

**Abstracts for Indigenous Gathering & Sharing Wisdom Conference,
October 6 & 7, 2009**

1)

Title: Cultural Planning for Aboriginal Children Adopted in Non Aboriginal Homes: Findings from a BC Study

Dr. Jeannine Carriere

Associate Professor
School of Social Work
University of Victoria

Dr. Carriere has conducted research in area of Aboriginal adoption for PhD dissertation and published articles and book chapters on topic of adoption, identity and Aboriginal peoples. Dr. Carriere was the Principal Investigator for this study.

Kim Grabowski, student

Graduate Research Assistant
Indigenous Masters Social Work
University of Victoria

Abstract:

This workshop will present the findings from a research study on the outcomes of the *Cultural Planning Policy* in British Columbia Canada. The study was funded by the Ministry of Child and Family Development and was undertaken by Dr. Jeannine Carriere with the support of a Research Assistant, Kim Grabowski. The goals of the study were to explore how cultural planning impacted Aboriginal children adopted into non Aboriginal families.

2)

Title: Creating Islands of Safety As Sites of Resistance and Dignity

Presenters: Cathy Richardson and Allan Wade

Abstract

Cathy Richardson and Allan Wade will present their work with Metis Community Services in creating and implementing a child safety model for use in cases of violence in families. This model, Islands of Safety, is based on rigorous safety planning, practices that dignify family members, and exploration of individuals' responses and resistance to violence in the family, negative social responses, and oppression that stems from colonial perspectives. Cathy and Allan will discuss their collaboration with child safety workers in the development and practice of this model, including methods of interviewing that promote safety for children and dignity for all family members.

3)

Title: Engaging Matrilineal Cultural Practices

Presenter: Bonita Danes

Moricetown Band

Abstract:

Since 2003 we {Moricetown Child Welfare Committee} have had a signed protocol agreement with the MCFD in the Smithers area. This solidified our position with regard to our children in Care or at risk of being taken into care. We have continually practiced our matrilineal system for years prior to this agreement. We are a matrilineal Society and have been incorporating this into our practice - when dealing with issues of Child Protection in our community and outside our community. This system works for our families that have children in care. It is at this time that we impose the colonial system of caring for our children into our discussions with MCFD. This has been a success and is seen as such by MCFD as well. We have been invited to do presentations to an MCFD Congress to mark the success of our committee's work over the years. All this work is being done in the absence of not having a Delegated Agency for our Wet'suwe'ten Children in Care or at risk of being in care.

4)

Title: Indigenizing adoption for Aboriginal children in care

Presenter: Maria Bertsch, M.A., R.S.W., B.S.W.
MCFD, Terrace, BC

Maria Bertsch is an MCFD Adoption worker who has served as an adoption's resource for social workers and as a consultant to a number of Aboriginal organizations/communities. She is a published author in the area of First Nations' adoption and a presenter in professional child welfare forums. Maria completed her Masters in 2008.

Abstract:

Have you wanted ideas on how to more effectively engage perspective Aboriginal adoptive parents? This presentation chronicles a study of adoption experiences from members of a First Nations community in NW BC. The results indicate that despite an overwhelmingly negative adoption history, many First Nations people are not only open to adoption but with support will consider adopting Aboriginal children currently in Ministry care. Research participants expressed an overarching desire to have children, who could potentially be adopted outside the community, returned to their hereditary lands. A series of recommendations for a more Indigenized adoption practice were identified including: improved information dissemination, on-going community-government consultation, cultural preservation, social work training, and government policy/practice changes. The workshop will encourage curiosity regarding social work leadership and how this framework can be instrumental when working within Aboriginal culture.

This workshop is relevant to social workers encountering obstacles in child protection and adoption practice with Aboriginal families. The information is also relevant to government and non-governmental organization administrators interested in moving their organizations towards more culturally-sensitive practice.

5)

Title: Relationships of Resiliency and Resistance

Presenter: Daleen Thomas, LLB, BA, Metis mother of three.

Metis Nation BC (I am currently also working under contract for Nona Bene Consulting, under contract for Caring for First Nations Society)

This work comes out of the research done for Caring for First Nations Society and Nona Bene on the redesign of Indigenous practice standards in Indigenous social work.

Abstract:

Resiliency is the term in social work used to describe a child's ability to thrive in environments of neglect and/or emotional maltreatment. Resistance, on the other hand, represents the historic movement of Metis and other First Nations to rise above colonialism and colonization.

