

Métis Consultation Group
Aboriginal Practice Standards Redesign
Metis Family Services
February 8, 2010

Prepared by: Ron Shortt, Métis Family Services (La Societe de les Enfants Michif)

In response to the initiative to redesign Child Welfare Practice Standards for work with Aboriginal communities, families and children, La Societe de les Enfants Michif and its operating arm, Métis Family Services felt it was vital that the work be informed by specific input reflecting the unique circumstances and needs of Métis people.

In recognition of this need an initial consultation group was convened by Métis Family Services on February 8, 2010 at the MFS office in Surrey, BC.

Participant in the consultation group was designed to reflect and include a diversity of community voices together with experienced practitioners in child welfare services to Métis by Métis.

Those participants are included in the attached list of attendees.

The consultation took the form of a round table discussion with a major focus on the identification of Principals, Values and Traditional Ways of Caring that could be defined to inform the crafting of Practice Standards to inform, shape, and guide the standards applicable to Métis people.

The discussions and input by the participants was wide ranging with an attempt to focus and categorize input and discussions into the themes identified above.

Principals	Values	Traditional Ways of Caring
Honouring the voice and identity of the child	Respect for the family	Community Care/Caring Community
Kinship Ties	Sharing the concept of community care and engaging the wisdom inherent in the community and held by the elders	Connectedness to the family
Working with the community on child welfare issues	Service in the spirit of generosity, to serve the ends of independence and self reliance	Connectedness to the family
Self Reliance	Engage the diversity and inclusiveness of the community and communication process	Learning to work together
Inclusive of our lost people regardless of genealogy		
Devictimization -personal -cultural		Traditional decision making was inclusive and consensus building
Principles from "Circle of Courage" -belonging -independence -mastery -generosity		
	Inclusive of cultural safety post adoption	
	Honour the voice of the child	
	Plan of care based on: -kinship principal -cultural planning -inclusive of the community and family	

Discussion

Together with the development of the thematic matrix the discussion raised several key issues related to the translation of those inclusions into Standards:

1. Community Care/Caring Community: this is a fundamental component of Métis traditions. The challenge will be to develop practice and standards which are inclusive of this component while maximizing the safety of children at risk and/or in care.
2. With the diversity and often “diaspora-like” circumstances of Métis people a further challenge will be to fashion practice and standards flexible enough to encompass children and families within the diversity of circumstances of the people.
3. Devictimization: there is strong element of victimization evident in Métis families and children at risk and/or in care. This dynamic is evident in at least three separate but related manifestations:
 - a) Cultural: this is a manifestation of racist attitudes toward and marginalization of Métis people.
 - b) Personal: resulting from cultural victimization, at the personal sense of “not belonging” to a strong and supportive reference group/community.
 - c) Systemic: the child welfare system is seen as both intrusive and disruptive without consistent identity building/strengthening components. These dynamics are not recognized in present practice/standards and their alleviation will be a key component of future practice.

The consultation participants strongly urged that practices and standards include specific provision and resources to address and reduce the profound alienation inherent in the above, which is a barrier to more positive outcome to child welfare interventions for Métis people.
 - d) Post Adoption Cultural Safety: present practice does not include cultural safety planning in the post adoptive periods. The inclusion of monitorable planning will enhance cultural reconnection, self-image/reliance and strongly contribute to more positive outcomes to child welfare interventions.
 - e) Pre-intervention: present practice standards focus on service to children and families following intervention. Equal attention needs to be given to pre-intervention, or pre-apprehension, supports where possible. The honouring of the community strengths should be a basis for these developments.

f) Given the unique circumstances of Métis people, it was considered preferable for Métis specific Practice Standards be developed, following from the never completed/adopted Métis Operational and Practice Standards of the 1990's.

g) One barrier to improved outcomes inherent in existing standards is an emphasis on a legalistic as opposed to a humanistic basis for front line practice.

Other Guidance References and Best Practices

1. Interior Métis Child and Family Services
-checklist for Independence Readiness
2. Métis Community Services Society
-Métis specific Roots manual
3. Island Métis Family Child and Services
-Cultural safety practices

Some Salient Points from the February 8th Consultation

Traditional Ways of Caring:

- Community Care/Caring Community
- What would this look like as a practical standard?
- How would the concept be applied in a way that maximizes child safety?

Values:

-Wisdom of the elders:

- How would a standard be crafted to capture this value in front line practice?
- What would be the minimum standard considering a) non-cohesive Métis community (e.g. urban) and, b) capturing the concept without compromising confidentiality

Principals:

Devictimization: Personal
Cultural

- How would this be reflected in a practice standard specifically crafted to inform day to day practice in Guardianship?; in Child Protection?