



Starting From a Traditional Place: The AOPSI Practice Standards Redesign

**Caring for First Nations Children Society
Nota Bene Consulting Group**



AOPSI: Aboriginal Operational and Practice Standards and Indicators – three phases

- 
- **Pre-AOPSI**
 - **Under AOPSI**
 - **Redesigning AOPSI**



Pre-AOPSI:

- No provincially delegated agencies
 - Usma Nuu-Chah-Nulth Community and Human Standards – 1986
 - Five provincially delegated agencies – Mid 1990s
 - Audit and Review Group – 1996
 - The purpose and approach
- 



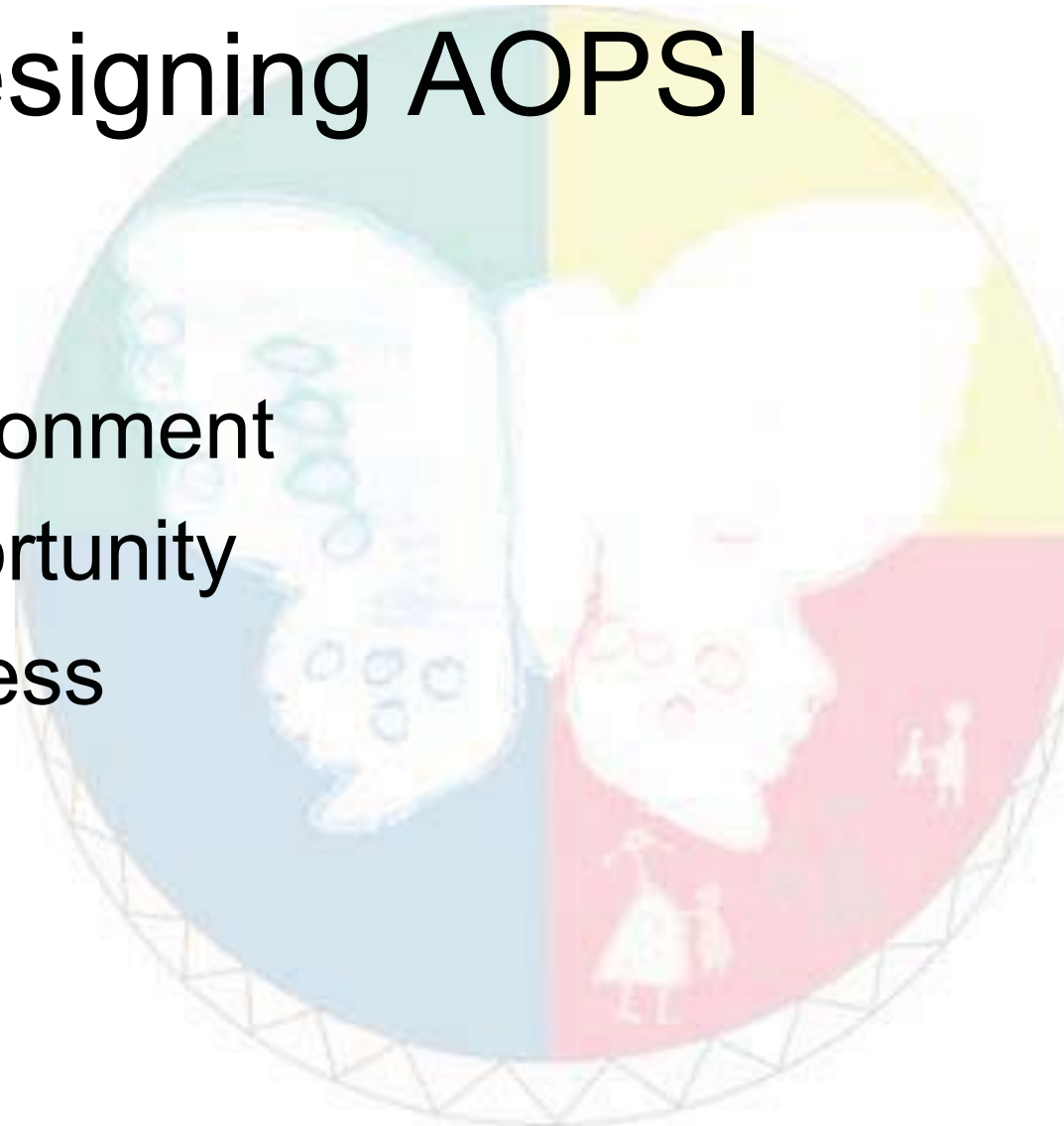
Under AOPSI:

- Canadian first
 - First Nations culture and traditions
 - Meet and exceed legislative requirements
- 



Redesigning AOPSI

- Issue
- Environment
- Opportunity
- Process






Redesign Process

- Structure
 - Steering Committee
 - Working Group
 - Project Lead
- 




Redesign Process

- 
- Three main activities:
 - Indigenous scholars focus group
 - Literature review
 - Input from wide range of people



Activities to date

- 
- Indigenous scholars focus group
 - Literature review
 - Working with members of Working Committee, to organize province-wide focus groups and gatherings




Activities to date cont'd

- 
- Meetings are being planned with First Nations, off reserve Aboriginal groups and the Métis community
 - Elders, community leaders, families, youth Delegated agencies' staff will be included in the information gathering process