What do these two terms have in common and why do they operate in the same manner - to transcend limitations and restrictions placed on the person? A presentation would overview literature and studies of the phenomenon. A circle or workshop would ask participants how they describe resilience and resistance. What are its principles? How do we, as Indigenous and on-Indigenous people define these terms? What images come to mind? How can we use these elements to encourage these phenomena in our communities?

6)

Title: Building a New System of Aboriginal Child Welfare

Presenter Names: Allen Cummings and Vanessa Currie

Nenan Dane_zaa Deh Zona Children and Family Services

Abstract

Nenan Dane_zaa Deh Zona Children and Family Services is an organization in accordance with the BC Societies Act, with a mandate from the Treaty 8 First Nations leadership and urban Aboriginal peoples and organizations of the north-east of British Columbia to develop a new model of jurisdiction for governance, services and quality assurance. This historic endeavor will enable First Nations, Aboriginal and Métis peoples to reclaim responsibility and authority for services and resources that are presently the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD).

In order to gather insight into each community's local context including strengths, needs, culture and traditional practices, Nenan is engaged in the River of Unity: Community Empowerment Process. Utilizing the International Institute for Child Rights and Development's Triple A methodology, young people, parents, community members, Elders and service providers are engaged in an assessment of their own strengths and challenges in supporting their children and families. Communities are playing an integral role in developing services that build from their strengths to address their needs.

A new community-based and culturally grounded service delivery model will be the result of this community engagement process. Communities are now developing action plans or solutions to issues they have identified which will result in our service delivery model. Communities are directing the development of services and, through their involvement, their capacity to support their families is enhanced. Importantly, a new structure for local accountability is being

developed with communities and is resulting in a community-based governance structure, including Community Councils and regional Youth and Elders Councils. The path ahead is exciting and there is great hope and enthusiasm in communities and a good deal of learning to share.

7)

Title: Reclaiming their places: Seven women Chiefs of Northern BC

Presenter: Shelly Johnson
Thompson Rivers University

Abstract:

This qualitative social work paper uses the medicine wheel to analyze and explore unique influences and experiences that encourage the political activism of seven First Nations band council, tribal council and hereditary women Chiefs. Collectively, the women Chiefs represent 19 Nations in Northern BC. The findings of the study indicate four distinct elements in the developing leadership styles of the women. First, the women recognize how their traditionally matrilineal Nations and inclusive governance models have been affected by the imposition of Euro-Canadian and Christian religious principles. Second, they are developing leadership styles that value and model community-based inclusiveness, transparency, neutrality, respect and mutual accountability at all levels. Third, they have begun to organize locally, regionally, provincially and internationally to strengthen First Nations culture, languages and feminine spirituality as well as address child welfare, education and land claims issues. Finally, each women Chief contributes toward a holistic vision of a safe, hopeful and just future for First Nations people in Northern BC. The seven women Chiefs recognize that social justice and change requires continued education and alliance building, both in and outside First Nations communities. The necessary and valued role of women in both elected and hereditary systems of governance is an issue requiring respectful acknowledgement, support and encouragement from Aboriginal organizations, Federal and Provincial governments.

8)

Title: Peer Youth Engagement and Advocacy

Presenter Names: Rebecca Jules + 2 Youth Facilitators
KAYA (Knowledgeable Aboriginal Youth Association)

Abstract:

KAYA advocates for youth voice and participation in various decision making processes that affect them, and recognizes that their voice is more than participating in meetings. Youth also express themselves through music, arts, and media. Our programming supports youth voice in all of these areas. We will be presenting on our peer to peer youth facilitator training and youth engagement model.

Youth will discuss their experiences of being involved in the Aboriginal Youth and Vancouver Police Working Group, engaging youth participation, and creating strategies to increase Aboriginal youth and police positive interactions, in addition to strengthening supports and programs in the community for youth.

The workshop will be hands on, include interactive games, a activity based on either music or arts, and a youth lead dialogue.

9)

Title: Empowering our house system

Presenter: Faith Tait
Nisga'a Access to Justice

Abstract:

In the Nisga'a Access to Justice program our focus is on empowering our Nisga'a traditional house structure to deal with conflict, for example if a child/youth is in a situation that may go through the justice system we deal with utilizing house chief, matriarch and members to resolve through a traditional house meeting, this process is call Yuuhlimkaskw. Our primary focus is on how can empower our own Nisga'a processes rather than utilizing the Canadian court processes, bringing these processes back to the long house not the court houses.

