A Report on the Northwest Territories Child and Family Services Act

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Challenges in Determining Child Welfare Outcomes

Limited progress has been made over the past 20 years in child welfare outcome research. Historically, the issue of outcome measurement has been overshadowed by the urgency to help children at risk (Trocmé, MacLaurin, & Fallon, 2000). In part, some of the challenges have been a result of the delicate balance between competing objectives in legislation, policy and practice that includes safety of the child, the development and well-being of the child, and supporting children within their own family and community. Despite repeated calls to shift to an outcomes-based approach to monitoring child welfare outcomes, services to children and families at risk continue to be driven primarily by service demand rather than service outcome. (Figure 1).

Establishing child safety as the paramount concern poses challenges to child welfare systems as this may result in higher placements in formal child welfare care. Higher placement rates come at a cost with the potential loss of a child's involvement with family, extended family and community. This is a specific issue noted for children of Aboriginal descent given the high overrepresentation of First Nations children in the care of child welfare in Canada (Trocme et al., 2006).

There is an ongoing debate about the utility of child welfare placement in Canada. Although children placed in care experience lower rate of subsequent maltreatment than those remaining at home, the success of child welfare placements must be determined in ways other than just child safety. Children in care are noted to experience disrupted or disjointed sibling and parental connections (Steinhauer, 1983, 1991; Timberlake & Hamlin, 1982), high turnover in professional relationships (Fanshel, Finch, & Grundy, 1990; Kufeldt, 1984), multiple school moves and poor academic outcomes (Kufeldt, Vachon, Simard, Baker, & Andrews, 2000; Sawyer & Dubowitz, 1993; Smucker, Kauffman, & Ball, 1996), maltreatment in care (Hobbs, Hobbs, & Wynne, 1999), economic instability and under-employment as adults (Triseliotis & Russell, 1984), street involvement (Kufeldt & Burrows, 1994; Worthington et al., 2008), and drug use (Barth, 1990). Other research however, suggests that the long-term outcomes of children admitted to care are not necessarily more negative than maltreated children who receive services in their family and community (Barth, 1990; Fanshel & Shinn, 1978; Festinger, 1983; Wald, Carlsmith, Leiderman, Smith, & deSales-French, 1988). Wald and colleagues have clarified the strength of this point to determine the

relative benefit of foster care when they suggest "the question of whether home or foster care is better must be refined by asking further, in terms of which aspects of development and for which children under which conditions?" (MacLaurin & Bala, 2004). This controversy highlights a critical challenge for Canadian child welfare services, specifically that Canadian systems have relied heavily on the foster care system as one of the primary forms of intervention without clearly understanding the short and long-term impact of the intervention.

The challenge facing child protection workers is to continuously balance the child's immediate safety needs with the inherent need for a nurturing and stable home that promotes their development, as well as with the strengths and resilience of the family. A clear outcome measurement approach is required to track outcomes to identify indicators of success for children receiving child welfare services.
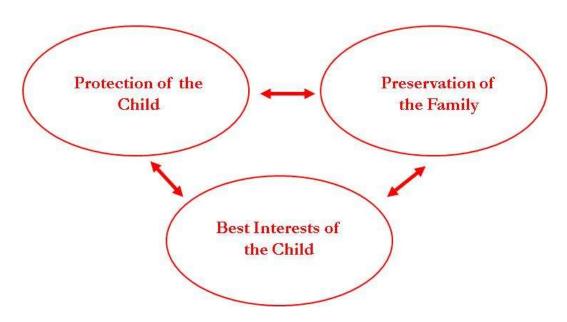
Figure 1 Competing Tensions in Child Welfare Objectives

Review of Child Welfare Data for the Northwest Territories

Rates of Child Maltreatment in Northwest Territories

Rates of child maltreatment in the Northwest Territories are determined to be significantly higher than the national incidence of child maltreatment. In 2003, the

incidence of maltreatment in NWT was 141.48 compared to 45.68 for the rest of Canada excluding Quebec (MacLaurin, Trocmé, Fallon, Pitman, & McCormack, 2006). (Table 1)

