Supporting Cultural and Relational Connections with Indigenous Children and Youth in Care: A Literature Review

By: Sarah Eddy
University of Victoria
In partnership with MCFD sponsor
Sarah Kobayashi, Team Leader for Indigenous Guardianship and Permanency Team

GS 505
Dr. Alison Gerlach
Amber Lowdermilk
April 15, 2025

University of Victoria

BRITISH COLUMBIA | Ministry of Children and Family Development

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary

Cultural connections play an important role in the overall health and well-being of Indigenous peoples (Child Welfare Information Gateway, n.d.) and can work as a protective factor for Indigenous children and youth (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998). Indigenous children and youth continue to be overrepresented in the child welfare system (Government of Canada, 2023) in British Columbia (BC) and are likely to lose connections to their cultures, families, and communities (Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Quinn, 2020) particularly when they are placed in non-Indigenous homes (Choate & Tortorelli, 2022; Oliver, 2020). This disconnection can have negative impacts on children and youth's mental health, self-esteem, and sense of belonging (Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024). Despite recommendations laid out in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada Calls to Action (Navia et al., 2018; Special Advisor Grand Chief Ed John, 2016) and from the Representative for Children and Youth (RCY) in BC (Representative for Children and Youth, 2024), Indigenous children and youth in care, specifically on continuing care orders (CCOs), lack supports in maintaining cultural and relational continuity. The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) have identified the need to address barriers and gain insight into how Indigenous children and youth on Continuing Care Orders (CCOs) can be best supported.

This research project was guided by the following two questions:

What factors are impacting cultural and relational connections with Indigenous children and youth in care?

How can the continuity of cultural and relational connections with Indigenous children and youth in care be better supported?

Methods

To explore these questions, a literature search was conducted using the University of Victoria library databases, (Ebscohost [APA PsycInfo, Bibliography of Indigenous Peoples in North America, Race Relations Abstracts, Social Sciences Full Text, Social Work Abstracts], Web of Science, Indigenous Studies Portal [IPortal]) and Google Scholar. Grey literature was retrieved from informal searches on Google, and the websites for the RCY and Canadian Child Welfare Research Portal. Literature included in this review was written by or with Indigenous scholars and/or communities in Canada, published within the last 10 years, and focused on urban Indigenous children and youth on CCOs and who were not currently living on their traditional territory.

Using a relational approach with this project that recognized how important it is to include others in the conversation and gain further insights, I met biweekly with my MCFD sponsor, Sarah Kobayashi. I also met with members of the Aboriginal Policy and Practice Team as needed to gain their insight and discuss the Aboriginal and Policy Practice Framework (APPF) in relation to this research.

Findings

I Identified five recurring themes in the reviewed literature and multiple sub-themes (see figure 1). My initial intention was to identify themes that spoke individually to each research question, however, as I analyzed the literature, I realized it was difficult to separate the two questions as all of the themes are interconnected. I will identify which question each theme speaks to, noting whether a theme applies to both questions or just one of them.

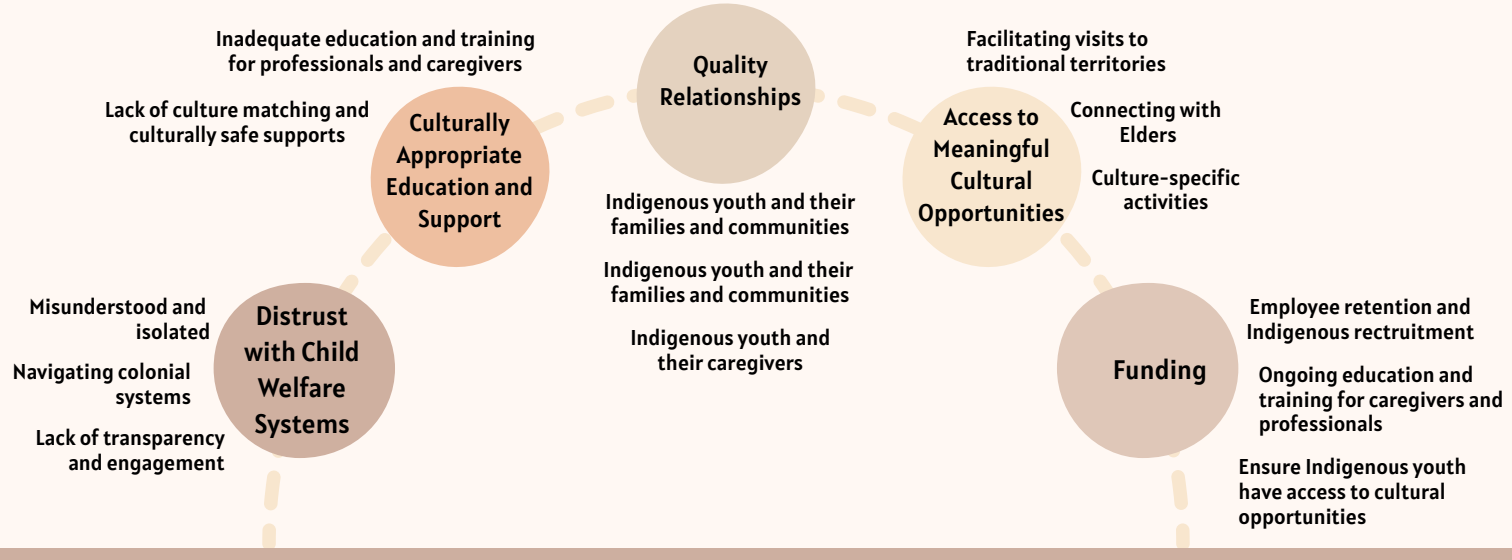
Distrust with child welfare systems

This theme sheds light on some of the barriers that Indigenous children and youth in care face. It speaks to the intergenerational distrust of the child welfare system due to the continuous removal of Indigenous children and youth from their families (Navia et al., 2018). Indigenous children and youth are left feeling isolated and helpless in navigating colonial systems that were not made for them (de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Navia et al., 2018; Quinn, 2022).

Culturally informed education and supports

This theme speaks to both research questions, regarding the barriers Indigenous children and youth face and the supports they need. The literature emphasizes that ignorance and a lack of knowledge pertaining to the historical contexts of damaging colonial practices are continuing to harm Indigenous children and youth as they continue to navigate discriminatory and racist behaviours (de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Navia et al., 2018). Indigenous children and youth have expressed a desire for the adults in their lives to receive culturally informed education and training as well as the need for culture matching and/or culturally safe supports (Burke, 2023; de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Madigan, 2017).

Figure 1. Findings



Quality Relationships

Positive relationships between Indigenous children and youth and their families, communities, and caregivers are vital to build trust and develop a sense of well-being. This theme speaks to both research questions, regarding the barriers Indigenous children and youth face as well as the supports they need. Some Indigenous children and youth in the literature reflected positively on maintaining connections with their families (Bennett, 2015; Mellor et al., 2020; Quinn, 2022) as well as on trusting relationships they had developed with their caregivers and/or social workers (Bennett, 2015; de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Madigan, 2017; Quinn, 2022). Others reflected on barriers they faced in connecting with their families (Navia et al., 2018; Representative for Children and Youth, 2021) as well as negative relationships they had with their caregivers and/or social workers (Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Madigan, 2017). Supports and efforts were also needed to establish and maintain positive relationships between Indigenous children and youths' caregivers and their birth families (Bennett, 2015; Burke, 2023; Oliver, 2020).