10)

Title: Give Away: Research as an Intellectual Tradition

Presenter: Michele A Sam
Human Early Learning Partnership

Abstract:

Based upon the cultural ideals of redistribution and sharing of knowledges, I bring together what appears (as I lived it) to be two disparate parts: the ways of knowing, doing and being of Indigenous experience and that of the academic community. I present research as a (re)search: a mechanism that prepares for the act of the "give away", transforming the traditional values into a contemporary context and use. I identify relationships that exist and are core interdependencies to research endeavors that assist in the (re)building of indigenous intellectual traditions and its knowledges. I share the work of my MSW as well as why I did what I did; who and what helped me to do such work (in community and in academics) and a review of the "triggers" of research (positive and negatives ones) as I experienced them. I present the continuation of that 'work' I do now, which is considered to be "western academics". The Human Early Learning Partnership provides opportunities to bring together child welfare and early learning perspectives into collective focus. Tools of decolonization, nation rebuilding and cultural continuity, are sometimes not only located in our ideological communities. Through the applied translations of knowledges, the (re) building of knowledges and "transfer of knowledge" can be useful in a practical way. I offer some ideas, through stories of doing, knowing and being that go along with this life work I have undertaken, that allows me to continue to be of service and continue in my own becoming.

11)

Title: Cree For Families-A Nation Building Indicator

Presenter Names: Ida Bull & Norine Saddleback & Ken Saddleback
Maskwachis Cree

Abstract:

Our Team of 3 people have participated in various leadership, empowerment and First Nations virtues training sessions as follows:

Part I (Ken Saddleback)

The workshop begins with the Cree Version of the Creation Story and how it is "within us" and how we have and always will be "Warriors With A Heart".

Part II (Norine Saddleback):

Focuses on the global governance component of language as one of the 7 Elements of a Nation by virtue of International Standards. What is nation building and why it is relevant in every institution. This second session will lead into how language immersion within the Child Wellness/Welfare Agencies will advance and empower Indigenous identity and respect for self and others.

Part III (Ida Bull):

Focuses on nation building through the Family Unit and language component - Cree For Families. The total physical response methodology and how our Cree syllabics can be maximized through effective and contemporary retention through immersion.

We will also share our successes and our findings to date since the completion of our Thesis "Cree Immersion: An Indicator of Nation Building & Success, Norine Saddleback-Samson & Ida Bull. (2007),Gonzaga University, Master's of Arts in Leadership & Administration)

Ken Saddleback is the Head ELder of Kasohkewew Child Wellness Society and true advocate of traditional parenting, practices and cultural relevance. Throughout our workshop we will relate back to history and contemporary indigenous concepts. Ken will further assist in the circle and smudging throughout the workshop.

12)

Title: Signs of Safety: Recognizing and building strength and safety with Aboriginal families in crisis

Presenter Names: Heidi Hebditch & Donna Bone

Ktunaxa Kinbasket Child & Family Services

Abstract:

Signs of Safety are a solution focused brief therapy approach to child protection work. Drawing on the strengths of family and the Aboriginal community, safety can be created for children during times of crisis. It is a loving and respectful approach to child protection work and allows workers to build relationships with people while helping them discover their unique gifts, talents and strengths as well as to connect them to their family and community. For decades Aboriginal children have been over-represented in the foster care system, but for those communities/agencies that are using the Signs of Safety approach, the number of Aboriginal children entering care is being drastically reduced. Not only are the families seeing the benefits of

this practice model, but the workers as well are finding an increased sense of understanding about families and their problems leading to greater job satisfaction.

13)

Title: The Politics of Change in Aboriginal Child and Family Services

Presenter Names: Charles Horn and David Stevenson
Department of Political Science
University of Victoria

Abstract:

Between 2002 and 2009, British Columbia experimented with major reforms to its child and family services system. A major feature of these reforms was a proposal to devolve significant management control over service to Aboriginal communities. The proposed reforms and the planning processes developed to advance them generated significant debate and controversy within the Aboriginal community. Much of the commentary on this 'regionalization initiative' has focused on the advantages or disadvantages of the proposed governance changes, that is, whether they would compromise long term community aspirations, or were necessary to counter the devastating impact of the existing system on Aboriginal children and families. In contrast, this presentation focuses on the debate itself; in an attempt too understand what the discussions reveal about Indigenous social and political thought. Here we argue that the terms in which various parties conducted the debate the poles around which positions crystallized, and the linkages made to other issues reveal a great deal about how self-determination is articulated and practiced within Aboriginal communities in British Columbia today. The presentation explores this and connects our findings to the broader context of self-determination amongst Indigenous Nations in North America.

