

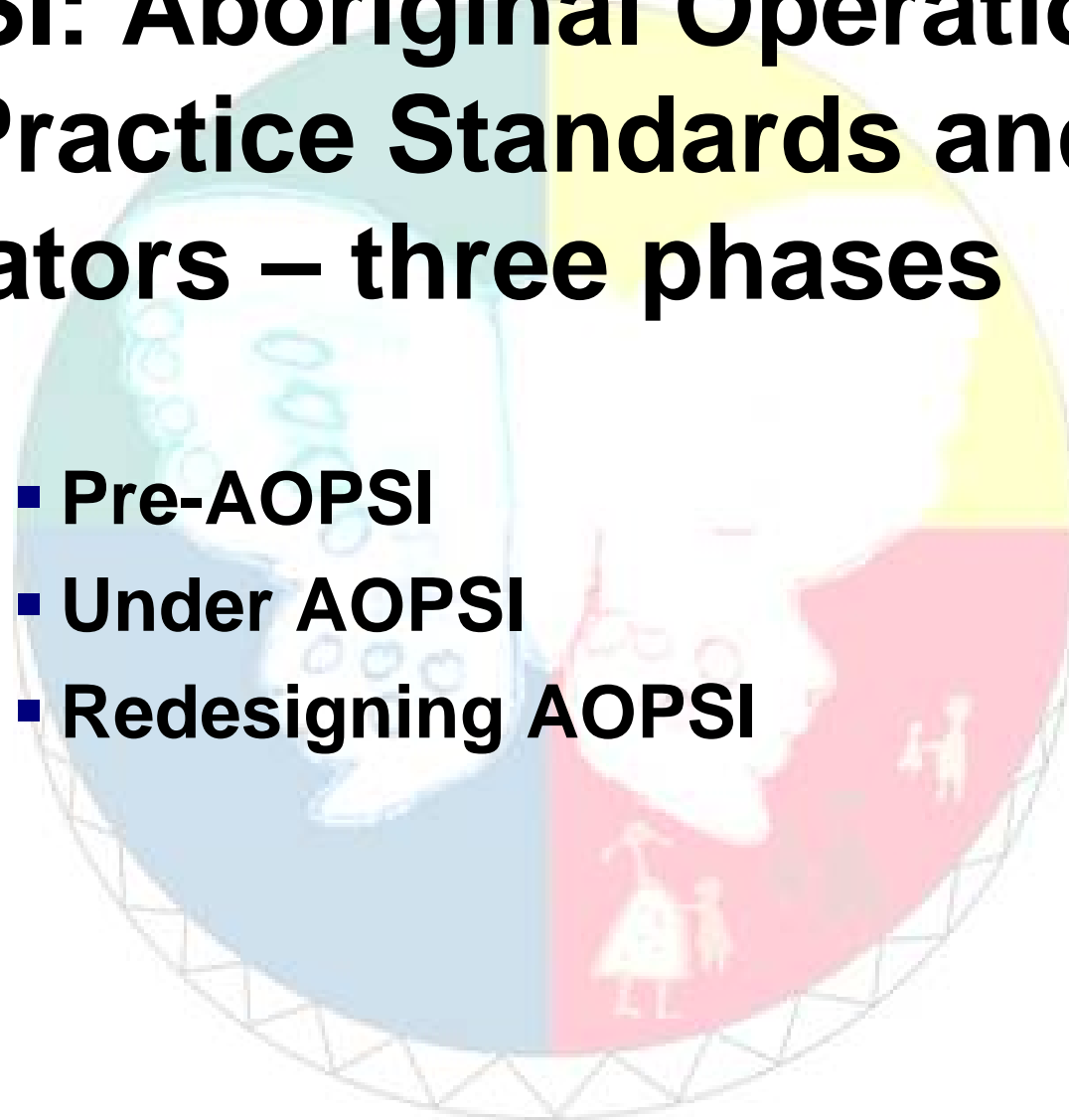


# **Starting From a Traditional Place: The AOPSI Practice Standards Redesign**

**Caring for First Nations Children Society  
Nota Bene Consulting Group**

# **AOPSI: Aboriginal Operational and Practice Standards and Indicators – three phases**

- **Pre-AOPSI**
- **Under AOPSI**
- **Redesigning AOPSI**



# Pre-AOPSI:

- No provincially delegated agencies
- Usma Nuu-Chah-Nulth Community and Human Standards – 1986
- Five provincially delegated agencies – Mid 1990s
- Audit and Review Group – 1996
- The purpose and approach