Table 1: Number and Incidence of Child Maltreatment Investigations in Northwest Territories in 2003 and Canada (excluding Quebec) in 2003			
Northwest Territories 2003		**Canada 2003**	
# of Investigations	Incidence per 1,000 children	# of Investigations	Incidence per 1,000 children
1,516	141.48	217,319	45.68
Northwest Territories Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2003			
Based on a sample of 372 child maltreatment-related investigations in Northwest Territories in 2003.			

The rate of substantiated maltreatment in the NWT was more three times higher than the rate for the rest of Canada (65.89 per 1,000 children compared to 21.71 for the rest of Canada).

Table 2: Number and Incidence of Substantiated Child Maltreatment Investigations in Northwest Territories in 2003 and Canada (excluding Quebec) in 2003			
Northwest Territories 2003		**Canada 2003**	
# of Investigations	Incidence per 1,000 children	# of Investigations	Incidence per 1,000 children
706	65.89	103,297	21.71
Northwest Territories Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2003			
Based on a sample of 178 child maltreatment-related investigations in Northwest Territories 2003.			

Primary Categories of Maltreatment

The higher rate of investigated and substantiated maltreatment was not consistent for each category of maltreatment. Substantiated physical abuse identified as the primary category of maltreatment for 7.65 children per 1,000 children in the NWT and for 5.31 per 1,000 children in the rest of Canada. Substantiated sexual abuse was relatively low at 3.17 per 1,000 children in 2003, however this incidence rate was much higher than the incidence for the rest of Canada excluding Quebec (0.62

per 1,000 children). Emotional maltreatment was noted as 4.11 per 1,000 children in the NWT compared to 3.23 for the rest of Canada. The higher rates of substantiated maltreatment in the NWT are specifically driven by substantiated neglect and substantiated exposure to domestic violence. Substantiated neglect was identified for 33.41 per 1,000 children in the NWT compared to 6.38 for the rest of Canada, while substantiated exposure to domestic violence was noted for 17.55 per 1,000 children in the NWT and 6.17 for the rest of Canada (Table 3).

Table 3: Primary Category of Substantiated Child Maltreatment Investigations in Northwest Territories in 2003 and Canada (excluding Quebec) in 2003

Primary Category of Maltreatment	Northwest Territories 2003			Canada 2003		
	# of Investigations	Incidence per 1,000 children	%	# of Investigations	Incidence per 1,000 children	%
Physical Abuse	82	7.65	11%	25,257	5.31	24%
Sexual Abuse	34	3.17	5%	2,935	0.62	3%
Neglect	358	33.41	51%	30,366	6.38	30%
Emotional Maltreatment	44	4.11	6%	15,369	3.23	15%
Exposure to Intimate Partner Violence	188	17.55	27%	29,370	6.17	28%
Total Substantiated Investigations*	**706**	**69.06**	**100%**	**103,297**	**14.32**	**100.00**

Northwest Territories Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 200

Percentages are Column percentages.

Based on a sample of 132 child maltreatment-related investigations in Northwest Territories in 2003.

The higher rates of substantiated neglect and exposure to domestic violence in the NWT identifies the need to examine alternative styles of service delivery best suited to support families at risk for neglect and families experiencing domestic violence within the home.

Severity of Physical Harm to Children

A relatively low proportion of children investigated for maltreatment in the Northwest Territories experienced forms of physical harm. Of the 707 children who experienced substantiated child maltreatment in 2003,   5% were identified as having some form of physical harm (35 children). This includes 3% for physical harm not requiring medical treatment and 2% for serious physical harm requiring medical intervention. These cases were primarily for substantiated physical abuse (bruises/cuts and scrapes) or substantiated neglect cases (other health conditions). The percentage of substantiated child maltreatment investigations identifying a

form of physical harm is lower in the Northwest Territories than for the rest of Canada where 10% of all substantiated investigations identified some form of physical harm (7% - physical harm – no treatment and 3% - physical harm requiring treatment) (Table 4).