14)

Title: Can You Hear Me Smile?

Presenter: Cindy Lacroix

Abstract:

As a direct descendant from both parents being Survivors of Residential School, I am familiar with the loneliness of shame. Although I was removed from my identity, the trauma was always with me. As I continue to grow and find my identity, the more I learn from others around me. The most common factor I always find, is humor. As Native People, I have learned, we are funny and like to laugh a lot. I also have learned that many of us were not able to enjoy this experience in childhood for various reasons, displacement (as for myself) but mostly from life in Residential Schools. Many Aboriginal Youth in Care have also experienced trauma from their displacement and loss of life setting lessons. Throughout my life and career as a Child/Youth Care Worker, having fun has been the best medicine of all. This has brought me to the acknowledgment of this loss and of a common ground for everyone to meet. I would like to take away from the hurt and pain through telling our stories and instead re-live out our stories from a different window...one that is colorful (in my world, all is blue), fun, memorable and to be shared with others. In this place...physical ability, size or most any other interruption we have, are no

longer obstacles here.

15)

Title: Implementation Jurisdiction in Syilx Territory

Presenter: Jennifer Houde
Okanagan Nation Alliance

Abstract:

Okanagan Nation Alliance is in the planning process for an Okanagan Nation Child and Family Service organization. The Nation will exert its jurisdiction. This means designing an agency that services all Aboriginal people in the territory based on the principals and values of the Syilx Nation. Through many discussions with community leaders, members and elders, the focus has been building a framework that is underpinning based on Syilx customs and practices while remaining community based and community driven.

This presentation will look at the Syilx developmental process to date. It will outline lessons learned. The presentation will also outline the strategy for anticipating and addressing challenges. The framework includes community dialogue process that will guide the approach to service delivery and also establish an accountability mechanism to ensure that the agency is meeting community needs within the limits of the child and family services mandate.

The Nation has been conducting focus groups within each of our 7 member communities. The Nation is also conducting a 2 day session involving various members of the Okanagan Nation community to look at chaptiwl (animal stories) and people stories that tell us what koolenchooten (creator) tells us about how we care for our children.

By reviewing the Syilx stories, the Nation can apply Syilx principals and values to a modern context that honors the spirit of our ancestors.

16)

Title: Local Knowledge as Catalyst: Transforming Aboriginal Child and Family Service Delivery

Presenter Names: Doris Paul & Stephen Kozey
Ayas Men Men Child and Family Services

Abstract:

Two employees of the Squamish Nation Ayas Men Men Child and Family Services agency, who are also students at the BSW and Doctoral levels, share their stories about how they are using Local Indigenous Squamish knowledge in offering child and family services within Squamish Nation communities with positive results and increasing community interest and support.

From formal family group conferencing of protection cases referred by the Ministry of Child and Family Development, to referrals by Squamish service providers and self referrals by Nation members, the presenters utilize the Circle, the Eagle feather ceremony, and local Squamish protocols in responding to a whole range of social concerns in the community.

Presenters will facilitate a short Circle with participants to give all an opportunity to identify

examples of local knowledge in their communities and how this might be advanced to transform and enhance service delivery for their children and families.

17)

Title: Healing and Empowerment through Honouring our Sacred Talk

Presenter Names: Gwen Gosek; Alex Wright; Diane Hiebert-Murphy
University of Manitoba

Abstract:

For centuries explorers, medical practitioners, academic researchers and the curious have relegated Indigenous people to the role of subjects in their own search for knowledge. In so doing, researchers built careers on collecting knowledge, and through owning, storing and controlling Indigenous knowledge and cultural artifacts. Their approach was often problematic because they: a) disrespected community cultural protocols; b) ignored Indigenous worldviews & values; c) focused on individual perspectives versus community perspectives; d) incorporated poorly informed research that resulted in poorly informed policies, which in turn were often punitive; and e) produced findings which often reinforced stereotypes and rendered peoples' realities invisible.

Decolonizing efforts within Indigenous communities have been moving beyond defining and implementing research protocols for their individual communities to defining Indigenous approaches to research and its application to all aspects of research impacting Indigenous peoples. The focus of this presentation will be on articulating basic principles of an Indigenous research methodological approach which emphasizes how healing and empowerment through our sacred talk is a critical aspect of research efforts in Indigenous communities. The presentation will incorporate a practical application of these principles to a two year study, which integrated an Indigenous partnership research model involving First Nations communities across Canada. The focus of the study, which incorporated a partnership research approach, examined the barriers and best practices in providing support to the families and communities of Indigenous children and youth with learning and behavioral disabilities in the care of First Nations child welfare agencies.

