

FOURTEENTH ANNUAL SUMMER INSTITUTE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT  
Addressing Inequity in Canada through Early Childhood Education  
Friday, June 2, 2017, 8:15 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

**Keynote: Truth and Reconciliation and the  
Duty of Early Childhood Education and Care**



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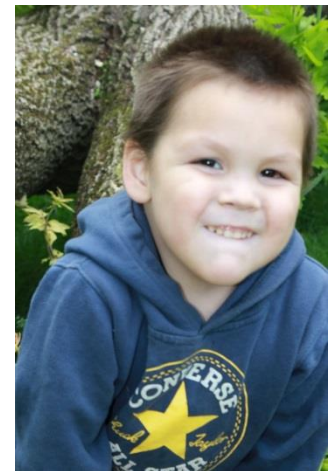


# Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

**We call upon the Federal, Provincial, Territorial, and Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate Early Childhood Education programs for Aboriginal Families.**

# Native Child and Family Services of Toronto, Mission Statement

“Native Child and Family Services of Toronto strives to provide a life of quality, well-being, caring and healing for our children and families in the Toronto Native Community. We do this by creating a service model that is culture based and respects the values of Native people, the extended family and the right to self-determination” (NCFST, 2011)



# Early Childhood Education & Care



# Historical Implications

- “The Indian residential school system was based on the clearly stated goals of **assimilating Indians**, deemed to be the most effective way to “civilize” the Indians,” (Davin, 1879)
- "I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that the country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand alone... Our objective is to continue until there is **not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department.**”( Scott, 1920)  
(Legacy of Hope Foundation, 2014)

# Historical Implications

## Residential Schools: It Matters

- It Matters because it “continues to affect First Nations, Inuit and Metis families,” (p.1)
- It Matters because it happened in our country.
- It Matters because it has major causes of poverty, homelessness, substance use, illness, violence, and illiteracy
- It Matters because “we share this land. We are responsible for our actions today” (p.1)  
(Legacy of Hope Foundation, 2010)

# Working with Indigenous Families: Unique Factors

**Poverty:** Median income of Aboriginal people is \$18,962, 30% less than the average Canadian (Wilson and MacDonald, 2010)

**Housing:** Nearly one in four First Nations adults live in crowded homes and 23% of Aboriginal people live in houses in need of major repairs (National Collaborating Center for Aboriginal Health, 2010)

**Intergenerational Trauma:** Bombay, Matheson & Anisman (2009) state, "The current health and social conditions, coupled with continued discrimination, act as reminders of, and are a continuation of, the historical traumas that persist in the thoughts of Aboriginal people and continue to impact them." (p. 2)

**Over-representation in Child Welfare:** The 2006 Census states that 2% of the province (Ontario) identify as Aboriginal, however 16-18% of children in care are Aboriginal, the number is just an estimate as other children in care do not identify as being Aboriginal (Beaucage, 2011)



# Working with Indigenous Families: Unique Factors

**Health and well-being of Aboriginal families:** First Nations people in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia may have death rates 6.5 times higher than the general population, and some specific rates of injury in certain populations are as high as 22 times the Canadian average (Canadian Paediatric Society, 2011)

**Cultural oppression:** According to Canadian Paediatric Society (2011), "Historical inequities, cultural alienation and loss of connectedness with the environment, as well as the grim legacy of residential schools, have contributed to depression, to alcohol and substance abuse and associated risk-taking behaviours, and to inadequate parenting skills for some"



# Know Your Indigenous Families - Canada

- The Aboriginal Population is the fastest growing population in Canada. (Statistics Canada, 2006)
- Policy makers recognize this growth indicated a need for aboriginal specific early childhood development programs. (Statistics Canada, 2006)
- The Aboriginal population is much younger than the Canadian population (averaging 25 versus 35 years) with proportionately TWICE as many children under the age of 15 years (38% versus 20%) (Statistics Canada, 2006)
- Over 600 First Nations Communities in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2006)
- In 2006, there were 1,172,785 aboriginal people in Canada and an estimated 70,000 in the GTA (COT, 2017)

# Know Your Indigenous Families - Ontario

- 134 Communities in Ontario (Statistics Canada, 2006).
- Approximately 35% of this population resides on-reserves and other 65% off reserves (Statistics Canada, 2006).
- About 8 percent of Ontario's Aboriginal population was aged 0 to 4 years, and 8.7 percent was aged 5 to 9 (Statistics Canada, 2006).
- On average Aboriginal children experience higher infant mortality rates, lower immunization rates, poorer nutritional rates, higher rates of obesity and other chronic diseases (UNICEF, 2009).

