A Study on the Housing and Supports Need of Aboriginal Fathers in Edmonton Involved with Child Welfare and Justice Systems

FINAL Report

A Research Project by:

Creating Hope Society

Acknowledgements

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Context

As an exploratory research piece utilizing an Aboriginal framework, we proposed to conduct research on Edmonton's Aboriginal fathers, and grandfathers involved in child welfare, criminal justice and corrections systems. More specifically, we sought to determine, and identify the housing and supports required to establish safe, stable, and long term housing for the return and retention of their children and grandchildren.

Using an appreciative inquiry approach, the goal of the proposed project was to identify the housing and supports needs for Aboriginal fathers and grandfathers who have the desire to responsibly parent their children and grandchildren, and to utilize the research findings to inform program development for this target group.

Through Creating Hope Society's Aboriginal Mothers Advocacy Program (AMAP), workers have encountered Aboriginal fathers, and grandfathers who wish to be reunified with their children/grandchildren, but who lack proper housing and the myriad of supports needed for their care and control. Every one of the 29 Aboriginal fathers involved with our program is currently homeless or in danger of homelessness, reminding us of the need for the proposed research.

Research on Aboriginal fathers, and more specifically those involved with child welfare intervention, is sparse, although the topic has recently gained some national attention. In January 2012, CBC aired an hour-long documentary entitled "Blind Spot – What happened to Canada's Aboriginal Fathers?" drawing on the findings of the first national study of Aboriginal fatherhood, led by Dr. Jessica Ball and Aboriginal advisory Ron George. The various publications generated from this study strongly support the need for further research into the perspectives and needs of Aboriginal fathers. Many Aboriginal fathers face daily challenges that constrain and inhibit their involvement with their children, and have limited access to programs or services to support them in achieving greater involvement (Ball, 2010). In a key publication on Aboriginal fathers' perceptions of policies and practices that shape their involvement with their children, Ball and George highlight "an urgent need to understand and support Aboriginal fathers" (Ball & George 2006, p. 125). The Aboriginal Fathers study involved exclusively participants from British Columbia and Ball notes the importance of avoiding "an over-generalized, 'pan-Aboriginal' interpretation of Aboriginal fathers' experiences" and calls for future research to explore patterns of fathers' involvement in local settings with their own varied historical and current circumstances (Ball 2010, p.135).

Research on Aboriginal fathers remains very limited, and a preliminary search did not reveal any research specifically addressing homelessness and housing crisis among Aboriginal fathers, its impact of their capacity and involvement as parents. The existing research on Aboriginal fatherhood points to the importance of further studies contextualized within local realities. We hope that this exploration of the housing and support needs of homeless Aboriginal fathers will provide much-needed evidence to inform program and policy development.

Quick Stats

- In 2006, Edmonton's CMA Aboriginal Population: 52,105
- 10% of Aboriginal families are lone-parented, 85% of these are headed by women
- 27% of Aboriginal families in Edmonton have children under the age of 15 years

Source: Aboriginal Edmonton A Statistical Story – 2009

- 85% of FFE* Aboriginal households are in core housing need
- 21% of FFE* Aboriginal families live in homes that require major repairs
- 33% of FFE* Aboriginal families live in crowded housing conditions
- 64% of FFE* Aboriginal families live in unaffordable housing
- 67% of FFE* Aboriginal families who can afford their homes receive a housing subsidy
    i. *Families First Edmonton

Source: Social Determinants of Health for the Aboriginal families – Families First Edmonton   Report June 2012

"I like the services here, because it helped me feel better as a person, and as a father."
- *Aboriginal father, 23 years old.*

In partnership with the University of Calgary and a research advisory team, the Creating Hope Society conducted a research project to generate evidence that would enhance our understanding of the experiences of homeless Aboriginal fathers and grandfathers with child welfare and justice systems to inform the development of more sensitive and effective interventions.

The objectives of the project were to:

1. Enhance understanding of the housing needs and experiences of homeless fathers and grandfathers who have been involved with child welfare and justice systems;
2. Identify the housing and supports needs of Aboriginal fathers and grandfathers with child welfare and justice interventions that will prevent them from being homeless; and,
3. Conduct the research required for the development of culturally appropriate housing and supports for Aboriginal fathers in Edmonton.

The proposed project was to:

1. Demonstrate the lack of housing and supports for the target population of Aboriginal fathers;
2. Positively influence policy and practice relating to Aboriginal housing and supports needs within the city of Edmonton;
3. Positively influence child welfare/justice systems workers' attitudes towards Aboriginal father involvement; and,
4. Add to the research on this under-resourced and overlooked population of Aboriginal fathers.

Approach

We used an appreciative inquiry approach for this study. Appreciative inquiry is a strength-based participatory process, through which participants are encouraged to celebrate and build upon their collective competence, resiliency and successes in pursuit of dreams for the future (Lafrance & Bastien, 2007). Appreciative inquiry makes use of storytelling as a key method of data collection. In line with Aboriginal oral tradition, this approach creates space to give voice to previously silenced Aboriginal perspectives (Lafrance & Bastien, 2007).

For this study, focus groups were the primary vehicle for a for data collection. Grounded in appreciative inquiry methodology, the focus groups discussions were facilitated to be strength based and call for the creation of new possibilities and alternatives based upon the life experiences of the participants. Hopefully, these discussions will inspire a broader vision on the part of program planners and service providers. The focus group questions were open-ended and encouraged the creative and imaginative forces of the participants. For example, questions asked participants to articulate their dreams for an ideal reality, and then reflect on existing barriers or obstacles to achieving this dream, and how those might be addressed to enable participants to move towards their desired reality. Through this approach, the research team gained insights into housing-related challenges facing Aboriginal fathers and grandfathers trying to maintaining children within the home, as well as the supports and services required to help them maintain safe, stable housing for themselves and their children.

Participants were recruited initially from fathers who were being served by Creating Hope Society presently and in our planned fathers program. We then invited others who have similar issues by using a snowball recruitment process. Creating Hope Society and University of Calgary, Faculty of Social Work developed an invitation letter to the Edmonton community agencies and organizations to advertise the Homelessness and Aboriginal Fathers community-based research project to their clientele. The team members shared the responsibility for liaising with other service providers and following up with potentially eligible clients who are interested in participating to the focus groups. Focus group participants will receive $25.00 Wal-Mart gift certificate to compensate for the time and energy they invest to share their stories.

We conducted five focus groups with an average of eight Aboriginal fathers per group. Three groups were from Edmonton and two from nearby reserves. One focus group was held recently with service providers/program planners. In addition, we conducted six individual interviews. These discussions form the foundation for a final session that would be conducted in a setting that asks the fathers and the officials to share their views in a candid and constructive fashion on March 25, 2014 in a sharing circle. The questions will be determined by the project team, based upon the key themes that emerge from the focus groups. The data analysis will consist of a review of the focus group transcripts with the aid of computer software and visual review by the research team. By involving several partners in this process of triangulation we hope to achieve a high level of validity and reliability.

The Project findings will be shared with government departments, Aboriginal agencies, and other organizations undertaking research and program development on ending homelessness. A final activity will include an Aboriginal Feast for the release of the findings report with invited stakeholders, along with research participants as part of the OCAP guidelines.

In addition, the Creating Hope Society has received funding to produce a film on Aboriginal fathers to contribute an additional deliverable related to knowledge sharing. CHS and the University of Calgary will

share responsibility to knowledge mobilization in the form of a Power Point presentation, film material, and a summary for broader consumption.