18)

Title: Starting from a Traditional Place: The AOPSI Practice Standards Redesign

Presenter Names: Linda Luca, Executive Director; Shawn Hoey, Program & Policy Manager
Caring for First Nations Children Society

Abstract:

This presentation will provide a brief history of and an update on the current redesign of the Aboriginal Operational Practice Standards and Indicators (AOPSI) which govern the practice and operations of the 22 First Nations, one Métis, and two urban Aboriginal Child and family service agencies in the province of British Columbia. In 2009, a new opportunity has presented itself. Taking advantage of the New Relationship between Indigenous people and the provincial government and the Ministry for Children and Family Development's Aboriginal Pillar of their

operational plan, the agencies have embarked on an historic redesign of the AOPSI practices standards.

During the redesign, agencies are not starting from the mainstream legislative requirements and attempting to fit culture in. The current approach is starting from traditional models of caring and demonstrating how this meets and exceeds the legislative requirements. The information gathering process is underway, results are coming in, pen is on the paper and glitches and surprises have emerged. Today we share this journey with you.

19)

Title: Honoring Disability

Presenter: Donna M. Good Water, MSW
Okanagan Indian Band

Abstract:

The Okanagan Nation is located in central BC and is comprised of seven Bands in Canada and the United States. The customs, values and social practices of the Okanagan are passed from one generation to the next through stories. As such, grandparents share the chaptix/stories with the children from an early age, and as the children reach adulthood, they share their Chaptix with their children. This generational practice ensures values related to children, old people and people with disabilities. This chaptix starts at a time when all the elements of the world and universe lives as one, with spiritual powers that secured relationships and helped one another. This is a chaptix about an Okanagan chief and the lessons his daughters learned about caring for others. I will tell the chaptix and then have a discussion with the audience about how they feel about the chaptix and what this story means to them.

20)

Title: An Anishnabe-Metis Auntie's Journey with Practicing Community-based/Traditions

Presenter: Dr. Barbara Waterfall
Social Work, University of Victoria

Abstract:

The traditional Anishnabec child welfare paradigm remains resilient today and is embedded in the ancient Kinship System of my Anishnabec ancestors. Organized through Extended Family relationships, the Traditional Anishnabec approach to child welfare today functions in preventative and directed ways to address the inter-generational effects of colonization which has disrupted Traditional and Nurturing forms of child care. This Anishnabec System functions along side and often in opposition to the dominant colonizing provincial child welfare system, where an auntie's role becomes one advocating for the Traditional Kinship paradigm. The presenter, through a story-telling format will speak to her journey of coming to re-claim her Traditional role as an Auntie, and in so doing foster the resiliency of the Traditional Kinship social welfare approach.

21)

Title: Moving Mountains: RE-conceptualizing Research from an Indigenous Perspective

Presenter: Todd Ormiston & Trevor Good

Abstract:

This presentation expands upon the paper: Re-conceptualizing Research: An Indigenous Perspective written by Todd Ormiston. In particular, it highlights the importance of Indigenous peoples recognizing, re-claiming and redefining traditional processes towards restoration of our cultures well being and ultimately self determination. Starting with storytelling, the two presenters will demonstrate the vital link stories have to teachings which guide Indigenous laws, policies and ways of being. Trevor connects these teachings through tribal Journeys and speaks to how his Indigenous child welfare practice framework incorporates these teachings and values. This presentation will also explore essential elements in re-claiming research from an Indigenous perspective utilizing case examples from various communities across Turtle Island.

22)

Title: Gitxsan Matrilineal World View

Presenter: Cheryl Williams

Abstract:

This view of re-thinking child welfare takes an entire community to raise a child in abstract of how we as First Nations need to view our world within the on going change of society. A child's roots are vital to continued existence in the same breath as their connection with family, regardless of family stature and dynamics. Within the Gitxsan system, we are matrilineal and with the changing views of society and imposition we have had to compromise, we are losing the importance of who we are and how we belong to our sacred teachings.

It has come to a point where matrilineal is not sufficient enough to save our children from getting lost in the child welfare system. It needs not only to be re-strengthened, but to be revitalized and reviewed as to what our roles and responsibilities are in our contemporary world. The roots of the child are forever in the past, present and the future. Like a tree, it shed, has re-growth, but is an entity of beginning to end and keeps revolving as such.