

**Williams Lake  
May 13, 2010**

**Re: How were children traditionally taken care of?**

- *Children are central, valued*
- *We need to model for others pride in ourselves, our culture*
- *Men were strong role models and decision-makers for families*
- *Aunties/uncles/other family members watched out for us*
- *Grandparents had specific role to 'instruct' the children and teach them about responsibility, traditions, culture....*
- *Responsibility for raising children may be shared but that does not absolve parents of responsibility for their children*
- *Youth are looking for direction, role models, connection to traditions*

**Re: Traditionally, knowledge and traditions are passed down through multiple means**

- *Stories and story telling were ways of teaching the children*
- *Multi-generation gatherings were a place for children to learn from elders and for elders to share stories, pass on their knowledge*
- *Teaching our cultural traditions helps connect us*
- *Importance of language to convey values and beliefs*
- *Need to ensure children not currently living in the community or with their families attend gatherings or other cultural events so that they learn about their culture*

**Re: Traditionally our own laws were well defined and guided us**

- *Practice needs to be based in our own laws and own jurisdiction*
- *Specific rules guided how children were taken in, parented, or given over to be raised by others*
- *There were defined reasons for taking over someone else's child*

- *Adoption is not culturally appropriate*
- *Customary adoption is part of tradition; way of keeping children in the community and/or keeping communities connected*

**Re: Our culture, traditions, ways of being, have been disrupted by outside influences**

- *Residential schools have had negative effect on communities*
- *Influence of TV culture gets in way of children wanting to learn their own culture*
- *Money, addictions, abuse issues, are changing relationships/values*

**Re: Practice Related Themes/Issues**

- *Decision making about the removal of children.*
- *Need to reduce reliance on 'government' taking charge; take back decision making responsibility and situate it in the community and in families*
- *Pressure to find quick solutions leads to focus on removal of children; have lost perspective on range of protective factors*
- *Reluctance by family members to get involved*
- *Practice guidelines and standards for social work with families need to be culturally respectful, appropriate, relevant*
- *Communities need to be involved in making decisions about placement of children; standards need to reflect community/traditions*
- *Get to know the family and the community*
- *Make services fit the family, not the other way round*
- *Inequity in availability of services*