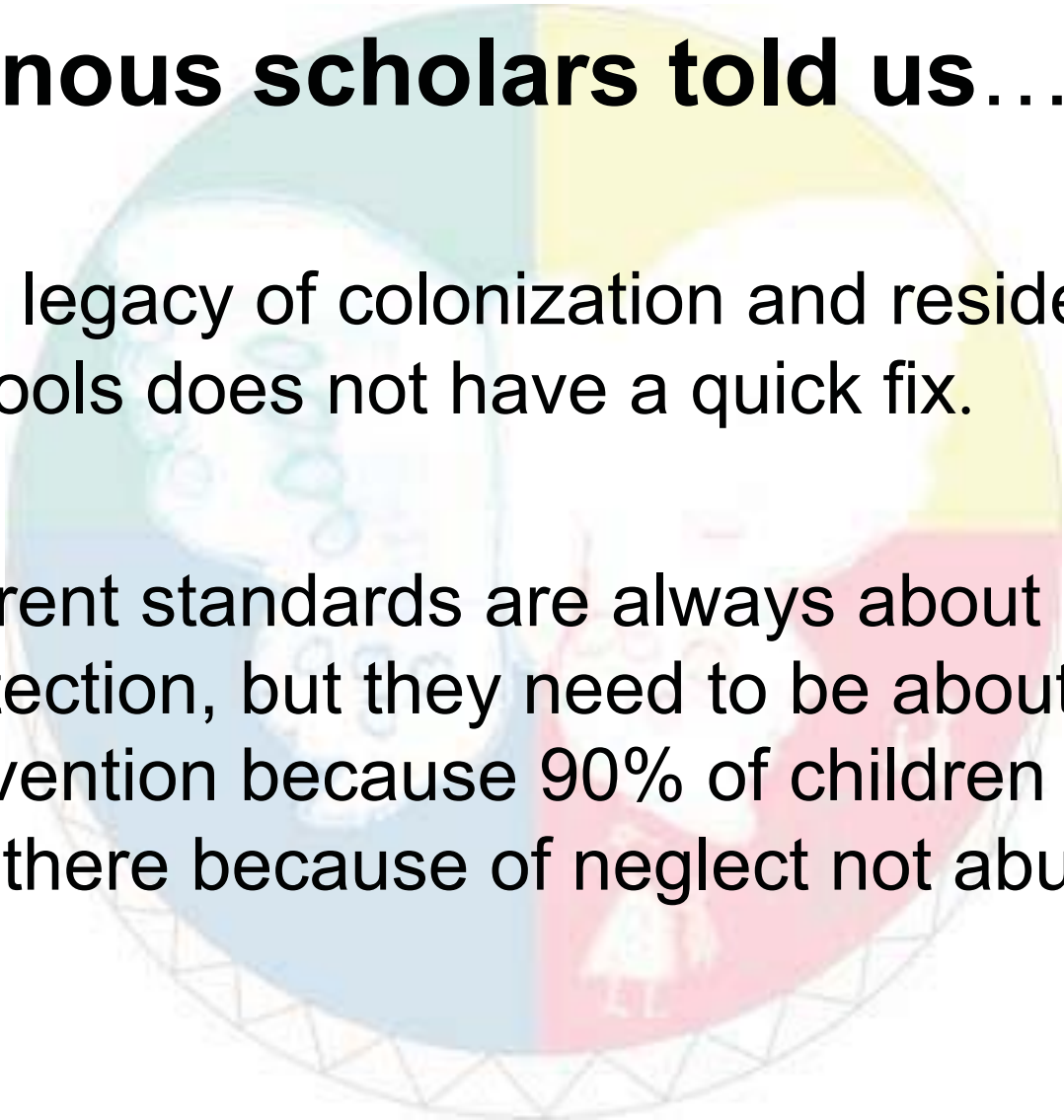


Challenges to Information Gathering

- 
- Huge geographical area with many remote communities
 - Ensuring respectful process
 - Local protocols
 - Allowing adequate time
 - Providing food
 - Using existing information from previous consultation processes

