
CRCF Research Seminar
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The First Nations Component of the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect – FNCIS 2008

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- Funding Agencies
  - Public Health Agency of Canada
  - Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
  - Ministry of Family Services of Manitoba
  - Ontario Ministry of Child and Family Services
  - The Centre for Excellence on Child Welfare.
History of Aboriginal Child Welfare

- **Pre-Colonial**
  - In general, less emphasis on nuclear family, this varied from Nation to Nation.
  - Common practice in many communities for parents to give a child to another family in the community (if they could not have one of their own).
  - Traditionalists consider it a privilege to have been reared by grandparents within customary adoption arrangements.

- *(RCAP, vol. 3 chapter 2)*
Residential Schools 1890-1970s

- Bagot Commission and Davin Report
- Became obligatory and children forcefully removed if they did not come willingly.
- Chronic underfunding and poor training led to horrendous physical conditions and undertrained and abusive staff.

(Fournier & Crey, 1997; Milloy, 1996)

- Child Welfare system replaced education system in removing thousands of children from their homes in order to “protect” them from poverty, unsanitary conditions, poor housing and malnutrition.
- Over 11,000 children, representing as much as one third of some communities were adopted between 1960 and 1990 (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996).

(INAC, 2008; Johnston, 1983; Fournier & Crey, 1997)
Emergence of Aboriginal child welfare agencies
1980s – 2000s

- Growing activism by First Nations communities starting in mid 1960s.
- Number of agencies grew from 4 (1981) to 30 (1986).
  - Funds only administrative costs + services for children in care.
- “Delegated model” in majority of situations
  - many argue for more control and expansion of services off-reserve.
Current context:

- First Nations agencies provide at least partial services to 442 of 606 reserves (Auditor General of Canada, 2008).
- 86 agencies now conduct investigations (Felstiner, 2008).
- Shift away from Directive 20-1 towards flexible funding.
- Human Rights complaint.
Potential Impacts of Aboriginal Child Welfare Research

- Promote shifts in the funding Aboriginal child welfare agencies.
- Reduce unintended negative consequences of policy changes.
- Identify specific family needs that must be addressed.
- Showcase successful models used by First Nations child and family service agencies.
- Support creation of programs or policies that address the structural factors which drive overrepresentation.
Aboriginal child welfare organizations have limited research resources/capacity.

University researchers have limited:
- Ability to access Aboriginal communities/data.
  - Particularly when using quantitative methods.
- Existing literature which can guide sample selection procedures, development of research instruments or interpretation of findings for a particular context.
O CAP

- Principles for research in Indigenous contexts
  - Ownership - members of a First Nation collectively own their cultural knowledge, data and information.
  - Control - communities aim to gain and maintain oversight over all aspects of information management.
    - Includes policy development/implementation, review processes, data management, etc.
  - Access - individuals have the right to access information about themselves and their Nations. Communities have the right to decide about access to collective information.
  - Possession - physical possession of data facilitates the assertion and protection of ownership and control.
Only national study of child welfare investigations and of Aboriginal child welfare and one of a few national panel studies that includes First Nations children.

Aboriginal sample has two components:
- Aboriginal children served by mainstream agencies- off reserve and non-delegated agencies;
- Children served by Aboriginal-delegated agencies.
First Nations component of the Canadian Incidence Study

  - CIS 1998 - 3 First Nations agencies
  - CIS 2003 - 8 First Nations agencies

- Key findings:
  - First Nations children are overrepresented in the child welfare system.
  - Overrepresentation increases across the investigation process.
  - Overrepresentation is driven by neglect cases.
  - Neglect is associated with structural factors.
  - (Trocmé et al, 2005)
Impact of CIS

- Wen:de report:
  - Federal funding proposal ratified by Assembly of First Nations.


- Identification of focus areas by provinces and child welfare agencies.

