families and communities is an important starting point for many First Nations authors (see Battiste, 2000; Carasco, 1986; Gough, Blackstock, & Bala, 2005; Hart, 2002; Kline, 1992; Morrissette, McKenzie, & Morrissette, 1993; Sinclair, 2004). Other authors contend that it is imperative for social workers to understand the historical context when working with First Nations children, families, and communities (Yellowbird & Chenault, 1999; Mawhiney, 2001). As well, it is imperative to address the effects of colonization and genocide rather than viewing it as a personalized individual pathology. “The harm caused to First Nations children and communities by the dislocations of the residential schools and adoptions is now widely recognized. Many of these children experienced significant erosion of their cultural identity, and suffered profound, long-term negative psychological consequences that continue today” (Gough, Blackstock, and Bala, 2005, p. 2).

Sinclair (2004) argues that the 60’s scoop reflects a colonial approach that has manifested in child welfare and further suggests that “[a]lmost every contemporary social pathology or health issue in the communities can be attributed to the fallout of colonialism” (p. 50). Other authors attribute colonialism to the “host of ills in Indigenous communities” (Yellowbird, & Chenault, 1999, p. 207). Hart (2000) refers to the profession of social work and that it has not been an “innocent bystander” in the colonization process and through

their misguided altruism, social workers continue to oppress Aboriginal people (p. 232). Yellowbird and Chenault (1999) suggest that the social work literature rarely connects colonial theory with current conditions in First Nations communities. “Yet Indigenous social work scholars insist that understanding colonialism is essential to effective social work practice with First Nations peoples” (Yellowbird and Chenault, 1999 p. 207).

Carasco (1986) highlights how cultural bias in child welfare has contributed to a lack of respect or acknowledgement of the “indigenous factor.” This has resulted in the denigration of Aboriginal culture, beliefs and values systems in relation to mainstream child welfare practice. Further, “[r]emoving children from their home, weakens the entire community. Removing children from their culture and placing them in a foreign culture is an act of genocide” (Monture, 1989, p. 3). The emergence of FNCFSA is in response to the colonial historical practices of governments and the recent provincial mandate for the provision of child welfare services on reserve.

The analysis of colonialism is also grounded in the well being, health, and healing of First Nations. “The new reality begins by healing within the individual, healing within the family, healing within the community, and ultimately, within the nation” (Duck, Ironstar, & Ricks, 1997, p. 2). Hart describes healing not an individual journey completed in isolation for the self, but it is intended to be restorative for “... the person, community and nation” (2000, p. 239). The healing from the affects of colonization includes a restructuring and recreating of the Aboriginal world view. A world view is defined as ideas and views to which a culture subscribes, and “...represents ‘religious, political, social and physical’ information, which serves to socialize its citizens” (McKenzie, & Morrisette, 2003. p. 259). “A particular world view is transferred to citizens through

institutions such as family, teachings, and religion; in that process, particular values, attitudes, beliefs, and options are adopted” (McKenzie, & Morrissette, 2003. p. 259).

The world views of First Nations and non Aboriginal people are seen as divergent, in conflict, and clashing. Little Bear (2000) suggests that “[o]ne of the problems with colonialism is that it tries to maintain a singular social order by means of force and law, suppressing the diversity of worldviews” (p. 77). However, despite the colonial influences many communities are ‘taking back’ authority and the child welfare field is one example. The analyses of colonialism have contributed to social work practices that are intended to strengthen and empower First Nations communities on the path to self determination and assuming authority for the delivery of culturally appropriate services.

An Aboriginal Strengths Based Approach

There are differences and conflicts in Aboriginal and non Aboriginal social work approaches for First Nations people. Red Horse, Martinez, Day, Day, Pouport, and Shcharnberg suggest that:

In mainstream social work practice, confidentiality rules are established to deal with the social stigma of negative labels. In addition, there is a built in cultural bias that promotes individuality through independence and disconnection from the family and community as a demonstration of strength and stability. But for Indian families, it is natural to seek advice and approval from elders, extended family and kin” (2000, p. 35).

The approach to helping within First Nations communities is reflected in a “strengths” based perspective and an “empowerment” model of social work practice. Further, there are differences highlighted in the literature that encapsulate various practices in aboriginal communities and non Aboriginal communities. These differences are based on world views and “[t]he new thrust has come from the culture of empowerment, the desire of professionals to work “with” the client in an egalitarian, democratic manner that

respects and values a client's individual views and ways of being in the world" (Berg and Kelly, 2000, p. 16).

McKenzie and Morrissette (2003) outline an Aboriginal perspective or framework for social work practice and it draws on the framework proposed by Mullaly's (1997) 'structural approach' to social work practice. The structural approach makes connections with oppression and the connection of the personal and political in social work practice. McKenzie and Morrissette (2003) further suggest that the structural approach is consistent with the strengths approach and the empowerment model of social work practice. "However, an Aboriginal perspective for social work practice focuses on the particular nature of oppression experienced by Aboriginal people and the role of cultural values and traditions in re-establishing individual and collective well being" (McKenzie & Morrissette, 2003, p. 257). To work effectively with Aboriginal people, McKenzie and Morrissette propose a framework which includes the following elements:

- understanding of an Aboriginal world view;
- understanding the colonization process;
- "recognition of the importance of Aboriginal identity and consciousness;"
- "appreciation of the value of cultural knowledge and traditions in promoting healing and empowerment; and"
- "an understanding of the diversity of Aboriginal cultural expression" (2003, p. 258)

It has been suggested that mainstream models of social work tend to rely on the social worker as the 'professional' and 'expert' with all the skills, knowledge, and abilities, and the client as the recipient in need of help (Early & GlenMaye, 2000; Nelson, Kelly & McPherson, 1985). MacFarlane (2006) in her commentary about a 'strengths perspective'

states that “[p]eople are more motivated to work toward a goal that they have set for themselves than one that an expert has set on their behalf” (p. 175). Yellowbird and Chenault (1999) highlight that the strengths perspective is empowering for First Nations people and communities as it focuses on strengths in community and in the culture versus what they “do not have” (p. 207). Saleeby (as cited in Yellowbird and Chenault. 1999) highlights assumptions about the strengths perspective and it is based on the following:

- Despite life’s problems, all people and environments possess strengths that can be used to improve the quality of clients’ lives;
- Client motivation is based on fostering client strengths;
- Individuals and groups are more likely to continue autonomous development when they are supported by their own capacities, knowledge and skills;
- The social worker does not fill the role of “expert.” Discovering strengths requires cooperation collaboration between clients and workers;
- Social workers must avoid the victim mind-set and temptation to “blame the victim;” instead, they should focus on how the individual has managed to survive in an oppressive environment; and
- Any environment, no matter how harsh, contains resources (p. 205).

Nelson, Kelly and McPherson (1985) differentiate between a ‘formal helping system’ and an ‘Indian community network.’ They view the Indian community network as complex in terms of interrelationships and involvement of community and “... understanding Indian helping is to recognize that it is firmly embedded in and grew out of its natural context – the tribal community” (p. 236). Nelson, Kelly and McPherson also

suggest that in the formal helping system the focus is on the ‘problem’ of the client “... rather than on the total life space of the individual or family” (1985, p. 235).

Hillary Weaver (1999) in her research about culturally competent helping practices refers to the specific skills required when working with Native Americans (p. 221). She identifies the skills as ‘general skills’ and ‘containment skills.’ In reference to general skills, communication and problem solving were highlighted as important, which involves active engagement of families. One participant in her study stated that “ [t]he biggest (most important) skill I can think of is the ability to interact and engage Indian people (collectively and individually) in a problem solving process that’s based on the definition of the problem and arrival of the solution from an Indian perspective” (1999, p. 221). Similarly, Weaver (1999) argues that when working with Aboriginal people competent social work practice involves a ‘strengths’ perspective as well as the ability to empathize. (p. 222). The containment skills refers to “...patience, the ability to tolerate silence and listening – all skills that require social workers to be less verbally active than they might be with clients from other cultures” (Weaver, 1999, p. 221). In addition, humor was identified as a skill and social workers were encouraged to “accept being the target of humor” (Weaver, 1999, p. 221).

McKenzie, Seidl, and Bone (1995) conducted a community based research project that received input from First Nations community members about child welfare practice. The intent of the research was to ascertain and develop a framework for “culturally appropriate child welfare standards” (McKenzie, Seidl, & Bone 1995 p. 125). The key findings are consistent with the BC First Nations Summit’s report entitled Indian Child and Family Services Standards Project (1992) and with Green and Thomas’ (2007) research

about ‘best practices’ in First Nations communities. The research highlights that the priority foster placement for First Nations children in care is within the family, extended family and community. If an out-of-home care arrangement is required, priority is given to the child’s attachment to family, extended family, community, and culture (Assembly of First Nations, 1992; McKenzie, Seidl, & Bone 1995; Green & Thomas, 2007). The involvement of family, including “Elders, grandparents, parents, aunties, and uncles” is imperative to child welfare practice in First Nations communities (Green & Thomas, 2007, p. 24). Further, involvement of extended family contributes to a commitment to planning and increases the likelihood of a successful outcome.

The Assembly of First Nations asserts that “[t]he family unit is central to the cultural identity of a First Nations for it is through the family that an individual’s cultural identity is established. The multitude of relationships that can and do exist in most Aboriginal families are the ties that bind First Nations together” (1992, p. 35). The family is seen as the instrumental and primary source of an individual’s identity and cultural pride. This is significant as research indicates that children in care have improved outcomes when connections with family are maintained and valued (Farris-Manning & Zandstra, 2007, p. 54). Other authors view identity as inextricably linked to a sense of community and belonging, and that children and youth who are connected are more resilient and receptive to guidance and support from the community and family (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Bockern, 2002, p. 47).

Chandler and Lalonde’s (1998) study of First Nations youth suicide found that communities that undergo cultural change are at a higher risk of suicide. However, they also identified that communities actively engaged in practices that are reflective of a

community's efforts to revitalize itself results in cultural continuity (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998, p. 192). It is suggested that community practices contributing to cultural continuity include: Land Claims, Self-government, education services, police and fire services, health and social services, and cultural facilities (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998, p. 210). These practices have been found to be restorative for First Nations culture, identity, and communities and they are the benchmark for healthier children, families, and communities.

Chandler (cited in Mandell, Carlson, Fine & Blackstock, 2006) "... indicates that the formation of personal identity in Aboriginal youth relies on the nature and extent of an individual's relationships with the people and world around him/her to a far greater extent than with non-Aboriginal children; thus, the commitment to maintenance of relationships is paramount" (p. 8). The formation of 'identity' for children in care is predicated on family, and the inculcation of cultural values and traditions (McKenzie & Morrissette, 2003, p. 265). Weaver (1999) describes identity formation as being "... grounded in a sense of community or being a member of a group rather than based on a sense of individuality" (p. 221). For children and youth having a positive self and cultural identity is closely tied to connections with family and community. Green and Thomas maintain that for children in long term care, self identity and knowledge of their heritage and culture is an issue as they often do not know what it means to be Aboriginal. "They know that they are First Nations, but they do not really know what that means. Helping children see the strength in culture and tradition is valuable and self esteem building" (Green & Thomas, 2007, p. 26).

Commonalities exist in how a decolonizing Aboriginal approach is executed in practice. Many agencies across Canada are engaging in practice that are within mainstream legislation but applying creative means to engage children, families, and communities. The

next section will explore various national and local ‘prevention programs’ that are developing within the cultural contexts of FNCFSA.

Prevention Programs and child welfare

Currently there are 105 FNCFSA across Canada providing services to 75% of First Nations communities (Audit and Evaluation Branch, INAC, 2007, p. 2). Accordingly, the FNCFSA follow provincial legislation and standards, but within the legislative mandate there is minimal emphasis given to early intervention and prevention. However, FNCFSA are creatively utilizing operational funding under the Directive 20-1 and applying to various funding and grant sources to develop resourceful and innovative preventative programs. The preventative programs offered by FNCFSA, provincially and nationally, support social work and Aboriginal helping practices. A cursory review of the literature will define “prevention” and examine various preventative programs offered under the umbrella of FNCFSA. This will also entail a review of other FNCFSA that have also developed a preventative approach, and the focus is on community needs and involvement.

The agencies reviewed include:

- Carrier Sekani Family Services, Prince George, Family Dispute Resolution Project focuses on tertiary prevention;
- Lalum’utul’Smun’eem Child and Family Services, located in Duncan, BC provides a range of supportive services;
- Tikinagan Child and Family Services – Talking together Circle;
- Mi’kmaq Family and Children’s Services in Nova Scotia – Family Group Conferencing Model; and
- Usma Child and Family Service – Family Group Conferencing.