Expected Impact

This project's results are expected to impact our understanding of homelessness policy and practice by identifying specific gaps in housing issues for Aboriginal fathers involved in child welfare, and to positively influence change in *housing in relation to child welfare intervention* policy and practice.

The *Edmonton Area Community Plan on Housing and Supports: 2011-2015's* goal of increasing housing and culturally appropriate supports for Edmonton's Aboriginal population of fathers and grandfathers involved in the child welfare and justice systems would be supported by the research project.

The Plan's goal of supporting the work of Aboriginal community-led initiatives to take leadership and operational roles in the development, coordination, and delivery of housing and support services for Aboriginal fathers/grandfathers involved in child welfare and justice systems would also be supported.
And finally, this research will ultimately add to the Plan's goal of achieving awareness of Aboriginal peoples' history and culture among housing and service providers, and amongst agencies delivering child welfare and justice interventions.

Creating Hope Society has recently garnered support for a project entitled "Dads Matter Too" supported by the City of Edmonton's Family and Community Social Services (FCSS) funds, and the Federal Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS) program. Participants in programming activities through "Dads Matter Too" had the opportunity to participate in the research if they wish to share their stories, and in turn, the research findings will inform the evolution of Creating Hope Society's programming for Aboriginal fathers.

Results

We begin by highlighting the experiences of mothers who were involved with the Aboriginal Mothers Advocacy Program. In part because a significant number of fathers joined this group when they had nowhere else to turn and because the literature is clear that many of the hurdles that the mothers encountered are echoed by those of the fathers.

- Mothers stated that when their children were first apprehended, they did not know where to turn to for help and assistance. They were not sure how to obtain a lawyer or where to get Legal Aid assistance, and child welfare workers for the most part failed to provide them with the information needed to understand what to do next. They did not know what their rights were. Sometimes the homes in which Aboriginal children were placed were arguably more harmful to the children than their own homes.

- The quality of services provided by the Legal Aid lawyers who represented them in child protection matters before the courts was generally lacking; their lawyers did not defend or represent them adequately.

- Their collective perceptions center around the belief that the decisions made by judges within the court setting are racist, biased and one sided in favour of the child welfare agencies interpretation of the situation. Judgment comes not only from judges and child welfare staff but also their own lawyers.

- None of the mothers in our project were aware of the various alternative dispute resolutions (i.e. mediation or family group conferencing) that could be utilized in the child welfare context. Aboriginal mothers reported that child welfare staff and lawyers rarely offered and/or made suggestions to alleviate the tension that is inherent throughout the child welfare experience.

- Families often do not understand the reasons for apprehension and often considered the investigation inadequate and missing important information.

- Families often become frustrated with changing expectations and frequent staff changes.

- Social workers often young, making it difficult to relate to them and for them to fully understand parental concerns.

- Racism and disrespect show up in many of the stories. "The social worker I dealt with was condescending, rude, disrespectful of me in front of my children. She attacked my parenting; she attacked everything about me in front of my children."

- Families do not feel involved in the plans made for their children while in care, and worry about the placement of their children in strange homes. Lack of information about children while in care and upon their return.

- Families fear child welfare intervention and asking for help. On the one hand families feel a need for assistance, but realize that this can be used against them in court – placing them in double jeopardy.

- Overly intrusive monitoring and invasion of privacy is prevalent, leading to a forensic approach to the families rather than a rehabilitative approach.

- Family visits were seen as inconsistent, infrequent, too short, overtly monitored and held in inappropriate area such as reception halls.

- Our approach to apprehensions can sometimes increase the trauma, such as when we call the CART team with police protection that is unwarranted.

- Disrespectful practice evinced anger in the mothers. At the same time, workers seem unable to

handle the strong emotions of fear and anger that they in some ways had created. Their typical response was to refer them for "anger management.

- Emotional repercussions from losing their children: grief, loss and the guilt associated with the removal of their children. Aboriginal mothers need to have more opportunities to express and deal with the pain of losing their children through the child protection process; they also need opportunities to heal from this pain.

- Mothers experience psychological ramifications from removal as do children who are removed. In addition to the pain and loss experienced by Aboriginal mothers when their children were removed, many mothers expressed fear and concern over the impact of the removal on their children.

- The parent-child relationship is greatly harmed by an apprehension and impairs the development of deeper relationships with family. At times the damage to this relationship persisted long into the future, due to the rupture that was caused by the separation they had endured. Most often there was little recognition of these long lasting wounds and the family was left to its own devices in sorting this out, as the case was closed to child welfare support.

- Our approach to kinship care can be destructive to family, exacerbating deep intergenerational divisions.

- Families feel powerless with Child Welfare, yet when they stand up to poor practice, experience retaliation.

- Punitive attitudes on the part of many of their helpers including child welfare workers, support workers and the judicial system including the lawyers appointed to defend them. Some compared the approach to that of the Inquisition.

- All of the mothers attended numerous programs at the request of the child welfare worker. There seem to be little rhyme and reason to the types and/or number of programs that mothers are required to attend. For many of the mothers it seemed that they were over- programmed and the child welfare expectations seemed to change from month to month. It was not unusual for a parent to have completed from 10 – 16 program expectations s within a three month period. Parents referred to this experience as *Jumping through Hoops* playing the game to satisfy child welfare, whether that meant taking more programming or just, it seemed, to satisfy the whim of social workers to prove they were doing what needed to be done to get their children returned or to ensure visits with children currently in care.

- An overarching theme was a longing for ways of helping that were more attuned to their origins.

The following were recommended to address the issues raised by mothers and grandmothers.

- More culturally sensitive assessments

- Balance western and aboriginal worldviews

- Rather than prescribed solutions, drill deeper and achieve clarity;

- Sharing circles to listen with respect to each other;

- Sharing/Reflection circles for Child Welfare Workers;

- Sharing circles for Casework Supervisors;

- Cross cultural, sensitivity, and anti-racism training for social workers;

- Specific training for social workers on alcohol and drug addiction;

- Sensitivity training on the unique stresses of parenting and poverty;

- Training on how to empower and engage Aboriginal mothers in determining and designing their own "expectations";

- Discussion and explanations by social workers as to mother's legal rights;

- Support to ensure that grief, loss and counseling is provided to Aboriginal mothers upon removal of their children.

Fathers Experiences

The following describes the unique aspects of fathers' experiences who wished to care for or have greater involvement in the lives of their children.

Dads matter hugely to their children. If you have a positive relationship with your dad, you're likely to do better at school, be happier have higher self-esteem, and even form better relationships when you're an adult. But all too often fathers get forgotten or sidelined, and governments, public services and employers act as if mothers are the only ones who really matter. We need this to change. - Father Institute (2013).

Aboriginal Fathers' Challenges with Child welfare

<u>"I made my kids and the government owns them"</u>

"It's not so much that we have failed to reach Aboriginal dads. It's more that we have never tried."

'You're never free. Once you're in the system, you stay in the system your whole life. They take your children. They take your grandchildren.'

This fear motivates fathers to fight to care for children. Confronting powerful welfare workers for the system's failure to meet children's needs is 'scary'….these fathers often cast social workers as 'the enemy'—professionals to stay away from them…they've got nothing for dads, Dominelli, et.al (2011).

They say they're there to help you but they pretty much tell you, you gotta find your own resources yourself. They tell you 'Okay, you've got to find a mental health worker." If you find a psychologist, we tell you which psychologist, we'll pay for it and one psychologist I do see, I've known them for twelve years, he knows everything about me pretty much but they're not willing to pay for him so that doesn't make no sense at all…they're trying to set me back by how many years of counselling and psychotherapy I have to take.