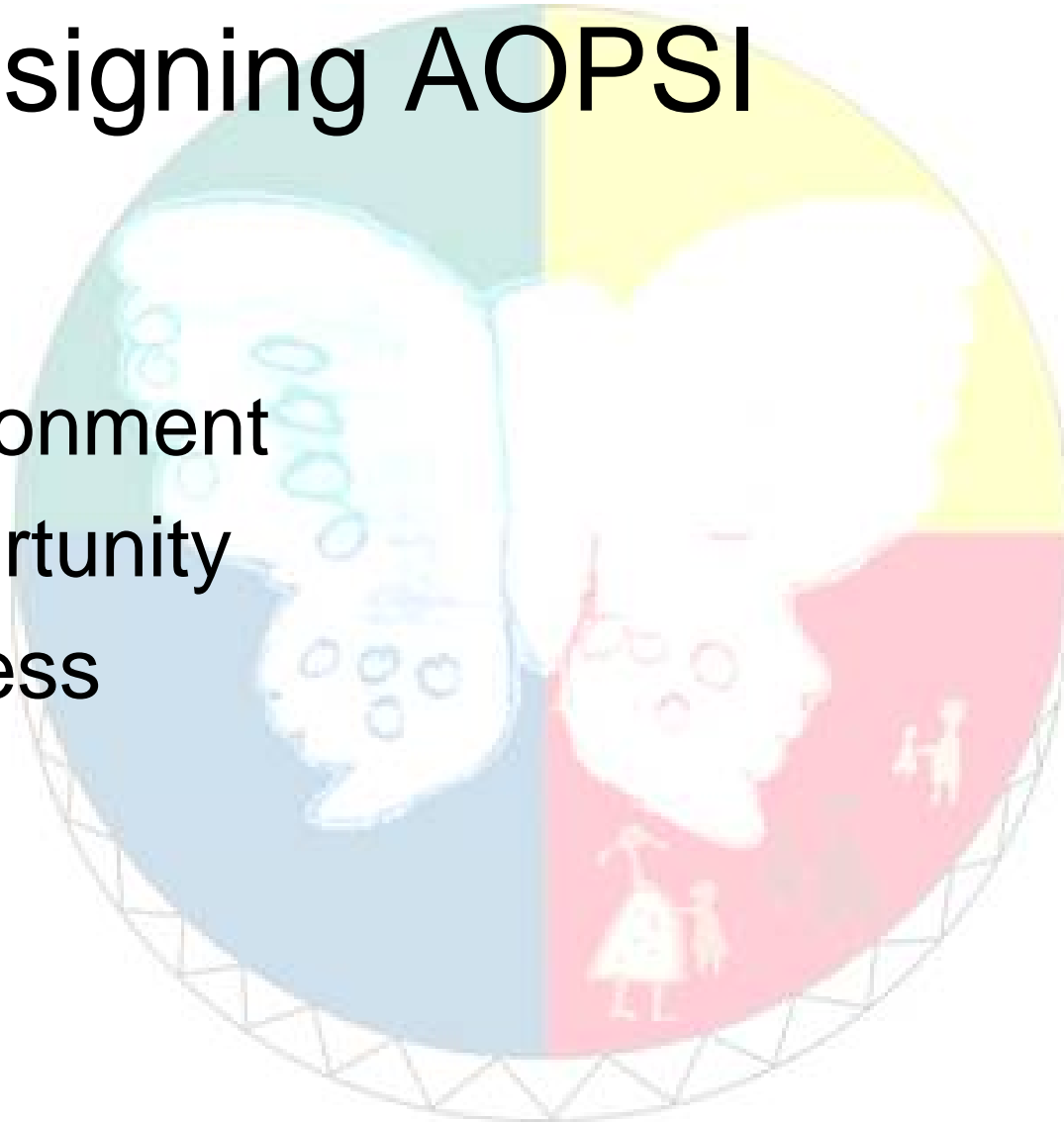
# Under AOPSI:

- Canadian first
- First Nations culture and traditions
- Meet and exceed legislative requirements



# Redesigning AOPSI

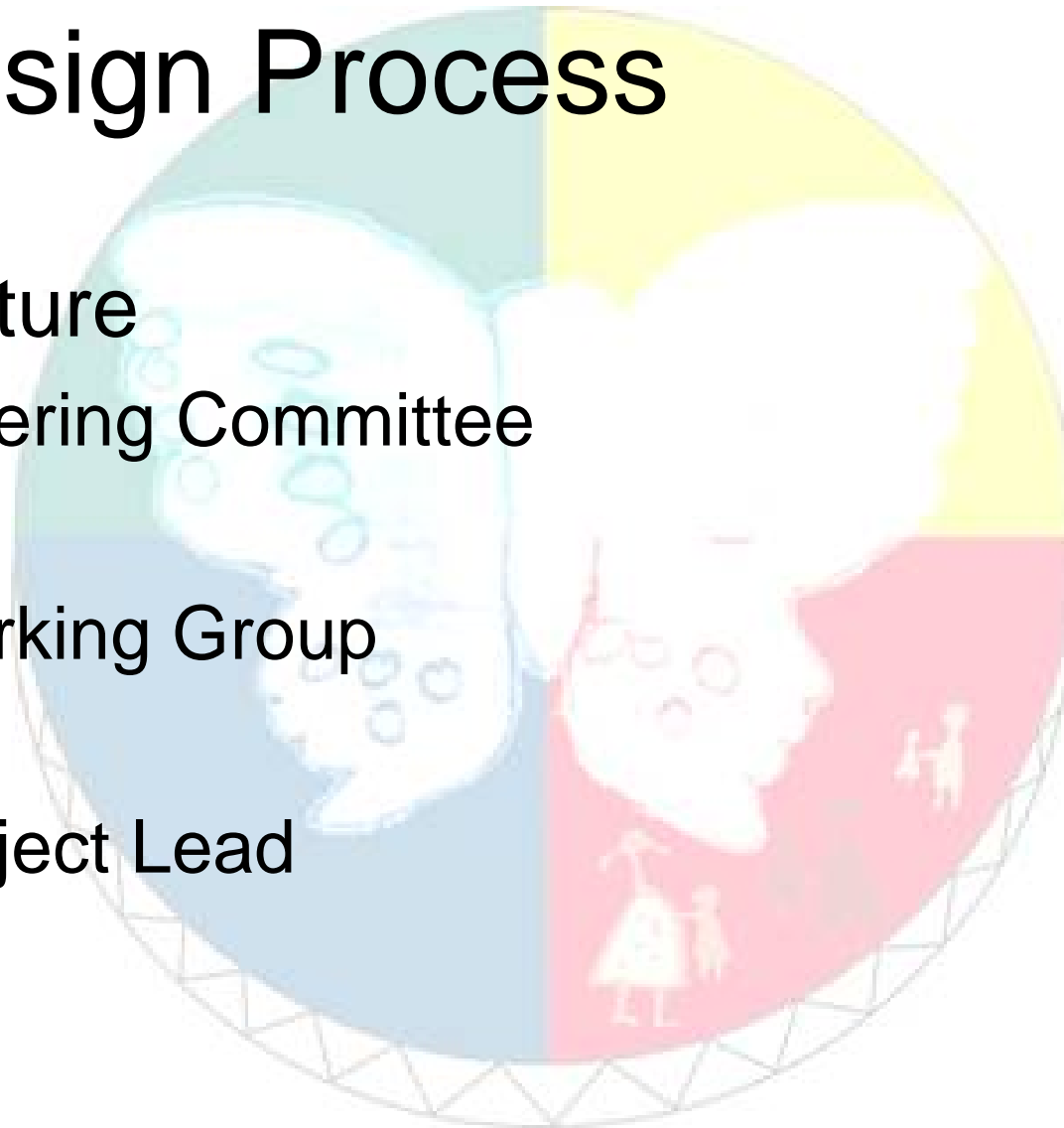
- Issue
- Environment
- Opportunity
- Process