Within a FNCFSA context, the terminology ‘prevention’ can have various meanings. It can represent activities to promote or prevent a behavior or action and could include “...preventing a child from coming into care” (Shangreaux, 2004, p. 24). Thomas, Leicht, Hughes, Madigan, and Dowell (2003) suggest that maltreatment prevention services include several major approaches and it consists of three levels of services: *primary*, *secondary*, and *tertiary* prevention programs (p. 8). Further, primary prevention activities have a universal focus and are intended to create awareness to the general public (e.g., public service announcements creating awareness of child abuse) or “... activities designed to have some impact on the whole population and make child abuse less likely to occur in the first place” (Watchtel, 1999, p. 20). Secondary prevention activities target high risk families and risk factors associated with child abuse and are intended to strengthen family capabilities and mitigate any risk factors. Examples of secondary prevention programs are parent education, support groups for teen parents, and respite services (Watchtel, 1999, p. 20). The focal point of tertiary prevention activities is families and children where child abuse has occurred or is indicated and includes family preservation services, children in care services, and counseling programs (Thomas, Leicht, Hughes, Madigan, & Dowell, 2003, p. 9; Shangreaux, 2004, p. 24).

The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada (2005) suggest that FNCFSA deal with a multitude of high risk factors; therefore, the need for secondary and tertiary intervention prevention programs would be required. (p. 116). Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Bockern maintain that the cost of not supporting children and youth at risk is staggering and without a concerted effort society is abandoning its future citizens (2002, p. 5). Although many of the FNCFS agencies face competing demands from community

and the legislative requirements of the province, there are many initiatives being implemented that are culturally based preventative programs that contribute to capacity building within communities.

The following list emphasizes aspects of preventative programs focused on Alternative Dispute Resolution within British Columbia.

- Carrier Sekani Family Services, Prince George, Family Dispute Resolution Project;
- Gitksan Family Services, , Hazelton, Family Group Conferencing and Advocacy Project;
- Namgis, Alert Bay Family, Group Conferencing Facilitators Program;
- Northwest Inter-Nations and Community Services Society, Terrace BC, Kin – First;
- Nuu chah nulth Tribal Council, Port Alberni, Usma, Nuu chah nulth ADR Project;
- Scw'exmx Child and Family Services, Kamloops, Interior Delegated First Nations Child and Family Services Mediation Model; and
- Squamish Nation, West Vancouver, ADR Model Project

All of the agencies received their grant through The Law Foundation of BC through the 'Child Welfare Initiative: Focus on Alternative Dispute Resolution and Aboriginal Children' (2006). The purpose of the initiative was to ensure the safety of the child and an alternative to court proceeding. Other FNCFSA have also developed a preventative approach, which focuses on community needs and involvement. Although all of the FNCFSA have developed unique programming under this initiative, Carrier Sekani Family Services stands out as a leader in program innovation.

Carrier Sekani Child and Family Services

Warner Adam suggests that despite cultural differences:

Our people are no different from other indigenous nations. Attempts of colonization to break our people's soul and spirit have never succeeded. We continue to demonstrate that our responsibility rests in preserving our culture, philosophy, and beliefs. We have been able to put into practice our values of healing people based on basic principles of humanity (Carrier Sekani Family Services, Agency Profile, n.d., p. 9).

Carrier Sekani Family Services and the thirteen member bands it serves recognized the need for a community based family dispute resolution program. The project was designed for Carrier and Sekani people and stemmed from concerns about involvement in "... family court, the number of Aboriginal children being apprehended, and the community and family tensions the formal court process often create" (Adam, Holyk, Shawana, 2003, p. 8). Carrier Sekani Family Services (CSFS) ensured that the community's voice directed the development of the project which reinforced community strengths, values and principles. The research project established a framework for resolving disputes regarding child and family issues, including the care of children, using Carrier and Sekani laws and values in a culturally appropriate manner.

Adam, Holyk, and Shawana note that "[c]ommunity members agreed that a family dispute resolution program would aid in the creation of a healthy community by focusing on restoring relationships with the land, with an individual's own spirit and with an individual's family and community. Community dispute resolution initiatives are seen to be a key element of healing and self-determination" (2003, p. 12). Another unique aspect of this program is that CSFS was able to partner with the University of Northern British Columbia to deliver alternative dispute resolution courses from a Carrier Sekani perspective (Tuz Beyaduck, The Talking Stick Newsletter, 2005, p. 5). The courses are accredited under First Nations Studies and also lead to a Family Mediation Certificate. The intent from CSFS perspective was to develop community capacity and for "[t]hose

completing the certificate [they] will play an integral role in mediation services being implemented by the agency” (Tuz Beyaduck, The Talking Stick Newsletter, 2005, p. 5). CSFS programs are an attribute to drawing on the strengths of the community and involving community in the process of program design, development, and implementation.

Lalum’utul’Smun’eem Child and Family Services

Lalum’utul’Smun’eem Child and Family Services provide a prevention program under the umbrella of their child and family service delivery model. The program is unique in that they provide services to Cowichan Tribes membership in one geographical area accessible by social work and prevention staff. A community empowerment approach is a critical element of program delivery as “[t]he values that guide their work are based in notions of community, relationships, and accountability” (Brown, Haddock, & Kovach, 2002, p. 146). The program provides an array of services to address child welfare issues for children and families and they are available to all community members. The more significant services are available year round and focus on issues of grief and loss, family violence, support for parenting, and child abuse. The prevention programs maintain a focus for children in care who may have experienced significant losses due to being brought into court ordered care. These programs for children are intended to maintain and support children and youth to maintain their Cowichan identity, as well as provide cultural teachings, learn respectful behavior, and learn about leading a healthy lifestyle. Finally, these programs maintain the cultural contact for children who have been in the child welfare system, so they maintain their connections with family and their heritage (Lalum’utul’Smun’eem Child and Family Services, n.d.).

Tikinagan Child and Family Services: Talking Together Circle

The Nishnawbe Aski Nation's territory covers a vast area of northwestern Ontario. The Nation has 3 FNCFSA providing services to their membership. Each of these agencies is not without its challenges in terms of geographical service delivery, funding and they also respond to competing demands of communities. However, despite the challenges one of the agencies, Tikinagan Child and Family Services and Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services are working collaboratively to develop and deliver an Alternative Dispute Resolution process, referred to as the "Talking Together Circle." The intent of the Talking Together Circle is to involve families, extended family, services providers and communities to create a collaborative plan that promotes "... the safety of the child, the well being of the family, and as a result, strengthens the community" (Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services – Talking Together Training Manual, 2001, p. 15). Tikinagan Child and Family Services provides services to thirty three Nishnawbe Aski communities and the mandate of Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services is to provide "... legal, public legal education, and law reform services. Services are delivered in the languages of the communities wherever possible" (Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services – Talking Together Training Manual, 2001, p. 14).

Accordingly, the partnership has led to less intrusive measures in terms of responding to protection concerns rather than children being removed from the community. The intent of the Talking Together Circle is to identify strengths which support "creative solutions to family problems and provides a culturally appropriate alternative to Family Court" (Brubacher, 2006, p. 186). In part, the program emerged in response to legislative reform in Ontario's child and family service legislation and concerns that Aboriginal children were at risk of being taken from their families and communities. The reform made

it mandatory for a child less than six years of age, who was in care for a total period of 12 months, to be made a permanent ward of the province.

Tikinagan Child and Family Services (TCFS) Talking Together program evolved out of their "...system of customary care [and] the First Nations have the authority to make decisions for children's care and well-being, with the consent of the child's parent or without consent when no parent or relative is available to make those decisions" (Brubacher, 2006, p. 41). Customary Care is an alternative to court and involves the parent, child, extended family, Elders, services providers, Nation and the TCFS and the priority is given to extended family rather than children being placed outside the community and it recognizes the importance of "cultural continuity in placement" (Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services – Talking Together Training Manual, 2001, p. 11). All parties must agree there is a child protection concern and agree to a Talking Together Circle and develop a plan to address concerns from the meeting. There could be court proceeding and the Talking Together program and the plan of care is recognized by the courts. "These plans include ways to ensure that children in care remain connected to their own extended family, their community and their culture." (Brubacher, 2006, p. 43). Significantly, a direct result of the Talking Together program, the TCFS has identified more community based supports, foster homes, and TCFS "... has the lowest rate of court involvement in child protection cases of any Children's Aid Society across the province" (Brubacher, 2006, p. 43). This is in contrast to previous years when TCFS had to place children in foster care outside of the community.

Mi'kmaw Family and Children's Services

The Mi'kmaw Family and Children's Services is the only First Nations Child and Family Services Agency in Nova Scotia. They provide child welfare services to thirteen Mi'kmaw reserves throughout the province and the agency provides culturally appropriate service to Status and Non-Status Indian, Métis and Inuit children (Gough, 2006, p. 3). Mi'kmaw Family and Children's Services (MFCS) also offers prevention, family support, and crisis and shelter programs for First Nations families. In addition, they operate two Family Healing Centers to address issues of violence and support healing in the communities. Since 2001, MFCS has been piloting a Family Group Conferencing model as an alternative to court.

The purpose of the Family Group Conferencing is to bring all parties together to seek solutions in a respectful open environment, where everyone has a voice and their voice is heard. MFCS views family group as an alternative to court and it will become "...standard casework practice and one of the foundation stones for culturally competent practice" (Mi'kmaw Family and Children's Services, Annual Report, 2001, p. 26). MFCS eventually adapted family group conferencing to fit with First Nations child welfare standards. Joan Glode, Executive Director of MFCS states that "FGC is validation for us [and] it fits with First Nations worldviews of respect, sharing resources, mutuality and interdependence, a family coming together and seeking its own solutions – the primary values in Aboriginal society" (cited in Mirsky, 2003, p. 4).

Usma Child and Family Services – Preventative Services

Currently, Usma C&FS is under a Block Funding arrangement with INAC. The intent of Block Funding is to apply financial resources to services that would not otherwise

be available to staff under Directive 20-1 including prevention. As a child welfare program, Usma C&FS has not been without its challenges given its wide geographical area, including communities accessible only by sea plane, boat, or logging roads. However, given these challenges the program has managed to create a service delivery model which is meeting the needs of the communities and the Usma C&FS staff. For instance, one aspect of a preventative program is the inclusion of a Family Support Worker in each of the Nuu chah nulth communities and in the urban area of Port Alberni. Another example is the Family Group Conferencing program that Usma C&FS is currently developing. Each of these preventative programs will be briefly examined in the context of child welfare services.

The purpose of Family Support Workers within each community is to be a primary point of contact if one of the Usma C&FS staff is not accessible or available in the communities. They also provide support to families, counseling and they may also arrange access for children in care with their families. Their work is inextricably linked to the social workers and they provide a valuable link for the communities in the event of a child welfare emergency. Another important aspect of their work is to act as a cultural link for children in care as they can identify family genealogy and provide opportunities and a connection for cultural activities (i.e., language classes, weaving, carving, and community potlatch ceremonies etc). For the family support workers in the urban Port Alberni area, the main focus of their work is to create opportunities for children in care of MCFD to have contact with their families and extended family (Linus Lucas, Personal communication, December 19, 2007).

While the Family Group Conferencing is a relatively new approach under the CFCSA, it has been a part of practice in Aboriginal communities, and only recently legitimized in legislation. It has also been part of Usma CFS mandate: to support and strengthen families while maintaining cultural identity. Family Group Conferencing (herein referred to as FGC), from Usma staffs' perspective, builds upon the strengths of families, and highlights and identifies the resources of the family. It is also an opportunity to bring in the voice of the child and hear the child's concerns. While the FGC is an evolving program, its intent is to be collaborative in that families and children have input and a voice into the process (J. Fontaine, Personal Communication, December 20, 2007). The family meeting is the traditional way of solving problems and finding solutions within Nuuchahnulth culture, and Usma C&FS social workers practice involves bringing family together, for the most part, to look for solutions within the family to develop a plan. The Family Group Conference Coordinator can formalize the process by preparing the family and assist with defining the problem from the family's perspective and this aides in preparation for the meeting. According to Fontaine the:

The Family Group Conference Coordinator acts as an impartial, independent body who facilitates the Family Group conference and ensures safety, respect and that all voices are heard. The meetings are intended to address the issues and to formulate a plan for the safety of the child. The process is intended to be respectful and based on the premise that families have the ability to care for their own, and it fosters traditional ways of problem solving and respectfully places responsibility on the family for their own children. The most important part of this process is that the voice of the child is first and foremost at the top of the list (J. Fontaine, Personal Communication, December 20, 2007).