Access to meaningful cultural supports

This theme speaks to both research questions, regarding the barriers Indigenous children and youth face as well as the supports they need. Culture serves as a protective factor (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Indigenous Corporate Training Inc., 2018), however, the literature highlighted how many Indigenous children and youth in care experience a lack of support and exposure in connecting with cultural supports, including Elders, cultural activities, and visiting their traditional territories (Madigan, 2017; Quinn, 2022; Representative for Children and Youth, 2017). As Ball & Benoit-Jansson (2023) point out, "cultural and community connectedness are primary considerations in Bill C-92 with regards to assessing what is in the best interest of an Indigenous child" (p. 48). Indigenous children and youth should be provided with meaningful opportunities to engage with cultural supports and their culture.

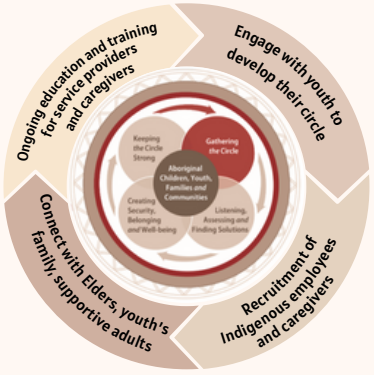
Funding

Funding was a barrier in maintaining cultural and relational connections that tied into many other themes, which is why it is important for it to be discussed on its own. Insufficient funding limits Indigenous children and youth from visiting their traditional territories (Bennett, 2015; de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Oliver, 2020) as well as engaging in cultural activities (Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Quinn, 2020). Indigenous children and youth in the literature also emphasized the need for Indigenous representation (Bennett, 2015) and culturally informed education and training for caregivers and workers in the child welfare system (Representative for Children and Youth, 2023; Representative for Children and Youth, 2024). Funding must be considered and factored into the yearly budgets for all Indigenous children and youth in the child welfare system (Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024).

Recommendations

The APPF was used to frame the following recommendations (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2015) which are detailed in the report.

Figure 2. APPF: Gathering the Circle



Gathering the Circle

Fund ongoing mandatory culturally informed education and training for service providers and caregivers
(Bennett, 2015; Burke, 2023; Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Madigan, 2017; Navia et al., 2018; Oliver, 2020; Quinn, 2020; Representative for Children and Youth, 2021, 2024; Siwakoti, 2024)

Engage with youth to develop their circle
(Ball & Benoit-Jansson, 2023; Bennett, 2015; de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Mellor et al., 2021; Representative for Children and Youth, 2017, 2021)

Recruit Indigenous employees and caregivers
(Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Madigan, 2017; Oliver, 2020)

Connect Indigenous children and youth with Elders, their families, communities and supportive adults
(Ball & Benoit-Jansson, 2023; Bennett, 2015; Burke, 2023; de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Madigan, 2017; Mellor et al., 2021; Representative for Children and Youth, 2017, 2024)

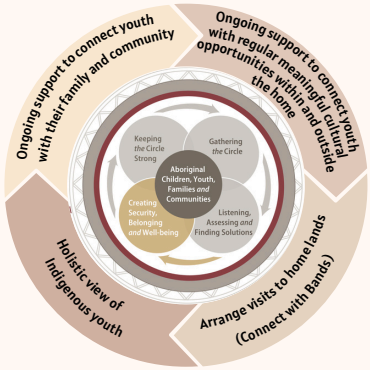
Listening, Assessing, and Finding Solutions

Engage and collaborate with Indigenous youth in developing their care plans
(de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Madigan, 2017; Mellor et al., 2021; Representative for Children and Youth, 2021)

Engage and collaborate with Indigenous children and youths' families and communities, and Elders in planning
(Bennett, 2015; Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Madigan, 2017; Representative for Children and Youth, 2017, 2021, 2024)

Collaborate with Indigenous children, youth, families, and communities on reviews of policy and practice
(Ball & Benoit-Jansson, 2023; Burke, 2023; de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Madigan, 2017; A. Quinn, 2020; Representative for Children and Youth, 2017, 2021)

Figure 3. APPF: Listening, Assessing, and Finding Solutions



Creating Security, Belonging, and Well-Being

Figure 4. APPF: Creating Security, Belonging, and Well-Being

Provide Indigenous children and youth with ongoing support to connect with their families and communities
(Ball & Benoit-Jansson, 2023; Bennett, 2015; Burke, 2023; Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Mellor et al., 2020; Representative for Children and Youth, 2017)

Provide Indigenous children and youth with ongoing support to regularly engage in meaningful cultural opportunities within and outside the home
(Ball & Benoit-Jansson, 2023; Bennett, 2015; Burke, 2023; Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Madigan, 2017; Mellor et al., 2020; Mellor et al., 2021; Quinn, 2020; Quinn, 2022; Representative for Children and Youth, 2017, 2021)

Arrange visits with Indigenous children and youth to visit their traditional territories
(de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Oliver, 2020; Representative for Children and Youth, 2021)

Use a holistic lens when working with Indigenous children, youth, families, and communities
(Ball & Benoit-Jansson, 2023; Bennett, 2015; Madigan, 2017; Quinn, 2020; Quinn, 2022)

Keeping the Circle Strong

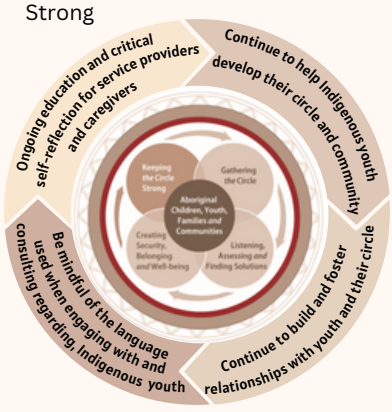
Fund and participate in ongoing mandatory culturally informed education and training and engage In critical self-reflection often
(Madigan, 2017; Mellor et al., 2020; Navia et al., 2018; Quinn, 2020; Representative for Children and Youth, 2021, 2024; Siwakoti, 2024)

Continue to support Indigenous children and youth develop their circle and community
(Ball & Benoit-Jansson, 2023; Bennett, 2015; de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Mellor et al., 2021; Representative for Children and Youth, 2017, 2021)

Continue to build and foster relationships with youth and their circle
(Ball & Benoit-Jansson, 2023; Bennett, 2015; de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Madigan, 2017; Mellor et al., 2020; Quinn, 2020; Representative for Children and Youth, 2017, 2021)

Be mindful of the language used when engaging with, and consulting regarding, Indigenous youth
(de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024)

Figure 5. APPF: Keeping the Circle Strong



Acknowledgements

I would like to humbly acknowledge that I am a First Nations settler, currently residing on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Lək̓ʷəŋən (Songhees and Xʷsepsəm/Esquimalt) and WSÁNEĆ Peoples.

I am grateful to have called these lands home for the last 5 years, though I am originally from Robinson Huron Territory, colonially known as Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. I am a mixed Indigenous woman, connected to Batchewana First Nation on my mother's side, and with Irish, Scottish, and English heritage on my father's side. Though I identify as a First Nations woman, I grew up without my culture and continue to be on a journey of learning and unlearning.

