

RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

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Culturally attuned ways to address government over-involvement in the care of Indigenous children

What you need to know:

Informed by colonial values, historical and contemporary policy and practice have resulted in the removal of many Indigenous children from their families, communities and cultures. A re-frame from 'overrepresentation of Indigenous children' to 'government over-involvement' is necessary in creating meaningful change in the child welfare system.

What is this research about?

The British Columbia (BC) Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) seeks research that asks: following the Sixties Scoop, and given the current overrepresentation of Indigenous children in child welfare, how can child welfare practice become more culturally attuned to working with Indigenous communities? This research examines culturally attuned ways to assess risk so that Indigenous children can be safely supported; and explores strategies to reduce the government over-involvement in the care of Indigenous children.

What did the researcher do?

The researcher performed a literature review focused on the experiences of children and families with previous, current, or vicarious involvement with government agencies in the Canadian child welfare system.

The researcher used Google Scholar and Summon 2.0 search engines to search for academic articles including qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods studies, and grey literature published January 2009 to March 2019 in English. The researcher added additional sources to the review from the reference lists of selected articles. The researcher reviewed each selected source and summarized the information.



UVic researchers reviewed literature to inform policies and practice on culturally attuned ways to assess risk, and reduce government over-involvement in Indigenous child welfare (Photo credit: UVic staff).



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What did the researcher find?

This review included 26 sources. Five themes emerged from the literature:

1. Government over-involvement
2. Culture and protection in Indigenous communities
3. Indigenous parenthood
4. Effectiveness of culturally attuned programs
5. Challenges of implementation

Recommendations for policy and practice:

- Build awareness of the historical context and reframe “over-representation” to government “over-involvement” in the lives of Indigenous children, families, and communities
- Initiate and commit to a long term collaborative process
- Involve Indigenous communities in child protection processes
- Increase information sharing early and often in planning for children after they come into MCFD care
- Ensure representation of diverse Indigenous identities in policy and programming
- Avoid a “one size fits all” approach by remaining adaptable to the specific resources, needs, and customs of each community
- Address the lack of options for keeping Indigenous children in their communities

How can you use this research?

This research will help policymakers, practitioners and other stakeholders in child welfare to integrate culturally attuned ways into Indigenous child welfare policies and the practice for working with Indigenous communities to support children, families and communities.

Future research should welcome an understanding of Indigenous beliefs and practices pertaining to child protection and child welfare.

About the researchers

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

Keywords

Indigenous child welfare; Sixties Scoop; Indigenous child protection; Indigenous apprehension; culture safety; Indigenous overrepresentation; Indigenous disproportionate representation

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