# Redesign Process

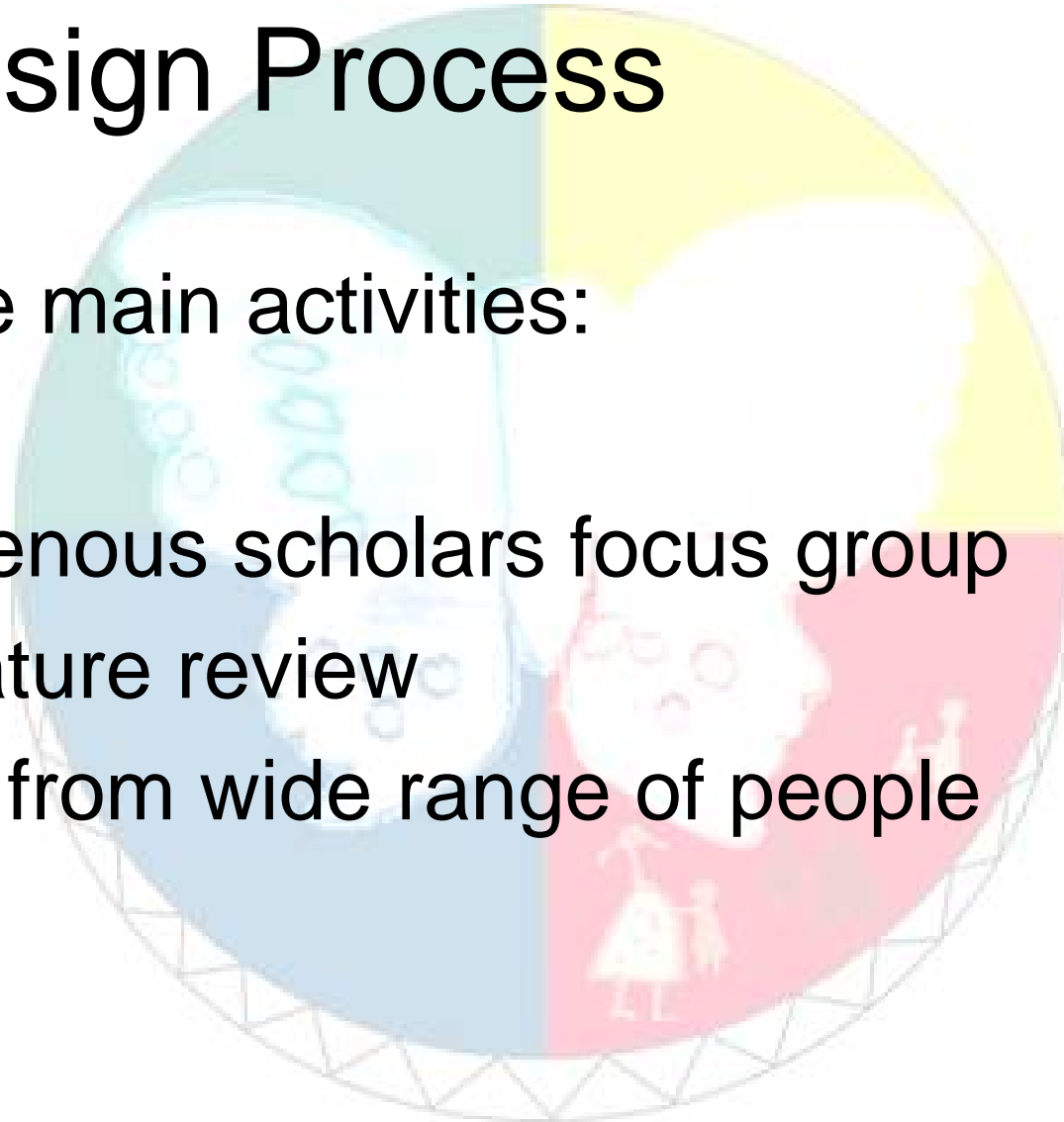
## ■ Structure

- Steering Committee
- Working Group
- Project Lead



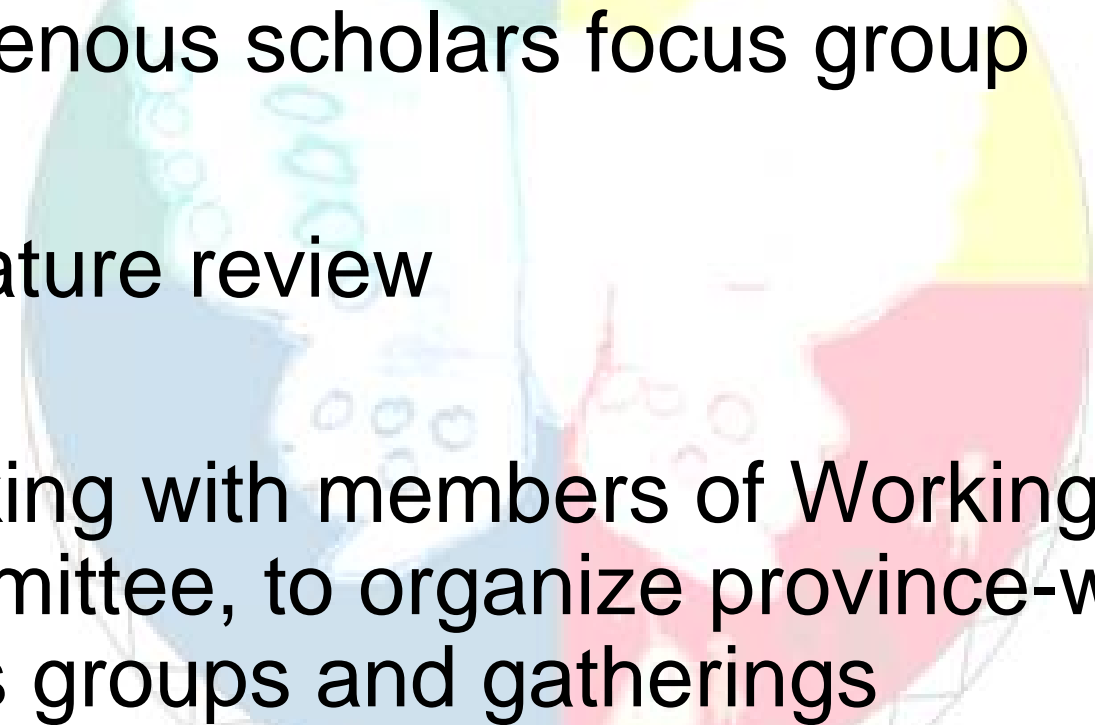
# Redesign Process

- Three main activities:
  - Indigenous scholars focus group
  - Literature review
  - Input from wide range of people



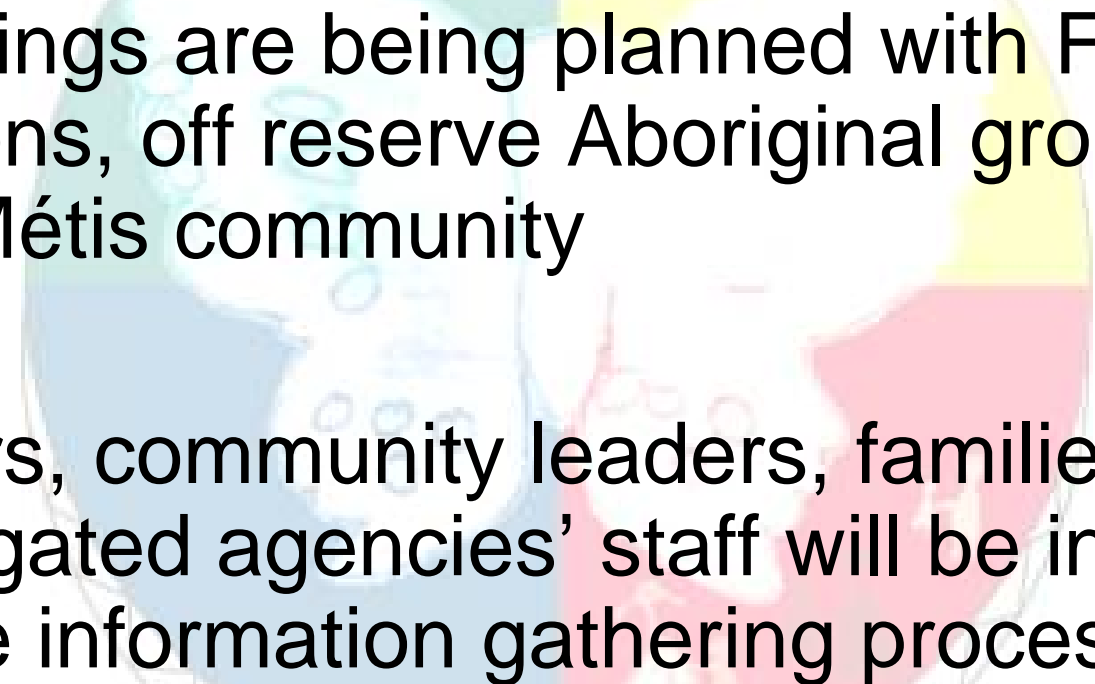


# Activities to date

- 
- Indigenous scholars focus group
  - Literature review
  - Working with members of Working Committee, to organize province-wide focus groups and gatherings



# Activities to date cont'd

- 
- Meetings are being planned with First Nations, off reserve Aboriginal groups and the Métis community
  - Elders, community leaders, families, youth Delegated agencies' staff will be included in the information gathering process