To further position myself within this research, I have worked with youth involved in the child welfare system, as well as with marginalized adults in low barrier housing, many of whom have been involved in the child welfare system. These experiences have shaped my research interests. However, I have remained reflexive and continued to focus on the literature, while also checking in with my instructors, sponsor, classmates, and the APP team.

I would like to acknowledge and express my sincere gratitude to those who supported me through this journey. My sponsor, Sarah Kobayashi, the course instructor and course coordinator, Alison Gerlach and Amber Lowdermilk, and members of the APP team, specifically Meredith Graham and Skyler McGavel. I raise my hands to all of you.

Historical Context

Understanding the history of the colonial practices directed at Indigenous communities, that took place in what is today known as Canada, and the negative impacts it had, and continues to have, on Indigenous communities is foundation to understanding why cultural and relational connections and continuity are vital to the overall health and well-being of Indigenous Peoples.

Indigenous children and youth have been targets of colonial practices for over 300 years. Indian Residential Schools (IRS) were just the beginning. Though they began to open in the early 1700s, they were not well-established until the 1830s (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a). The first federally funded schools opened in the 1880s and remained open for just over 100 years, with the last IRS closing in 1996 (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a). According to the TRC (2015a), it was not until 1894 that the federal government put regulations in place relating to residential school attendance. This allowed Indian agents the power to issue orders for children, who they deemed were being improperly cared for, to be placed in schools (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a). The colonial project, based on European standards, did not account for Indigenous ways of knowing and being and the detrimental impact of colonial oppression was not considered. The TRC (2015a) provided a quote by Public Works Minister Hector Langevin, who, in 1883, justified these actions by saying “if you leave them in the family they may know how to read and write, but they still remain savages, whereas by separating them in the way proposed, they acquire the habits and tastes—it is to be hoped only the good tastes—of civilized people” (p. 58).

Ignorance and an unwillingness to learn or understand Indigenous cultures resulted in the colonial mindset of needing to “save” Indigenous children, by forcefully removing them from their communities and families, and making them conform to Eurocentric ways of living. Indigenous children and youth who went to IRS endured multiple forms of abuse and neglect of all sorts, and many lost their lives (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a). Indigenous children were stripped of their identities and forbidden from engaging in cultural practices and speaking their languages (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a). Approximately 150,000 Indigenous children and youth attended IRS and those who survived were often left feeling displaced and disconnected from their community and society (Indigenous Corporate Training Inc., 2018; Matheson et al., 2022; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a).

By the end of the 1970s, residential schools began to close, however the Sixties Scoop was becoming established across Canada (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a). Between the 1950s and 1990s, (Matheson et al., 2022; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a) Indigenous children and youth were, again, forcibly removed from their families and communities and placed with non-Indigenous caregivers by child welfare agents who believed the children were not being properly taken care of (Matheson et al., 2022; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a). Approximately 20,000 Indigenous children and youth were impacted by the Sixties Scoop (Matheson et al., 2022).

Today, there continues to be an overrepresentation of Indigenous children and youth in the child welfare system (Government of Canada & Indigenous Services Canada, 2023; Matheson et al., 2022; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a). As of 2015, it was estimated that there are more Indigenous children and youth in child welfare systems than at the peak of the IRS era (Matheson et al., 2022; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a).
As noted by the TRC (2015a):

> "Today, the effects of the residential school experience and the Sixties Scoop have adversely affected parenting skills and the success of many Aboriginal families. These factors, combined with prejudicial attitudes toward Aboriginal parenting skills and a tendency to see Aboriginal poverty as a symptom of neglect, rather than as a consequence of failed government policies, have resulted in grossly disproportionate rates of child apprehension among Aboriginal people" (p. 138).

A census report by the Government of Canada (2021) stated that “although Indigenous Peoples represent only 5.0% of the Canadian population, Indigenous children make up over half (52.0%) of the children in foster care”. This report did not account for Indigenous children and youth who were in care but in alternative placements, such as group homes (Government of Canada & Indigenous Services Canada, 2023).

Today's Child Welfare System

MCFD have identified the need to address barriers and gain more insight into how to better support Indigenous children and youth on CCOs. Identifying these barriers and supporting cultural and relational continuity speak to the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action 1, 2, 4, and 5 (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015b).

Indigenous children and youth are often placed in non-Indigenous homes (Choate & Tortorelli, 2022; Oliver, 2020), and lose connections to their cultures, families, and communities as a result (Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Quinn, 2020). This has negative impacts on their overall health and well-being (Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024) and can lead to oppositional behaviours, involvement in the criminal justice system (Bennett, 2015), substance abuse (Bennett, 2015; Burke, 2023; Representative for Children and Youth, 2017; Representative for Children and Youth, 2021), or death by suicide or toxic drug poisoning (Representative for Children and Youth, 2017; Representative for Children and Youth, 2021).

Cultural connections and continuity are important to the overall health and well-being of Indigenous peoples (Indigenous Corporate Training Inc., 2018). Cultural continuity can serve as a protective factor for Indigenous children and youth and includes teachings from ancestors, ways of knowing and being, spirituality, language, ceremonies, protocols, traditions, and connections to the land (Indigenous Corporate Training Inc., 2018). This is important to the overall health and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples (Indigenous Corporate Training Inc., 2018). There is also evidence that relational continuity serves as a protective factor for Indigenous children and youth in care (Quinn, 2022). Relational continuity extends beyond the nuclear family, including not only direct relatives like parents, siblings, and grandparents but also includes extended family and community members (Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Mellor et al., 2020; Quinn, 2022). Currently, cultural and relational connections and continuity remain largely absent in child welfare policies, practices, and funding (de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Burke, 2023; Quinn, 2022).

Research Methods: A Literature Review

Research Questions

The two questions that guided this literature review were:

Question I

What factors are impacting cultural and relational connections with Indigenous children and youth in care?

Question 2

How can the continuity of cultural and relational connections with Indigenous children and youth in care be better supported?

To explore the research questions, a literature search was conducted using the University of Victoria library databases, (Ebscohost [APA PsycInfo, Bibliography of Indigenous Peoples in North America, Race Relations Abstracts, Social Sciences Full Text, Social Work Abstracts], Web of Science, Indigenous Studies Portal [IPortal]) and Google Scholar. I used key terms to guide my search as well as a list of inclusion and exclusion criteria (see figure 6). Only literature written within Canada was utilized. Though there was a focus on Indigenous children and youth on CCOs, it was not always clear within the literature whether the children and youth were on CCOs.

Overall, I reviewed 104 titles and abstracts, fully read 27 academic articles and selected 11 that met the inclusion criteria. In addition, 9 non-academic reports and articles were selected from websites such as the Representative for Children and Youth and the Child Welfare Research Portal.

Using a relational approach with this project that recognized how important it is to include others in the conversation to gain further insight, I met with my MCFD sponsor, Sarah Kobayashi, biweekly. I also met with members of the APP team as needed to gain their insight and discuss the APPF in relation to this research.

Figure 6.