Young fathers experienced a lack of support by social workers as well as barriers due to policies in both housing and social assistance. This is particularly true for fathers raised in government care. For example, a father living on his own receives social assistance for one person. If he wants to parent his children he has to find adequate housing before being allowed to do so. However, he cannot secure adequate housing based on the social assistance he receives for a single person.

"I was belittled, you know, when I…we had gone through three or four different social workers and each time…very condescending, like it was their way. I was automatically, because of my past, each worker as

we went up the ladder, only looked at the picture and the paperwork from previous workers, so I never got any leniency whatsoever. I was pretty much guilty until proven innocent so it was a constant struggle."

Walmsley et al. found that almost 50 per cent of fathers were considered irrelevant to both mothers and children. They suggest that, even though all children who come into contact with child welfare authorities have fathers, the fathers remain a ghostly presence in practice. The lack of attention to fathers in the general social work literature and over-representation of mothers and under-representation of fathers in the child welfare literature reflected the presence of mothers and absence of fathers in research about child abuse and neglect.

> *"I was already outside the box so any support that I was looking for, I had to find other means because I was already labelled and marginalized. I have been really busy trying to get the ground under my feet again to try and get stabilized so I could get stable for my children so we could have good visits and spend some quality time with them. You know, I guess that's where it's at." Some participants described how their own childhood experiences without a father or with abusive fathers and father figures, including step- fathers and priests in residential schools, set the stage for their journey as fathers. One father described how he feels he has to draw an image of fatherhood: "there isn't much to draw on. I make it up as I go, one day at a time."*

Obviously all children involved with child welfare have fathers however, the fathers are absent from child welfare interventions and labeled as irrelevant or invisible. Social workers avoid providing any encouragement to men to be involved in their children's lives by reinforcing the father's weaknesses and failings rather than focusing on their strengths and potential. Ball (2012) maintains that due to the historical actions of colonialism the majority of Aboriginal fathers have not had any caring father figures in their life. They have no idea how to be loving and caring towards their children. Due to the government interventions such as residential schools, the disruptions created for Aboriginal people and their communities has placed a heavier burden upon Aboriginal fathers than colonial fathers ever have to face, including high rates of suicide, incarceration, unemployment and homelessness.

> *"My dad was in and out of the picture, very vague and very brief in my life…at a young age I began to question…my self-worth and my self-esteem became very low as I began to think something was wrong with me…when you're that young, you don't understand addiction. The only thing you crave is love, affection and to be appreciated as a kid and that's some of the things I lacked growing up and so today."*

Overall Perceptions of Aboriginal Fathers

"Although all children who come to the attention of child welfare authorities have fathers, men are curiously absent from child welfare interventions" (Strega, et al, 2008). Strega suggests that ideas of failure to protect are used in Canadian criminal prosecutions against mothers; she failed to find a single instance in which the concept had been deployed against a man.

Ball, (2009) states that although Aboriginal children are over represented in child welfare the Aboriginal fathers are seriously underrepresented in child welfare interventions. This reinforces the necessity for policy reform, program changes and a commitment to long term investments to eliminate structural racism, institutional racism, discriminatory social barriers and the need to provide assistance in overcoming the plethora of personal issues that are the direct result of colonial decisions and actions.

"They say they're there to help you but they pretty much tell you, you gotta find your own resources yourself. They tell you, "Okay, you've got to find a mental health worker". If you find a psychologist, we tell you which psychologist and we'll pay for it. Yet they're not willing to pay for a psychologist I have seen for twelve years who knows everything about me pretty much. That makes no sense to me. They pay for any other ones that are on their payroll but not ours 'cause . . . he doesn't write notes that are correct according to them correct. {I suspect that} he doesn't give them anything they can use against me so they're trying to set me back by the many years of counselling and psychotherapy I have to take before I sit in a room like this. I wouldn't be able to talk, I'd just be sitting here nodding my head and agreeing with everything. I told her that, if kids came with an instruction book, I'd understand. But we learn from our mistakes and I made one mistake and you know, I'm paying dearly for it now"

"You know when that doorbell rings you became scared. Is that the Ministry at the door even though your house is clean and there is nothing you have to worry about?...I remember crying like a baby because I never knew they had so much power to seize my children."

Homeless fathers are frequently denied access to programs and resources, as much of the focus of support services is concentrated on homeless mothers. Homeless parents are frequently perceived as being ineffective or unskilled parents but are often not given the support needed to help improve their skills. Parent education programs may empower homeless fathers by providing them with not only information on child development and healthy bonding but also about how to deal with any family violence that may have impacted their relationships with their child.

Education for front line staff

Eradicate the "victim blaming approach" that sees a homeless person as being a tramp, drug addict, alcoholic, incompetent etc. Becoming homeless is beyond a person's control and there are numerous factors that contribute to it. Providing housing, treatment and other forms of humanitarian aid will enhance recovery as well as family connections.

"There needs to be more support systems for the dads and to educate them more about their rights and to offer just different support programs for them and to let them know that this is …offered, this is what your options are instead of just saying, "you know too bad, see you."

"I guess respect, you know, that I'm a human being. You know for the most part, I thoroughly believe that I was labelled an Indian drug addict, drunk, deadbeat dad from the get-go "cause it's sad too' cause of the earrings and all, they judged me by the cover pretty much and I think it could have helped too if they were more educated with addicts and you know that way, they might have been more compassionate or understanding and more helpful in finding supports that I needed because for a long time, I found the supports I needed and I didn't know how, you know, I got lucky."

Stress Theory and Homeless Fathers

Intense and never-ending stress is experienced more by homeless individuals than families living in poverty. Being homeless causes psychosomatic distress that repeatedly triggers depression, social

exclusion, learned dependency and distrust. These overwhelming difficulties often lead to drug or alcohol *abuse. These responses create barriers for finding housing, (Pattnaik, 2013).*

> *"For the most part but you know, like I said, I didn't realize the supports that were out there and growing up the way I grew up, men don't cry, you work for everything that you get and you have, so I didn't know how to calm that emotional and mental stress that came from working myself into the ground. So it got so stressful and that's basically why I turned to drugs."*

Ball, (2009) points out that the socioeconomic exclusion influences with the above factors which creates increased rates of both physical and mental illnesses and low- self-confidence. These factors interfered with the father's involvement in their children's lives. Considering the sizeable population of Aboriginal fathers who are homeless, programs and intervention pathway should be constructed in a manner that supports the Aboriginal men as well as their respective communities.

> *The affairs of members of First Nations fall uniquely under federal rather than provincial jurisdiction. Their rights are governed by Canada's 1985 Indian Act, which holds them as "children before the law."… they enjoy fewer rights, services, and supports, and far more barriers to accessing information, compared to other Canadians. Extreme socioeconomic exclusion, oppression under Canada's Indian Act, and mother-centric biases in parenting and childcare programs and in child welfare and custody practices…deter Aboriginal fathers from sustaining connections with their children… because of colonial government interventions that placed many of these men or their parents in residential schools that were rife with abuse, most participating fathers had no exposure to positive father role models when they were growing up (Ball, 2009).*

Supports

Father involvement programs should avoid deficit perspectives and instead regard homeless fathers as responsible human beings who are capable of successfully raising their children. Research shows that father involvement over an extended period builds stronger parent-child relationships (Dubowitz et al., 2001). Therefore, intervention programs for homeless fathers need to be implemented for a sustained period of time to support fathers' efforts to initiate strong patterns of involvement with their children.