Conclusion

The history of child welfare for Aboriginal peoples originated with the imposition of mandatory attendance at residential schools under the guise of education. Although

compulsory attendance at the residential schools did not result in higher educational standards, rather it led to the erosion of cultural, familial, and communal integrity. A similar pattern is obvious with the extension of provincial child welfare mandates to on reserve populations and it is another example of colonial influence and control. Crichlow describes the child welfare as a system "...that reflects white dominant mainstream ideals and has historically been used on Aboriginal peoples in ways that conflict or are inconsistent with Aboriginal people's values and traditions" (2003, p. 89). It is apparent that the *Indian Act* still is a major influence in the lives of Aboriginal People, yet what is the alternative to this historical and enduring legislation and what other options are available to First Nations people. From a First Nations perspective, authority for child welfare is one step towards 'Self Government,' and to control the future of communities for their membership.

The Directive 20-1 is a prime example of control that impacts and influences FNCFS's ability to operate beyond the parameters of legislation. Yet there are FNCFS across Canada providing innovative programs and services and seeking funding outside the confines of the Directive 20-1 funding model. Further, given the expansion of FNCFS indicates a level of political will to provide child welfare 'differently' than provincial mandates. The various social work approaches and analyses of prevention programs highlight promising practices in social work with Aboriginal communities and are constructed on a decolonizing approach to child welfare. It is apparent that a social work approach and preventative model for working with Aboriginal clients needs to take into consideration many elements. These elements include the historical context of the family, extended family, and community, while recognizing the value of culture, Aboriginal

identity, and traditions in the helping processes. There are also many common elements within the various social work practices and preventative programs discussed. All of these programs contain elements that are premised on:

- Families and communities are the best placement for children involved in child welfare;
- Families are in the best position to make decisions regarding the care of children;
- Families and communities are the most valuable resource to provide for cultural continuity; and
- Incorporating community and cultural values enhances program development and acceptance by the community.

While there is a need to explore further elements of preventative approaches and their efficacy within the context of child welfare, there is also a need to explore specific social work practices within the context of First Nations child welfare. It would also be worthy to question the limitations imposed upon FNCFSA by the Directive 20-1. For instance, FNCFSA have only recently been able to incorporate sections of the CFCSA to their social work practice and how or why is it that these inequities continue.

The following chapter outlines the methodological approach and research design utilized to embark on the research, which is to identify a framework of Aboriginal social work practice, specific to Usma C&FS.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The primary purpose of this exploratory study was to ascertain and develop a framework of social work practice, specific to Usma C&FS. The study sought to answer the following research question:

What is the framework of social work practice at Usma, Child and Family Services?

Interview questions were intended to generate discussion and elicit information about social work practice at Usma C&FS as well as inform the research question (see Appendix A). In considering the rationale for the design, the assumptions, principles, and approaches associated with an *interpretive approach* resonates with me in terms of its practical orientation. Given that I am seeking to “understand the subjective meaning” of social workers’ actions the interpretive approach is suited for this study above other paradigms. Creswell (2003) suggests there are different frameworks and assumptions associated with postpositive, socially constructed, advocacy/participatory and pragmatism approaches. Within each of these paradigms there are frameworks and assumptions about research and understanding of various phenomena. In this discussion, I am primarily focused on an interpretive framework and perspective and its ensuing approach to research. Part of what intrigues me about the interpretive approach is its voluminous methodologies and methods associated with the qualitative research approach and its focus on the intersubjectivity of personal experience. Creswell suggests the interpretive approach is core to qualitative research and that “... it recognizes the self reflective nature of qualitative research and emphasizes the role of the researcher as interpreter ...” (2007, p. 248). Schwandt defines the interpretivist point of view and its relation to social action as developing an understanding of and meaning of the action (2003, p. 296).

The primary focus of this study is to develop an understanding of the phenomenon of social work practice specific to Usma C&FS and the practice within the Nuu chah nulth communities. The participants' subjective, personal ideas, views and what they define as meaningful in terms of social work practice from a First Nations perspective are fundamental to this study. The participants' frame of reference, from an interpretative research perspective provides a lens and the opportunity to see, hear, and understand "...the participants' views of the situation being studied" (Creswell, 2003, p. 8) and to inductively develop meaning about social work practice. I would also suggest that the choice of design provides an opportunity to define from the participants' perspective what is working from within the communities, rather than social work being defined outside of the agency and communities. Further, as a researcher I am cognizant that my choice of methodological assumptions has implications in terms of my own values and approach to research.

For me as a researcher, I am perplexed at how the interpretive orientation fits or if it does not fit with my daily aspirations and values which are related to a decolonizing agenda. However, as Smith (1999) argues a decolonizing framework incorporates the stories, texts, cultures, languages and voices and they have become "spaces of resistance and hope" (p. 4). The act of research at Usma C&FS is the space for hearing the stories of practice and what is effective in communities. First Nations child welfare and the reclaiming of authority in pursuit of self determination and governance is an act of decolonization. I believe part of this perplexity is about my personal dilemma about what I bring as a First Nations person to the research. All of these perspectives bring theoretical assumptions about personal and political troubles. Yet I know intuitively that I have

brought my own assumptions and values as a First Nations person and practitioner into the process of research and trying to decipher what is pragmatic and important in asking the research question to the participants at Usma C&FS. It is with these thoughts and ideas about informing social work practice that guided the inquiry and the choice of methodology. The methodology for the study is a qualitative interviewing approach and the method for data analysis relies on thematic analysis technique.

Qualitative Design

Selection of Participants and Data Collection

In considering the rationale for the research design, this thesis draws primarily on the interpretive social sciences, which includes qualitative research methods and methodologies. My interest in this study stems from my own personal experience in child welfare and believing I can make a difference in the outcomes for children, families, and communities. Given that my intent is to develop a framework of social work practice, I concentrated on the perspective and subjective experiences of social workers employed by Usma C&FS. The end result is a study that is from their voices and experiences of working with the Nuu chah nulth children in care, families and communities.

I asked participants from the Usma C&FS program, to participate in this study because of their experience, skill, and knowledge about social work practice. There were various discussions with the administrator of Usma F&CS about who could or would be interested in participating in the study. The administrator identified five social workers of Aboriginal ancestry who could contribute to the research question from a First Nations perspective. I contacted each of the social workers via phone or email.

I spoke with each social worker about the intent of the research, and four social workers agreed to participate in the research. All of the participants in the study were women and three of the participants are from the Nuu chah nulth territory and the other participant is from a First Nations community in BC. All of the participants possessed a university degree and had been employed by Usma C&FS between 2 and 10 years. Two of the participants had previous child welfare experience but each participant mentioned an interest in working in the helping profession and making a difference for children and families. For instance, one participant referred to studying to be a nurse but realized she wanted more involvement and contact with clients on a “one to one” basis (Social Worker 1). Another participant mentioned being drawn into the helping profession because of their family history. “It was partly the way I grew up, seeing my parents working with children and youth ... taking kids into the home and raising other children” (Social Worker 2). One participant stated that that she had a strong “desire to help” and make a difference in the lives of children and families in the Nuu chah nulth territories (Social Worker 3).

The interview guide consisted of questions formulated by the researcher, which were reviewed by the Usma C&FS program staff who agreed to participate in the study (Appendix A). This review of the interview questions consisted of emailing the participants the research questions as well as an in-person meeting with the participants. The meeting with the participants provided an opportunity to present them with the research proposal and provide them with a copy of the ‘Participant Consent Form’ (Appendix D). I was also able to clarify questions they had related to confidentiality and it was also an opportunity to develop rapport with the participants, gain their support, and arrange dates for the interviews. This meeting also assisted me in understanding the

aspirations of the Usma C&FS program, and the program delivery over a wide geographical area.

Interviews and data collection were completed on site at the Usma C&FS program office and dependant on social worker schedules. The data collection involved a semi-structured interview intended to generate discussion about social work practice in the Nuuchah nulth First Nations communities. I attended the office over a two day period and interviews lasted from one hour to an hour and a half. In order to maintain confidentiality for the participants, I personally interviewed the participants and I transcribed the taped interviews. All of the individual interviews and transcriptions were coded so the identity of the person was not revealed and any identifying names or references to persons were deleted. Each transcription was coded by a number which was specific to each participant and this assisted in identifying where transcribed interview the data was from, but not the individual interviewee. I also shared the transcriptions with each participant in the study and requested their feedback, but I was unable to have any meaningful discussion about the transcription with the participants.

The initial interviews and data collection yielded a large amount of transcribed data and it is important to note how this information can be overwhelming in terms of volume. I reviewed and ascribed to Kirby and McKenna's (1989) insight about providing an analytical framework for managing the transcribed data. They suggest maintaining 'data files,' one being a 'content file' and the other a 'process file.' Content files contain the researcher's comments, field notes, thoughts, and reflections, as well as interview transcripts. The process files contain the interview guide and information pertaining to participants, comments or notes regarding interviews (Kirby and McKenna, 1989, p. 125).

Qualitative Interviews

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis provides a structured method for analyzing interview data. The techniques associated with thematic analysis allows for an examination and interpretation of data with an emphasis on finding explicit and implicit assumptions and meaning within the interview data. The data analyses draws on Attride-Sterling's (2001) techniques for conducting thematic analysis of qualitative research. The following description reviews the process for implementing and analyzing the data.

Coding Data. The preliminary phase in the analysis process started with listening to the recorded interviews and becoming familiar with the data. Transcribing the interviews also provided another avenue for analysis as well as reviewing the transcriptions. I re-read the transcripts in conjunction with reviewing the audio tapes as I required clarification in certain areas. I also read and re-read each of the transcripts to acquaint myself with the content and within the margins of the transcripts I made notes, comments, and highlighted relevant details and text. These steps provided a useful precursor to data analysis and the coding framework as well as the emergence of themes.

Developing a coding framework was guided by the review of the data, and initially my focus in the analysis was directed by the research questions. However it also became apparent that there were salient issues that arose in the data, which were common in each of the interviews. For instance, I found common words, phrases, and sentences that were recurring across interviews. These recurring phrases included ideas related to respectful social work practice, the importance of relationships and being aware of the historical context of families and communities. These were important in deciphering and determining

initial codes. Categories of codes were then applied to the data and the data was reduced and grouped according to segments and passages of text, single words, and longer quotations (Attride-Sterling, 2001, p. 391). In coding the data, I attempted to develop a framework of codes that were not redundant or did not overlap; however, there were broad and expansive codes with repetitive data.

Development of Themes. In developing the themes, I reviewed the data segments associated with the various codes. This aspect of theme identification and extraction required re-reading codes and associated data and sometimes referring to the original transcribed interview. Primarily, I was searching for common and significant patterns of themes within each code and associated text. Once the themes were identified, I found there were multiple themes which appeared repetitive. The next step required a review of the selected themes and amalgamating some themes which were related and contained similar codes as well as similar data. The identification of themes required interpretation of codes and data. Once the themes were identified they were again reviewed for any emerging relationships and or meanings. As well, these associations and meanings were the grounds for the final interpretations of the data.

Ethical Considerations

When conducting research with human subjects, the University of Victoria has a number of ethical guidelines that must be taken into consideration. In terms of this research, I took steps to ensure the:

- Anonymity of identity, and confidentiality, for the participant was maintained;
- Participants were aware that informed consent was paramount to the study;
- Clearly articulated the purpose for the study; and

- Explained the procedures for the study.

Each of these areas will be reviewed within the context of the University of Victoria's Application for Ethical Review of Human Research.

In order to maintain the anonymity of the identity of the participants, the researcher took precautions to eliminate any references in the transcribed data that identified participants. This included references to names, home communities, extended family members and reference to the position or identity of staff at Usma C&FS. As well, the data was not available or accessible to anyone outside the research. Electronic access to data was password protected and any physical data files were stored under lock and key.

The study did not anticipate any perceived or potential harm to the participants. Any coercive attempts to involve participants in the research were mitigated by 'informed consent' which is a pivotal issue when considering ethics in research. This is significant as Smith notes that historically, Indigenous populations have been the 'objects' of research (1999, p. 60) and their knowledge 'exploited' for research purposes (1999, p. 63). Creswell, suggests that consent is crucial so that participants are aware that have "the right to participate voluntarily and the right to withdraw at any time, so that the individual is not being coerced into participation" (2003, p. 64). This was made explicit in the 'Participant Consent Form' (Appendix D), which was reviewed with each participant prior to signing. Participants provided consent of their own free will, without coercion or duress. In order to ensure that participants did not feel obligated or pressured to participate, I also reviewed the University of Victoria's approved application for Ethical Review of Human Research Ethics and the Participant Consent Form (Appendix D) in two separate meetings.

There were two preliminary meetings with the participants. The first meeting was the opportunity to introduce myself as the researcher and explain my interest in the study, and why as a Nuu chah nulth person, I thought this was important area of research. In this prior meeting with the participants, I ascertained their interest and availability to participate in the study, and I articulated the purpose for the study. This provided them an opportunity to ask questions and to understand the nature of the study. As well, I explained the procedures for the study so they knew what to anticipate from the research. It was also a preliminary opportunity to review the University of Victoria's requirements for research and the Participant Consent Form.