# Challenges to Information Gathering



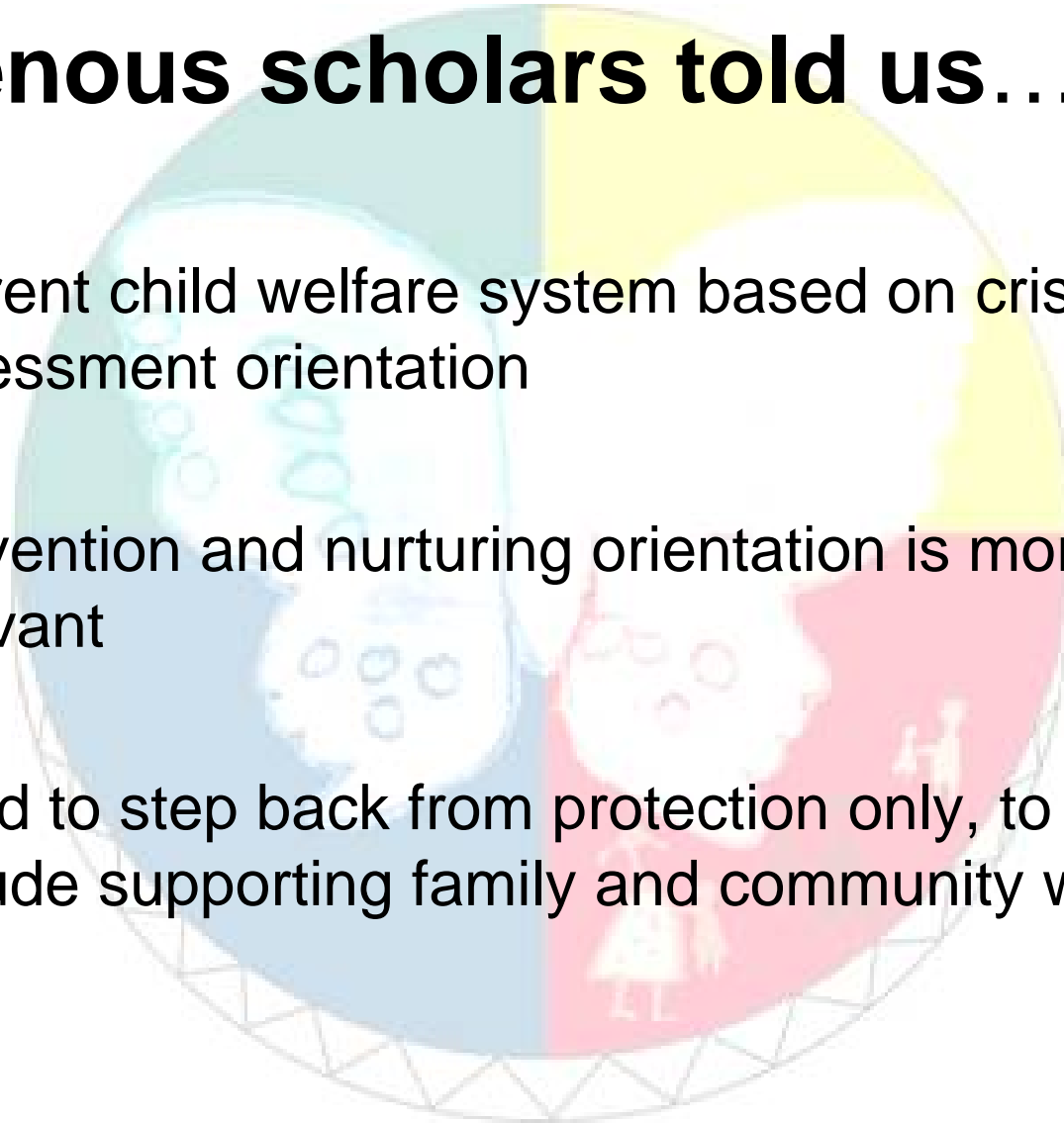
- Huge geographical area with many remote communities
- Ensuring respectful process
  - Local protocols
  - Allowing adequate time
  - Providing food
  - Using existing information from previous information gathering sessions

# Indigenous scholars told us....

- The legacy of colonization and residential schools does not have a quick fix.
- Current standards are always about protection, but they need to be about prevention because 90% of children in care are there because of neglect not abuse.

# Indigenous scholars told us....cont'd

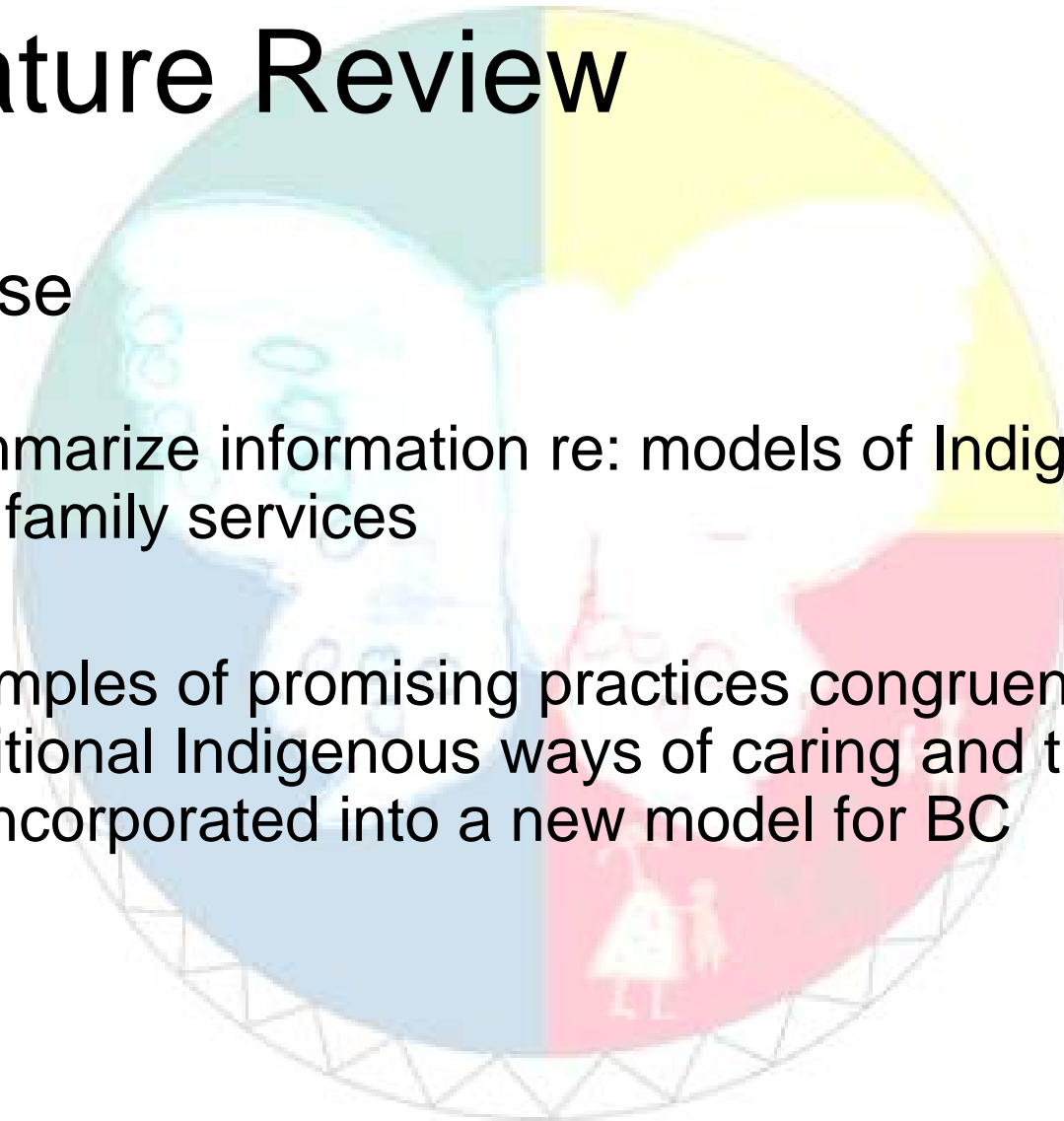
- Current child welfare system based on crisis and risk assessment orientation
- Prevention and nurturing orientation is more culturally relevant
- Need to step back from protection only, to also include supporting family and community wellness