> *"I just made the children, the government owns them, okay. I'll just leave it at that, that's just what it feels like for me. Child welfare keeps contacting me and… they just want me to go to court and try to get involved with them a bit more. Well sure, I would like to but it's just ….it's just been so long since I've seen them, it's just like…it's almost like there was, like it wasn't my choice okay but what I'm about to say is like they are going out of my life, you know, like there was no, how would you say? Room,, like you know, with them being gone so long, it is like they just kind of like grew out of my life. You know how a tree grows right? It's like a branch that just grew out of my life right so…it's just too painful to keep going back. It's painful for me and them…once the government owns your children, there's nothing that you can do, there is nothing that you could do ever, to try and get out of it so.*

In recent years, there has been an increased awareness of the important role that fathers play in their children's lives. Previous programs that work with families have traditionally been targeted toward mothers, and have ignored the important paternal roles. Homeless fathers are not a homogenous group and the diversity of their life experiences and needs necessitates diversity in the delivery of services, development of policy frameworks, and research designs. Amidst the existing deficit perspectives,

stigmas, and stereotypes about homeless fathers, we recommend that researchers and service providers take extra measures to dispel such negative attitudes through carefully designed research studies and programs that simultaneously inform policies and practices. By drawing the attention of educators, researchers, and policy-makers to the needs of homeless fathers and their children, we hope to see that the growing field of father involvement leaves no fathers behind (Pattnaik, 2013).

With incarceration disproportionately impacting less skilled minorities, children of incarcerated fathers disproportionately are born into households where a biological or stepfather is not present. As such, current and formerly incarcerated fathers may be one of a few stable male authority figures in the lives of their children, with substantial influence as role models and in teaching acceptable behaviors and values. Father-child communication and participation in school-related activities can improve father-child involvement. Through actions like encouraging fathers to take parenting classes, discouraging aggressive behaviors, and encouraging the pursuit of work and educational opportunities, educators may also help fathers promote pro-social behaviors that can improve relationships with gatekeeping mothers that take a "wait-and-see "or "second chance" approach). Programs that encourage parent-child involvement during incarceration or involve the mentoring of children report decreased recidivism among parents and increased child well-being (Roy & Dyson, 2005)

Under- and unemployed fathers provide in other ways than financially and are often involved in providing both nurturance and presence for their children. Family practice and child welfare courses need to include information on men and fathers and how to engage with them. In revising social work education about families, it is critical that we not reify the white two-parent middle-class heterosexual family in the process extended family models that are common in Aboriginal and other cultures and the multiple-mother families that occur in African Canadian communities (Pattnaik, 2013). For formerly incarcerated fathers who are non-abusive and not engaging in criminal behavior, father involvement can bring needed economic resources, childcare (both from the father and the father's family), a more stable home environment, and presence of a father-figure that may benefit the child and mother. Involvement also encourages fathers to avoid crime and get involved in pro-social activities. The involvement with their children provides reasons to make changes in their lives, learn how to be fathers and become involved in their children's lives. These can be accomplished by providing counselling, substance abuse treatment, educational opportunities as well as parenting classes in order to assist the men in becoming better parents.… the significance of father-child bonds may serve as a powerful motivating force for fathers to make positive changes in their lives, including increasing involvement with their children, avoiding recidivism, and seeking employment. In turn, increased father involvement in childcare, economic support, and involvement may benefit children and mothers.

Multigenerational Issues /Intergenerational Trauma:

Some fathers explained that colonial legacies had exerted different but equal challenges for Aboriginal women and spoke of the need for both Aboriginal women and men to achieve "balance" and "wholeness" by following a traditional healing path to recovering their Aboriginal knowledge and their capacities to parent and live together as families (Strega, 2008). In Canada, about 70 % of Aboriginal mothers and fathers either spent most of their school years living in Indian Residential Schools far from their families, or were raised by parents who grew up in Indian Residential Schools. Research involving non- Aboriginal fathers has shown that young fathers are less likely to be living with their children if their own fathers did not live with them during childhood (Furstenberg and Weiss, 2001). Currently in Canada, approximately 45 % of Aboriginal children live with one parent, most often their mother (Statistics Canada, 2006). Adolescent fertility is up to eight times higher among Aboriginal youth compared to non-Aboriginal youth in Canada, and this too is a multigenerational pattern (Grimond & Robitaille, 2008). Aboriginal families are

three times more likely than non-Aboriginal Canadians to be living in poverty In the case of Aboriginal children in Canada, for nearly a century, the federal government sponsored a nationwide program of forced separations of children from their parents and extended family clans, requiring children as young as 4 years of age to live in Indian Residential Schools far from their home communities (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). As a result of this and other colonial government interventions, Aboriginal Peoples[2]—and Aboriginal men in particular—are arguably the most socially disenfranchised population in Canada. There are monumental systemic barriers to well-being and little social advocacy. The disruption to intergenerational transmission of fatherhood that colonial interventions caused in Aboriginal children's socialization experiences is a legacy that persists in Aboriginal family life today. Not only were the knowledge and skills passed down by older men to young children lost when the colonial government forced parents to give up their children, but children's opportunities to be directly exposed throughout their childhood to the meanings and functions of adult men in family life were also lost (Anderson and Ball, 2011).

Aboriginal educator Sally Gaikezheyongai explains that the mass removal of children from Aboriginal communities was akin to ripping the heart and center out of Aboriginal worlds (cited in Wemigwans 2002). Once the heart was taken, everything else began to shatter and fall away, including roles for men, who had no children to teach, protect, and provide for. This created conditions that Aboriginal men struggle with today. Aboriginal men's journeys to learn how to engage as fathers are part of the healing movement for Aboriginal Peoples as a whole. First Nations Peoples, who comprise one of the Aboriginal populations in Canada, often say that: "It took seven generations for the government to bring our families, communities, cultures and languages to the brink of extinction, and it will take seven generations for us to heal and re-build.

[2] The roles of Canadian legislation and policy in contributing to social exclusion of Aboriginal individuals and groups have been extensively documented (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996; Salee 2006). Chief among colonial government intrusions into Aboriginal community and family life was the Indian Residential School movement that required Indian and Métis parents to place their children in a government-sponsored school from an early age and throughout their formative years. Most children were transported to schools hundreds of kilometers from their families and many never returned. They were forced to give up their birth names and their mother tongue. A large number were subjected to physical and sexual abuse. As many as one-quarter of all children housed in these schools died as a result of illness, abuse, or poor nutrition (Fournier and Crey 1997; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996).

Many Aboriginal men who may be fathers in Canada today are either survivors of an Indian Residential School or "secondary survivors" of parents who were raised in a Residential School and therefore had little knowledge of how to engage in a caring and responsible way with a child. Compounding the struggle to fill a gap in embodied memory of Aboriginal fatherhood is the reality that the conditions of life have dramatically changed in the intervening centuries, such that a full return to traditional male roles is neither possible nor relevant to raising children in today's world.

There is little theory or research-based insights into the kind of psychological and cultural reconstruction effort required to create a positive image of fathering almost out of thin air, to learn positive fathering behaviors and involvement, and to overcome the negative legacy of childhood experiences of abusive or neglectful men and women who were charged with raising Aboriginal children in the context of Indian Residential Schools or foster care.

In view of increasing evidence of the important contributions that fathers can make to children's survival, health, and development (Lamb 2004), what can we learn from exploring Aboriginal men's experiences of becoming positively involved fathers? To date, there has been only one Canadian research study about Aboriginal fathers' experiences... early findings suggest that while a history of multigenerational trauma has resulted in challenges for Aboriginal fathers that are more severe than those faces by fathers from other ethnic groups, the nature of many of these challenges are familiar across groups.