The second meeting, prior to the interviews, also included a final review of the Participant Consent Form prior to the participants signing the form. I informed participants that they were taking part voluntarily in the study and that they were able to revoke their consent at any time. Further, if they revoked their consent none of their interview data would be used in the study. Finally, prior to signing the consent to participate, the form was reviewed individually with each participant and I asked if they had any questions or concerns about participating.

Situating the Researcher

The fact that I am a Nuu chah nulth woman and I work in the social work field and I am employed for a non profit society that provides training and policy support to all of the delegated FNCFSA, affords me the opportunity as an "insider researcher" (Smith, 1999, p. 137). Although I have never been employed in any of the Nuu chah nulth communities or for Usma C&FS program, I had contact through my employment with the majority of participants interviewed, which may have given me an advantage that other

researchers may not have had. In hindsight, I question whether participants felt obligated as Aboriginal people to participate in the study, but this aspect was never discussed with them. However, all the participants believed this was a topic worth researching, and we shared a common interest in research that would benefit the Usma C&FS and the broader FNCFSA. As I was able to meet with the participants prior to the interviews and I had a previous working relationship with the agency, as well as being involved in the First Nations field of child welfare, the interviews were reflexive in that we developed rapport before and during the interviews.

Limitations of the Research

A number of factors contributed to limiting the findings of the research. I will discuss the limitations in terms of participants, methodology and outside influences on data collection. The participants involved in the research were limited to a small pool of social workers. Initially, there were more social workers and resource workers who indicated an interest in participating but during the recruitment phase only four social workers came forth. However, the information obtained from the interviews is sufficient to create a preliminary understanding of what constitutes social work practice from a First Nations perspective and within a community context.

Additional interview data was also required to clarify concepts not clearly articulated in the initial interview data. However, an issue that complicated the need for additional interviews with the participants was an unfortunate loss of a Nuuchah Nulth community member involved in the child welfare system. The death of Sherry Charlie in a Kith and Kin placement with extended family, promoted a number of inquirers and the reverberation can still be felt within Usma C&FS and in the Nuuchah Nulth communities.

I will briefly summarize the various inquiries as this impacted my ability to collect further interview information.

Initially, the MCFD initiated what is referred to as a “Directors Review” and it was initiated in response to the death of a child in care of Usma C&FS. The intent of the Directors Review is primarily meant to address concerns about practice and to determine whether policies and standards were met. The initial review started in October 2002 and concluded in June 2005. Further, Jane Morley in her capacity as the Child and Youth Officer completed 2 reviews of the death and circumstances related to other siblings in the extended family home. These reviews were completed in June 2006 and September 2006. As well, the coroner initiated a “Coroner’s Inquest” in February 2006. Finally, Ted Hughes released his report in April 2006. This report was initiated for a variety of reasons and one being the death of Sherry Charlie. In consideration of Usma C&FS it became obvious that the agency was under considerable scrutiny and the issues garnered extensive media and public attention. Further, considering my preliminary interviews were started in February 2003, it became apparent that it was impossible to ask the agency staff for follow up interviews as the organization responded to pressures from outside reviewers.

Chapter 4: The Research Findings

This chapter presents the results of interviews with the participants, and it frames social work practice and incorporates aspects which recognize the historical, social, political, and community contexts. The context for social work practice in communities takes into consideration a decolonizing approach, which approaches social work from a different paradigm than that of mainstream practice. For example, the participants referenced the necessity to recognize the impact of residential school on parenting as one example of the historical context that continues to affect the communities. Further, the participants highlighted that the work of front line practice was not only about addressing the ‘issues,’ but developing rapport, trust, and relationships with families. As well, there are aspects about the social work role that are about being seen, being a presence and attending and participating in community events. The participants noted that there are political elements to their work that are mitigated by management but it is also about clarifying the role of social workers and the Usma C&FS program. A predominant theme throughout the interviews was the importance of ‘relationships.’ This was not only in the context of relationships with the community, the services providers, but more importantly with the families and children. Of paramount consideration is that children are placed with family and that children in care know who they are and who their family is - this was reiterated across all interviews.

The Practice Approach

Historical and Political Influences

As shown in the literature review the increase and impetus for the development of First Nations child welfare is a result of the inappropriate historical practices of provincial

authorities (Johnson, 1983; Armitage, 1994; Durst, 1999). Mawhiney suggests that social workers need to understand the historical context as this is the rationale for First Nations assuming authority for the delivery of child welfare services, which are culturally relevant and appropriate for their communities (2001, p. 135). It is well documented that the negative consequences of extending child welfare jurisdiction on reserve correlated with the demise of residential schools (Johnson, 1983). Yellowbird and Chenault state that it is imperative for social workers to understand the impacts of colonialism and this is essential for social work practice (1999, p. 27). The participants also acknowledged the prolonged impact of the residential schools in their child welfare work.

All participants indicated that for newly hired social workers it was imperative and important to understand the historical implications. As one participant suggested:

If I was a new social worker coming to Usma, what would you say; I think it would be the most important for me as a person coming to work here, like...get to know your community well. Um, you want to make sure that they understand the um the residential issue, the residential school issues that I think that most people are continually affected by ...definitely get to know your community well (Social Worker 1).

Another participant noted the negative perceptions that community members continue to hold of education and child welfare services. These perceptions of education and child welfare are a continuation of the 60's scoop and residential schools, but they permeate the minds and hearts of former residential school attendees. As one social worker suggested the knowledge of historical issues are not negated or minimized, but rather each "... new social worker that is hired needs to know the residential school impacts" (Social Worker 2). The social worker also shared her personal experience of residential school with clients but also recognized the perception parents have of education is a carry over from residential school.

I hear that a lot. Um, going into the communities and talking to school personnel ... you know, the principal's saying that, well, if these guys compare us to residential school, the kids saying my parents went to residential school so, and the parents are saying, 'I don't like them in the school, it's just like residential school.' So it is still there, and ... and I have conversation with a lot of people and I talk to them about the fact that I'm knowledgeable because I did go to residential school but I'm also knowledgeable because I did have grandparents who helped raise me and I had parents who listened to me. I try to bring it all together and try to help them and acknowledge that it's a stumbling block they can get over (Social Worker 2).

Within the context of working with community members, a participant noted the importance of "being very aware of the history" and equated the MCFD and Usma child welfare programs as being the "new residential school" and "an assimilation tool" (Social Worker 4). The same participant referred to the history in the context of communicating with family and stated that "... I try really hard to just put it on the table; I'll often bring it up" (Social Worker 4). The participants also acknowledged the negative perceptions of social work and that it is equated it with the history:

I think in terms of our communities ah, they, when they look at the fact that there was so many children that had to go to residential school, that were removed from communities and parents felt like they had no power to be able to, to be able to say how their children were going to be raised (Social Worker 3).

The history of forcibly "removing children from their culture" (Monture, 1989, p. 3) also heavily influenced the individual and community experiences of social workers and social work practice. The participants acknowledged the historical influences as a challenge and noted that the "communities or people don't understand our role" and the negative view of social work is based on the history as community members have said "... well, you guys are the ones who came and took all of our kids" (Social Worker 1). Participants also recognized that educating the communities about the role and mandate of Usma C&FS was integral to overcoming negative views and stereotypes of social workers

and the child welfare field (Social Worker 1; Social Worker 3). However, participants also described challenges related to politics and one social worker suggested that “every community is very political, families are political ...” (Social Worker 4).

Um, there’s been a few conflicts with the band, who try to get involved. See, you have that kind of political involvement where maybe council or maybe council members filed a motion or maybe a council member that we’re dealing with, um, so there’s always that kind of political element that we’re dealing with and um, some of it is a challenge. A big challenge too, is that we don’t have resources in the community, um, sometimes children will need to be brought out of the community (Social Worker 1).

I think there’s a lot of political involvement, not involvement in the program. We try really hard to separate um, what Usma does from the political aspects of what happens in the communities and we’ve made it very clear to the workers that when something reaches a political level and we back off as the social worker and that it is not, you are no longer involved in the situation. In terms of Usma, as things become political it needs to go higher up, in terms of who is going to handle situations. One of our co-chairs holds the portfolio for the Usma program and he has a very strong background in terms of his understanding of the program and also recognizing that when something become political then it’s his responsibility to step in and he’ll often go to the community to address issues of political nature. So they recognize this is political business not, this is not Usma this is not part of practice and so as a tribal council I think they try very, very hard to maintain that there is a difference between the politics and actual practice (Social Worker 3).

As well, the same social worker noted that challenges arise with service delivery and that there are community members and band council members that attempt to influence social work practice.

Services in a community, that’s a really big challenge that we face. Ah, most of our communities have a family care worker that we work really closely with, um, and sometimes there are a couple of communities that don’t [have a family care worker] so that’s most definitely a challenge. You’ve got to have a family care worker in the community. I would definitely say the understanding of what our program is, the lack of people not knowing and also the political interference are probably the two biggest things challenges we have. For example, one of our workers was told they had a band council resolution and he’s not allowed on reserve. So I mean that, we try to get beyond that, you know.

The participants also acknowledged backlash from the communities in relation to their role.

I think there is ah, the political aspect of child welfare practice based on [the] cultural part of it. Um, it goes along with what I was telling you earlier about the people think of me as? Like they say, when they don't like what I'm saying, that I talk and think like a white man (Social Worker 2).

Oh yeah, you're just ah, you're a native but you live in a White man's world (Social Worker 1).

Within all Aboriginal communities there is involvement with child welfare and for the majority of communities child welfare involvement has been negative and detrimental. The legacy of residential school and child welfare has left an influence that communities do not trust child welfare agencies. Participants noted that the historical influences also create an environment where 'politics' attempt to interfere or influence social work practice. These political influences can be barriers to practice if left unattended, but Usma CFS has developed mechanisms internally to address political interference.

Involvement of Family and Extend Family

Within First Nations culture the concept of 'family' is paramount (Aboriginal Community Panel, 1992, p. 10). The notion of family is not only within the context of the nuclear family but the broader extended family, and the genealogy can be extensive. Involvement of family in child welfare practice is imperative in the context of First Nation child welfare (Thomas & Green, 2007, p. 24). This is highlighted by one of the participants and she comments that:

I think our agency; we really focus not only on the family but on the extended family. We include grandparents in our family meetings and sometimes I found meetings, I mean one we had, I think we had 45 people there, so I think that is a big aspect of it (Social Worker 1).

The value placed on extended family is not reflected in the mainstream child welfare service deliver models, or in family law which perceives the nuclear family as the norm. Hamilton and Sinclair note that there are differences between the Aboriginal agencies and that of non-Aboriginal child care agencies and they suggest these differences are based on different paradigms and approaches.

The Aboriginal agencies are more sensitive to Aboriginal culture and the needs of families. They are sometimes able to find solutions, which those not familiar with the community might not even consider. While adhering to their understanding of the best interest of the child, they tend to view child and family situations and problems in a much more holistic fashion, than do non Aboriginal agencies, and treat the whole family, rather than intercede when presented with a troubles or neglected child. (1991, p. 529).

Castellano (2002) also notes the importance of ‘family’ in Aboriginal life and that care of children involved the networks of extended family and clans. The notion of family is “...etched deep in the psyche of Aboriginal people” (Castellano, 2002, p. 16). The social workers at Usma C&FS believed that working in the context of family and the extended family was an important aspect of decolonizing social work practice in the Nuu chah nulth communities. It is also consistent with the research and the importance of maintaining a child’s attachment to family (Assembly of First Nations, 1992; McKenzie, Seidl, & Bone, 1995; Green & Thomas, 2007). The following quotation captures one of the participant’s responses to questions about social work practice in the communities.

Some of the families I work with, I ask them, ok, “who in the family is available, and if it’s a single mom, I ask; “Who’s available?” Is there any uncles or grandparents that could do some things with them. Usually we know the families and we know who the people are (Social Worker 2).

The same participant also highlights the importance of knowing family systems within the context of the Nuu Chah Nulth communities.

So when I work with a family I'll ask them, you know, is there anyone in the family that you'd like to be a part of this, you know, what about the head of your family? What about, who do you want to be here? I acknowledge that I'm aware that there's a system out there? (Social Worker 2).

The distance between communities and the Usma C&FS may seem prohibitive in terms of providing effective social work practice or interventions. However, the benefit of knowing the families was reiterated by one participant who believed this was also about 'connectedness' to the families and knowledge of the communities that Aboriginal social workers have:

... if something is happening late at night, most of the workers have the ability to say, oh I know exactly who to call and be able to call that person to be able to get a better read on what's going on in the community ... (Social Worker 3).