# Literature Review

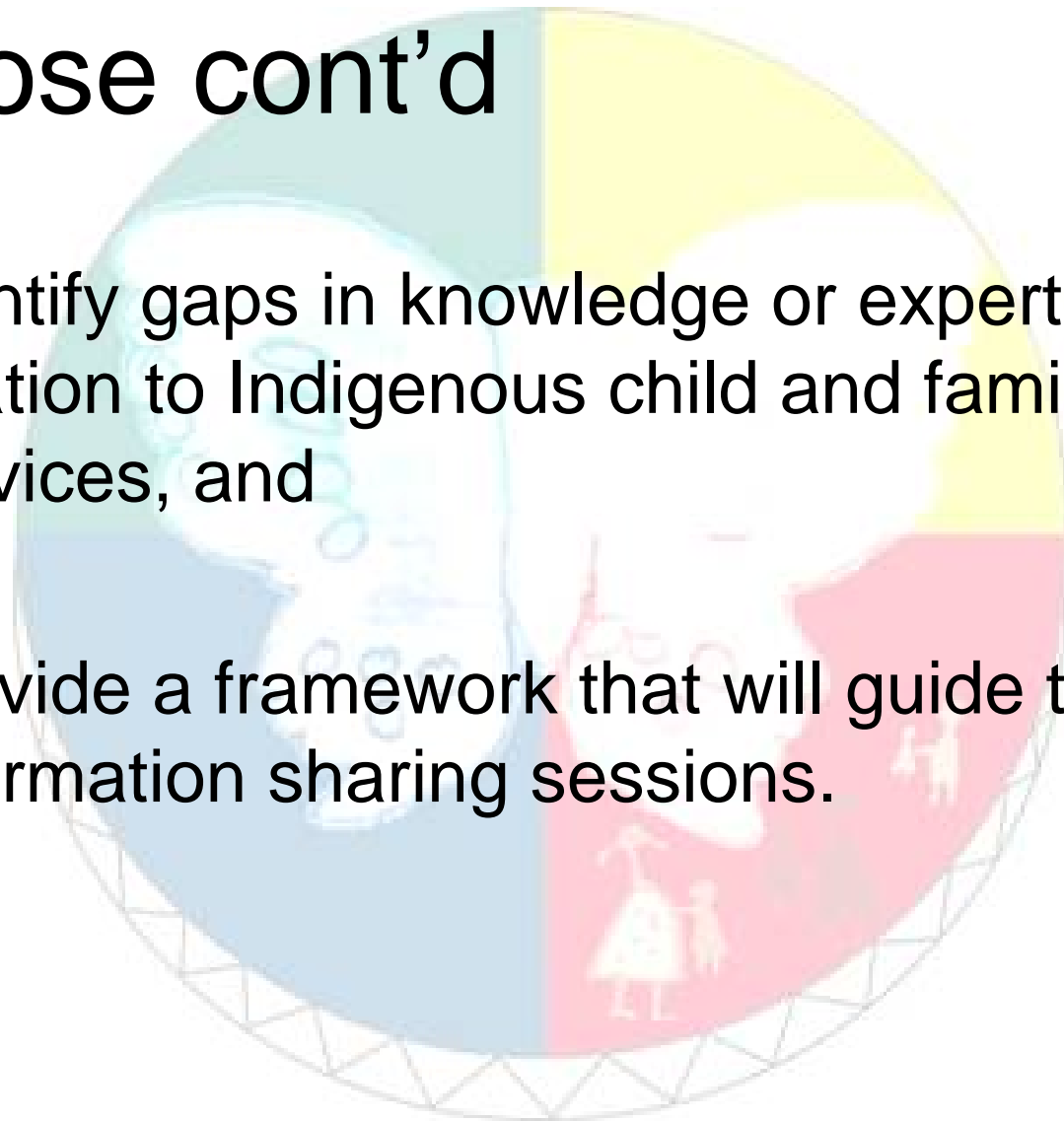
## ■ Purpose

- Summarize information re: models of Indigenous child and family services
- Examples of promising practices congruent with traditional Indigenous ways of caring and that could be incorporated into a new model for BC