Overall Effects of Social Discrimination/Racism

Brown, et al. (2009) "We chose the word 'ghost' to describe these fathers in child welfare because in order to see a ghost, one has to first believe in their existence and relevance." When social workers are looking for placement options for children, fathers are rarely considered as placement options. Ghost fathers are created by colonial biases that are pervasive throughout child welfare policies and practices. Canadian child welfare workers are white women between the ages of 26-44 and they make up 70% of the workforce. However, when we look at child welfare managers, supervisors and policy makers, the majority are men. Over 50% of the families that social workers are involved with are Aboriginal. Poor, unemployed men are considered failures (when compared to colonist views) in taking care of their children because they are poor and unemployed. They receive no credit for taking care of their children. There is also a persistent colonist attitude that the poor should not be able to have children and families because they are too poor to take care of them.

Fallon et al, (2013), argue that the discrepancies in the placement of Aboriginal children are influenced by macro-level decisions that are based upon colonialism, racism and poverty that has been experienced for several generations. When examining micro-level causes racism (institutional), discriminatory practices as well as cultural bias by colonists, these further impact the effects of poverty, age of children, unemployment as well as care-giver concerns. These lead to the children being placed away from their families and their culture.

Strahlschmidt (2013) points out that numerous studies of child protective services found that the fathers were treated differently from mothers, in many cases fathers are considered an "after-thought" or they are not considered important at all. This treatment raised hostility. This in turn has instigated a general mistrust from fathers towards social workers. Fathers reported feeling of hostility from the workers. Father's generally have learned to avoid interaction with children's protective services. Case-workers thought that the father's mistrust and hostility were indicative of guilt rising out of being delinquent on child support, or other situations for which they face incarceration. This simply highlights the depth of the discrimination and racism that case-workers frequently utilize in dealing with Aboriginal peoples.

First Study of Aboriginal Fatherhood in Canada

The first study of Aboriginal fathers was conducted in the province of British Columbia, home to about one-third of the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada. First Nations and Aboriginal Head Start programs in British Columbia had already identified a need to understand Aboriginal fathers' needs and goals and to improve their outreach and service to this population. As one program staff said, *It's not so much that we have failed to reach Aboriginal dads. It's more that we have never tried.*

Challenges/Changes:
Ball, (2009) When a child is removed, former custodial parents receiving income assistance are cut back to the level for accommodating a single person, which makes it difficult to provide a suitable home for the

return of the child. In spite of numerous barriers, including lack of resources, homelessness, lack of a vehicle, lack of money for social or recreational events the Aboriginal fathers expressed determination and a commitment in caring for their children.

> *I felt right from the beginning that they weren't even giving me a chance to be a dad; they were just setting me up for fail. So they said that they were being a part of my…involved in my life for…to help me become a better dad but they're just waiting for me to make my first mistake and take my son…*

As Ball (2010) affirms, due to the ongoing conditions that many Aboriginal men face and the barriers they must overcome they are often labeled as being uncaring about their children. The ongoing marginal living conditions including homelessness, ill-health, racism, discrimination and ongoing social stigma add to their struggles. It is these factors that need to be addressed and programs that address the ongoing social determinants of health for these men need to be provided. It is the structural and institutional racism that keeps Aboriginal fathers from being involved in the lives of their children. They are not indifferent. They are looked upon through the lens of colonialism.

There is NO dedicated funding to support Aboriginal Father's in transitioning into fatherhood. There are no father support or education programs to prepare or assist fathers (Ball, 2012)
New fathers are stressed by their economic role and need information, emotional support, and practical experience under supervision to become fathers (Walmsley et al, 2009).

The relative invisibility of Aboriginal men in research is mirrored in the absence of policy aimed at encouraging Aboriginal fathers' involvement. As one support worker acknowledged, blaming mothers while ignoring fathers is so deeply embedded in child welfare discourse and practice as to be more or less routine, leading workers to fail to engage with men as potential assets (Ball, 2009).
While file recordings corroborate our quantitative data they do not explain workers' failure to engage purposefully with fathers (Strega et al., 2008).

Fathers described actively searching for clues about how to become fathers.

> *I'd rather choose the good part because my daughter's more important, I'd rather see her grow up into a beautiful woman, to support her, to be everything to her 'cause she's everything to me. Now she's only five but wait until she's fifteen, twenty, thirty, I'm willing to take on everything but these people need to know what men need. We need more supports…I got into an argument yesterday with a social worker that deals with my daughter…you may have a little degree but that doesn't mean you are making rational decisions, you guys should be providing and helping me…I have full custody of my kid…I am not sexist about woman but as men who need help just as much as women need help, it should be equal.*

 Reforming practice requires concurrent changes in policy. Housing and welfare policies particularly impact poor marginal fathers who wish to maintain relationships with their children. Unless they are designated as sole custodial fathers, they do not qualify for social housing that might accommodate their children and are unlikely to qualify for additional social assistance support.

One strategy to enhance father–child relationships is through father participation in parenting programs. They have been shown to increase fathers' accessibility to their children, the amount of direct involvement

with their children, and their support of children's learning, while also increasing children's math readiness and decreasing parent reports of children's problem behaviors (Strahlschmidt, 2013).

Recommendations for fathers

Educate professionals and the broader community on the value of father involvement (e.g., trainings, workshops, panels).

Provide staff with concrete ways to identify, locate, contact, and engage fathers/paternal relatives (e.g., trainings, tip sheets, office protocol).

Provide child welfare staff with tools and access to family finding resources, and prioritize identifying fathers and timely paternity testing.

Engage upper-level management in the implementation of father involvement efforts within the agency and cross-system.

Strengthen court and legal system partnerships in efforts to identify, locate, contact, and engage fathers. Partner with public and community providers, as well as with father coalitions, father and mother representatives to build community support for father engagement.

Educate mothers on the value of father engagement both to create buy-in and to increase access to inform Support the participating local offices to embed best practice on working with fathers/father figures.

Reviewing the conclusions from serious case reviews in this respect.

Develop and pilot a training course for child intervention workers and their managers.

- Produce learning resources for social work educators.
- Publish information for fathers on family rights

Key Messages for Policy Makers and Program Planners

It is clear our research that the presence and involvement of fathers, and their positive relationship with their children's mothers is a very important factor in their development and growth. Yet the very systems established to serve these families almost seem to act in conspiracy to divide the family unit by keeping fathers out of the picture. Child welfare intervention can often be triggered by an incident of family violence, sometimes an alcohol or drug fueled and resulting in a call to the police and a subsequent call to child welfare. The resulting scenario is most often a no-contact order by the court, thereby excluding the father from participating in the usual transactions that address the return of the children and the rebuilding of family. This then creates an almost tragic comedy of child welfare workers working to enforce the order, and trying to catch the father and mother together. As one can imagine, this cat and mouse game does little to enhance family life or reunification.

There is also some evidence that mothers were at times complicit in the isolation of the fathers for a their own reasons, or kept knowledge of the relationship away from child welfare, for fear they would not have the children returned, But when the mothers cooperated with their partners, an entirely different outcome happened.

> …good thing about my ex is that she never chased me away from my kids. She always gave me a chance to go see my babies and if it wasn't for that then I probably wouldn't be a good father as I am today. I'd probably be one of those men that just jumped from woman to woman to woman making babies, babies, babies, babies and babies. That's how I would probably be living right now. Either that or I'd be in jail and getting into trouble, maybe selling drugs and stuff like that, if I don't have a family and support system out there so that's simply the way I see it.