Table 4: Physical Harm in Substantiated Child Maltreatment Investigations in Northwest Territories in 2003 and Canada (excluding Quebec) in 2003

	Northwest Territories 2003		Canada 2003	
	# of Investigations	%	# of Investigations	%
No Physical Harm	672	95%	93,076	90%
Physical Harm, No Treatment Required	19	3%	7,408	7%
Physical Harm, Treatment Required	16	2%	2,814	3%
Total Investigations*	707	100%	103,298	100%

Northwest Territories Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2003

Percentages are column percentages

*Based on a sample of 178 investigations in Northwest Territories in 2003 with information about child welfare placement.

Previous Investigations of Maltreatment

Children who come into contact with child welfare services in the Northwest Territories have frequently had previous contact. In 2003, 74% of children investigated by child welfare had a previous child welfare contact including 18% with one previous contact, 23% with either 2 or 3 previous contacts, and 33% with more than 3 previous contacts. Of the 525 children with previous contact, 38% had been previously investigated within the past 6 months, while 72% were investigated within the previous 12 months. This is critical for workload issues as well as for family well-being, as a high proportion of children and families are subsequently subjected to a rigorous investigation process designed to determine future risk of maltreatment to the child (Table 5).

The proportion of children in the Northwest Territories (74%) who experienced multiple investigations for maltreatment is much higher than Canada (62%). In addition, 33% of children who experienced substantiated maltreatment in the Northwest Territories had more than 3 previous openings compared to 21% for

Canadian substantiated investigations. The high rate of recurrence is an indicator of the chronic nature of some forms of maltreatment, specifically the higher rates of neglect and exposure to domestic violence, and highlights the need to develop community approaches to address these concerns.

Table 5: Previous Case Openings in Substantiated Child Maltreatment Investigations in Northwest Territories in 2003 and Canada (excluding Quebec) in 2003

Previous Investigations	Northwest Territories 2003		Canada 2003	
	# of Investigations	%	# of Investigations	%
No previous Openings	144	20%	38,500	37%
One previous Opening	124	18%	21,243	21%
2-3 Previous Openings	165	23%	20,433	20%
> 3 Previous Openings	236	33%	21,774	21%
Unknown Record	38	6%	1,312	1%
Total Investigations*	**707**	**100%**	**103,262**	**100%**

Northwest Territories Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2003

Percentages are column percentages

Based on a sample of 132 child maltreatment-related investigations in Northwest Territories in 2003.

Placement in Care

Placement in child welfare care can use a number of options. At the end of the investigation phase, the worker may decide to have the child placed informally with extended family or family supports which reduces the level of risk for the child, or may make a formal child welfare placement in a formal kinship care placement, a traditional foster care placement or a group home or residential facility. Placement rates at the conclusion of the investigation are a conservative estimate of the number of children placed as frequently placements result in the weeks following an investigation. In Northwest Territories in 2003, 36% of children changed residence following a substantiated investigation including 13% in an informal kinship care placement, 9% in a formal kinship care, 10% in traditional non-family foster care, and 4% in a group home or residential placement.

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The rate of placement in the Northwest Territories was considerably higher than national estimates for the CIS-2003 as 5% of children were placed in informal care and 8% were placed in either formal kinship care, traditional foster care or group or residential treatment homes. Placement in care is a traditional child welfare approach designed to ensure the safety of children at risk.