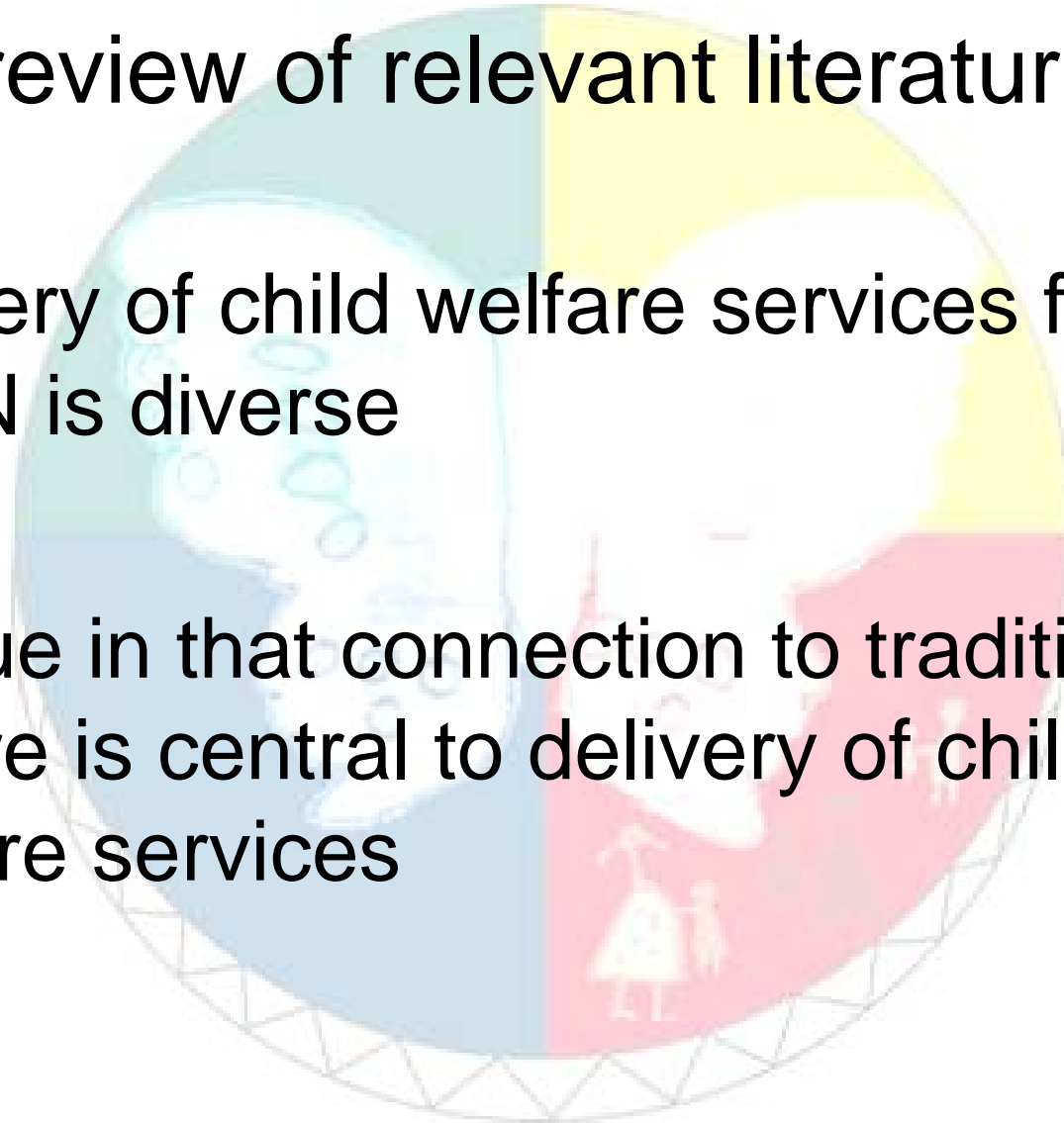
# Purpose cont'd

- Identify gaps in knowledge or expertise in relation to Indigenous child and family services, and
- Provide a framework that will guide the information sharing sessions.



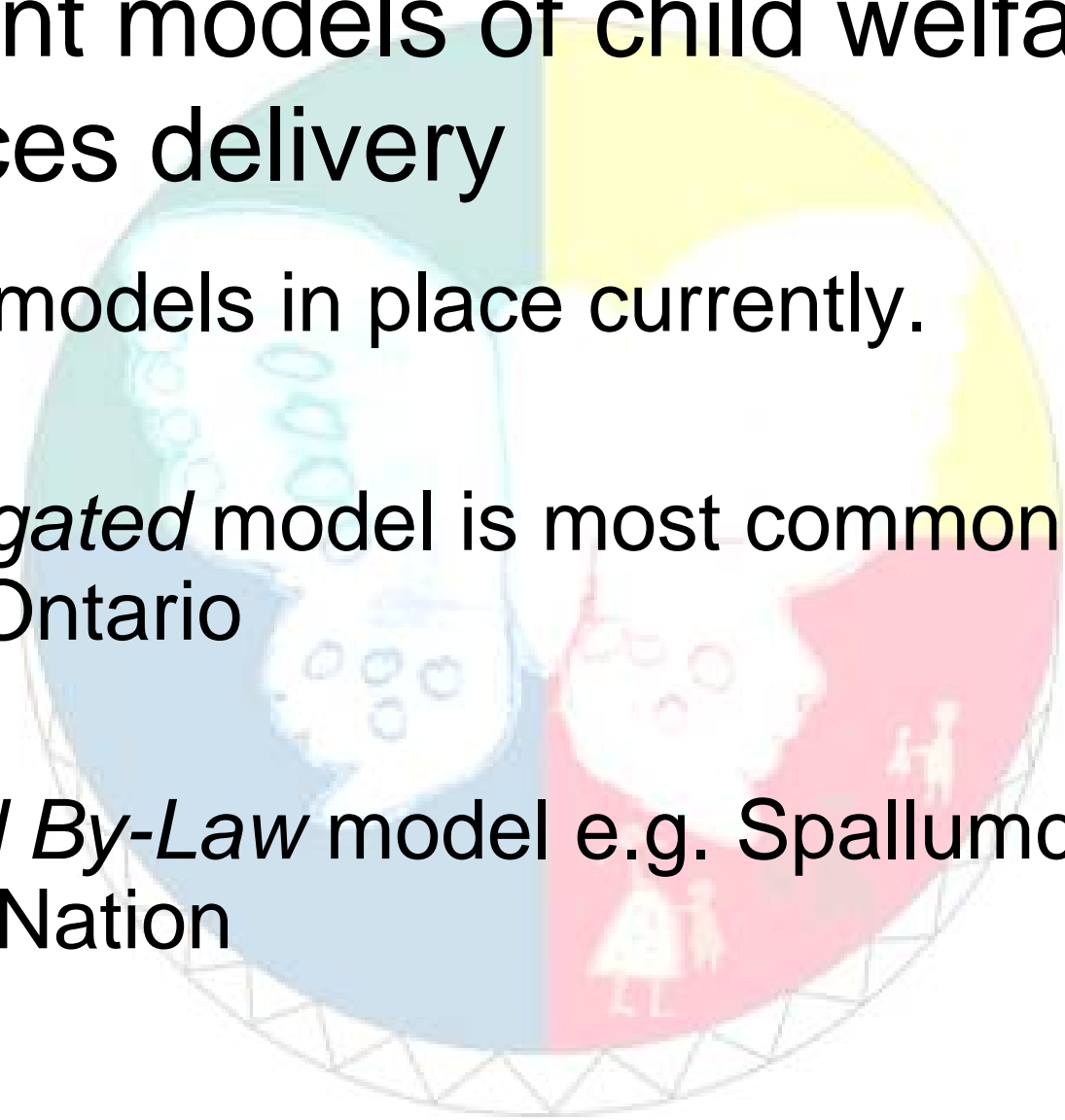
# From review of relevant literature.....