Search terms

child* OR teen* OR youth* OR adolescen* OR "young adult*"

"child welfare" OR "residential care" OR "in care" OR "foster care" OR "foster placement" OR "social services" OR "group home" OR "family care home"

Indigenous OR Aboriginal* OR "First Nations" OR Metis or Inuit

(connection* OR ties OR roots) N3 (cultur* OR relation* OR family) "cultur* connection" OR "cultur* ties" OR "cultur* roots" OR "relation* connection" OR "family connection" OR "family ties" OR language OR land OR "land based" OR elders

Figure 7.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion Criteria:

- 2015-2025
- Written by and with Indigenous scholars, youth, families and/or communities
- Children and youth on Continuing Care Orders (CCOs)
- Within Canada

Exclusion Criteria:

- Not written by and with Indigenous scholars, youth, families and/or communities
- Children and youth on Continuing
- Focused on the beginning stages of the child welfare system
- Focused solely on self-governance

Limitations

A limitation of this research was the time constraint which required omitting literature about related factors, including topics solely on self-governance, Indigenous children and youth in care on their traditional territories, and perspectives pertaining to other stages of involvement in the child welfare system, i.e. not CCOs. This ties into the second limitation, being that this is a very small portion of a very large, multifaceted topic. Thus, this literature review only provides a piece of the puzzle.

Findings

There were five recurring themes with several subthemes that I identified in the literature. My initial intention was to identify themes that spoke individually to each research question, however, as I analyzed the literature, I realized it was difficult to separate the two questions as the findings were all interconnected, which lead to some overlap. I will identify which question each theme speaks to, noting whether a theme applies to both questions or just one of them.

"When I was younger I was taught you are not supposed to talk to them, if you talk to them you get judged, or you are just being a little snitch. You don't talk to professionals" (Youth)

(Navia et al., 2018, p. 155)

Distrust with the child welfare system

"To tell you the truth I never talked to anybody. Social workers would try to talk to me, but I would never talk to them because I felt like I had to protect my family" (Youth)

(Navia et al., 2018, p. 155)

The findings in this theme shed light on some of the barriers that Indigenous children and youth in care face as a result of the generational distrust of the child welfare system due to the continuous removal of Indigenous youth from their families (Navia et al., 2018). The findings highlight how Indigenous children and youth are left feeling isolated and helpless in navigating colonial systems that were not made for them (de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Navia et al., 2018; Quinn, 2022).

Misunderstood and isolated.

In the literature, common feelings shared among the youth included feeling misunderstood and isolated, for reasons such as navigating complex, intersecting identities (mixed backgrounds, sexuality, age, gender, disability, etc.) (Bennett, 2015; de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Mellor et al., 2020; Mellor et al., 2021; Navia et al., 2018), living with a non-Indigenous family (Quinn, 2022), and grappling with the negative impacts of ongoing colonial practices they do not understand (de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Federation of BC Youth in Care Network, 2024; Quinn, 2022). Children and youth described feeling rejected by their Nations and other Indigenous peoples due to their urban identity and their involvement in the child welfare system which led to further feelings of isolation (Navia et al., 2018). Indigenous children and youth wanted to connect with their culture but felt unsupported in doing so (Federation of BC Youth in Care Network, 2024). As a result, Indigenous children and youth tended to perceive themselves negatively, thinking they were unlovable, and not good enough to be a part of a family (de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015).

"I totally feel like people think, "Oh, they're too old, they're damaged goods." (Youth)

(de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015, pp. 67)

"The biggest thing I hear is, "Will they burn my house down?" (Youth)

(de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015, pp. 68)

Feelings of isolation and disconnection were associated with youth numbing the pain through substance use (Burke 2023; Representative for Children and Youth, 2017; Representative for Children and Youth, 2021) and, in more severe cases, suicide or toxic drug poisoning (Representative for Children and Youth, 2017; Representative for Children and Youth, 2021).

"Yeah, it's like, about babies, like on TV or whatever, it's always the nice new baby … not like me, like a hoodie and tattoos. " (Youth)

(de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015, pp. 68)

Lack of transparency and engagement

I grew up in care, and it's so important (…) It's just knowing, "OK, I'm not that drunk Indian" or also, on the flip side, I don't have to live it up as a white girl.

(de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015, pp. 71)

Another subtheme I identified as a barrier in the literature was the lack of Indigenous children and youth engagement regarding care and permanency planning. Indigenous children and youth have expressed wanting to be engaged in the planning process, as well as in deciding who is present for the planning meetings (Bennett, 2015; Madigan, 2017). Engaging Indigenous children and youth in this process would allow them to feel safe and improve opportunities for more honest interactions between Indigenous children and youth and their social workers (Madigan, 2017). Children and youth also expressed wanting their workers to be transparent about alternative options, such as permanency planning, which could promote connections with extended family, Elders, or community members (de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015). It is especially important to develop these connections prior to youth aging out, as not having a safe adult on aging out of the system was associated with an increased risk of substance use and/or suicide (Representative for Children and Youth, 2017; Representative for Children and Youth, 2021). Providing children and youth with information pertaining to their Indigenous roots was also valued (de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015). Children and youth described wanting transparency so that they could make informed decisions regarding their care planning. It is important to note that there is no one approach to engaging Indigenous children and youth in this process, and that workers need to remain flexible, as needs may differ from youth to youth (Madigan, 2017).

"The first time I met her she told me what Nation I am. It was in my file the whole fuckin' time…. It took her one day to tell me more about my family, where I'm from and all, than I never heard from being in care for six years…" (Youth)

(de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015, pp. 70)

Navigating colonial systems

This theme does not pertain solely to MCFD and was identified in the literature as a major barrier for Indigenous children and youth in care who faced implicit and explicit racism and discrimination in many areas of their lives, including the child welfare system (Bennett, 2015; de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Navia et al., 2018), the school system (Bennett, 2015; Federation of BC Youth in Care Network), and the healthcare system (Bennett, 2015). Children and youth expressed not engaging with child welfare professionals out of fear of having their words used against their families (Navia et al., 2018). The distrust of the child welfare system in Indigenous communities was also perceived by youth to be a reason for the lack of Indigenous caregivers (de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Navia et al., 2018).

"I tried to do a school exchange to connect with my culture, however lack of communication with my SW and lack of approval in a timely fashion made me miss the deadlines. " (Youth)

(Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024, p. 13)

Findings also noted that the healthcare system is also causing harm by using western approaches to diagnose and treat Indigenous children and youth, as opposed to a holistic Indigenous lens (Bennett, 2015). Treatment options that focus solely on medical diagnoses, disregard a sense of balance in other aspects of well-being, such as physical, spiritual, and emotional (Bennett, 2015; Quinn, 2022). The literature identified the need for policies and practices to shift towards a holistic and timely approach to supporting the health and well-being of Indigenous children and youth (Madigan, 2017; Representative for Children and Youth, 2017).

"I'm 18 or 20 and I'm supposed to have it figured out. Who does that? Don't cut me off just because you think suddenly I'm grown. That's just so crazy. Like, "surprise!" I'm 20 now so all the shit I went through is fixed? I don't need anybody? "

(de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015, pp. 76)

Culturally Appropriate Education and Support

This recurring theme in the literature speaks to both research questions, regarding the barriers Indigenous children and youth face and the supports they need. Children and youth expressed the desire for adults in their lives to receive culturally informed education and training and for culture matching and/or culturally safe supports as they often faced racist and discriminatory comments and behaviours from non-Indigenous youth and adults (Burke, 2023; de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Madigan, 2017). The literature highlighted the importance of culturally informed education to mitigate the harmful impacts that ignorance and a lack of knowledge pertaining to the historical contexts of harmful colonial practices has on Indigenous children and youth (de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Navia et al., 2018).