It was clear that the fathers we met cared about their children and wished to be as involved in their lives as much as they could be. In some instances, especially when the mothers stepped away from their families and child welfare intervened, some fathers overcame many barriers to become full time fathers. The barriers to their involvement were significant, and times were created by the very people who should have been supporting them, child intervention workers. There is considerable evidence that they encounter disrespect and mistrust, and are often deprived of the kinds of supports that mothers can take for granted.

> I did everything in my life to deal with social services but I got nowhere, but then when I showed them the determination that I did and I'm still doing, . . . because I told them how much my daughter really means to me. There's times where I cried thinking I was gonna get nowhere because I'm nothin', I'm nobody, I'm just a statistic but I kept praying and praying, going to sweats, that's what gave me the will, the strength that I need to this day …it gets me frustrated, gets me bothered but at the same time, I know the higher power's gonna help me, and I know that I'm a man with determination, ambition and also I'm gonna show them that I can do this regardless of any help of family. I got nobody, like I swear I was born alone.

Fathers also had to overcome internal barriers, including addiction, prior criminal records, incidents of family violence, lack of housing, lack of parental models, and intergenerational trauma. Their plea was

that workers look at them more deeply to see what they had to offer to their children rather than to only focus on their deficits. In many instances, the fathers had also been in care and followed the life trajectory of many of their peers – life on the streets, addiction, poverty, and then jail. Incidentally, the mothers have also been in care, and child welfare seems more than willing to recognise the errors of their child rearing capacity by being more eager to take their children, often immediately after birth. This perpetuates the seemingly never ending cycle of child welfare two wounded and fragile parents with few resources to cope with the vagaries of life.

> …her family loved her being a mom again. She'd lost her other two sons already so she was happy to be a mom again and I moved in with her and went right to full-time dad, went from like homeless and drugs to full-time fatherhood and only because she had the place already and everything, I was able to function and I loved it. I was changing diapers every day and then, you know, our relationship started having problems. She has her own history with trauma, you know men and stuff and I'm not like that. I was adopted out, the people that adopted me treated me very well so I didn't grow up with violence or substance abuse in my younger years. I know it now because I've been on the street a long time, my mom passed away from drinking, most of my family are very in tune with it now, but hers goes back like a long way with men. We started having these issues where she just didn't feel comfortable being with a functional father and …getting violent. I didn't know what to do. I've never been like hit by a girl before. So in the end, I had to leave for my own safety and my sons. I walked away, I walked right out the door while she was bathing him and went to detox. I haven't seen him since.

Many men felt misunderstood and experienced the classical symptoms of racism, stereotyping, and fear of the unknown when it comes to Aboriginal men. When asked what he would have to say to the minister if he was granted the opportunity one father stated this eloquently in the following words.

> I'd tell the Honorable Minister that he needs to listen more to the man that struggles with maintaining a relationship with his children, because obviously something has gone wrong with his choices. Be patient, don't be so quick to label him . . . . . don't forget that he is a human being, he needs to be heard, needs to be supported and encouraged not to give up. If I was in room with a man that was thinking about giving up, I would tell him that I'd never give up on him because we all deserve to be heard and acknowledged and to be supported to be the best human being we could be in life because life is so short.

These fathers were for the most part realistic about their limitations, and when they were not in a position to father on their own, supported their care by extended family, especially by grandmothers, as an alternative. This precluded on of their deepest worries, that their children would be safe from foster carers who did not really love them.

> …it's a blessing when they go back to family right, and he's safe, he's, you know, he could spend his childhood there and probably learn traditional ways and culture 'cause she's involved in with the people and it's safe and quiet. I'm barely functional myself by choice, I guess, and my own circumstances. …childhood, the important years, I'm okay if he spends it up there, even if I can't live up there for whatever reason. Ultimately, I would like to have him in my care though . . . if I had a chance to do fatherhood the next time I want it to be for real. But I spoke to him on the phone and he's happy and healthy.

Many fathers showed an amazing persistence in keeping the contact going with their child. One father described it thus.

I have full custody of my kid, I fought left and right for her, now I'm fighting for her again. My daughter means more to me than anything; I'll fight for her right to the Supreme Court if I have to. I dealt with so much stuff in my life that I should be broken by now, you know, I was stabbed three times and shot once and I'm still here.

And another,

Well it started with not being able to see my daughter because my daughter's mom wouldn't let me see her at first . . .Tried to see her as much as possible . . . so I even slept in trees just to visit her 'because I had no family in Red Deer, I slept in minus thirty-six degree weather, sleeping underneath a tree, almost frozen to death, just to visit my daughter. Now there was no help for me at all but I still did it out of my will because of how much she means to me. I slept underneath these trees, I'd find shelter no matter what but as long as I knew I was okay, I was okay.

Many suggested that they could benefit sharing their experiences with each. This has been very powerful with the mothers support group and in our experience with the focus groups the men would have liked to continue meeting together to share stories and support each other.

I just think things would go a heck of a lot more smoothly if there were some recovering addicts or people who've been through the wringer and who have educated themselves to a {higher} level of understanding, that would help immensely. A lot of these people {professionals} just don't understand."

The reason I grew up with a lot of abuse, tons of abuse. My uncles used to hit me with bull whips, chains. I grew up in such a torment of heartache and pain, my mom was never around, I was on my own, treated me like I was an animal. My uncles didn't like me because my grandparents loved me When my grandfather passed away I was so close to him that now, he makes me realize what to do in life. He is the one that gives me the oomph in life so that's why I'm here, that's why I'm telling my story. It's for everybody that's going through hardships, they need to listen to the people that went through it, so they can have a better understanding and a better peace of mind.

These are just some highlights that bring out the fundamentally human side of these father we had the privilege of meeting. They portray human life laced with pathos, courage in the face of adversity, determination in the face of obstacles, love for their families, and a pragmatic realism about themselves and their lot in life. For the senior officials who seek concrete notions about how to create an organisation that is well positioned to treat them with the dignity and respect that they deserve, please be sure to check   out   Appendix   5   at   the   end   of   this   document.[i]

Discussion of Underlying Issues

Social Exclusion Many of the families that come into child welfare are there as a result of social isolation characterised by unequal access to resources, capabilities and rights .Not only are they marginalised economically, but also socially in terms of family and community supports, and how they are perceived by the community at large.

Systemic Racism - While there is an understandable reluctance to discuss this topic, far many Aboriginal professionals describe day to day experiences that can only be considered as blatant racism. If this happens to highly educated, well dressed professional people, why should we act surprised if it happens to the poor and poorly educated parents of child whose families get involved with the child welfare system. We cannot discuss child welfare services with its attendance connection to the judicial system without contemplating the reality that our lack of success in fundamental change may be at least in part attributable to the existence of a largely racist society. We are known throughout the word as a kind and polite people. We have become more politically correct in our expression, to the extent that most of us are unaware that it even exists. Lise Noel (cited in Henderson, 2000, p.29) reminds us that systemic colonization is grounded in intolerance. This intolerance comes from unconscious assumptions that underlie "normal institutional rules and collective reactions." It is a consequence of following these rules and accepting these reactions in everyday life that anything or anyone deviating from them is viewed as problematic, as being in need of 'fixing'. These rules, assumptions and reactions are imbedded in the consciousness of all and are so engrained in our day-to-day lives that we do not even realize that they exist. Think for a moment of the analogy of the goldfish in its fishbowl; the goldfish is surrounded by water in its bowl, but yet is completely unaware that it is surrounded by water, or that it is even in a bowl. These realities are a given, are inextricably interwoven into the goldfish's existence, thus making them invisible to the fish altogether. Going back to the accepted assumptions and reactions that have become embedded into our collective consciousness, there is little reason to believe that these attitudes are not deeply engrained in child welfare, just as they are in the rest of Western society.

