

**Starting from a Traditional Place:
Redesigning Child and Family Service Standards
Synopsis of the Thematic analysis of the
Round Table discussions held Wednesday November 18, 2009**

Question 1. How are children taken care of in your community? (Probe: Role of families? Of clans/ houses? Of communities?)

Theme: Role of families – Extended family as the norm for caring for children

Related sub-themes

- All family members have a role in caring for children
- Children are central, valued

Theme: Importance of ceremonies

Related sub-themes

- Ceremonies for people of all ages

Theme: Importance of traditional protocols and transmitting knowledge about protocols & ceremonies

Theme: Reclaiming traditional ways via reframing/renaming using traditional language – Importance of language in shaping practice and policies relating to caring for children

Theme: (Integrated) service provision, with cultural component, within the community

Related sub-themes

- Schools having language and cultural programming
- Wrap around approach for families and children at the centre

Question 2. What makes you most proud about the way your community and its families look after their children?

Theme: Ceremonies & culture

Related sub-themes:

- Ceremony with the purpose of instilling sense of belonging
- Having a place in the community where ceremonies can happen and people can come together
- Traditional programs offered in the community
- Grandparents/Elders teaching traditional practices
- Children knowing their identity
- Children and youth being celebrated in the community

Theme: Families are caring for children, so we're able to prevent children going into care

Theme: Strength of our children; children and youth are expressing their voice

Question 3. What are some of the traditional values (*and practices*) in your community that guide how children should be taken care of?

Theme: Importance of ceremony and transmitting knowledge about ceremony

Related sub-themes

- **Sharing food as part of ceremony**
- **Ceremony as a way of linking Elders and younger generations**
- **Baby ceremony**
- **Puberty rites**
- **Burning ceremony**
- **Talking circle**

Theme: Importance of cultural identity

Related sub-themes

- **Having respect for traditional knowledge and traditional protocols**
- **Language teachers at the schools**
- **Drumming, singing, dancing, language**
- **Cultural camps**
- **Canoe**

Theme: Importance of relationship; connections; belonging

Related sub-themes

- **Trust as the basis for relationships**
- **Life-long connections**
- **Ensuring that everyone has (at least) one caring, trusting relationship**
- **Importance of expressing affection within families**
- **Children belong to their community**

Theme: Children are: sacred; a gift; a blessing; to be valued; our future

Related sub-themes

- **Children are the community's wealth**
- **Children need to be protected and nurtured; children's safety is essential**
- **Importance of keeping children and youth away from drugs and alcohol**
- **Importance of attending to children's (and adults') needs holistically, as reflected by the Medicine Wheel**

Theme: (Extended) family has a primary/essential role in caring for its children

Theme: Importance of respect

Related sub-themes

- **Respect for the earth and for all creatures**
- **Tolerance and acceptance**

Question 4. What should happen if parents are having difficulties looking after their children? Who needs to be involved?

Theme: Family conferences / family circles

Related sub-themes:

- In matriarchal communities, take direction from the matriarch(s)

Theme: Seek solutions within the community

Related sub-themes:

- Elder Committees
- Involve traditional programs and/or family support programs

Question 5. What should happen if immediate family members (aunts, uncles, grandparents) are unable to help out?

Theme: Seek solutions within the community and/or within the Band

Related sub-themes:

- Involve community-based traditional support programs
- Community development approach is essential to address current experiences and impacts of residential school

Theme: Elder committees and Community care committees

Theme: Have social workers located within the community, and trained in Aboriginal culture and history

Related sub-themes:

- Social workers to stay in the same community for several years, for continuity

Theme: Involve Family Group Conference and Wrap-around approaches

Theme: Experiential training about culture for foster parents

Question 6. Are there any current practices of those providing services to children/youth and families that you particularly support?

Theme: Practices that support traditional practice and beliefs

Related sub-themes

- Children cannot be separated from their connection to family, community, and culture
- Ceremonies help to instill cultural values and pass on knowledge
- (Re)connection to culture and community development need to take place together, since they are inseparable
- Focus on connecting children and youth to the traditions of their particular nation/community

Theme: Elders have a central role to play in family and community

Related sub-themes

- Elders are a meaningful part of the child welfare process

Theme: Recognizing and promoting strength-based practice to create a positive identity and sense of community

Related sub-themes

- Engage families and help build skills through prevention and focusing on strengths
- Building community capacity

Theme: Wrap-around/Integrated case management/Family Group Conferences/Circles - approaches that are holistic and wherein families can direct the process

Theme: Developing respectful relations amongst community members, families and community service providers

Related sub-themes

- Relationships are key, so practice needs to emphasize getting to know families and community
- Social Workers need to have a community orientation and be culturally aware in order to develop respectful relationships with families

Theme: Communications skills are basis for developing respectful relationships

Related sub-themes

- Listening and paying attention to verbal and non verbal communication

Theme: Need to go through process of de-colonizing and gaining belief in own ways and people again

Related sub-themes

- Building trust in locally delivered service

Question 7. What current practices would you like to see changed?

Theme: Want to see shift from problem-focused to prevention / realistic planning, based on strengths

Theme: Want to see smaller caseloads

Theme: Want to see change in legislation

Theme: Want to see change in documentation / reporting systems

Theme: Want to see risk assessments being culturally appropriate

Theme: Want to see family foster homes

Theme: Want to see changes in adoption legislation

Theme: Want to see changes in insufficient funding for extended family care givers

Theme: The language surrounding the term “standards” is problematic

Question 8. Other comments, issues and challenges

Theme: Need for funding for traditional programming

Theme: Need for wellness/health centres in Aboriginal communities