"Being placed with foster family from a different culture and having other kids in the home who are from different cultures makes it hard to stay connected to your own" (Youth)

(Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024, p. 14)

Inadequate Education and Training for Professionals and Caregivers

> **"My standards may not meet the white standards and yet it could be healthy. . . . See me as I see myself, give me back the power to think I'm a good housekeeper. I'm healthy. My children are clean. But it's those standards . . . those thoughts, perceptions, and racism, and prejudice . . . how do you change their attitudes?" (Elder)**
>
> **(Burke, 2023, pp. 640)**

Many Indigenous children and youth in the literature expressed the need for workers and caregivers to receive culturally informed training and education (Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Madigan, 2017), which was echoed by Elders (Burke, 2023) and foster parents (Oliver, 2020). Not only would this provide caregivers and professionals with a better understanding of the negative historical and ongoing impacts of colonialism (Representative for Children and Youth, 2023) but would also allow them to understand the potential harmful impacts of current policies and practices (Burke, 2023). Culturally informed education and training would provide caregivers and professionals with tools to engage with Indigenous children, youth, and families in a culturally safe way (Burke, 2023; Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024), as well as to develop care plans that are culturally appropriate (Madigan, 2017).

Lack of Culture Matching and Culturally Safe Supports

Culture matching pertains to Indigenous children and youth being placed with Indigenous caregivers and was apparent throughout the literature. However there are not enough Indigenous caregivers to meet the need for the number of Indigenous children and youth in care (Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Navia et al., 2018). Children and youth who live in non-Indigenous homes and who are not supported by their caregivers to develop or maintain cultural connections can feel isolated and disconnected, with detrimental effects on their well-being (Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Representative for Children and Youth, 2017). Alternative options identified in the literature, such as recruitment of Indigenous workers (Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024), developing kinship relationships (Burke, 2023), and/or engaging Elders and/or Knowledge Keepers in planning (Representative for Children and Youth, 2023) may have positive impacts. Children and youth expressed the desire to connect with Indigenous adults to help them develop a better sense of identity and understanding of what it means to be Indigenous (de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015).

> **"I was told a lot by my social worker that there's no Cree family out there to adopt me because they have lots of kids already, no housing, and they're like scared of the system for how it treats us." (Youth)**
>
> **(de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015, pp. 69)**

Quality Relationships

Positive relationships between Indigenous children and youth and their families, communities, and caregivers are vital to build trust and develop a sense of well-being. This theme speaks to both research questions, regarding the barriers Indigenous children and youth face as well as the supports they need in forming quality relationships with their families, communities, and caregivers. In the literature, Indigenous children and youth have reflected positively on connections with their birth families (Bennett, 2015; Mellor et al., 2020; Quinn, 2022) as well as on trusting relationships they have developed with workers (Bennett, 2015; de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Madigan, 2017; Quinn, 2022). Others reflected on barriers they faced in connecting with their families (Navia et al., 2018; Representative for Children and Youth, 2021) as well as negative relationships they had with their caregivers and/or social workers (Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Madigan, 2017). The literature also highlighted that supports and efforts were also needed to establish and maintain positive relationships between Indigenous children and youths' caregivers and their birth families (Bennett, 2015; Burke, 2023; Oliver, 2020).

"I think the one person that helped me the most... is my younger brother... We went through so many homes. Through every home that we went to my brother was the only one that was with me" (Youth)

(Bennett, 2015, pp 109)

Relationships between Indigenous youth and their families and communities

A recurring theme in the literature was that maintaining connections with their birth families and communities served as a protective factor for Indigenous children and youth (Quinn, 2022), and positively impacted their overall well-being (Bennett, 2015; Mellor et al., 2020; Quinn, 2022). Some youth, however, struggled to maintain these connections with their families and communities (Navia et al., 2018) but expressed desire in wanting to reconnect before aging out of the child welfare system (de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015). Literature notes the importance of caregivers and workers advocating for and supporting children and youth in maintaining these connections, as opposed to keeping them separated from their families (Navia et al., 2018; Representative for Children and Youth, 2021). These connections should also be developed and supported prior to youth aging out, as a lack of supports may result in homelessness and/or substance use (Representative for Children and Youth, 2017; Representative for Children and Youth, 2020).

"When I was thirteen, I started running away. I kept running back to her. Everywhere she was. If I could get to her, I ran to her. Break windows, jump out, and run. I put my foster parents through hell and back. I was fighting for this woman" (Youth)

(Navia et al., 2018, p. 158)

Relationships between Indigenous youth and their caregivers

Indigenous children and youth are aware of the power dynamics at play in the child welfare system and are skeptical about the system and those who work in it (Navia et al., 2018). Some youth expressed having negative relationships with their caregivers and/or social workers (Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Madigan, 2017), while others reflected on positive experiences with theirs (Bennett, 2015; de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Madigan, 2017; Quinn, 2022). A few factors that encouraged positive relationships included workers and caregivers taking time to facilitate cultural learning experiences (Bennett, 2015) and expressing genuine interest in and supporting youth to engage meaningfully with their culture (de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Quinn, 2022). The literature highlighted how Indigenous children and youth often bounce around to different homes and through different social workers (Representative for Children and Youth, 2017; Representative for Children and Youth, 2021), which poses as a barrier to cultural and relational continuity as children and youth eventually became discouraged from connecting with and seeking support from their caregivers and/or social workers.

> **"She was a group home worker. She had a huge impact on me... She helped me to calm down and... refine my patience and things like that... So, I started to be a little more caring and sensitive..."**
> **(Youth)**
> **(Quinn, 2022, pp. 5)**

Relationships between caregivers and Indigenous families and communities

It is perhaps not surprising that the literature highlighted Indigenous families distrust of workers within the child welfare system and experiences of feeling belittled and judged during interactions with workers (Navia et al., 2018; Special Advisor Grand Chief Ed John, 2016). Positive relationships between caregivers/workers and Indigenous families help develop a stronger circle of care around the youth (Representative for Children and Youth, 2023). Social workers should initiate the process of developing positive relationships between the caregivers of Indigenous children and youth and their families (Burke, 2023) using ceremony to foster these connections (Oliver, 2020). Failure to do so, further increases the risk of indigenous children and youth who lack supports when they age out, ending up homeless (Representative for Children and Youth, 2020) and/or using substances (Representative for Children and Youth, 2017; Representative for Children and Youth, 2020; Representative for Children and Youth, 2021).

Access to meaningful cultural opportunities

This recurring theme in the literature speaks to both research questions, regarding the barriers youth face as well as the supports they need. Many Indigenous children and youth expressed a lack of support and exposure in connecting with cultural supports (Madigan, 2017; Quinn, 2022; Representative for Children and Youth, 2017). As Ball & Benoit-Jansson (2023) point out, "cultural and community connectedness are primary considerations in Bill C-92 with regards to assessing what is in the best interest of an Indigenous child" (p. 48). Culture serves as a protective factor (Indigenous Corporate Training Inc., 2018) so Indigenous children and youth need low barrier access to meaningful opportunities to engage with their culture and cultural supports.