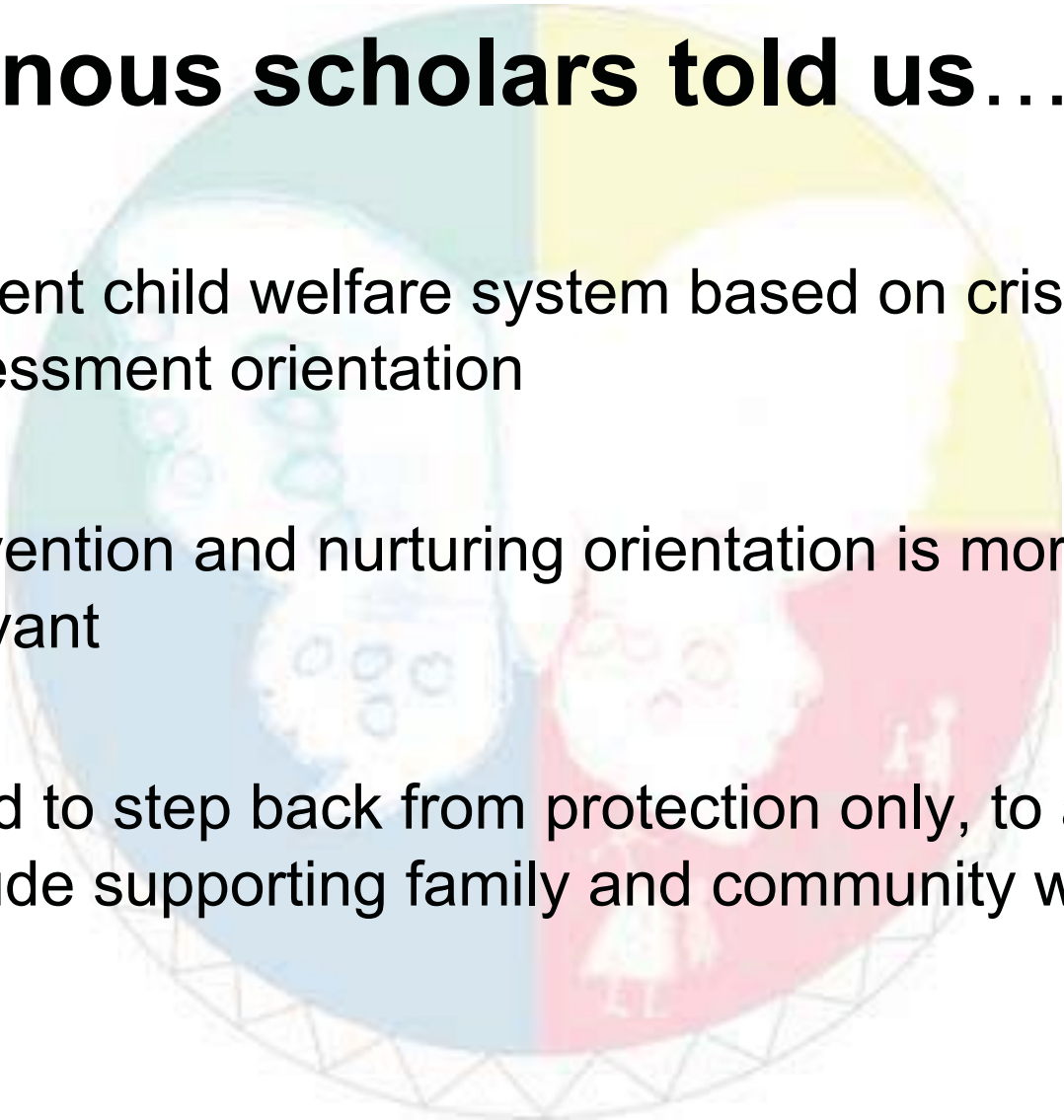


Indigenous scholars told us....

- 
- The legacy of colonization and residential schools does not have a quick fix.
 - Current standards are always about protection, but they need to be about prevention because 90% of children in care are there because of neglect not abuse.