Table 6: Placement in Substantiated Child Maltreatment Investigations in Northwest Territories in 2003 and Canada (excluding Quebec) in 2003

Placement status	Northwest Territories 2003		Canada 2003	
	# of Investigations	%	# of Investigations	%
No Placement Required	454	64%	89,715	87%
Informal Kinship Care	88	13%	5,249	5%
Formal Kinship Care	59	9%	1,275	1%
Traditional Foster Care	73	10%	4,975	5%
Group/Residential Treatment	28	4%	2,010	2%
Total Investigations*	**708**	**100%**	**103,224**	**100%**

Northwest Territories Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2003

Percentages are column percentages

*Based on a sample of 178 investigations in Northwest Territories in 2003 with information about child welfare placement.

Household Income

In the Northwest Territories in 2003, 37% of substantiated child investigations lived in homes where at least one caregiver was employed full-time, while 15% of households relied on part-time/multiple jobs, or seasonal employment. Twenty-five percent of households reported use of benefits, employment insurance or social assistance and 23% of households had no source of income or unknown source.

In Canada, a higher proportion of children lived in households that reported full-time employment (57%), while a lower proportion indicated no income or an unknown income source (7%). The literature has clearly documented the impact of poverty on child maltreatment reports to child welfare, specifically as it relates to issues of neglect. Families experiencing lower levels of income experience a higher risk of physical neglect, as well as challenges with ensuring adequate supervision.

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Table 7: Household Source of Income in Substantiated Child Maltreatment Investigations in Northwest Territories in 2003 and Canada (excluding Quebec) in 2003

	Northwest Territories 2003		Canada 2003	
	# of Investigations	%	# of Investigations	%
Full-Time Employment	262	37%	58,736	57%
Part-time /Multiple Jobs / Seasonal Employment	107	15%	12,833	12%
Benefits / EI / Social Assistance	178	25%	24,904	24%
UnknownNone	158	23%	6,807	7%
Total Investigations*	**705**	**100%**	**103,280**	**100%**

Northwest Territories Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2003

Percentages are column percentages

*Based on a sample of 178 investigations in Northwest Territories in 2003 with information about child welfare placement.

Housing of Children Investigated by Child Welfare

At the time of the substantiated maltreatment event in 2003, 24% of children lived in homes that were purchased by their caregivers, while 22% lived in rental homes. A higher proportion (43%) lived in forms of public housing or supported housing based upon income.

In Canada in 2003, 32% of children experiencing substantiated maltreatment lived in their own home, while 43% lived in rental accommodations and 13% lived in public housing stock – a much lower rate than noted for the Northwest Territories. Public housing can be viewed as a proxy measure for poverty and reflects the challenges faced by children and families existing on lower income levels. This highlights the correlation between poverty and child maltreatment in Canada.

Table 8: Housing Type in Substantiated Child Maltreatment Investigations in Northwest Territories in 2003 and Canada (excluding Quebec) in 2003

	Northwest Territories 2003		Canada 2003	
	# of Investigations	%	# of Investigations	%
Own Home	166	24%	33,015	32%
Rental Accomodation	154	22%	44,684	43%
Public Housing	304	43%	13,005	13%
Shelter/Hotel	0	0	1,305	1%
Other/Unknown	81	11%	11,288	11%
Total Investigations*	**705**	**100%**	**103,297**	**100%**

Northwest Territories Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2003

Percentages are column percentages

*Based on a sample of 178 investigations in Northwest Territories in 2003 with information about child welfare placement.

Malicious Referrals to Child Welfare

In the Northwest Territories, child welfare legislation requires that professionals and community members report suspected maltreatment. To ensure that investigations are carried out by trained child welfare professionals in a thorough yet minimally intrusive manner, those who are making the report are not expected to verify their allegation prior to reporting but need to be making the referral in good faith. In 2003, almost half of all investigations of alleged maltreatment were judged to be substantiated, while 21% remained suspected following the conclusion of the investigation. Thirty-two percent of investigations were determined to be unsubstantiated. While most of these referrals were made in good faith, in 4% of the investigations (59 child investigations), the allegation appeared to have been made with malicious intent by a person who knew the allegation was false at the time of the report. All malicious reports in the Northwest Territories were made with referrals for neglect as the primary concern. Fifty four of the 59 malicious referrals were made by either a parent/caregiver not living in the home (23) or by a relative of the child (31).