- Delivery of child welfare services for and by FN is diverse
- Unique in that connection to traditional culture is central to delivery of child welfare services



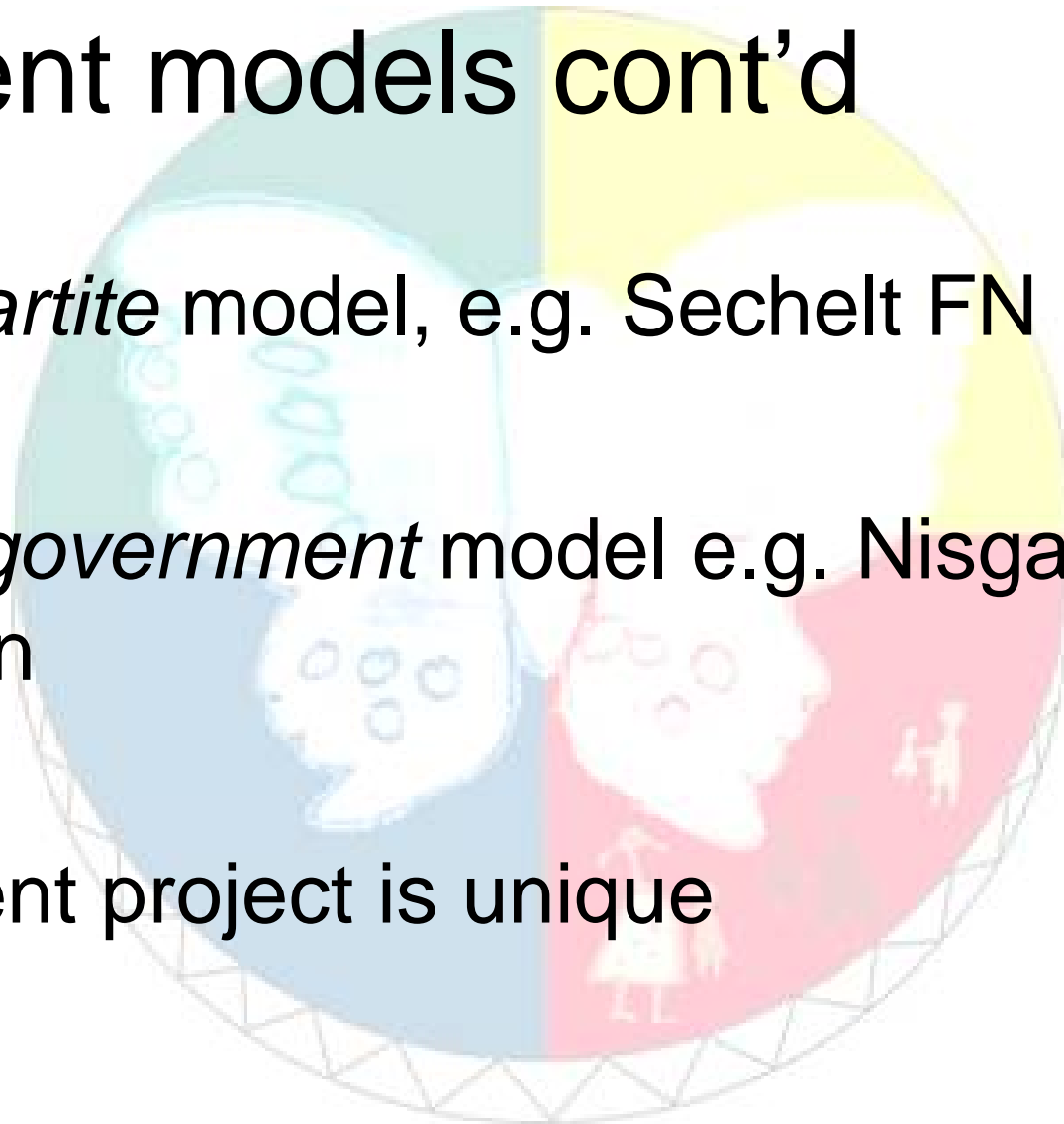
# Current models of child welfare services delivery

- Five models in place currently.
- *Delegated* model is most common e.g. BC, Ontario
- *Band By-Law* model e.g. Spallumcheen First Nation



# Current models cont'd

- *Tri-partite* model, e.g. Sechelt FN
- *Self-government* model e.g. Nisga'a, Yukon
- Current project is unique



# Examples

- Ontario – Tikinagan, Kunuwanimano
- Alberta First Nations Practice Standards and Yellowhead Tribal Authority
- Carcross-Tagish First Nation



# Examples con't

- In BC, several First Nations working to develop programs and services that reflect their traditional beliefs and cultural practices, e.g. Chahalis, Haida



# Core practices

- Community control
- Community based decision-making
- Continuum of options based on traditional practices
  - Protect child within the home
  - Customary care with extended family
  - Voluntary or non voluntary customary care
  - Custom Adoption
- Alternate dispute resolution process

# Challenges

- Practices must meet or exceed the requirements of Provincial legislation
- Developing practice standards that allow for diversity amongst First Nations' and Aboriginal communities' traditions and cultures – avoiding “pan Indianism”

# Challenges cont'd

- Shifting from a future oriented “risk reduction” model to one that supports family and community healing
- Understanding the implicit values and beliefs in existing standards to help tease out what they would/could look like from an Indigenous perspective e.g., investigations

# Challenges con't

- How can new standards take into account Aboriginal Social Workers' deep connections to their communities and their "insider knowledge"?
- Helping others outside First Nations accept decisions based on different paradigm