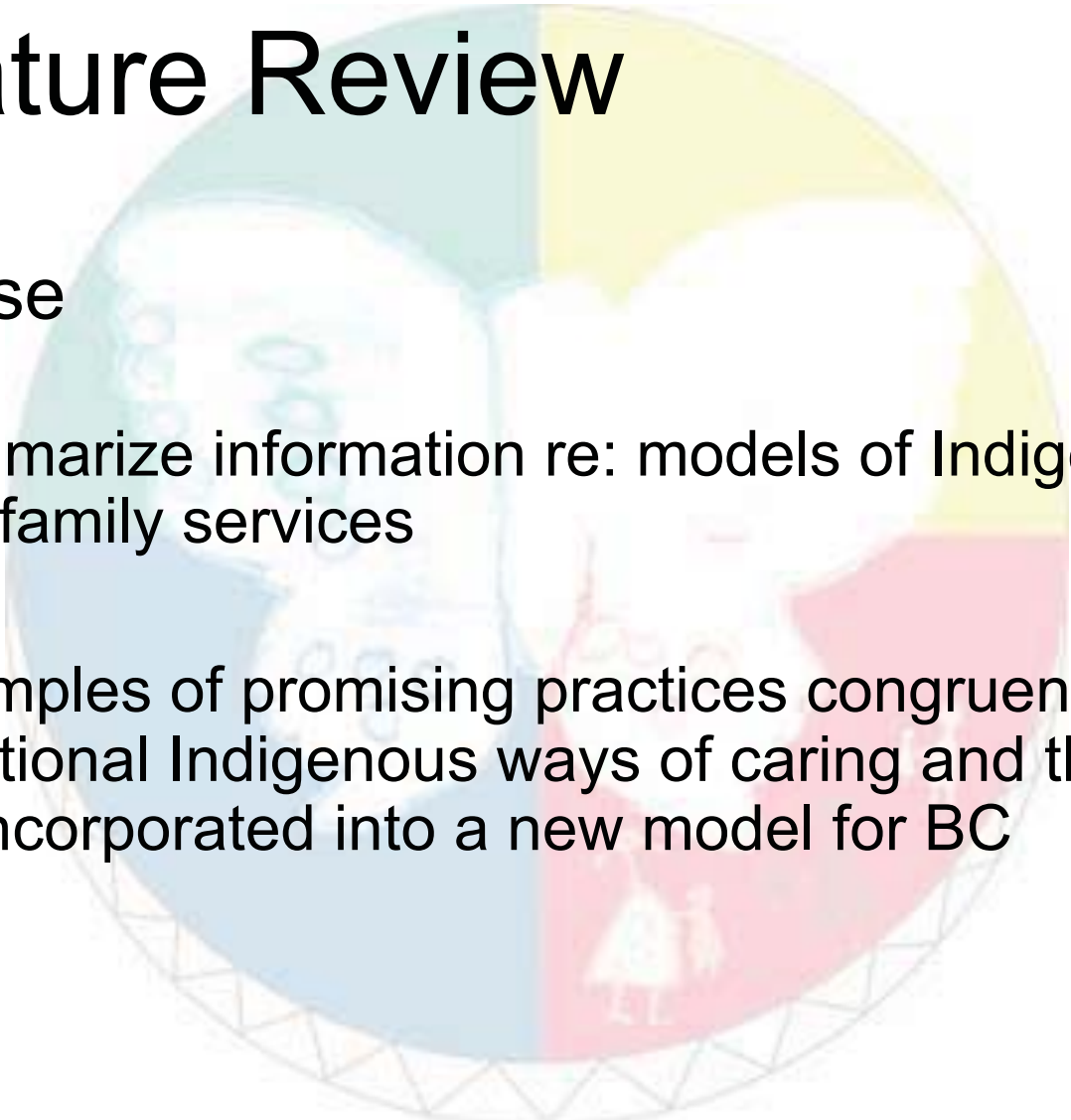
Indigenous scholars told us....cont'd

- 
- Current child welfare system based on crisis and risk assessment orientation
 - Prevention and nurturing orientation is more culturally relevant
 - Need to step back from protection only, to also include supporting family and community wellness



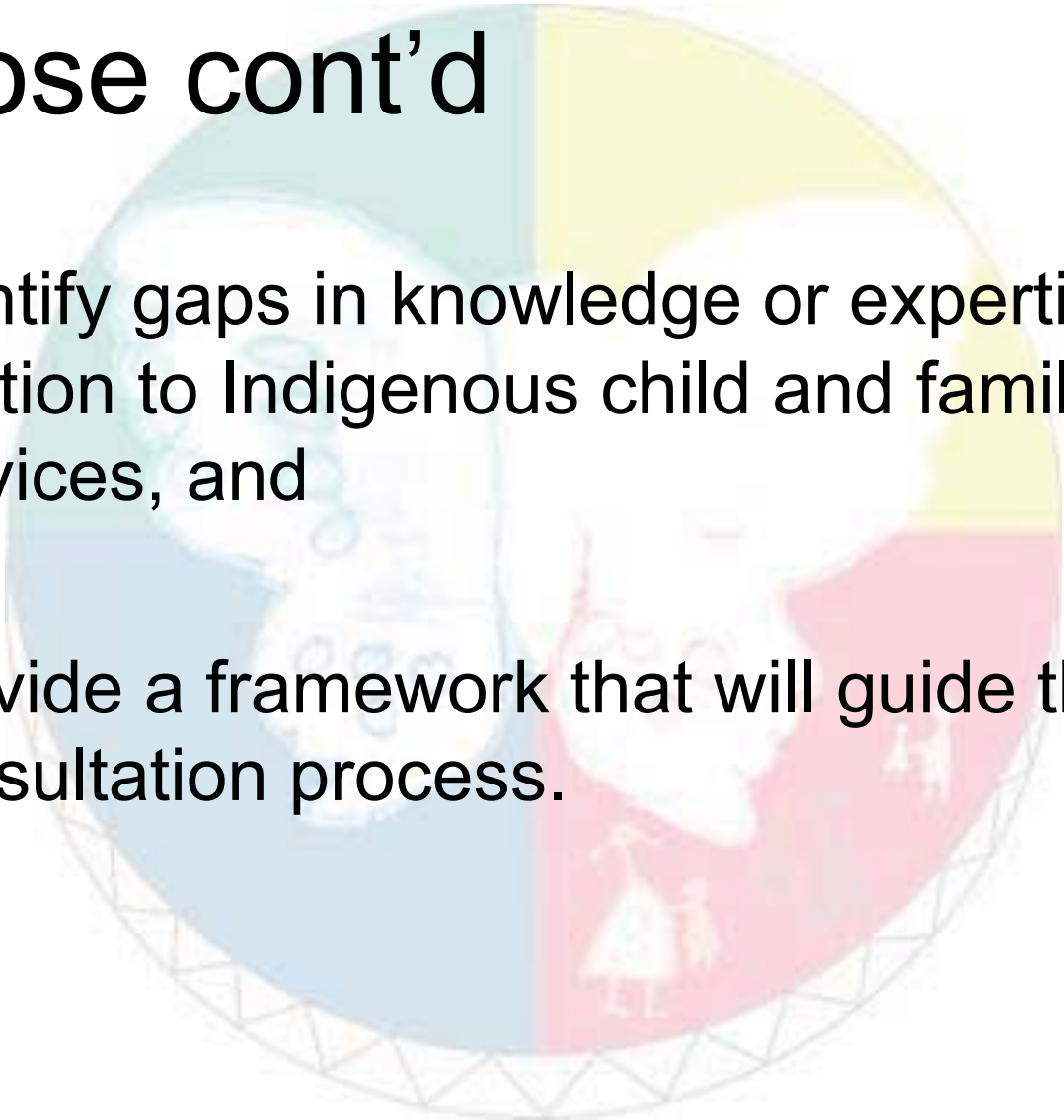
Literature Review

■ Purpose

- Summarize information re: models of Indigenous child and family services
 - Examples of promising practices congruent with traditional Indigenous ways of caring and that could be incorporated into a new model for BC
- 