The proportion of malicious referrals remains fairly constant over time and across jurisdictions. In Canada in 2003, 5% of all investigations reported that a malicious referral.

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Table 9: Level of Substantiation and Malicious Reports in Child Maltreatment Investigations in Northwest Territories in 2003 and Canada (excluding Quebec) in 2003

	Northwest Territories 2003		Canada 2003	
	# of Investigations	%	# of Investigations	%
Substantiated Reports	706	47%	103,297	48%
Suspected Reports	327	22%	28,053	13%
Unsubstantiated Non Malicious Reports	267	17%	58,626	27%
Unsubstantiated Malicious Reports	59	4%	10,744	5%
Unsubstantiated Reports, Unknown Malicious Intent	152	10%	15,119	7%
Total Investigations*	**1,511**	**100%**	**215,839**	**100%**

Northwest Territories Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2003

Percentages are column percentages

*Based on a sample of 372 investigations in Northwest Territories in 2003 with information about child welfare placement.

Key Themes in Community Consultations

Investing in Children, Families and Communities

Permanency planning for children is a critical element for child welfare intervention (Barth, 1999; Fluke, Edwards, Kutzler, Kuna, & Tooman, 2000; Pecora, Whittaker, Maluccio, Barth, & Plotnick, 2000). In consideration of the three competing tensions in child welfare legislation and policy, adequate attention must be paid to ensuring that the child experiences continuity in their involvement with family, extended family and community in addition to ensuring the safety of the child. A shift to a community building orientation in child welfare from more traditional approaches is being noted in Canada and is due in part to the dramatic increase in caseloads, the shift in presenting concerns from physical and sexual abuse investigations to neglect and exposure to domestic violence, and the call for the demonstration of service outcomes. This approach identifies the need to extend interventions beyond the family level to include the professional, organizational and community levels. Barter (2001) suggests that this is essential if child protection is

to address not only protecting children in their families but also the social, economic and political forces that have a significant impact upon families and communities (Barter, 2001). As noted in the NWTIS-2003, a significant proportion of children experiencing substantiated maltreatment in the Northwest Territories are living in homes that are disadvantaged with respect to housing safety, poverty, and substance abuse (MacLaurin et al., 2006). The shift to a community building orientation calls for a meaningful and significant investment in communities in order to ensure the safety and well-being of children and families. Indicators of meaningful community investment include: 1) a shift to a strength-based rather than a deficit-based orientation, 2) building on parents and families as essential partners, 3) proactive development rather than reactive intervention, 4) developing power for families and communities, 5) and working with families and children in situations of risk and violence within the context of their own community and neighbourhood (Barter, 2001). While there are challenge in implementing a community development approach in remote and northern communities with respect to costs and resources, the cost of children who are placed in care outside of their own communities is the greatest financial investment for most Canadian jurisdictions both historically and at present time (Bowlus, McKenna, Day, & Wright, 2003; Courtney, 1999).

Community consultations clearly identified the desire to keep children within their own communities as well as the need for a significant investment in community resources to assist children at risk in a culturally appropriate manner. Remote northern communities called for more consistent and coordinated services that went beyond fly-in crisis intervention to address current social issues.

Child and Family Advocacy

A review of provincial and territorial legislation indicates that most jurisdictions in Canada identify the role of a child or child and family advocate to ensure the rights and best interests of children are being met. Points of intervention focus on both the individual rights of specific children as well as structural and systemic rights of child welfare populations and specifically children in care of the government. Models range in scope, purpose and reporting accountability through the different jurisdictions but a common feature is to represent the rights, interests and viewpoints of children and youth who are receiving, or should be receiving, services as prescribed under child welfare and adoption legislation. One specific difference that requires careful consideration is whether the department of the child

and family advocate should report directly to the Provincial or Territorial Minister overseeing the department or whether the child and family advocate should be at arms length from the Ministry to reduce the potential for bias in decision making. There is consensus that the role of each provincial or territorial office of the advocate should be designed to meet the specific needs of the children, families and communities for which they are responsible.

