

Loving Our Children: Finding What Works for First Nations Families

Canada Research Chair in First Nations Child and Family Services
Implementation 2023-2030



Background

First Nations families and communities are often blamed for the poverty, poor housing, and inadequate health, education, and social services that contribute to their overrepresentation in child welfare and other poor outcomes, even though these structural drivers are rooted in colonialism and largely beyond their control. (See the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) report and the [Canadian Human Rights Tribunal decisions](#).)

According to the Canadian Incidence Study on Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (2019), 76% of investigated First Nations children are living off reserve, with most receiving child and family services through non-Indigenous child welfare entities. While there are a plethora of reports, inquests, and studies suggesting improvements to the off-reserve child welfare system, including tailoring services to the structural drivers, progress toward reform has been limited and extremely slow.

Services that respond to the realities and needs of children, youth, families, and communities result in more children being able to stay safely in their homes or with extended family. Over time, this reduces the need for child welfare interventions and enables First Nations children to thrive.

In 2022/23, Canada began rolling out more than \$19-billion in additional funding over five years for First Nations child and family services linked to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal orders. First Nations now have an opportunity to identify their needs and desired outcomes and to develop, improve, and refocus child and family services.

The transformation of First Nations-run child and family services requires a holistic, multigenerational approach, unique to each nation, and effective ways to create, deliver, and evaluate these services.

Cindy Blackstock has been awarded funds from the Canada Research Chair (CRC) program to support the implementation of evidence-informed, decolonized, and culturally appropriate services for First Nations children and families. This CRC program will address the structural drivers disadvantaging First Nations children and families and develop implementation and evaluation tools by:

1. **Documenting and sharing information** about established and emerging evidence-informed and culturally appropriate services for First Nations children and families,
2. **Developing and testing a framework** to support the design, delivery, and evaluation of services that address the structural drivers of First Nations' child welfare involvement,
3. **Creating an information base for reform** by collating the existing recommendations about structural drivers,
4. **Training service providers, students, and interdisciplinary teams** so they can work respectfully with First Nations to implement services that account for structural factors.

Opportunities to participate

- Share information about established and emerging prevention programs
- Apply to have prevention programs evaluated.
- Refer staff or students interested in joining the research team

Want to learn more?

Connect with the primary research team:

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