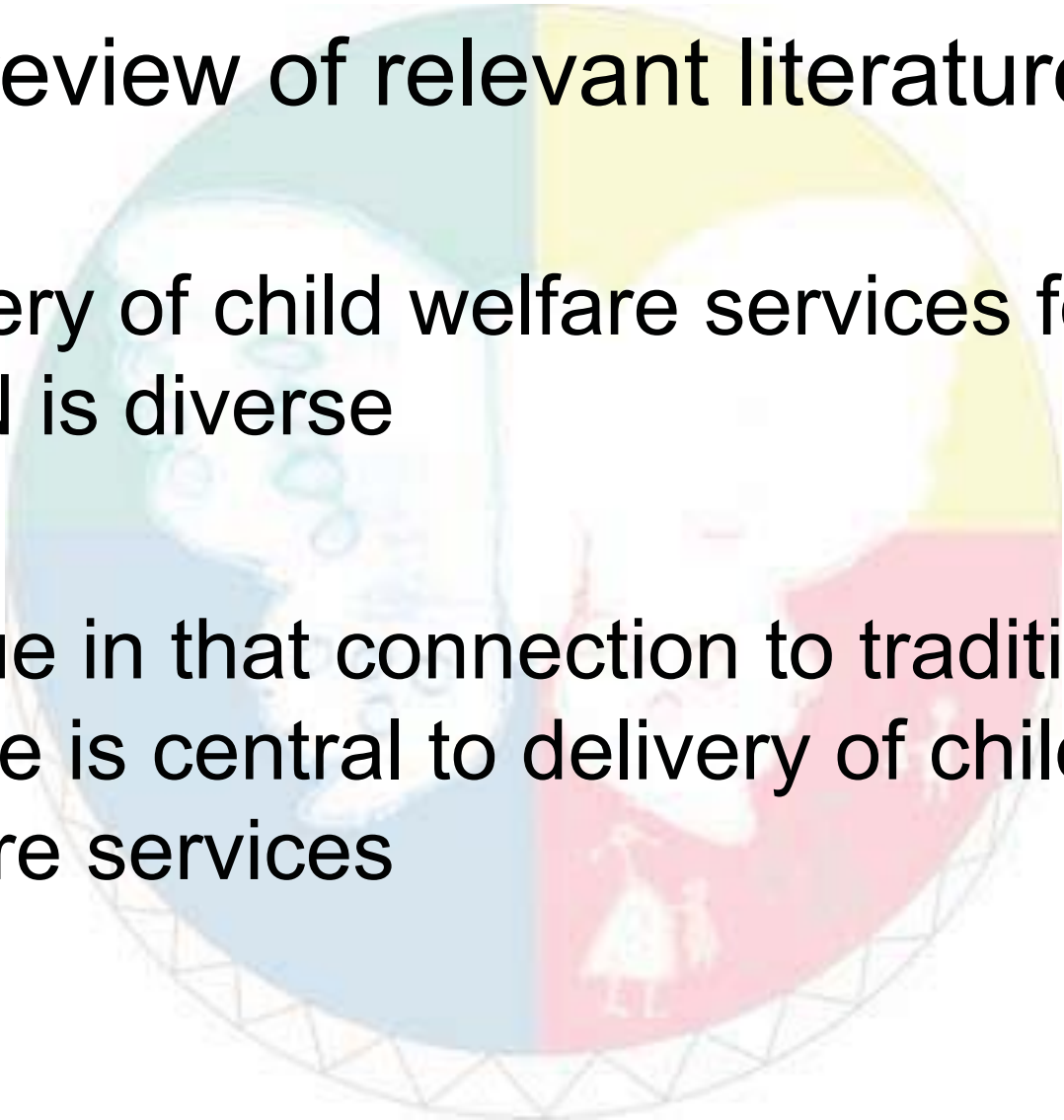


Purpose cont'd

- 
- Identify gaps in knowledge or expertise in relation to Indigenous child and family services, and
 - Provide a framework that will guide the consultation process.