The participants believed that relationships and getting to know the children, families and extended families and communities was a positive aspect of practice. It assisted in creating "caring," "trusting," relationships with people to create positive change. This is consistent with research which indicates that all people and environments possess strengths, which assist in creating change (Brubacher, 2006; McKenzie & Morrisette, 2003). The following quotes by three participants exemplify this theme:

... the overall outcome is that they don't have to remove children um, so they will try to identify the strengths in the families in terms of the kind of services that they can, or who in they're family is able to provide the support and you know, and help the individuals so the children don't have to be removed (Social Worker 3).

I think all you get to do is be effective, that's how I feel anyway. It's with the family you're working with, though that has a lot of reverberation, because you're never just working with parents. There are grammas, aunties; you're talking to a lot of people, so if you could have a productive outcome or ... the relationship was good. That is building ... all those people who were involved and that everything worked and they felt you were someone to be trusted and that you did care about not, you know, just the event, whatever it was – you cared about the family and the kids, and they were, that's effective as well ... (Social Worker 4).

At first it was very difficult, I think you are considered a new, ah, outsider, not really an outsider but you are somebody new, people don't know you. In terms of clients they are very apprehensive, ah if they don't know you or even just community members. You know they won't come and talk to you and they won't ah, not very open. After sometime, I found that people would even just come up and reporting a concern to me. There was kind of a trust starting to build there. (Social Worker 1)

The findings indicate that a source of strength within Aboriginal communities is found within the 'family.' However, within mainstream child welfare models there is a "...lack of recognition of the extended family model as relevant to the Aboriginal community" (Crichlow, 2003, p. 94). At Usma C&FS there is less of a tendency to pathologize Aboriginal families involved in the child welfare system. Rather the participants acknowledged and engaged the broad network of kinship relationships as they are viewed as a source of support and knowledge within the context of planning. The participants' legitimize the family and community as the most important resource for children.

Building Relationships

Various authors have noted beneficial aspects of values bases on social work ethics, and one aspect is about building respectful relationships (Berg 1994; Mckenzie, Seidl, and Bone 1995; Hart, 2002). Not surprisingly, the participants in the research reiterated the importance of values based on respect, trust, and caring, relationships and being a 'presence' in the communities. As one social worker suggested, "I would pity the social worker trying to work in the communities without having built relationships because, I don't think they would last and I don't think they would do a lot of good for the families ..." (Social Worker 4). Turnell and Edwards comment that when working with voluntary or involuntary clients "[t]he best chance to foster change within a family, whether there is

maltreatment of children therein or not, is to build cooperative working relationships with its members” (1999, p. 33).

All of the participants who were interviewed had comments related to building and forming “relationships” with the families and communities in terms of social work practice. In the literature, it is described as being nonjudgmental and a willingness to engage with clients in a respectful open manner (Weaver, 1999, p. 222). Green and Thomas, refer to this as ‘best practices’ and it is based on “... nurturing relationships with the children, families, communities, co-workers, leaders and outside resources” (2007, p. 25). As well, participants noted that having relationships with a broad spectrum of community members creates effective practice. The participants related that their work at Usma C&FS was dependant on their presence and the relationships with community members.

Probably one of the things I really like working at Usma is that you get to know people in the communities. Working in Ahousaht for 5 years, I really got to know people well. Uh, I would say that is my favorite part of the job, you really get to build relationships with people (Social Worker 1).

I think in terms of our program that we’ve been really fortunate to have workers that have stayed probably a very lengthy duration of time, so they’ve been able develop um, relationship with the communities that they serviced throughout the Nuuh Chah Nulth area and um, I think by being able to work in the communities for the length of time they have, they’ve been able to develop respect from people in the community and by doing that I think they’ve been able to develop good working relationships with quite a number of people that are right across from Nuuh chah nulth or whether it’s a specific community where they’re working with say maybe the schools or the RCMP or um, band workers, and people who they meet with on a regular basis. (Social Worker 3)

Further, the participants describe the importance of knowing the individuals as well as their extended families they work with so they can be more effective and creative in planning.

Try to be respectful of who um, when families are going through situations, trying to be respectful of their family grouping so that they can include them in planning

... as an aboriginal agency, our workers have the ability to get to know um, the individuals they are working with, um, more deeply. They have that ability, I think they are more accessible to their clients and I think our workers have the ability to be able to be creative in their thinking in terms of the kinds of services they provide to their clients (Social Worker 3).

... you have to build relationships all the time and really sometimes you are going into a community where you really don't have any background and you don't know the families and you don't know who you can talk too ... (Social Worker 4).

Participants also referred to differences in practice within MCFD and Usma C&FS.

The differences in practice are related to relationships and approaches to practices. A participant noted that "... at the ministry, you don't really develop the same type of relationship that I do ... I find in our families, with our families or children, you are dealing with family, quite a few members, and dealing more with the community on a whole as well" (Social Worker 1). Weaver suggests that problem solving involves active engagement of families in the solution from their perspective (1999, p. 221). This was reiterated by the participants in their reference to differences in ministry social work practice.

I've heard people say that there is and I've been a foster parent with the Ministry and before I worked here I was a foster parent so I have seen the differences. I think we strive to be very available to our, the people we work with, our clients, our foster parents, our kids, and respond to their needs.... I think, and again it goes back to you know, going into their homes and sitting with them and being with them, as I, you know, the Ministry doesn't come sit down with us and you know, eat with us. We offer them food, tea and they won't [take it], you know, that's really important to us within the Nuuchahnulth processes is to share a lot of things over food and I think the other comparisons are true that we listen to them [clients] without trying to solve that problem for them right off the bat (Social Worker 2).

Another participant suggested that because the social workers are engaged with a variety of service providers in the communities and have long term relationships with the families and children they serve they can respond appropriately.

... say when something is happening late at night, most of the workers have the ability to say, oh I know exactly who to call and be able to call that person to be able to get a better read on what's going on in the community. I think that's the difference between Ministry social work and aboriginal social work where um, I think that ability to be able to read a situation really quickly because of the connectedness to a community that aboriginal social workers have, and the [family] history, you know like as I said it helped that some of our workers have stayed or have such a lengthy period of time that they hear a name and then they'll know a lot of history that goes along with that family or that particular person and quite often they're right and they are very quickly able to make an assessment in terms of what going on. Say a call comes in and it's a single father who's had it on track for maybe the last six years or whatever, and they'll say, oh yeah and then they'll know what has happened just by being able to listen to the community who may say maybe this is what's affecting that person (Social Worker 3).

In terms of planning with families, one participant noted the importance of rescinding custody orders and there is a noticeable difference between MCFD and Usma C&FS. "We return kids, which I believe whether right or wrong, the Ministry would not ...and that was one of the reasons why I wanted to work in First Nations Agency. I thought there were lots of the good changes happening" (Social Worker 4).

In summary, an aspect of engaging with children, families, and extended families was a willingness to develop rapport and relationships. An integral focus of social work practice is premised on forming the 'relationship' with not only the individual but the extended family, and the community. This provides an advantageous starting point for the social workers as they can identify family members to involve in the planning and create a better outcome. Further the staff at Usma C&FS have the benefit of being long term employees and have the corporate memory of families, extended family and children in care.

Children in care: Knowing where they are from

All of the participants made references to children in care and the critical importance of maintaining contact with families and communities even if they were in Continuing Custody (section 50) under the CFCSA. In terms of the history of removing children and placing them in foster homes outside of the communities, with minimal or no extended family involvement, the priority for Usma C&FS is placement with family (Foxcroft & Blackstock, 2003). As one participant commented:

... the door's never closed. That's a good thing, that's true and I'm really proud of that, for here, never, ever closed, but for parents too. The child could be Continuing Custody, but if that parent has changed their life, we will support them to apply to the courts and have their kids back. It's never closed forever, you know, I don't think anybody is under any illusion here that foster care works (Social Worker 4).

This is in contrast to the notion of *parens patriae* which is defined as the “inherent jurisdiction of a court to look after the best interests of the child” and this is in contrast to the Aboriginal worldview and emphasis on family, extended family, and community (Macintyre citing Bala and Clarke 1981, p. 6). One of the social workers described efforts to maintain extended family and parental contact. “I think we really push for continued contact with parents even with the kids in continued custody. A lot of times I think we really work hard, probably more so than a Ministry office that maintains that contact with parents” (Social Worker 1).

The participants mentioned “knowing where they are come from” alluding to children in permanent care and continued “involvement,” “connection,” and “placement” with family and their communities. This is significant in that the MCFD does not continue planning contact for children in care with families once they are in Continuing Custody of the Director (per section 50 of CFCSA). One of the participants mentioned that when the guardianship responsibilities for children in care were transferred from MCFD to USMA

C&FS “they [i.e., the children in care] really did not have a clear understanding of where they are from and so we make sure that they learn that” (Social Worker 1). The same participant also highlighted that “in terms of our children in care, they are usually with extended family that will be the first thing we look for, if not extended family then a Nuuchah nulth family” (Social Worker 1). For children in care, the practice of involving extended family is imperative as cultural identity is formed through family and it creates a sense of belonging (Assembly of First Nations, 1992, p. 38; Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Bockern, 2002, p. 47). The priority for foster care placements, if required, is with family and extended family, and preferably within the child’s community.

It is apparent from Reid and Dudding’s (2006) research that the majority of children and youth in government care do not fair well after leaving care. However, data from research as far back as the 1980’s (Kimmelman, 1985; Johnson 1983) show Aboriginal children in care placed in non-aboriginal homes were not successful. Other researchers have identified that outcomes for children in care and youth leaving care are improved when there are connections to family, school, and community (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Bockern, 1995; Casey Family Programs, 2001; Green & Thomas, 2007; Rutman, Hubberstey, Feuniw, & Brown 2005; Reid and Dudding, 2006; Weaver, 1999). This is reiterated by participants at Usma C&FS, as one participant described that for children in care the importance of “... making sure they know how to connect with their communities, if they are not living in their own communities” (Social Worker 1).

Maintaining connections is not only about familial relationships but involvement and exposure to cultural values and traditions. As one participant jubilantly explained:

So we’d better maintain the ties, I believe we work really hard at maintaining a child’s ties – write that down!! But we do, we do ah, we pay, and I’ve not seen

that at the Ministry at all. We pay a lot of money out for parents who have kids that are CCO [Continuing Custody Order] but for them to travel and visit their kids because it's good for the kids. We maintain that relationship. We tried really, really hard to have these kids go to the community and participate in, in like the canoe quest or, or that camp they have ... (Social Worker 4).

Participants also noted that children in care in the communities are exposed to various cultural activities (i.e., potlatches, naming ceremonies, weaving, carving, and language transmission) by continued involvement in community activities. This is also supported by child care workers and family support workers in the communities who are First Nations and they are a vital link for children in care to cultural activities.

Opportunities for cultural programs for children in care are important and aid in the formation of 'Aboriginal identity' and contribute to the 'collective well being' (McKenzie & Morrissette, 2003, p. 257). One participant commented:

Our child care workers are First Nations, in terms of like say doing a plan of care, there is not too many of our kids that we need to work on a Cultural Plan because they are living with family they ah have a really good understanding of who their family is, where they come from... A lot of our kids participate in children in care programs that we offer here and we really look at their history ...so they understand that, they understand what happened at the residential school, and any issues that the communities have faced, they learn about their families, by doing family trees (Social Worker 1).

Given that the participants viewed the formation of relationships with the families they worked with as critical it was apparent that the importance of maintaining connections for children in care was also priority. In part, this is an aspect of cultural continuity that the participants viewed as important and integral for planning for children in care. The following quotes capture this aspect:

It's really, really important and what I try to do with people, especially the kids, I recognize their family to them all the time. So that, I let them know I am aware of where they are from and who they are from (Social Worker 2).

... so they know, I think we do work at that, making sure they know where they're from (Social Worker 4).

The participants in this study all reiterated the importance of maintaining extended family relationships for children in care and this is a critical element of social work practice at Usma C&FS. For children in care the importance of knowing your family is essential to the formation of identity and continuation of culture. The emphasis on maintaining 'connections' is not a high priority in mainstream practice; however, given the history of removing Aboriginal children from their communities, Usma C&FS endeavors to provide foster care based on the needs of the children and families. The best interests of the child are viewed within the context of family and community as opposed to the notion of 'individuality' found in mainstream society (Crichlow, 2003, p. 88).

Helper's Values

In terms of the approach for working with families and in the Nuuchahnulth communities, the participants' comments related to the 'helper's values' based on 'trust,' 'patience,' 'respect,' and 'caring.' In addition, the findings suggest that part of the approach is based on being visible and making connections in the communities, and knowledge of issues in the communities.