- Current Human Rights complaint filed by AFN and FNCFCS.
First Nations Component of CIS-2008

- Larger sample
  - 23 Aboriginal agencies: 22 First Nations and 1 Métis.

- Potential for new analyses
  - Comparisons between First Nations and provincial/territorial agencies.
  - More in-depth examination of neglect investigations.

- Guided by a National Advisory Committee comprised of provincial First Nations representatives from across Canada.
FNCIS 2008 Advisory Committee

- Joan Glode, Mi’kmaw Family & Children’s Services of Nova Scotia
- Richard Gray, First Nations of Quebec & Labrador Health & Social Services Commission
- Betty Kennedy, Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario
- Monty Montgomery, University of Regina
- Elsie Flette & Tara Petti, First Nations Southern Authority of Manitoba
- Judy Levi, North Shore MicMac District Council (New Brunswick)
- Linda Lucas & Shawn Hoey, Caring for First Nations Children Society (British Columbia)
- Stephanie O’Brien, Assembly of First Nations
- Cindy Blackstock & Marlyn Bennett, First Nations Child & Family Caring Society
Collaboration Grounded in Shared Concerns

- Honoring OCAP Principles
- Respecting Strengths & Limitations of Research
- Protecting Anonymity of Children, Families, Workers, Agencies
Emphasis on scientific integrity - validity and reliability of research increases its value as an advocacy tool.

Commitment to participant anonymity – shared focus on protecting and benefitting the children, families, workers and agencies involved.

Commitment to OCAP principles:
- Research team will not collect or analyze First Nations specific data without First Nations involvement and guidance.
- Research team will not allow secondary analyses that identify First Nations agencies without advisory committee approval.
**Negotiating OCAP within the Context of the CIS**

- First Nations ownership and control mediated by First Nations advisory committee.
  - Focus on national/regional level means that many agencies lack resources to exercise meaningful control.
  - Direct agency control would potentially compromise anonymity.

Research team reports on progress, key technical questions, and potential next steps

Committee members offer guidance, feedback and help prioritize tasks

Research team completes tasks prioritized and approved by the committee
First Nations ownership and control limited by nesting in national study.
- Research quality and ability to make comparisons across sites and study cycles currently depends on utilization of instruments and processes designed for mainstream agencies.

First Nations access and possession limited by protection of participants’ anonymity.
- Participating agencies receive their data in aggregate, report form only.
- Public domain analyses limited to regional or national level.
Capacity Building Approach Key to Negotiating Limitations

- Cycles building towards full scale FNCIS.
  - Will involve greater ownership, control and access.
- Bi-directional capacity building needed to achieve this goal.
  - Increased capacity of research team to undertake meaningful and effective First Nations research.
  - Increased capacity of First Nations to participate in and make use of research.
- Advisory committee - research team collaboration builds capacity.
  - Facilitated by recruitment/training of Aboriginal researchers.
  - Ultimate goal is co-production of knowledge.
Key Capacity Building Activities

- Quantitative Methods for Aboriginal Child Welfare Research Workshops
  - 39 participants from across Canada:
    - child welfare administrators, students, university researchers and government/policy personnel.
  - Applied and flexible approach to engaging participants with CIS data and with research methods.
  - Hope to develop follow up program
    - Will support participants who pursue research.
  - Funding from NAMHR, NCCAH, CECW and McGill School of Social Work.
Key Capacity Building Activities

- Development of supplemental literature and research tools.
  - Existing literature on Aboriginal child welfare underdeveloped.
    - Gray literature, often poorly referenced, basic policy and programmatic information difficult to find.
  - Systematic approach to compilation and publication of background/contextual information for FNCIS:
    - Policy fact sheets;
    - Maps of agency boundaries;
    - Documentation of variation across agencies.
Support for internal capacity building by Aboriginal child and family service agencies.
- CRCF has funds to support small scale collaborative projects.
- Projects with individual agencies/organization help develop:
  - Relationships/trust;
  - Data collection and analysis capacity;
  - Openness to research.