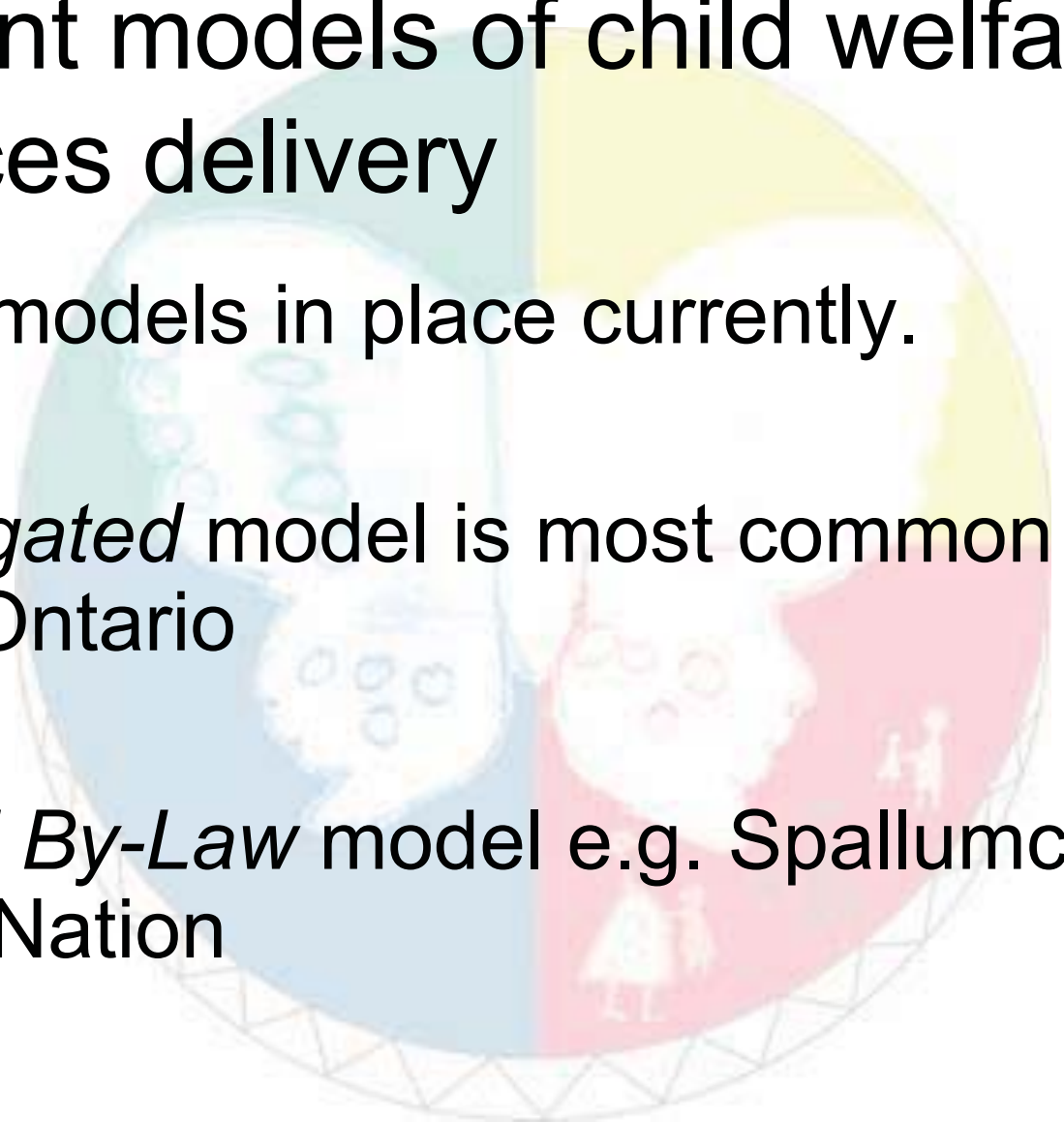


From review of relevant literature.....

- Delivery of child welfare services for and by FN is diverse
 - Unique in that connection to traditional culture is central to delivery of child welfare services
- 