> **"Knowledge of my cultural connection was a reminder that I had once been valued. It was a memory of my inner strength, but since it was unvalued by mainstream society where I was forced to survive, in reality my lived experience was that it negatively impacted my success in the past"**
>
> **(Quinn, 2022, p. 5)**

Culture-specific activities

In the literature, Indigenous children and youth have expressed a desire to connect with their cultures but lack of support in doing so (Federation of BC, 2024; Madigan, 2017; Quinn, 2022). Some Indigenous youth who aged out of care expressed how they reconnected with their culture (Navia et al., 2018; Quinn, 2022), however, not all had the capacity to initiate these connections on their own (Representative for Children and Youth, 2017). The literature clearly identified that cultural connections need to be prioritized for Indigenous children and youth in care (Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks), as it is vital for them to learn about their history, develop a sense of identity (Bennett, 2015) and feel grounded in who they are (Mellor et al., 2020). It is also important not to take a pan-Indigenous approach and find ways to connect youth with cultural activities that are specific to their heritage (Bennett, 2015; Oliver, 2020). Indigenous children and youth want to know their culture to develop a better sense of identity and belonging. They want support in this but want it to be meaningful as opposed to just something to tick off a box (Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024).

> **They were round dancing and smiling and happy. I could smell smudge, and the drums and something about being there, I was like "I belong!" I recognized that I had a community and I followed that" (Youth)**
>
> **(Navia et al., 2018, p. 159)**

> **"It would help if culture was something that was truly prioritized by way of continuously offering youth opportunities to engage with cultural supports" (Youth)**
>
> **(Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024, p. 16)**

Connecting with Elders

Another recurring subtheme was that Indigenous children and youth value Elders, who they perceived as having valuable cultural and spiritual knowledge that could help guide and centre them (Bennett, 2015; Navia et al., 2018; Representative for Children and Youth, 2020). Though Elders should not be solely relied on to do this work, connecting Indigenous children and youth with Elders would allow them to further understand their cultural identity and experience teachings relationally (Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Representative for Children and Youth, 2020). Indigenous children and youth, as well as their caregivers, also benefit from Elders' mentorship (Oliver, 2020; Quinn, 2022). Involvement with Elders can help restore balance to youth's spiritual well-being (Quinn, 2022). These relationships should be sought out and maintained, however Elders need to be compensated for their work (Burke, 2023; Quinn, 2020).

"We gotta be the people who stand up. The abuse and everything that we went through, it is hard to dust that off. But there is a lot of elders who are helping us, guiding us the right way and trying to show us the spiritual way" (Youth)

(Navia et al., 2018, pp. 159)

"I know we can do like an adoption that's with Elders and stuff, like in our culture, so you can get adopted into your culture..." (Youth)

(de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015, pp. 74)

Facilitate Visits to their traditional territory

"... just going there [to her home place] was about a connection to [my] ancestors ... [I] started to cry just when being there"

(Mellor et al., 2020, p. 14)

Indigenous children and youths' traditional territories are a sacred place, with time spent in their territories reconnecting with their family and community, and further fostering a sense of belonging and identity (Bennett, 2015). Children and youth expressed a desire to go to their home community, however funding and transportation was often identified as a major barrier (de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Oliver, 2020; Representative for Children and Youth, 2021). These visits need to be supported by caregivers and workers (Representative for Children and Youth, 2021) and accounted for in budgets to ensure a timely delivery of the funds (Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024). Those who make decisions on budgets, as well as those who work with foster families, need to have ongoing training to understand the importance of Indigenous children and youth having connections to their traditional territories and homelands as a protective factor against suicide (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998).

Funding

Funding was a barrier in maintaining cultural and relational connections that tied into many other themes and must be considered and factored into the yearly budgets for all Indigenous children and youth in care (Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024).

Employee retention and Indigenous recruitment

Funding came up throughout the literature as a barrier to cultural and relational continuity (Bennett, 2015). To help mitigate this, the literature identified the need for Indigenous workers and caregivers to be recruited (Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Oliver, 2020; Quinn, 2020) and compensated accordingly (Burke, 2023; Quinn, 2020). Increasing the Indigenous workforce may also help support workers in the child welfare system in reducing the workload and allow more time to build and develop meaningful connections with Indigenous children, youth, and families (Representative for Children and Youth, 2023; Representative for Children and Youth, 2024).

"For sure, I needed someone to show me some things around self, self-respect, my body. Protecting myself, self-respecting my body and myself (...) So someone to show me, like, this is how you can respect your body, as a Native female, like a strong proud Native female. "

(de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015, pp. 73)

Ensure Indigenous youth have access to cultural opportunities

The importance of providing Indigenous children and youth with meaningful cultural opportunities was discussed, however, it is important to note that funding is required to bring children and youth to their traditional territories (Bennett, 2015; de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Oliver, 2020) as well as to engage them in cultural activities (Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Quinn, 2020). This needs to be done in a timely manner as delays negatively impact a youth's opportunity to engage in activities and can result in a youth becoming discouraged and disinterested to participate in future cultural activities (Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024).

"It was important for us to see, for the wife and I to see, the family interested. It was, you know, we did not get this at the time but we know now that it's absolutely critical for kids in care to be around their family, to know their family, not just a name at the end of a telephone line but to know where they live. To see them, hear them, play with them, all that kind of good stuff" (Foster Parent)

(Oliver, 2020, p. 590)

Ongoing training and education for caregivers and workers

The need for ongoing culturally informed education and training for workers and caregivers came up a number of times, however, it is important to note that this also requires time and funding (Representative for Children and Youth, 2023; Representative for Children and Youth, 2024). Everyone working with Indigenous children and youth, regardless of whether it is directly or indirectly, require ongoing, culturally informed education and training so they can be better informed when making decisions that affect the lives of Indigenous peoples, as uninformed policy and practice continue to cause harm to Indigenous children, youth, and families (Burke, 2023; de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Quinn, 2020; Representative for Children and Youth, 2024).

"... I did meet my family, like my social worker took me this one time to meet my grams and stuff, my uncles and cousins and stuff... Like I went back to Vancouver and they're like a plane ride, it's far. I don't have the money to make that trip. They don't have the money ... We kind of just stayed as strangers" (Youth)

(de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015, pp. 80)

"... What helped me to succeed is the connection with my family all the time and being able to go back to the rez and keeping that contact helped me" (Youth)

(Quinn, 2022, pp. 5)

"For our culture, being young lasted a lot longer. It was more based on your knowledge and your standing in the community ... not about "can you live on your own?" and some age limit. " (Elder)

(de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015, pp. 76)

"Providing more activities etc. that are cultural related. Ex. Sweat lodge, smudging, shawl/drum/rattle making, cedar weaving." (Youth)

(Federation of BC Youth in Care Network, 2024, pp. 13)

"I feel sorry for social workers because they're bound by policies and subjected to listen to those policies as opposed to listening and realizing the traditions and the strong, strong values that were held once upon a time..." (Elder)

(Burke, 2023, pp. 640)

"More staffing for this purpose (e.g Roots Workers, Youth Advisors, FCCWs)" (Youth)

"Having an Indigenous Youth Mentor " (Youth)

(Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024, p. 12)

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the above findings, and framed using the APPF. This framework, as stated by the MCFD (2015):

> "Identifies a pathway towards improved outcomes for Aboriginal children, youth and families through restorative policy and practice. It does this by providing an Aboriginal specific model for policy and practice based upon shared values, foundations and processes. This model shapes and enriches the way we work with Aboriginal children and families" (p. 6).

