



UAKN  
Urban Aboriginal  
Knowledge Network

RCdU  
Réseau de connaissances des  
Autochtones en milieu urbain

## RESEARCH PROJECT SUMMARY

### Western Research Centre

#### **Name of Project:**

Pathways to Restorative Child Welfare Practices: Decision Making at VACFSS

#### **Research Start-up Summary and Abstract:**

The Restorative Child Welfare Practices research project is conceptualized by the Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society's (VACFSS) leadership team. Located in Vancouver, VACFSS is the largest urban Aboriginal delegated child welfare agency in BC. In 2014, the VACFSS ED approached the UBC professor Shelly Johnson to co-develop the proposed research project.

The research goal of this project is to identify the pathways of decision-making and practice within child protection most likely to generate restorative outcomes for the unique aggregate of children and families and families served by VACFSS.

The knowledge and practice insights identified and developed through this research project will directly contribute to the development of restorative policy, practice and decision making at VACFSS. We anticipate that findings from this project will also be directly applicable to work of other delegated Aboriginal agencies in British Columbia, across Canada, and to Indigenous peoples working in the context of child welfare internationally.

A literature review conducted on the topic of restorative child welfare practices in urban Aboriginal delegated agencies reveals there are concrete gaps in policy development, practice and research. This indicates that this research project will be of interest to urban child welfare agencies, researchers, academics, urban Aboriginal peoples, government representatives and community-university partners provincially, nationally and internationally.

This project will use a mixed methods approach including expertise arising from practice knowledge keepers at VACFSS and data collected.

#### **Engagement Objectives:**

**Research Question:** What pathways of decision-making and practice yield the most restorative outcomes for children and families connected to the child protection program at VACFSS? How may VACFSS ensure the application of this decision making model and practice pathways/strategies more consistently across the organization?

The Restorative Child Welfare Practices research project aims to document VACFSS pathways of decision making to better support restorative child welfare practices. As explained by VACFSS

ED Bernadette Spence, *“VACFSS restorative policies and practices ensure child safety and stronger family functioning; however, the result is not consistent. We want to review and document VACFSS practices that result in better outcomes such as family engagement that prevents children from coming into care, child placements with relatives, reunification with families and enhanced family functioning upon completion of services. We have undertaken a previous study that documented least intrusive pathways in the legislation and we would like to build on our past research findings to formalize our practice pathways, in policy and realign our service delivery frameworks”.*

**Collaborating Friendship Centre and/or other urban Aboriginal organization:**

Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society

**Main contact:**

Shelley Johnson (Saulteaux) Assistant Professor,  
University of British Columbia, School of Social Work  
604-822-9647 Email: [shelley.johnson@ubc.ca](mailto:shelley.johnson@ubc.ca)

Bernadette Spence (Cree) Executive Director  
Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society  
604-872-6723 Email: [Bernadette\\_Spence@vacfss.com](mailto:Bernadette_Spence@vacfss.com)