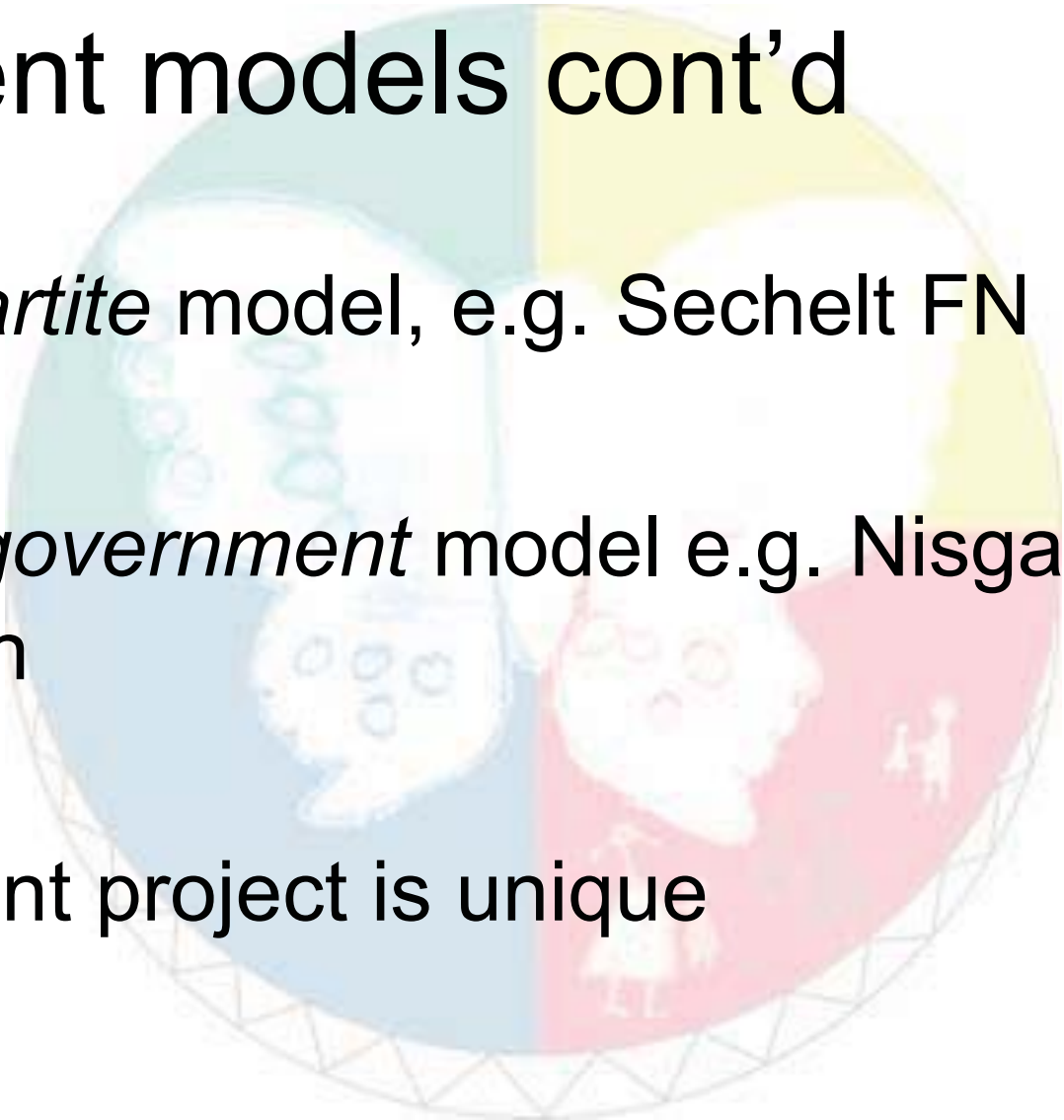


Current models of child welfare services delivery

- Five models in place currently.
 - *Delegated* model is most common e.g. BC, Ontario
 - *Band By-Law* model e.g. Spallumcheen First Nation
- 



Current models cont'd

- *Tri-partite* model, e.g. Sechelt FN
 - *Self-government* model e.g. Nisga'a, Yukon
 - Current project is unique
- 



Examples

- 
- Ontario – Tikinagan, Kunuwanimano
 - Alberta First Nations Practice Standards and Yellowhead Tribal Authority
 - Carcross-Tagish First Nation




Examples con't

- In BC, several First Nations working to develop programs and services that reflect their traditional beliefs and cultural practices, e.g. Chahalis, Haida






Core practices

- 
- Community control
 - Community based decision-making
 - Continuum of options based on traditional practices
 - Protect child within the home
 - Customary care with extended family
 - Voluntary or non voluntary customary care
 - Custom Adoption
 - Alternate dispute resolution process