Young (cited in Henderson, 2000, p.30) poses a conundrum for those who belong to the dominant groups of society: The oppressor has no apparent existence. Not only does he not identify himself as such, but also he is not even supposed to have his own reality. His presence is so immediate and dense and his universe coincides so fully with the Universe that he becomes invisible. Rarely seen, rarely named, he is unique nonetheless and having a full existence as the keeper of the word. He is the supreme programmer who confers various degrees of existence on those who are different from himself…as the embodiment of the universal, the dominator is also the only Subject, the Individual, who never being considered to belong to a particular group can study those impersonal categories of the population who pose a "problem", represent a "question", constitute a "case" or simply have a condition."

The complexities involved in reconciliation with Aboriginal people by members of the dominant group are no simple matter. We are finding that to support Aboriginal self-determination in the development of policies and practices that are in keeping with Aboriginal traditions and beliefs calls for an uncommon degree of humility and a high degree of receptivity to different ways of thinking. Our challenge is to become consciously aware of how our thoughts and decisions are affected by systemic racism, and to appreciate more thoroughly the challenges encountered by Aboriginal families in dealing with complex institutions like child welfare and the court systems. This calls upon each of us to be prepared to look deep into our souls to root out the vestiges of racist attitudes that continue confound our relationships.

This proposal, however, is no easy task; as Carl Jung stated "People will do anything, no matter how absurd, in order to avoid facing their own soul."

So, where do we go from here? We do not have all of the answers. None of us do! However, I believe that between all of us – clients, families, communities, front line staff, administrators, program planners, researchers and academics, policy makers, and politicians – we can come up with a plan. We all have different perspectives; none of us by ourselves gets the whole picture. Like the Hindu parable of the blind men with the elephant, each man can feel different parts of the animal, but is unable to see what the others see. And Like the blind men, we lack an overall image of the elephant. The only way that the blind men could begin to understand what an elephant looks like would be to step back from it and describe to each other what they "see." It does not suffice to share one's perspective and insist that it is the only valid one. Each must be prepared to hear what others "see" in order to grasp the "whole picture".

Similar challenges exist within our helping systems. This challenges us all to come together in a discursive dialogue that can enrich each of us. If may seem complicated, but it need not be so, if we are all willing to be open to each other's truth, to what each other "sees".

Bureaucratic Organizations: help or hindrance?
Part of the reason for continuing problems may rest in the very institutions that have been created to help Aboriginal children and their families. Cohen (1960) pointed out, over thirty years ago, that one of the greatest changes in human services within recent years has been an increase in formal organizational structures with the accompanying paraphernalia of professionalism, regulations and bureaucracy. William James is cited by Cohen (1960) as having foreseen some of the dangers that accompanied the creation of formal organizations when he stated that:

> *Most human institutions, by the purely technical and professional manner in which they come to be administered, end by becoming obstacles to the very purposes which their founders had in view. Notoriously the greatest reforms in many at least of the professions and institutions have been first advocated, or at least have been greatly aided, by laymen rather than by the official keepers of the seal. And there is reason arising from the very nature of a professional and technical institution why it should easily get out of touch with human life. For the scientific and the technical is necessarily the objective, the impersonal, and the intellectual, as distinguished from the subjective, the personal, the individual, and the emotional. (p. 34)*

In short, we may, in the immortal words of Pogo, have met the enemy and he is us. Many would agree that social services in general and child welfare in particular, have fulfilled James' prediction. Child welfare agencies deal with some of the most intimate aspects of the lives of citizens, namely the relationships which exist in families as well as between families and communities. Yet, the bulk of their service modalities are based on technical and professional considerations.

Sieder (1960) contends that a community is characterized by the quality and scope of its educational, health and welfare institutions. When these are used and supported by citizens, then democratic society is in good health. She cautions that when responsibility for the institutional life of the community is relegated entirely to employed officials, whether in the public or private sector, a precious part of our heritage is lost and services fail to achieve their full potential. It may be worth reflecting on the extent to which our cherished institutions may actually be part of the problem, and that to some extent they have played a role in diminishing the relational aspects of community.

Reflection
>
> *Is it so difficult to ensure that children can contribute something to their community, to their school, to their church…to themselves?   Is it so difficult to ensure that every child has the opportunity to live life fully? Why do we keep tinkering around the edges with more bureaucratic solutions that do not meet the needs of the children? Why do we have so much trouble changing our minds in the face of so much evidence that what we do now is not working?*

Impact of Residential Schools
The removal of Aboriginal children from parents to be raised in residential schools deprived those children of a cultural legacy. These children missed the experience of a tightly knit community of extended family and relatives who share the task of child rearing by providing nurturing and security. This deliberate assault on Aboriginal culture, tradition, language and spirituality resulted in following outcomes for Aboriginal people:

> *Low self-esteem; dysfunctional families and interpersonal relationships; parenting issues such as emotional coldness and rigidity; widespread depression; widespread rage and anger; chronic physical illness related to spiritual and emotional states; unresolved grief and loss; fear of personal growth, transformation and healing; unconscious internalization of residential school behaviors such as false politeness, not speaking out, passive compliance; patterns of paternalistic authority linked to passive dependency; patterns of misuse of power to control others, and community social patterns that foster whispering in the dark, but refusing to support and stand with those who speak out or challenge the status quo; the breakdown of the social glue that holds families and communities together, such as trust, common ground, shared purpose and direction, a vibrant ceremonial and civic life, co-operative networks and associations working for the common good, etc.; disunity and conflict between individuals, families and factions within the community; spiritual confusion; involving alienation from one's own spiritual life and growth process, as well as conflicts and confusion over religion; internalized sense of inferiority or aversion in relation to whites and especially whites in power; toxic communication - backbiting, gossip, criticism, put downs, personal attacks, sarcasm, secrets, etc.; becoming oppressors and abusers of others as a result of what was done to one in residential schools; cultural identity issues - the loss of language and cultural foundations has led to denial (by some) of the validity of one's own cultural identity (assimilation), a resulting cultural confusion and dislocation; destruction of social support networks (the cultural safety net) that individuals and families in trouble could rely upon; disconnection from the natural world (i.e. the sea, the forest, the earth, living things) as an important dimension of daily life and hence spiritual dislocation; acceptance of powerlessness within community life (Aboriginal Healing Foundation,1999).*

Questions
The fallout from the residential schools is severe, and its legacy continues. While there are those who would tell Native people that they should just "get over it," it is not that easy. If this is real, and much of the healing that was supposed to happen has not taken place, how can we hope that the limited interventions available to our families will make a fundamental difference? We may claim that this is not the responsibility of child welfare systems, but if not us, who? Perhaps it is time to hold off on Western approaches that serve to further alienate rather than help, and turn to the more traditional approaches that many of our families yearn for.

Intergenerational Trauma

The abuse and neglect suffered in residential schools not only affected their lives as adults, but those of their descendants whose families have been characterized by further abuse and neglect. According to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation:

Intergenerational or multi-generational trauma happens when the effects of trauma are not resolved in one generation. When trauma is ignored and there is no support for dealing with it, the trauma will be passed from one generation to the next. What we learn to see as "normal" when we are children, we pass on to our own children. Children who learn that ... or [sic] sexual abuse is "normal", and who have never dealt with the feelings that come from this, may inflict physical and sexual abuse on their own children. The unhealthy ways of behaving that people use to protect themselves can be passed on to children, without them even knowing they are doing so. This is the legacy of physical and sexual abuse in residential schools (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 1999:A5).