Feedback from community consultations identified the need for a child's advocate in addition to a family advocate. This was noted in terms of issues related to children who were removed from home and placed out of region or out of territory, issues related to religion, and family and cultural beliefs. In addition specific concerns were identified regarding expanding the definition of family when decisions of reunification are being made to allow children to be returned to extended family members as an option of choice.

Community Committee Development

The current legislation has demonstrated innovation through the identification of community committee to support the well-being of children and families in all regions of the Northwest Territories. To date, only one community committee has been developed in Fort McPherson and this is viewed to be at a very early stage of development. Community members in most meetings identified the potential benefits of this approach and the need to develop a coordinated and planned strategy for the initiation of this form of community development in each region of the territory. Resources to support the development and growth of this initiative are needed to ensure continued success. In addition, a planned strategy to evaluate the impact of this community development plan on the children and families involved with child welfare is needed. This initiative was described by a community member in Yellowknife as an investment in the well-being of children.

Culturally Appropriate Child Welfare Intervention

Aboriginal children make up the majority of children in care in the Northwest Territories as 91% of children in substantiated maltreatment investigations were First Nations, Métis or Inuit (MacLaurin et al., 2006). There is a critical need for professionals working with Aboriginal children and families to understand the culture and heritage of diverse communities throughout the territory. Applying a

mainstream child welfare lens to community issues without a clear understanding and appreciation of the unique community strengths and challenges poses a serious risk. Understanding the differences between professional assumptions and the established community standards is essential for the development of a more collaborative approach to ensuring children are kept safe and maintaining involvement with their home, their culture and their community.

Feedback from community consultations in the Yellowknife, southern and northern regions consistently identified that there is a disconnection between the standards applied by the Ministry and the standards embraced by communities.

Use of Mediation and Alternative Measures

There has been a growing shift to the use of mediation in child protection cases to help resolve conflicts involving child protection workers, parents and children. This has been documented in work to develop models of practice as well as research to determine the effectiveness of mediation efforts (Barsky, 1999; Maresca, 1995; Savoury, Beals, & Parks, 1995; Sutherland, 2006; Wilhelmus, 1998). Mediators are seen to have less control over the decision making outcome but are actively involved in the development of a process that optimizes consensus between all parties. Mediation has been useful in reaching decisions that meet the best interests of the child, support permanency planning for children, enhance the quality of communication between child protection and family members, and use resources in an effective and efficient manner (Barsky, 1999).

Community consultations provided consistent feedback about the need for a more collaborative approach to reaching decisions between child welfare and families. Specifically participants identified alternative measures prior to apprehension, ways to divert placement, placement with kin if child was removed, and the use of mediation as a process to avert the legal adversarial process. An investment in the development of mediation strategies to work with and support the work of child welfare workers and families was identified as a critical need to ensure that the best interests of the child were consistently met.

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Plan of Care

Collaborative child protection work suggests that child protection workers must understand how parents experience and negotiate intervention if families are to truly engage with service plans. Research on client views of child welfare have identified the impact of the power differential between families and professionals as well as challenges to equal understanding between parties (Dumbrill, 2006; McCullum, 1995). Research is examining the benefits of community initiatives designed to enhance the power experienced by families using child welfare services and the impact this has on collaborative case planning between parents and professionals (Dumbrill, 2006).