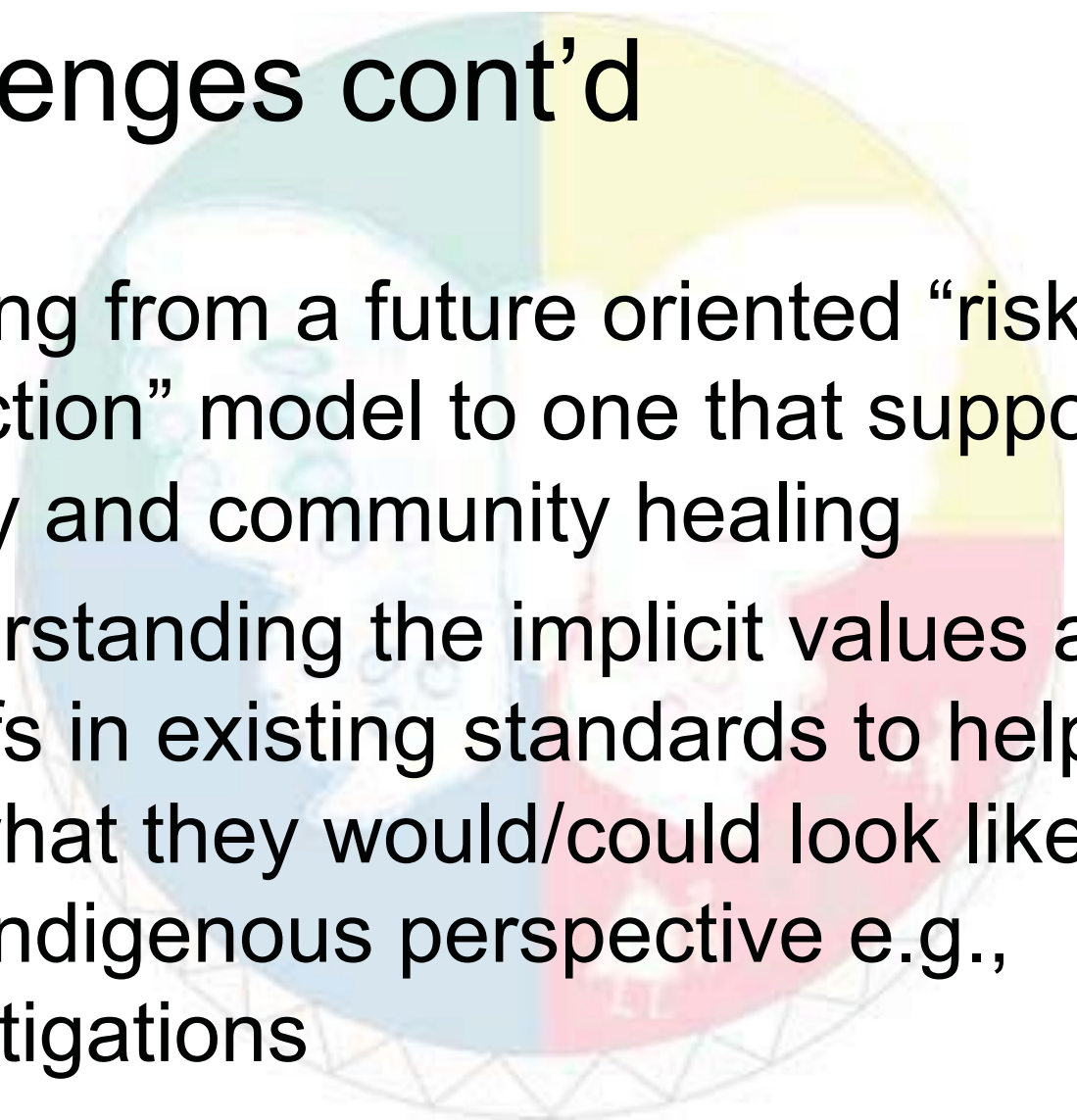


Challenges

- Practices must meet or exceed the requirements of Provincial legislation
 - Developing practice standards that allow for diversity amongst First Nations' and Aboriginal communities' traditions and cultures – avoiding “pan Indianism”
- 

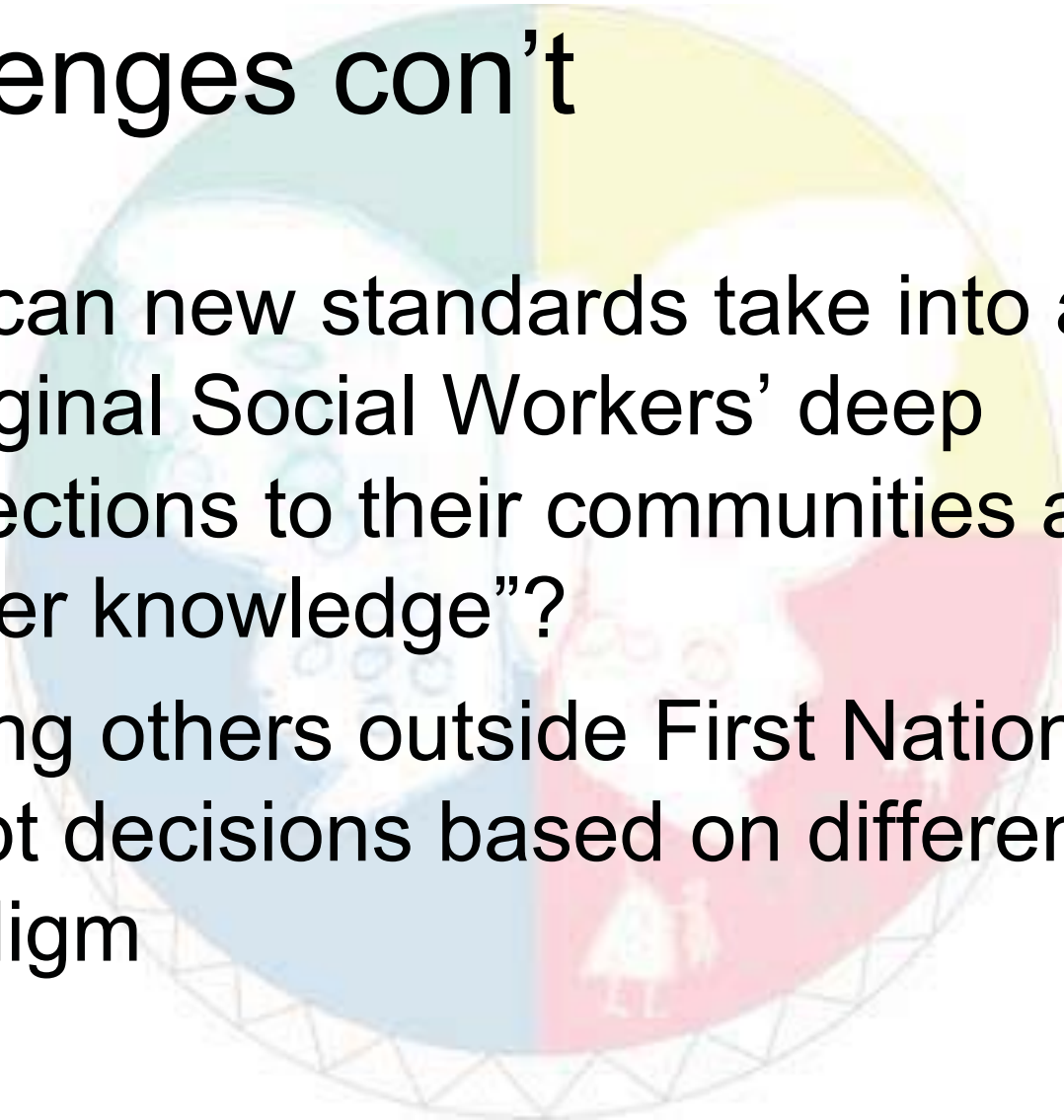


Challenges cont'd

- Shifting from a future oriented “risk reduction” model to one that supports family and community healing
 - Understanding the implicit values and beliefs in existing standards to help tease out what they would/could look like from an Indigenous perspective e.g., investigations
- 



Challenges con't

- 
- How can new standards take into account Aboriginal Social Workers' deep connections to their communities and their “insider knowledge”?
 - Helping others outside First Nations accept decisions based on different paradigm