A number of the participants referred to having tea while attending to a child welfare concern. Although it may seem unorthodox in mainstream models of social work practice to accept tea, coffee, or whatever is offered by the client, it is not unusual practice in Aboriginal communities. This informal approach and accepting, whatever is offered, helps to set the stage and as one participant suggested it is also a time to reflect on relational issues that may come up but it is non-intrusive and develops the rapport.

... I'm a fairly cautious person to begin with, so I don't just come barreling in there and say "Hi, this is me." My approach is somewhat more quiet and I'll do the home visits, I'll sit in the homes, I'll have coffee and tea with them, whatever, if they bring me a piece of bread, I'll have a piece of bread with them. I listen to what they have to say, more often you know a talk isn't around what I'm there for right away, um, I just get to know them and I acknowledge that who I am and how I'm related to them because that will come up, it always comes up, but I also let them know that I'm there to do some work and what it's about and I think once I have addressed the issue with them I leave it and I just follow their lead, quite often about where they're going. Its trust in what I have to say because I'm not going to say something I don't mean (Social Worker 2).

This approach is consistent with Berg and Kelly who suggest putting aside our assumptions about families and children and begin "...instead with the client's context and world view" (2000, p. 81). It is also consistent with Hart's reference to working with Aboriginal families in that "... family is respected and valued by the helper" (2002, p. 113).

Another participant also mentioned building trust in the context of being involved with a family despite attending the home for a child protection investigation.

.... hopefully some families will come to trust you. I've been some places where there's a concern or whatever and I have a cup of tea with somebody who, you know, I had talked to before for a prior investigation a long time ago (Social Worker 4).

While some of the helping values may seem basic in terms of social work ethics and practice, they form the tenets of practice values within Usma C&FS. One of the participants described the personal qualities required as a social worker as having "patience." However, her comments also indicated the long term nature of relationships with families, children and communities. She further reiterated:

I think everybody on our staff we really care about our clients and the kids that we work with, it's not just a job. Ah we have been here for so long that they are starting to see second generations so now ... you really know these families. One of our workers, kids, she brought them into care when they were babies and now

they're graduating so I mean this is ah, you know ...you really have ah, to care about them (Social Worker 1).

Another participant noted the longevity of some of the workers as being important for relationships and developing respect.

I think in terms of our program that we've been really fortunate to have workers that have stayed probably a very lengthy duration of time, so they've been able develop um, relationship with the communities that they serviced throughout the Nuu chah nulth area and um, I think by being able to work in the communities for the length of time they have, they've been able to develop respect from people in the community and by doing that I think they've been able to develop good working relationships (Social Worker 3).

Another participant mentioned that one would need to "get to know your community well. Of course you want to make sure they have the basic understanding of the residential issue, the residential school issues ..." (Social Worker 1). These values are consistent with Weaver's findings, and she suggests that it is imperative for social workers to be open-minded, nonjudgmental and develop respect for clients, and have an "active acknowledgement of oppression" (1999, p. 222).

Another important aspect of the social work approach in communities was participation at various community services and events. A number of participants mentioned the significance of attending cultural events, community based meetings, and activities not associated with social work in terms of presence and involvement in community. The following quote exemplify these aspects of social work practice and engagement in the community.

I attended like ah say, they would have community human service meeting, which would be like where service providers attend, and you look at issues that are going on in the community. Um, I would always make myself be seen up at the school, like I just started to check in with the principal once a week, I would go check into the health clinic once a week, I would try to be there on the same day every week, sometimes it was one or two days a week, so that it would be

consistent. Even if I wasn't very busy we would sit in the Holistic Center which is there, where they provide services. So people saw you there (Social Worker 1).

... you get to know like certain people in the community there is a couple of grandmothers, by actually stopping by and having tea, I am not there for work, I am not there, for even just clients, I am not focused really all the time on my job as much as maybe if the school had a basketball tournament going on I would try and go to those kind of things. The school often has, ah, picnics or outings, that we would try and be part of that (Social Worker 1).

Yeah, it is a relationship and being available for things that aren't even related to being a social worker. For example, um, we have, when things happen the cultural practices is to host a dinner and invite the community and do what's necessary be it a public apology be it...celebrating that the kid is here and alive and didn't get too badly injured or something. We do our best to get to those when we are invited to them (Social Worker 2).

The findings suggest that an important aspect of social work practice is being involved in community and being involved in a meaningful way with the people, children, and families you are engaged with. Social work in the Nuu chah nulth communities is not just about presenting the issue or child protection concern but about taking the time to be with clients. It is also about being visible and a presence in the community. It is also about 'showing' people that you care and with care comes trust, respect, and when it comes to the hard conversations there is or can be acknowledgement or more open discussion of issues.

Discussion and Implications of the Research

This research was intended to answer the question “What is the framework for social work practice at Usma, Child and Family Services?” Given that Usma C&FS is a relatively new phenomenon in the field of child welfare, it would be anticipated that the agency would develop a practice based on their unique histories, community contexts, governance structures, and the legislative and policy contexts. It was also hoped that this exploratory research would raise questions and increase the dialogue of what constitutes important social work practices with First Nations children, families, and communities. I believe it has also revealed the tensions and challenges faced by many FNCFSAs and by Usma C&FS.

These tensions are created within the framework of federal and provincial ethos. The culture of government is still shrouded in the colonial mentality – First Nations can not assume authority over their jurisdiction. This approach governs and continues to govern all aspects of First Nation lives. At times, I find it contradictory that so many FNCFSAs have evolved and are assuming authority for service delivery, when they are compelled to follow federal funding regulations and provincial legislation. But if they do not provide the service by default it will defer to the provincial child welfare authority. This is how the colonial mechanisms continue to control First Nations people, even under the guise of self government, funding is still regulated by the federal government.

An overview of the research findings suggests that there are practices principles and values at Usma C&FS based on:

- Involvement of the family, extended family and the community;

- Maintaining connections for children in care and continued involvement of family and community, even if in permanent care;
- A practice approach taking into consideration basic social work values which includes respect, trust, patience, caring and building relationships with clients; and
- There are aspects of a social work approach which are based on a decolonizing agenda, which acknowledges and mitigates against the historical and political influences.

Some of these findings are consistent with other researchers. For instance, Walmsley (2005, p. 90) suggests that the "... practice ideals of Aboriginal practitioners in Aboriginal organizations are generally broad, and while they focus on the child within the context of the family and community, their thinking extends beyond this to the reciprocity involved in care-giving between generations." His research also highlights that 'trusting relationships' are key to helpful child protection practice. Walmsley suggests that:

To create trusting relationships, the practitioner must be calm, patient, open, responsive, respectful, and understand the parents, family, and community. The benefits of this are less intrusive intervention and family members who support the plans developed for the children (2005, p. 111).

Gilman's research supports the findings in this research as she also found that Aboriginal social workers saw themselves as an "instrument of change" and this was accomplished through the "relationship" they developed with their clients (1997, p. 202). Further, another key factor in Aboriginal child welfare practice is family preservation and engagement of family (Red Horse, Martinez, Day, Day, Pouport, & Shchamberg, 2000). This is consistent with the focus of this research and some of the prevention activities and programs associated with child welfare. Further, many of these preventative programs emphasize alternatives to court, which includes family and extended family involvement in child welfare processes. Many of these programs have been successful in reducing court

involvement and are predicated on family involvement. The FNCFS agencies recognize the importance of continued family contact in maintaining identity for children in care and the importance of culture in a child's life. The prevention programs draw on Aboriginal strengths based approach and find creative solutions to problems and issues within families and communities.

The research and interviews with participants from Usma C&FS have opened up doors for further exploration of an Aboriginal approach to helping. I would suggest that the themes that I have outlined share some commonalities with other FNCFS. However, given the fact that this has been a relatively limited area of research, I think this study has outlined future potential areas of study. For instance, I would suggest that other areas of study could include: the importance of maintaining family contact for Aboriginal children in permanent care; identity and the formation of identity for Aboriginal children in care; and engaging families and communities to improve outcomes for families and children involved in child welfare. Further defining culturally relevant social work practices can also inform policy and improve the practices of provincial ministries in providing services to Aboriginal families and children. The findings and responses from the participants help understand the complexity of being an Aboriginal person involved in child welfare and further our understanding of social work approaches that could be more successful with Aboriginal children, families, and communities.

The RCAP (1996) recommendations acknowledged the limitations of the *Indian Act* and its influence over the lives of Aboriginal people; however, I do not see any evidence to suggest that the federal government is positioning itself to relinquish control over Aboriginal communities. This includes the minimal progress towards the efforts of self

government for First Nations communities. Although Aboriginal governments could assume authority for many programs to address issues within their nations tomorrow, the pragmatics of it is contrary to their desires. The fact is the Aboriginal communities, at least currently, have no choice about framing service delivery as they are constrained by funding. The First Nations governance structures continue to be regulated by existing programs, funding, and legislative arrangements within the federal and provincial governments' paradigms. Unless, there are new funding arrangements developed and based on the needs of First Nations communities, the services and programs will be limited by criteria defined by government as is the case with child welfare (but it also includes other program areas such as health, education, income assistance etc).

For instance, in the literature review of child welfare 'Preventative Programs' it is obvious that to receive funding for a legislated mandate of the CFCSA, the First Nations in BC had to apply to the Law Foundation for funding to financially support and validate their programs. This gives the appearance of control for First Nations but only if they meet the criteria of the funding authority. Further, the funding is time limited and proposal driven, but it does not ensure continuity of services, program development, or staffing. As the funding does not support ongoing sustainability of programs the holistic practices of FNCFSAs are negated. The same could be said about the Aboriginal Operational Practice Standards and Indicator as these standards have to meet or exceed provincial standards and policy and approval for changes are at the discretion of the provincial Director of Child Welfare. Within the paradigm of the current funding model and legislation there are concerns that it does not meet the needs of FNCFSAs. The concerns related to the INAC's funding formula are that it does not adequately provide for the range of services that are

child welfare related. Neither is there equity in terms of funding for the daily operations of FNCFSA as they are unable to compete with MCFD for salaries and other benefits. The reality for many FNCFSA and communities is that funding for programs is based on targeted social programs that government decides to fund, not what the First Nations community determines is required and the discussion is never about long term sustainability and adequate resources.

Although there are inadequacies in funding, the frustrations experienced by many FNCFSA are a result of control administered outside of the agency. I have observed many instances when this has led to conflict with federal and provincial governments. For example, the provincial government makes legislative changes without consulting or giving consideration to FNCFSA funding formula and this negates an agency's ability to provide the service as they may not be eligible to bill INAC as it does not fit within their funding model. There are also conflicts with transferring an Aboriginal child in care of the province to a FNCFSA and it becomes immersed in funding negotiations - meanwhile, children are languishing in foster care without any meaningful family connections. Further, in my experience, I have observed how agencies are viewed as 'less than' with the implication that FNCFSA cannot provide a service based on the MCFD superior model of child welfare. I have found within the child welfare colonial context that highlighting these issues does not always result in action or changes.

At Usma C&FS, and other FNCFSA, the initial rationale for assuming authority for child welfare was premised on providing services 'differently' than the provincial ministry. I believe FNCFSA have been able to apply a different model of social work practice based

on their unique histories and cultures. For the interim, assuming authority for child welfare service delivery is a step closer to self determination.

References

- Aboriginal Community Panel. (1992) *Liberating our Children: Liberating our Nations*.
Ministry of Social Services: Province of British Columbia.
- Aboriginal Justice Inquiry – Child Welfare Initiative (AJI-CWI). July 2001. *Conceptual Plan for the Restructuring of Child Welfare in Manitoba*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Joint Management Committee.
- Aboriginal Justice Inquiry – Child Welfare Initiative (AJI-CWI). 2001. *Promise of Hope: Commitment to Change*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Executive Committee. Available online at: www.aji-cwi.mb.ca/pdfs/promiseofhope.pdf
- Adam, Warner; Holyk, Travis; Shawana, Perry. (2003). *Whu Neeh Nee (Guiders of Our People) - Carrier and Sekani First Nations Family Law Alternative Dispute Resolution Research Project*. *6th International Conference on Restorative Justice*. Retrieved October 07, 2007, from <http://www.sfu.ca/cfrj/fulltext/adam.pdf>
- Attride-Sterling, J. (2001). Thematic networks: An analytical tool for qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 1(3), 385-405.
- Carrier Sekani Family Services. (n.d.). *Carrier Sekani Family Services: Agency Profile*. Retrieved November 1, 2007, from <http://www.csfs.org/Pages/Contact/contact.html>
- Armitage, Andrew. (1993). Family and child welfare in First Nations communities. In B. Wharf (Ed.), *Rethinking Child Welfare in Canada* (pp. 131-171). Toronto Ontario: McClland & Stewart Inc.
- Assembly of First Nations. (1995). *Breaking the silence: An interpretive study of the residential school impact and healing as illustrated by the stories of First Nations individuals*. Ottawa, ON: Assembly of First Nations.