Feedback from community consultations indicate that some families view the plan of care process as being coercive and led by the professionals involved in the process, rather than a collaboration to reach consensus. While the spirit of the plan of care process is to avoid legal intervention, practice challenges may pose barriers to meeting the full potential of this intervention. Specific feedback from community members suggested that there needed to be true family and community involvement, and mechanisms to ensure cultural training for workers to allow more collaborative community and family engagement.

Differential Response

The experience of the Northwest Territories is similar to other jurisdictions in Canada in that child welfare services are responding to growing numbers of referrals regarding a complex array of problems. As noted in the NWTIS-2003, this increase is being driven primarily by cases involving child neglect or exposure to domestic violence, while severe physical harm and sexual abuse represent a decreasing percentage of caseloads (MacLaurin et al., 2006). There is growing interest in the development of alternative approaches to meet the diverse needs of children who are at risk of the longer term impacts of neglect yet who do not present with the acute symptoms of physical or emotional harm (Trocmé, Knoke, & Roy, 2003). Using a differential response or multiple tracks of entry to child welfare for these populations supports the development of family strengths through a collaborative approach as opposed the more formal investigatory procedures. These approaches have also been noted to build upon and collaborate with existing or required community resources to keep children in their community service continuum (Anselmo, 2003).

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In terms of the Northwest Territories, a review of these innovations in service delivery could enhance and support the development of community committees to address issues of child and family well-being in a manner that diverts from the legislated investigatory approach.

Increasing Use of Formal and Informal Kinship Care

Formal kinship foster care is defined as any living arrangement in which children live with neither of their parents but instead are cared for by a relative or someone with whom they have a prior relationship (Geen, 2003). The primary aims of kinship placements are 1) family preservation when the permanency goal is reunification with birth parents, and 2) substitute care when kinship care is considered to be a long term arrangement when restoration is not possible, or the permanency goal is adoption or guardianship by the child's kinship carers (Scannapieco, 1999). Kinship care is a primary focus for child welfare in most western jurisdictions however the use of kinship care varies depending on the child welfare orientation regarding the paramount concerns with respect to child safety, well-being or family support. There is significant research that kinship foster families are eligible for the same services as non-kinship care families however they receive less training, fewer services and less support (Scannapieco, Hegar, & McAlpine, 1997). In addition, kinship families request fewer services than do non-kinship foster homes. There is a need to establish a commitment to kinship care parents for support, training, and guidance in order to achieve the well-being of children.

Consistent feedback from community consultations identified the need to keep children in their home communities as opposed to placement in non-kinship foster care in other communities, and with non-Aboriginal caregivers. The development of a kinship care strategy is needed in order to support maintaining children at risk in their home communities with ongoing contact with their family members.

Aboriginal Self Governance in Child Welfare

Due to the historical legacy of the Canadian government's involvement in the lives of aboriginal people, First Nations' communities have a valid concern about the impact of policies adopted by Canadian governments on their families, communities, values and customs, first through the residential school system and later in the child welfare system (Sinclair, Bala, Lilles, & Blackstock, 2004). Over

recent years, there has been an increase in the development of delegated or mandated First Nations child welfare services in many jurisdictions across Canada. Aboriginal child welfare in Canada continues to be delivered through complicated jurisdictional arrangements that have challenged the goal of providing culturally appropriate child welfare services for First Nations children, families, and communities (Bennett, Blackstock, & De La Ronde, 2005) .

Based upon a review of existing and developing delegated First Nations child welfare services in Canada, there is wisdom in initiating the development of increased self determination of First Nations peoples in the provision of child welfare services in Northwest Territories. While there has been limited outcome evaluation to determine the long term impact of these initiatives ground breaking work was done with the Wen:de report produced by the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society (Blackstock, Loxlely, Prakash, & Wein, 2005). There have been a number of very successful and award winning initiatives in Canada by First Nations leaders including the West Region Child and Family Services in Manitoba, the Mi'kmaq Family and Children's Services in Nova Scotia, and the Yellowhead Tribal Services Agency n Alberta.

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