Figure 8.

Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework

Note. Centring Indigenous children, youth, families, and communities.. Image created by the Ministry of Children and Family Development (2015)

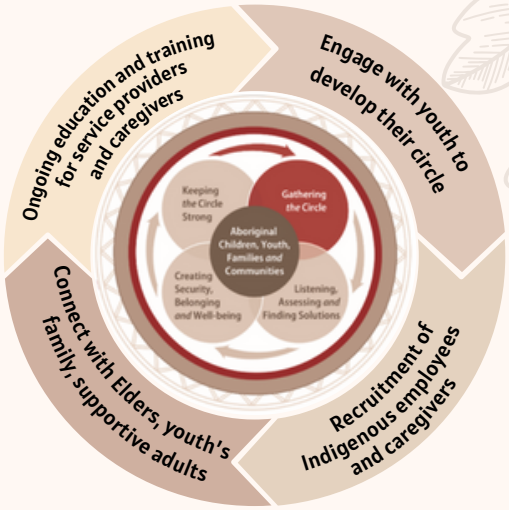
This framework provides a process that is circular, as opposed to strictly linear, that ebbs and flows, and works differently with each child, youth and family. It is a strength based, relational process, that takes time and effort (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2015). Central to the APPF, is keeping Indigenous children, youth, and families at the centre, ensuring meaningful engagement and listening to their voices (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2015). Many of these recommendations tie into those made by the RCY (Representative for Children and Youth, 2024; Siwakoti, 2024). It is also important to note that there are funding implications for many of the recommendations.

Gathering the Circle

"Gathering the Circle speaks to the need to ensure that engagement with Aboriginal children, youth, families and communities is appropriate by ensuring the right people are involved, the necessary knowledge and understandings are being sought and the context for appropriate decision-making is set" (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2015, p. 18)

Figure 9.

Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework



Note. Gathering the circle. Image created by the Ministry of Children and Family Development (2015)

Fund ongoing mandatory culturally informed education and training for service providers and caregivers

(Bennett, 2015; Burke, 2023; Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Madigan, 2017; Navia et al., 2018; Oliver, 2020; A. Quinn, 2020; Representative for Children and Youth, 2021, 2024; Siwakoti, 2024)

Recruit Indigenous employees and caregivers

(Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Madigan, 2017; Oliver, 2020)

Engage Indigenous children and youth in developing their circle

(Ball & Benoit-Jansson, 2023; Bennett, 2015; de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Mellor et al., 2021; Representative for Children and Youth, 2017, 2021)

Connect Indigenous children and youth with Elders, their families, communities and supportive adults

(Ball & Benoit-Jansson, 2023; Bennett, 2015; Burke, 2023; de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Madigan, 2017; Mellor et al., 2021; Representative for Children and Youth, 2017, 2024)

Listening, Assessing, and Finding Solutions

"Listening, Assessing and Finding Solutions speaks to the spirit of collaboration, sharing, respect and learning that should characterize how one works with Aboriginal children, youth, families and communities, and is a part of a process that is focused on ensuring that the most culturally safe approaches and solutions can be found" (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2015, p. 19)

Figure 10.

Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework

Note. Listening, assessing, and finding solutions. Image created by the Ministry of Children and Family Development (2015).

Engage and collaborate with Indigenous children and youth in developing their care plans

(de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Madigan, 2017; Mellor et al., 2021; Representative for Children and Youth, 2021)

Engage and collaborate with Indigenous children and youths' families and communities, and Elder's in planning

(Bennett, 2015; Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Madigan, 2017; Representative for Children and Youth, 2017, 2021, 2024)

Collaborate with Indigenous children, youth, families, and communities on reviews of policy and practice

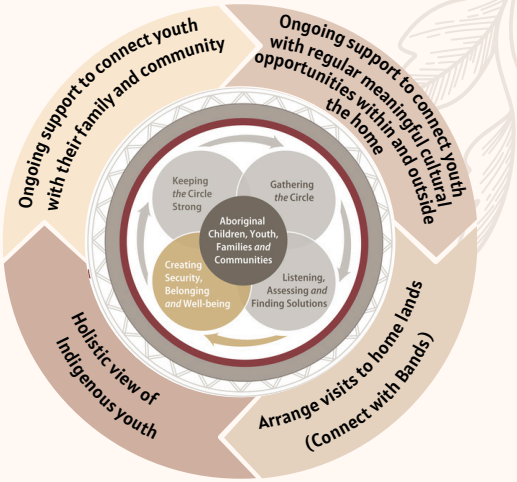
(Ball & Benoit-Jansson, 2023; Burke, 2023; de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Madigan, 2017; A. Quinn, 2020; Representative for Children and Youth, 2017, 2021)

Creating Security, Belonging, and Well-Being

"Creating Security, Belonging and Well-Being recognizes the central significance and importance of cultural connection and identity to a child's well-being, and the need for this to be nurtured and maintained. Actions taken must be planned in a manner that ensures the child's cultural connection is strengthened.
This requires the inclusion of ancestors, Elders, community, family and extended family in the planning for a child's well-being. These actions must be trauma-informed and acknowledge and understand the resiliency of Aboriginal peoples in remaining connected to, and expressing, their cultures" (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2015, p. 20)

Figure 11.

Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework



Note. Creating Security, Belonging, and Well-Being. Image created by the Ministry of Children and Family Development (2015).

Provide Indigenous children and youth with ongoing support to connect with their families and communities

(Ball & Benoit-Jansson, 2023; Bennett, 2015; Burke, 2023; Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Mellor et al., 2020; Representative for Children and Youth, 2017)

Provide Indigenous children and youth with ongoing support to regularly engage in meaningful cultural opportunities within and outside the home

(Ball & Benoit-Jansson, 2023; Bennett, 2015; Burke, 2023; Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Madigan, 2017; Mellor et al., 2020; Mellor et al., 2021; Quinn, 2020; Quinn, 2022; Representative for Children and Youth, 2017, 2021)

Arrange visits with Indigenous children and youth to visit their traditional territories

(de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Oliver, 2020; Representative for Children and Youth, 2021)

Use a holistic lens when working with Indigenous children, youth, families, and communities

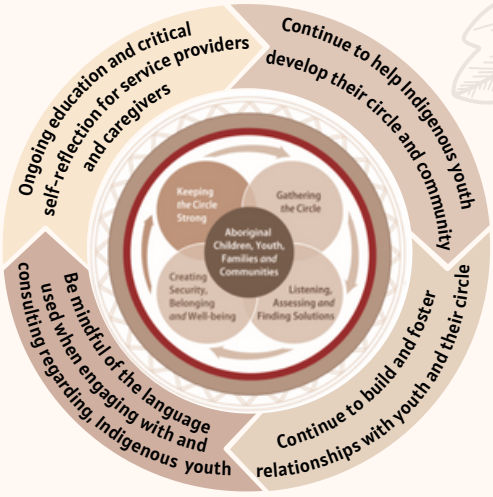
(Ball & Benoit-Jansson, 2023; Bennett, 2015; Madigan, 2017; Quinn, 2020; Quinn, 2022)

Keeping the Circle Strong

"Keeping the Circle Strong speaks to the importance of working in an engaged and holistic manner that recognizes that the health and well-being of relationships is essential to the health and well-being of a child and youth over the long term. Trust, open communication and maintaining connections, are pivotal to ensuring the well-being of children, youth and families into the future. The Circle process should remain in place beyond immediate solutions being found" (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2015, p. 21)

Figure 12.

Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework



Note. Keeping the circle strong. Image created by the Ministry of Children and Family Development (2015).

Fund and participate in ongoing mandatory culturally informed education and training and engage in critical self-reflection often

(Madigan, 2017; Mellor et al., 2020; Navia et al., 2018; A. Quinn, 2020; Representative for Children and Youth, 2021, 2024; Siwakoti, 2024)

Continue to support Indigenous children and youth develop their circle and community

(Ball & Benoit-Jansson, 2023; Bennett, 2015; de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024; Mellor et al., 2021; Representative for Children and Youth, 2017, 2021)

Continue to build and foster relationships with Indigenous children and youth and their circle

(Ball & Benoit-Jansson, 2023; Bennett, 2015; de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Madigan, 2017; Mellor et al., 2020; A. Quinn, 2020; Representative for Children and Youth, 2017, 2021)

Be mindful of the language used when engaging with, and consulting regarding, Indigenous children and youth

(de Finney & di Tomasso, 2015; Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2024)

"Together, Canadians must do more than just talk about reconciliation; we must learn how to practise reconciliation in our everyday lives—within ourselves and our families, and in our communities, governments, places of worship, schools, and workplaces. To do so constructively, Canadians must remain committed to the ongoing work of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 21)

References

Ball, J., & Benoit-Jansson, A. (2023). Promoting cultural connectedness through Indigenous-led child and family services: A critical review with a focus on Canada. First Peoples Child & Family Review, 18(1), 34–59. https://doi.org/10.7202/1109654ar

Bennett, K. (2015). Cultural permanence for Indigenous children and youth: Reflections from a delegated Aboriginal agency in British Columbia. First Peoples Child & Family Review, 10(1), Article 1. https://fpcfr.com/index.php/FPCFR/article/view/243/232

Burke, S. (2023). Wisdom from the Elders: Kinship care that honors traditional Indigenous ways. AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples, 19(3), 635–645. https://doi.org/10.1177/11771801231189842

Chandler, M. J. & Lalonde, C. (1998). Cultural continuity as a hedge against suicide in Canada's First Nations. Transcultural Psychiatry, 35(2), 191-219. https://doi.org/10.1177/136346159803500202

Child Welfare Information Gateway. (n.d.). Culture as a protective factor. https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/prevention/culture-protective-factor/?top=58

Choate, P., & Tortorelli, C. (2022). Attachment Theory: A Barrier for Indigenous Children Involved with Child Protection. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 19(14), Article 14. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19148754

de Finney, S., & di Tomasso, L. (2015). Creating places of belonging: Expanding notions of permanency with Indigenous youth in care. First Peoples Child & Family Review, 10(1), Article 1. https://fpcfr.com/index.php/FPCFR/article/view/246/231

Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks. (2024). Cultural Connections for Youth in Care. https://fbcyicn.ca/sites/default/files/Cultural%20Connections%20for%20Youth%20in%20Care.pdf?utm_medium=email&_hsenc=p2ANqtz--EQbkLdmpRzvKedODIXWSBWAS_T0RTkAcZbJT03T7Kf3-7IH2CQx9ejnT9leXE9KGnfT-Gy4nZqbJFCyjred9hjP18xA&_hsmi=343721757&utm_content=343721757&utm_source=hs_email#msdynttrid=3TOOoebcb62-qUhapDOv4jgvpIEGN5Kj-FwEaHSGrOw

Government of Canada, & Indigenous Services Canada. (2023). An update on the socio-economic gaps between Indigenous Peoples and the non-Indigenous population in Canada: Highlights from the 2021 Census [Report]. https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1690909773300/1690909797208#chp3-9

Indigenous Corporate Training Inc. (2018, June 10). Why continuity of Indigenous cultural identity is critical. https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/why-is-indigenous-cultural-continuity-critical

Madigan, B. (2017). Voices of Youth: How Indigenous Young People in Urban Ontario Experience Plans of Care. First Peoples Child & Family Review, 12(1), Article 1. https://fpcfr.com/index.php/FPCFR/article/view/329/278

Matheson, K., Seymour, A., Landry, J., Ventura, K., Arsenault, E., & Anisman, H. (2022). Canada's colonial genocide of Indigenous peoples: A review of the psychosocial and neurobiological processes linking trauma and intergenerational outcomes. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 19(11), 6455. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19116455

Mellor, A., Cedar Child and Family Services, & Cloutier, D. (2020). Becoming self-in-relation: Coming of age as a pathway towards wellness for urban Indigenous youth in care. First Peoples Child & Family Review, 15(2), 3–22. https://doi.org/10.7202/1080807ar

Mellor, A., Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services, Cloutier, D., & Claxton, N. (2021). "Youth will feel honoured if they are reminded they are loved": Supporting coming of age for urban Indigenous youth in care. International Journal of Indigenous Health, 16(2), 308–321. https://doi.org/10.32799/ijih.v16i1.33179

Ministry of Children and Family Development. (2015). Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework in British Columbia. Government of British Columbia. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/family-and-social-supports/indigenous-cfd/abframework.pdf

Navia, D., Henderson, R. I., & First Charger, L. (2018). Uncovering colonial legacies: Voices of Indigenous youth on child welfare (dis)placements. Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 49(2), 146–164. https://doi.org/10.1111/aeq.12245

Oliver, C. (2020). Inclusive foster care: How foster parents support cultural and relational connections for Indigenous children. Child & Family Social Work, 25(3), 585–593. https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/10.1111/cfs.12730

Quinn, A. (2020). Nurturing Identity Among Indigenous Youth in Care. Child & Youth Services, 41(1), 83–104. https://doi.org/10.1080/0145935X.2019.1656063

Quinn, A. L. (2022). Experiences and well-being among Indigenous former youth in care within Canada. Child Abuse & Neglect, 123, 105395. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2021.105395

Representative for Children and Youth. (2017). Broken promises: Alex's story. https://rcybc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/rcy-brokenpromises-alexsstory-feb2017-lo_web-2.pdf

Representative for Children and Youth. (2021). Skye's legacy: A focus on belonging. https://rcybc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/RCY_Skyes-Legacy_REVISED-FINAL_21-June-2021.pdf

Representative for Children and Youth. (2024). Don't look away: How one boy's story has the power to shift a system of care for children and youth. https://rcybc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/RCY-Dont_Look_Away_July2024-final.pdf

Siwakoti, A. (2024). No Time to Wait: A review of MCFD's child welfare workforce – Part One. Representative for Children and Youth. https://rcybc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/RCY-NoTimetoWait-July2024.pdf

Special Advisor Grand Chief Ed John. (2016). Indigenous resilience, connectedness and reunification – From root causes to root solutions: A report on Indigenous child welfare in British Columbia. The Government of British Columbia. https://cwrp.ca/sites/default/files/publications/final-report-of-grand-chief-ed-john-re-indig-child-welfare-in-bc-november-2016_0.pdf

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015a). Honouring the truth, reconciling for the future: Summary of the final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Executive_Summary_English_Web.pdf

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015b). Truth and reconciliation commission of Canada: Calls to action. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/indigenous-people/aboriginal-peoples-documents/calls_to_action_english2.pdf