- Battiste, M. (Ed.). (2000). *Reclaiming Indigenous voice and vision*. Vancouver, B.C:UBC Press.
- Berg, I. Berg, I. K. & Kelly, Susan. (2000). *Building solutions in child protective services*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Brendtro, L.; Brokenleg, M., & Van Bockern, S. (2002). *Reclaiming youth at risk: Our hope for the future*. Bloomington, Indiana: National Education Service.
- Brown, L., Haddock, L., & Kovach, M. (2002). Watching over our families and children: Lalum'utul'Smun'eem child and family services. In B. Wharf (Ed.), *Community approaches to child welfare*. Peterborough:ON: Broadview Press.
- Broacher, M. (2006). *Coming home: The story of Tikinagan child and family services*. Canada: Barney Printing.
- Carasco, E. (1986). Canadian Native children: Have child welfare laws broken the circle? *Canadian Journal of Family Law*, 5, 110-157.
- Castellano, M. (2002). Aboriginal family trends: Extended families, nuclear families, families of the heart. Retrieved October 1, 2007, from <http://www.vifamily.ca/library/cft/aboriginal.html>
- Canadian bar association warns passage of C-44 could cause dispossession of hundreds of First Nations communities in the name of "human rights." (2007, September 29) Four Arrows Newsletter.
- Chandler, M.J. & Lalonde, C.E. (1998). Cultural Continuity as a hedge against suicide in Canada's First Nations. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 35(2), 193-211.
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among the five traditions*. (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

- Crichlow, W. (2003). Western colonization as disease: Native adoption and cultural genocide. *Canadian Social Work*, 5(1), 88 - 107.
- Duck, J., Ironstar, V., & Ricks, F. (1997). Healing the community. *Journal of Child and Youth Care*, 11 (3), 1-13.
- Durst, D. (1999). The wellness of Aboriginal children: seeking solutions through self-government. In J.H. Hylton (Ed.), *Aboriginal Self-Government in Canada: Current Trends and Issues* (pp.187 -204). Winnipeg, Canada: Printcrafters, Inc.
- Early, T., & GlenMaye, L. (2000). Valuing families: Social work practice with families from a strengths perspective. *Social Work*. 45 (2), 118 -130.
- First Nations Summit (1992). Indian child and family service standards project: Final report. Vancouver: First Nations Summit.
- Fournier, Suzanne., & Crey, Ernie. (1997). *Stolen from our embrace: The abduction of First Nations children and the restoration of Aboriginal communities*. Vancouver: British Columbia: Douglas & McIntyre Ltd.
- Foxcroft, D., & Blackstock, C. (2003). USMA: Cherished ones, precious ones, the children: A First Nations approach to child, family and community well-being. In N. Trocme, D. Knoke, & C. Roy (Eds), *Community collaboration and differential response: Canadian and international research and emerging models of practice*.
- Furniss, Elizabeth. (1991) *A conspiracy of silence: the care of the Native students at St. Joseph's residential school in Williams Lake*. Williams Lake, BC. Cariboo Council,
- Hamilton, A. & Sinclair, C. (1991). *Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba: Vol. 1. The justice system and Aboriginal people*. Province of Manitoba.

- Gibbins, R. (1997). Historical overview and background: part 1. In R. J. Pointing (Ed.), *First Nations in Canada: perspectives on opportunity, empowerment and self-determination*. (pp. 19-34). Toronto: McGraw-Hill
- Gilman, D. (1998). *Culturally relevant Aboriginal Child welfare: Principles, policy and practice*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation: University of Manitoba.
- Gough, P., Blackstock, C., & Bala, N. (2005). Jurisdiction and funding models for Aboriginal child and family service agencies. CECW Information Sheet #30E. Toronto, ON, Canada: University of Toronto. Retrieved Aug 3, 2006 from www.cecwcepb.ca/DocsEng/JurisdictionandFunding30E.pdf.
- Gough, P. (2006). Nova Scotia's child welfare system. CECW Information Sheet #43E. Toronto, ON, Canada: University of Toronto, Faculty of Social Work. Retrieved Oct 5, 2007 from www.cecwcepb.ca/DocsEng/NSChildwelfaresystem43E.pdf
- Green, J. and Thomas, R. (2005) Learning through Our Children, Healing for Our Children: Best Practice. In First Nations communities. In Lena Dominelli (Ed.), *Communities in a globalising world: Theory and practice for community empowerment*. (pp. 175-192). U.K.: Ashgate Publishing.
- Haig-Brown, C. (1988). *Resistance and renewal: Surviving the Indian residential school*. Vancouver: Tillacum Library/Arsenal Pulp Press.
- Hart, M. (2002). *Seeking mino-pimtsiwin: An Aboriginal approach to helping*. Halifax: N.S. Fernwood Publishing.
- Hart, M. (2000). An Aboriginal Approach to social work practice. T. Heinonen and L. Spearman (eds.), *Problem Solving and Beyond: An Introduction to Social Work Practice*. (pp. 232-256). Toronto: Irwin Press.

- Hughes, E.N. (2006). *BC children and youth review: An independent review of BC's child protection system*. Victoria: Ministry of Children and Family Development.
- Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. (1995). *First Nations child and family services program*. Canada: Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.
- Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. (1999). *You wanted to know: Federal programs and services for registered Indians*. Canada: Minister of Public Works and Government Services
- Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. (2007). *Evaluation of the First Nations child and family services program*. Departmental Audit and Evaluation Branch: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. Available at http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/ae/ev/06-07/06-07_e.html
- Johnson, P. (1983). *Native children and the child welfare system*. Ottawa: Canadian Council on Social Development.
- Joseph, S. (1991). Assimilation tools: Then and now. In D. Jense & C. Brooks (Eds.), *In celebration of our survival: The first nations of British Columbia*. (pp. 65- 80). Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Kline, M. (1992). Child welfare law, "best interests of the child" ideology and First Nations. *Osgoode Hall Law Journal*, 30 (2), 375-425.
- Kimmelman, E.C. (1985). *No quiet place: Review committee on Indian and Metis adoptions and placements*. Manitoba: Manitoba Community Services.
- Kirby, S. & McKenna, K. (1989). *Experience, research, and social Change: Methods from the margins*. Toronto: Garmond Press.

- Lalum'utul'Smun'eem Child and Family Services (n.d.). *Our children are scared*.
[Brochure]. Duncan: Author.
- Little Bear, L. (2000). Jagged worldviews colliding. M. Battiste (Ed.), *Reclaiming Indigenous voice and vision*. Vancouver, B.C.:UBC Press.
- MacDonald, J. (1985). "The Spallumcheen Indian band by-law and its potential impact on native Indian child welfare policy in British Columbia." *Canadian Journal of Family Law* 4. 75 HeinOnline [Academic Search Elite](#). EBSCOhost. University of Victoria Lib., Victoria, Feb 18, 2003.
- MacFarlane, C. (2006). My strength: a look outside the box at the strengths perspective. *Social Work*. 45 (2), 175-176.
- Macintyre, E. (1993). The Historical Context of Child Welfare in Canada. In B. Wharf (Ed.), *Rethinking Child Welfare in Canada*. (pp. 13-36). Ontario: McClelland & Stewart Inc.
- Mandell, D. Clouston Carlson, J., Fine, M., & Blackstock, C. (2003). *Aboriginal child welfare*. Partnership for Families Project: Wilfred Laurier University.
- Mandell, D. Clouston Carlson, J., Fine, M., & Blackstock, C. (2006). Aboriginal child welfare. In G. Cameron, N. Coady, & G. Adams (Eds.), *Toward positive systems of child and family welfare: Current issues and future directions* (pp. 115-159). Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- Mathias, J., & Yabsley, G. R. (1991). Conspiracy of legislation: the suppression of Indian rights in Canada. In D. Jense & C. Brooks (Eds.), *In celebration of our survival: The First Nations of British Columbia*. (pp. 34- 47). Vancouver: UBC Press.

- Mawhiney, A.M. (2001) First Nations in Canada. In J.C. Turner & F.J. Turner (Eds.), *Canadian Social Welfare* (4th edition). Toronto: Pearson Education Inc.
- McDonald, R.J., & Ladd, P. (2000). *First Nations child and family services joint national policy review: Final report, June 2000*. Ottawa, ON: The Assembly of First Nations and Department of Indian and Northern Development.
- McKenzie, B., Seidel, E., & Bone, N. (1995). Child and family service standards in First Nations: An action research project. *Child welfare*, 74(3), 103-125.
- McKenzie, B. & Morrissette, V. (2003). Social work practice with Canadians of Aboriginal background: Guidelines for respectful social work. In A. Al-Krenawi & J. Graham (eds.), *Multicultural social work in Canada: Working with diverse ethno-racial communities*. (pp.251-282). Don Mills, ON:Oxford.
- Mi'kmaw Family and Children's Services (2001). Annual Report. Nova Scotia: Mi'kmaw Family and Children's Services 16th Assembly.
- Ministry of Children and Family Development. (1999). *Aboriginal operational and practice standards and indicators*. Victoria: Crown Publishing.
- Ministry of Children and Family Development. (2004). Delegated aboriginal child and family service list. Province of BC: Ministry of Children and Family Development.
- Ministry of Children and Family Development. (2007). Children in care trends and indicators. Ministry for Children and Family Development: Data Service Branch
- Ministry of Social Services and Housing (1985). *Agreement between the superintendent of family and child services of British Columbia and the Nuu chah nulth Tribal Council*. Province of British Columbia: Ministry of Social Services and Housing.
- Milloy, J. S. (1999). *A national crime: the Canadian government and the*

residential school system 1879 to 1986. Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press.

Mirsky, L. (2003). *Family group conferencing worldwide: Part one in a series*. International Institute for Restorative Practices. Retrieved November 1, 2007, from

<http://www.iirp.org/library/fgcseries01.html>

Morse, B.W. (1999). The inherent right of aboriginal governance. In J.Hylton (Ed.), *Aboriginal Self-government in Canada: Current Trends and Issues (2nd edition)*, (pp. 16-44). Saskatoon: Purich Publishers.

Morrisette, V., Morrisette, L., McKenzie, B. (1993). Towards an aboriginal model of social work practice: cultural knowledge and traditional practices. *Canadian Social Work Review*. 10, (1), 92-108.

Monture, P. (1989). A vicious circle: Child welfare and the First Nations. *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*, 3, 1-17.

Nabigon, H., & Mawhiney, A. (1996). Aboriginal theory: A Cree medicine wheel guide for healing First Nations. In F. Turner (Ed.), *Social work treatment*(4th ed). New York: The Free Press.

Nelson, C., Kelly, M, & McPherson; D. (1985). Rediscovering support in social work practice: Lessons from Indian Indigenous human service workers. *Canadian Social Work Review*, 2, 231-248.

Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services Corporation. (2002). *Talking together training manual*. Ontario: Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services Corporation.

Nuu chah nulth Tribal Council (1996). *Indian residential schools: The Nuuchah-nulth experience*. Canada: Nuuchah-nulth Tribal Council.

