



UAKN
Urban Aboriginal
Knowledge Network

rcdu
Réseau de connaissances des
Autochtones en milieu urbain

RESEARCH PROJECT SUMMARY

UAKN Atlantic

Name of Project:

Let's Get It Right: Creating A Culturally Appropriate Training Module And Identifying Local Urban Aboriginal Resources for Non-Aboriginal Caregivers of Aboriginal Children In New Brunswick

Research Start-up Summary and Abstract:

This project evolved out of a case brought before the New Brunswick (NB) Court of Queen's Bench, Family Division, where the Department of Social Development (DSD) was severely criticized by the Judge for not being more sensitive and aware of the government's historical, legal and moral obligation to service Aboriginal children and their families in ways that are unique to their culture. In this case, the family was Aboriginal and living in a non-Aboriginal community.

The over-representation of Aboriginal children in care speaks to the critical importance of ensuring that these non-Aboriginal caregivers are knowledgeable, not only about the developmental and emotional needs of the children, but about the importance of an integrated cultural history. Clearly, more than 'cultural sensitivity' is required. This research project aims to ensure that the care providers can impart a celebratory pride of the Aboriginal history that is unique to the child and his or her extended family and community. An inclusive approach towards families and communities will be foundational.

Engagement Objectives:

The three overarching goals for this project are to create a suite of culturally appropriate support materials to be packaged in a training module for non-Aboriginal caregivers of Aboriginal children-in-care; and to identify urban Aboriginal community-based supports for those non-Aboriginal caregivers as well as to establish processes and protocols for accessing those community-based resources and to determine what community-driven advocacy looks like and how culturally appropriate advocacy can be used to support and champion the desires and needs of Aboriginal children in care, their extended families and non-Aboriginal caregivers.

The end result will be the creation of a culturally appropriate 1-2 day training module for foster parents responsible for the day-to-day custody of Aboriginal children in the legal custody of the Minister of Social Development in New Brunswick. This research project also proposes piloting the training module, which subsequently will have the potential to be deployed province-wide.

This project will seek to answer the following questions:

1. What culturally and linguistically appropriate supports are there for non-Aboriginal parents caring for Aboriginal children?
2. What supports do these non-Aboriginal caregivers need?
3. What urban Aboriginal services, organizations and support groups are there that non-Aboriginal caregivers could be accessing in their immediate community?
4. What are the processes and protocols by which the non-Aboriginal caregivers could access these resources?

This research project's outcome will be the creation of culturally appropriate support materials and establish community-based resources for non-Aboriginal caregivers of Aboriginal children-in-care. The materials will increase the parents' awareness and understanding of what it means to bring these infants and children into their homes and support the child's Aboriginal identity. The research project will also identify what community-based urban Aboriginal resources are available to caregivers living in the greater Fredericton Area. Finally, the project will create a process for caregivers who want to access those supports and resources.

Methodology:

This research project will use a mixed methodology, meaning complementary quantitative and qualitative data will be collected, analyzed, and reported on. Quantitative data will be collected on the number of children in care; the number cared for by non-Aboriginal caregivers; and if the children were from on or off reserve. Qualitative data from the urban and on-reserve communities about existing and needed training and community-based resources will be collected using a Participatory Action Research.

Collaborators and Team Members:

Project Lead: Katie Smith, MSW student

Community Partners: Patsy McKinney, Director Under One Sky and Elizabeth Blaney New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council

Elder: Miigam'agan, Elder in Residence, STU

BSW Students: Nevin Brewer, Kelly Cunningham, Christy Dingee, Emily Mersereau

Academic Partner: Barb Wilkens, Faculty Liaison, St. Thomas University

Government Team Members: Peter Mathews-Program Manager for Foster and Group Homes, Region 3, Social Development, Judy Levi, Aboriginal Consultant, Social Development and Valerie DeLong, Consultant for Foster and Group Homes, Social Development and Child Youth Advocate Office, Robert Lafrenière

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