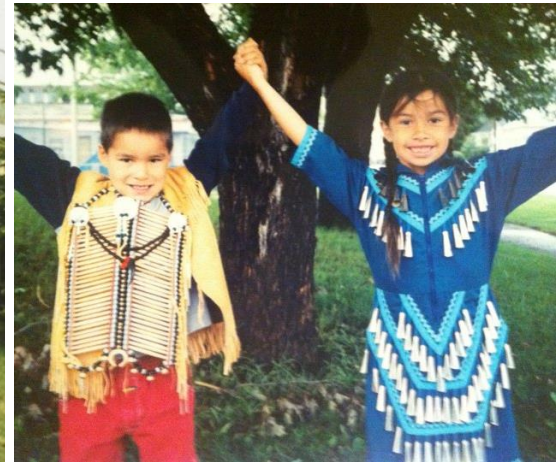
# Know Your Indigenous Families - Toronto

- 63% of the First Nations community had to give up important things (e.g. groceries) in order to meet shelter-related costs (TARP 2011)
- 22% of the First Nations population sometimes or often did not have enough food to eat (TARP 2011)
- 40% of participants reported that a child protection agency was involved in their own personal care growing up as a child (TARP 2011)
- 55% of respondents with children reported that their child had not participated in any community programs for Aboriginal children (TARP 2011)

# Know your Indigenous Families



# Know your Indigenous Families



# Working with Indigenous Families

- A Survey went out to the Early Years Community in Scarborough Child and Family Life Centre on January 2014 and December 2014 and the majority wanted the following:
  - More Cultural Experiences
  - More Visits from Elders
  - More Traditional Teachings to children
  - Continued Programming on Site

(SCFLC, 2014)

# Working with Indigenous Families

- Scarborough Aboriginal Youth participated in a Youth Forum in December 2014 and the results were as follows:
- More Cultural Knowledge
- To take a stand against Discrimination/Racism
- Help the Parents and Children
- Strengthen the Community
- Have a variety of Education Opportunities

(Brown, 2015)

“Community is our people, everyone who wants best for Aboriginals”

G, 25







# Defining Community and Family

## Our Holistic Approach

A Holistic Approach is a vision with a sense of balance within our team members, our early years programs, our youth, our families and the culturally appropriate curriculum and programs delivered. The development of a collaborative working environment with experienced staff, unique families and partnering agencies, a reciprocating process, a safe and open place to explore alternative ideas and learn information together; creates a dynamic, sustainable program which benefits children, families and staff with individual and group needs.

# Working with Indigenous Families

- Identifying and defining family
- Being able to service the whole family
- Accessing and understanding Childcare and Early Years Programs
- Acquiring and Maintaining Subsidy
- Aboriginal people are visual-spatial learners and prefer a holistic framework of understanding that is reflective and collaborative, (Rasmussen et al., 2004; Toulouse, 2008).

# Working with Indigenous Families

- Battiste (2002) states, “Without Aboriginal education, Aboriginal students are in a perpetual state of identity chaos and dependency. It affects their ability to succeed” (p. 16)
- Contemporizing the traditional roles for urban indigenous people.
- Defining Success

# Working with Indigenous Families

- To foster a positive Aboriginal identity among children, culture must form the foundation of early learning experiences
- Culture is learned through language, ceremonies, gatherings, stories, food, music, games, arts and crafts, as well as land-based experiences
- It is important for service providers to have a good understanding of their own cultural beliefs and to respect the diversity of cultural beliefs of the children and families they are working with
- Elders and other resource people are considered the most important means for cultural knowledge to be transmitted to children and families

(Battiste, 2002; Toulouse, 2008).

“What we have is because someone stood up before us. What our Seventh Generation will have is a consequence of our actions today”

Winona LaDuke, Anishnabe





# Working with Indigenous Families

## Storytelling

- Storytelling has been a form of teaching for generations.
- A storyteller can be anyone of any age.
- To be a storyteller, one has to know how to work well with groups and how to “sense the needs of the audience,” (p. 145).
- Storytelling was and is still used as a form of moral teachings.

(Positive Indian Parenting, 1986)



# Working with Indigenous Families: Special Gifts & Inclusion

- Families with special gifts include children and parents/guardians with special needs
- Families can find it stressful to navigate through multiple systems including child care and education
- Families having to meet numerous professionals and educators is draining, intimidating and cumbersome



# Working with Indigenous Families: Special Gifts & Inclusion

- Families may have had previous involvement in residential schools and experienced extreme abuse, a slaughter of culture and language
- Indigenous Cultural values may not be compatible with Mainstream Educational values
- Children and Adults with Special Gifts are valued as teachers



# Families: Special Needs & Inclusion

## The First Teacher





“Trouble no one about their religion;  
respect others in their view and demand  
that they respect yours.”

Chief Tecumseh





Becoming involved in an Indigenous relationship with a child and family is a courageous act.

Its vital to recognize Indigenous Early Years as unique programs which require Indigenous leadership.

This is part of the healing journey of Aboriginal people and Canada.

THANK YOU!  
Chi Miigwetch - Ojibway  
Nia:wen - Mohawk  
Ekosani – Cree  
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# References

Traditionally, Aboriginal people have used a strong oral history to pass down teachings and stories.

Traditionally, Aboriginal people do not believe that a person owns information.

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