- Nuu chah nulth Tribal Council website (2007). Usma child and family services: Mission Statement. Retrieved August 31, 2007, from <http://www.nuuchahnulth.org/tribal-council/usma.html>
- Read, S. (1995). Issues in health management promoting First Nations wellness in times of change. P. Stephenson, S. Elliott, L. Foster, J. Harris, (Eds.), *Canadian west geographical series 3: Persistent spirit: Towards understanding Aboriginal health in British Columbia* (pp. 297-329). University of Victoria: Western Geographical Press.
- Reid, C. & Dudding, P. (2006). *Building a future together: Issues and outcomes for transition-aged Youth*. Ottawa, ON: Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare.
- Rutman, D., Hubbersey, C., Feuniw, A., & Brown, E. (2005). *When youth age of out of care – A bulletin of time 2 findings*. University of Victoria: School of Social Work.
- Red Horse, J., Martinez, C., Day, P., Day, D., Pouport, J., & Scharnberg, D (2000). *Family preservation: Concepts in American Indian communities*. Seattle, Washington: Casey Family Programs.
- Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. (1996). *Volume 1 Looking forward, looking back*. Ottawa: Canada Communication Group.
- Sayer, J. & MacDonald, K. (2001). A strong and meaningful role for First Nations women in governance. In *First Nation Women, Governance and the Indian Act: A Collection of Policy Research Reports*. Canada: Status of Women Canada.
- Shangreaux, C. (2004). Staying at home: Examining the implications of Least Disruptive Measures in First Nations Child and Family Service Agencies. Retrieved from First Nation Child and Family Caring Society of Canada September 9, 2005 website: <http://celarc.ca/cppdoc1-12/200351.pdf>

- Shewell, H, & Spagnut, A (1995). The First Nations of Canada: Social welfare and the quest for self-Government. In J. Dixon & R Scheurell, (Eds.), *Social welfare and Indigenous Peoples*. (pp.1-53). London: Routledge.
- Sinclair, M., Bala, N., Lilles, H. & Blackstock, C. (2004). Aboriginal child welfare. In: N. Bala, M. Zapf, R. Williams, R. Vogel, & J. Hornick (Eds.), *Canadian child welfare law: Children, families and the state*. 2nd Ed. (pp. 199–244). Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing.
- Sinclair, R. (2004). Aboriginal social work education in Canada: Decolonizing pedagogy for the seventh generation. *First Peoples Child & Family Review*, 1, 49-61.
- Slowey, A. Gabrielle. (2000). Aboriginal self-government, extinguishment of title and the Canadian state: Effectively removing the “other”? *Native Studies Review* 13, (1) 1-17.
- Smith, Linda. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies*. London: Zed Books Ltd & Dunedin: University of Otago Press
- Schwant, T. (2003). Three epistemological stances for qualitative inquiry: Interpretivist, hermeneutics, and social constructions. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.
- Ha-Shilth-Sa Special Edition. (1988, May). Nuuchah-nulth family and child services. Ha-Shilth-Sa: Nuuchah-nulth Tribal Council.
- Thomas, Leicht, Hughes, Madigan, Dowell (2003). *Emerging practices in the prevention of Child abuse and neglect*. USA: Children’s Bureau- Office on Child Abuse and Neglect. Available at <http://www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/programs/whatworks/report/report.pdf>

Tuz Beyaduck, The Talking Stick Newsletter (2005, Fall). Carrier Sekani Family Services Newsletter. Available at:

<http://www.csfs.org/Files/Public/Newsletters/October%202005%20Newsletter.pdf>

Watchtel, A. (1999). *The state of the art in child abuse prevention*. Ottawa: Health Canada.

Available at http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/familyviolence/html/nfntsptprevention_e.html

Weaver, H. (1999). Indigenous People and the social work profession: Defining culturally competent services. *Social Work*, 44 (3), 217-225.

Yellow Bird, M., & Chenault, V. (1999). The role of social work in advancing the practice of indigenous education: Obstacles and promises in the empowerment – orientated social work practice. In K. Swisher & John Tippeconnic (Eds.), *Next steps: research and practice to advance Indian education*. (pp. 201-235). Charleston, West Virginia: Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools.

Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me what motivated you to become a social worker?
2. Tell me about your work at Usma, Nuu chah nulth?
3. Could you tell me about your experience in working in the communities (individual and family practice, economics, social, or cultural influences)?
4. How would you describe effective social work practice? What does it look like in practice when the work is effective?
5. Does the fact that you are an Aboriginal person working in the Nuu chah nulth territory have any affect on your social work practice? In what ways does it make your practice effective? Or does it add a level of difficulty to your practice.

Additional Questions

1. What is important in your social work practice, at Usma?
2. What are the most important aspects of social work practice in the First Nations communities?
3. What are the underlying values that influence the social practice at Usma, Nuu chah nulth?
4. Do the various Nuu chah nulth communities have any influence on social work practice? If yes, how?
5. Are there political aspects of child welfare practice? If so, what are they? How do these affect the work?
6. What are the differences in social work practice of Usma, Nuu chah nulth and the Ministry of Children and Family Development?
7. What services are accessible to your children and families as compared to the MCFD clients?
8. How is culture incorporated into your social work practice?
9. Can you give specific examples of when cultural practices are incorporated in:
 - situations with children in care;
 - situations with family you are involved with;
 - situations with extended family you are involved with.

Appendix B

Minister's authority to make agreements

90 For the purposes of this Act, the minister may make an agreement with any of the following:

(a) an Indian band or a legal entity representing an aboriginal community;

(a.1) the Nisga'a Nation or a Nisga'a Village;

(b) the government of Canada, the government of a province of Canada or the government of a jurisdiction outside Canada, or an official or agency of any of those governments;

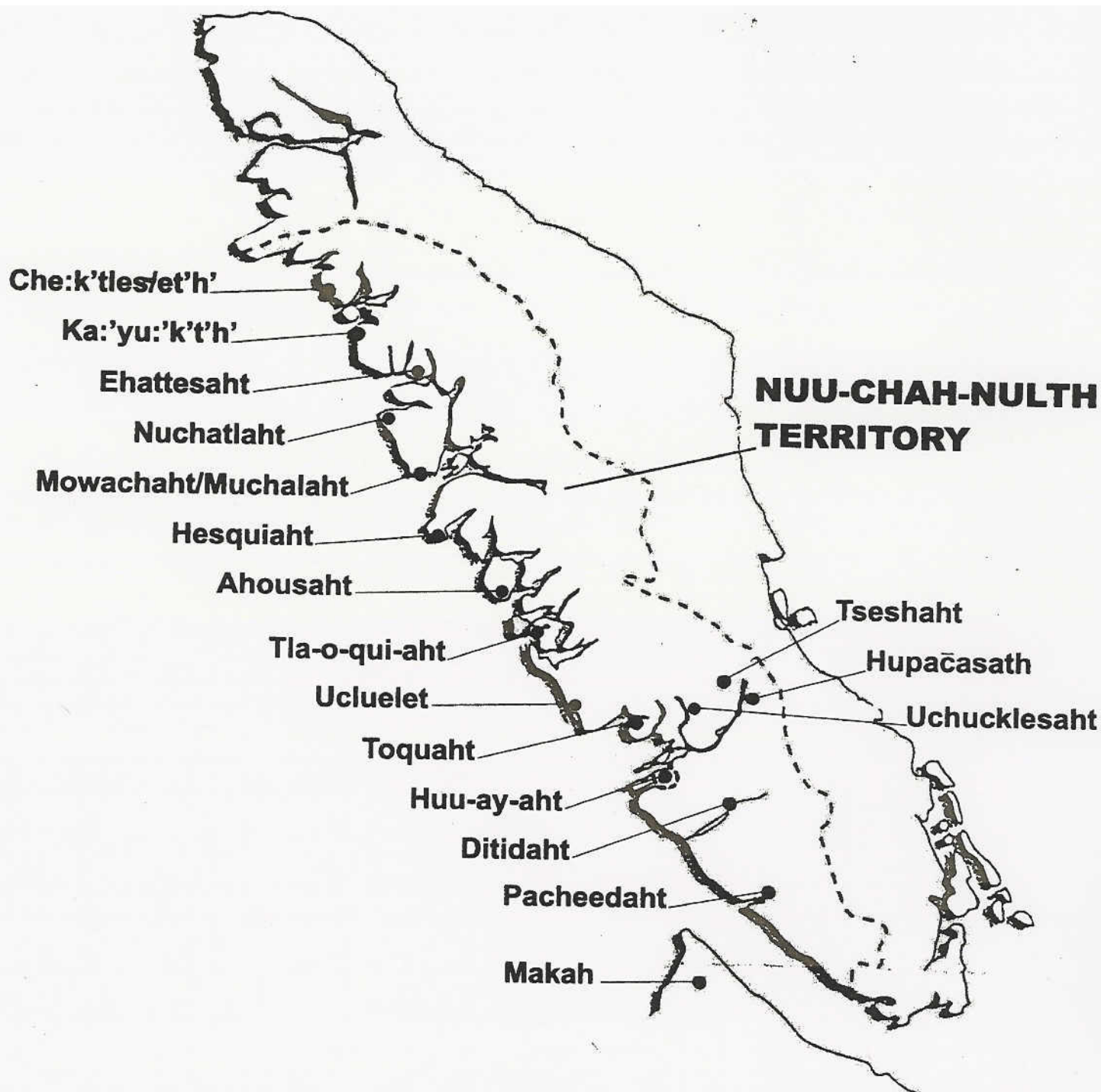
(c) any person or group of persons.

Director's power to delegate

92 (1) Subject to the regulations, a director may delegate to any person or class of person any or all of the director's powers, duties or functions under this Act.

(2) A delegation of the powers, duties or functions of a director must be in writing and may include any terms or conditions the director considers advisable.

Appendix C



Source: Nuu Chah Nulth Tribal Council

Appendix D

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

Participant Consent Form

OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT,

RESEARCH

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS

COMMITTEE

An Usma, Nuu chah nulth Theory of Social Work Practice

You are being invited to participate in a study entitled an Usma, Nuu chah nulth Theory of Social Work Practice, that is being conducted by Linda Lucas. Linda is a graduate student in the department of Human and Social Development at the University of Victoria and you may contact her if you have further questions at 250 642 5216 or by email at lucas@uvic.ca

As a Graduate student, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a degree in the Master of Social Work. It is being conducted under the supervision of Leslie Brown. You may contact my supervisor at 250 721 6275 or by email at lbrown@uvic.ca.

The purpose of this research project is to interview social workers employed by Usma, Nuu chah nulth about their social work practice. Ultimately, the intent is to develop a theory of social work practice, based on the analysis of the interviews, which is limited to the experience of social workers employed by Usma, Nuu chah nulth.

Research of this type is important because there is limited theory regarding social work in an Aboriginal community. Although this research is limited to social workers employed by Usma, Nuu chah nulth, it has implications for other First Nations who are developing a child welfare program. Further, the research is valuable in contributing to the broader community and academic knowledge base. This study will contribute to the understanding of social work practice in a First Nations context and contribute positive knowledge about First Nations social work practice.

You are being asked to participate in this study because of your skills, abilities, experience and knowledge of social work practice in the Nuu chah nulth communities. This is the rationale for how and why you were chosen to participate.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include interviews only **and with your permission, the interviews will be audio taped.** Interviews will take approximately 2-3 hours with a possible additional interview lasting approximately the same duration of time or less. I may need a follow up telephone call if I require further clarification or additional information. All interviews will take place in Port Alberni at the Nuu chah nulth Tribal Council office or a location and time convenient to you. There maybe additional information that will be requested from the agency administration regarding the historical context of the agency or from agency documents, such as evaluations or community needs assessments.

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, but given the short time frames for interviews it is not anticipated that you will be unduly burdened by the interview process. If the interview time is not conducive to your needs, I will arrange a time free of distractions or interference and suitable for your time frames. There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include your contribution to the body of knowledge regarding First Nations issues and the development of a theory of Social Work practice at Usma, Nuu chah nulth. Further, given the lack of direct research by First Nations this will be beneficial for the Nuu chah nulth communities, Usma, as well as academia.

As a way to compensate you for any inconvenience related to your participation, and in keeping with the cultural traditions of Nuu chah nulth, it would be respectful to meet with you at the completion of the research to share the results of the research, and to formally thank you by requesting your attendance at a dinner or luncheon provided by myself.

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you decide to withdraw from the study, I will ask for your consent to use the data up to the point of your withdrawal from the research. Further, if you chose not to permit me to use your data up to the point of your withdrawal from the research, I will either destroy all of the data, whether it is electronic, audio taped or transcribed data, or if you chose, I will return all electronic, audio taped, or transcribed data to the you

In order to assure myself that you are continuing to give your consent to participate in this research, I will, if the interviews extend beyond the period of time identified, remind you that your participation is voluntary.

I also need to inform you that I intend to develop papers intended for distribution in the broader public and the results of the research maybe incorporated into journal articles, edited books, or other public sources.

In terms of protecting your anonymity in this study, there will be no identifying information about you in the thesis. However, given that I intend to interview only 5 social workers from Usma, Nuu chah nulth, and given the relatively small size of the agency, there is a chance your identity may be unintentionally recognized. All precautions will be taken to limit your identity including careful use of the transcribed data, which could inadvertently identify your position or identity at Usma, Nuu chah nulth.

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected as it will not be accessible to anyone outside this research. There will be no identifying information about the participants available in the transcribed data. The researcher will be collecting, transcribing, and analyzing the data, which will not be available or accessible to anyone outside the research project. All information will be stored in a locked filing cabinet accessible only to the researcher and any electronic data or files will be password protected. The data and transcribed interviews maybe reviewed by my Thesis Supervisor, should I require assistance in the analysis.

Other planned uses of this data could include the development of academic papers related to First Nations Social Work Practice.

Data from this study will be disposed of in the following manner. Your transcribed and coded data will be retained while the raw data will be destroyed within 6 months of the defense of my thesis.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways. The analyzed data

will be written up as part of my thesis requirements and made available widely to the general public through the University of Victoria library system. Other planned uses of this data include the development of academic papers related to the topic of First Nations social work practice and a presentation to you on the results of the research.

In addition to being able to contact the researcher and the supervisor at the above phone numbers, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria (250-472-4362).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date