Despite the publicity generated by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People and the creation of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, many still do not understand what happened in the residential schools or how unresolved trauma from residential school abuse continues to impact individuals, families, communities and nations and will do so until it can be expressed, validated and released in healthy, creative ways. A better understanding of the historical and current impacts of this experience may not only improve our knowledge of the past and its implications for the present, but may also provide pause for reflection on how we may be repeating past patterns because we have not searched our hearts to better understand how deeply held beliefs and assumptions may influence current practice and perpetuate similar outcomes for Aboriginal children and families today. Currently, Aboriginal children enter government care in much higher numbers than those of the 60s Scoop.

Reflection
> *As Aboriginal children families migrate to our cities, bringing with them their intergenerational trauma, how will we break the cycle? Who else needs to be involved?*
>
> *To what extent are we continuing the legacy of the residential school system? What forces are contributing to this possibility? What can we do to change direction and to address the forces do contribute to this possibility?*

Recommendation: What about the notion of creating healing centres for Aboriginal families where parents and their children could find a safe haven and healing? This multi-service centre could replace the multiplicity of very expensive services that are currently called upon with an integrated system of services that welcomes and nurtures Aboriginal families in an appropriately cultural fashion.

A severed relationship –
The colonizers were able to establish residential schools, as well as all other instruments of colonization and assimilation, as a consequence of their ability to adhere to a dualistic worldview; this is to say that they were able to separate themselves (the subject) from those being colonized (the object). This resulted in a severed, exploitive relationship, one that shielded the colonizer from perceiving Aboriginal children and their families as being the same as themselves. Conversely, if we were to stand in the context of a restored relationship, we could engage in a process of mutual recognition and acknowledgement.

We will now focus on important considerations in our search of better ways to serve and assist our fellow humans. It will discuss such knowledge as the social determinants of health, attachment theory,

childhood resiliency, the impact of poverty, racism and its accompanying oppression. Few of us can deny that these are important factors whose absence can hamper the development of healthy families, families that may otherwise be capable of forming and nurturing healthy and productive members of our society. Indeed, I would suggest that these are fundamental to lasting change in our service system for children and their families.

Studies on the social determinants of health indicate that poverty is a major contributor to many difficulties that families experience. There is little doubt that children who are born in poor families, whose lives begin in an environment of deficiency and whose parents are preoccupied with the stresses of being able to provide decent accommodation, food, and security are at far greater risk than children whose parents are financially secure. Yet we have failed as a society to ensure that every child receives a basic level of sustenance, often blaming their parents for their deficiencies – all the while forgetting that these parents were raised within a similar situation. This is not to suggest that all poor children are doomed to the same eventuality, as some can overcome this burden at great personal effort, but we do know that there is a much higher possibility that this will be the case.

We know that when children do not develop a sound attachment and secure base at an emotional level with their mother, especially in the womb and during the first year of life, are at an immense disadvantage, one that can be difficult to recoup. Yet we too often fail to ensure that pregnant mothers are provided with the security they need to prepare themselves the most important job in the world, that of producing the next generation of human beings. We know that children have certain developmental stages in early life during when their brain has windows of opportunity in which to develop and when those windows of opportunity are missed, they cannot easily be recovered.

We know from resiliency theory that a child who has one person in their life who values them, respects them, and hears them makes a significant difference in that child's life. It opens up the possibility of becoming a strong, capable individual, better prepared to face life on life's terms. Is it so difficult to ensure that every child has a special connection with one person? What about the other connections that a child needs to thrive, rather than simply survive? We know that children who have an opportunity to contribute to their community in some way have more respect for that community. They become more attached to the community, more loyal to it and will want to continue contributing with a greater sense of self-respect and belonging. We know that children who have some form of spiritual or religious connection do far better in life, with something to believe in, hope becomes more possible than otherwise. We know that children who have the opportunity to develop one talent, to have one thing they can say "I'm good at [soccer, guitar, dancing], and I like doing this". Anything that gives the child a sense of competence will help prepare the child for life or life's terms. Children who have an opportunity to engage in organized recreation are far better prepared to live life on life's terms. The evidence is incontrovertible; the lessons learned in teamwork and socialization, respect for others, competition, and channeled aggression are invaluable life lessons, lessons that every child is deserving of learning.

Yet in spite of knowing that the social circumstances of children can determine their present and future health, knowing that the happiness, contentment, and security of the mother has a huge effect on determining the future emotional and physical well-being of the child, knowing that we have limited time and opportunity to ensure that young children are able to develop to the fullest extent, we continue to fail many of our children.

Nowhere is this more visible than in the world of Child Welfare which deals with children who are most likely to have experienced such losses; children who are most likely to have lacked the fundamental security and firm foundations that all of us depend upon to live rich and fruitful lives. Nowhere is this more

likely to happen than with children whose basic needs for security, love, food, attention, and attachment have not been met. Nowhere is this more likely to occur with than with children who live with a series of unrelated caregivers, whose love and emotional attachment may be peripheral at best. Nowhere is this more likely to occur than for Aboriginal children who, in addition to the burden that they carry as a result of their early backgrounds, have to carry the burden of losing their identity, their sense of self, and their connection to family, community, and culture. The evidence seems clear that for too many of these children, life becomes a revolving door of renewed poverty, homelessness, addiction, institutional life in jails and mental health settings.

Some have defined wisdom as the ability to apply knowledge into practice. Our question is, when does this knowledge and information turn into wisdom. While this discussion is focused on the Aboriginal people of Canada, it seems clear that Aboriginal people everywhere are suffering. As a human race, we know that twenty percent of our members are consuming eighty percent of the world's resources. We know that we are devastating Mother Earth in our practices, fouling its waters, polluting its air. We know that there are fundamental racist and oppressive attitudes towards others, particularly towards those with a darker shade of skin. We know that many of our mainstream institutions depend upon a constant supply of such people to maintain their existence. Our courts, our legal systems, our police forces, our jails depend upon a constant and increasing supply to keep their jobs. Yet we know that the solutions do not lie in the arrest, processing, and incarceration of poor black, Native, and Hispanic men. The child welfare system is not so different. Were it not for the chronic poverty in Aboriginal communities across the country, there would be far fewer Aboriginal families coming to the attention of the child welfare system; far fewer Aboriginal children coming into care.

The following describe some of the systemic issues that challenge all of us in the provision of a reactive child protection system.

The restored relationship involves the willingness to open ourselves to the place of another in such a way that we genuinely let the voice of another speak to us, and in such a way that we are willing to be changed when we hear that voice and experience the perspective of another. These stories are about severed relationships and the ongoing (and seemingly endless) damage that has resulted from the severance of that which was once whole.

Reflection

What are we doing to heal this severed relationship between us? To what extent are we now deepening this wound in our current legal institutions?

Lateral Violence and its sister, domestic violence

It is no secret that domestic violence and it close kin, domestic violence is a problem in our Aboriginal communities. This is not to suggest that it is not a huge problem in the rest of society. Man's inhumanity to man has been well documented over the centuries, and recent experiences attest to its perpetuation. But we do not have to look far afield to find examples of this our organisations, community organisations and churches. Perhaps it is more visible in our Aboriginal communities. Certainly, they seem to prevail in our justice, correctional, and child welfare systems. These are often what seem to trigger our interventions as the "private" matters come to the attention of various authorities.

Reflection

To what extent to our present practices serve to violate existing family relationships; separating husband and wife rather than helping them to reunite or coming to respect what each has to offer to the happiness and full development of their children.
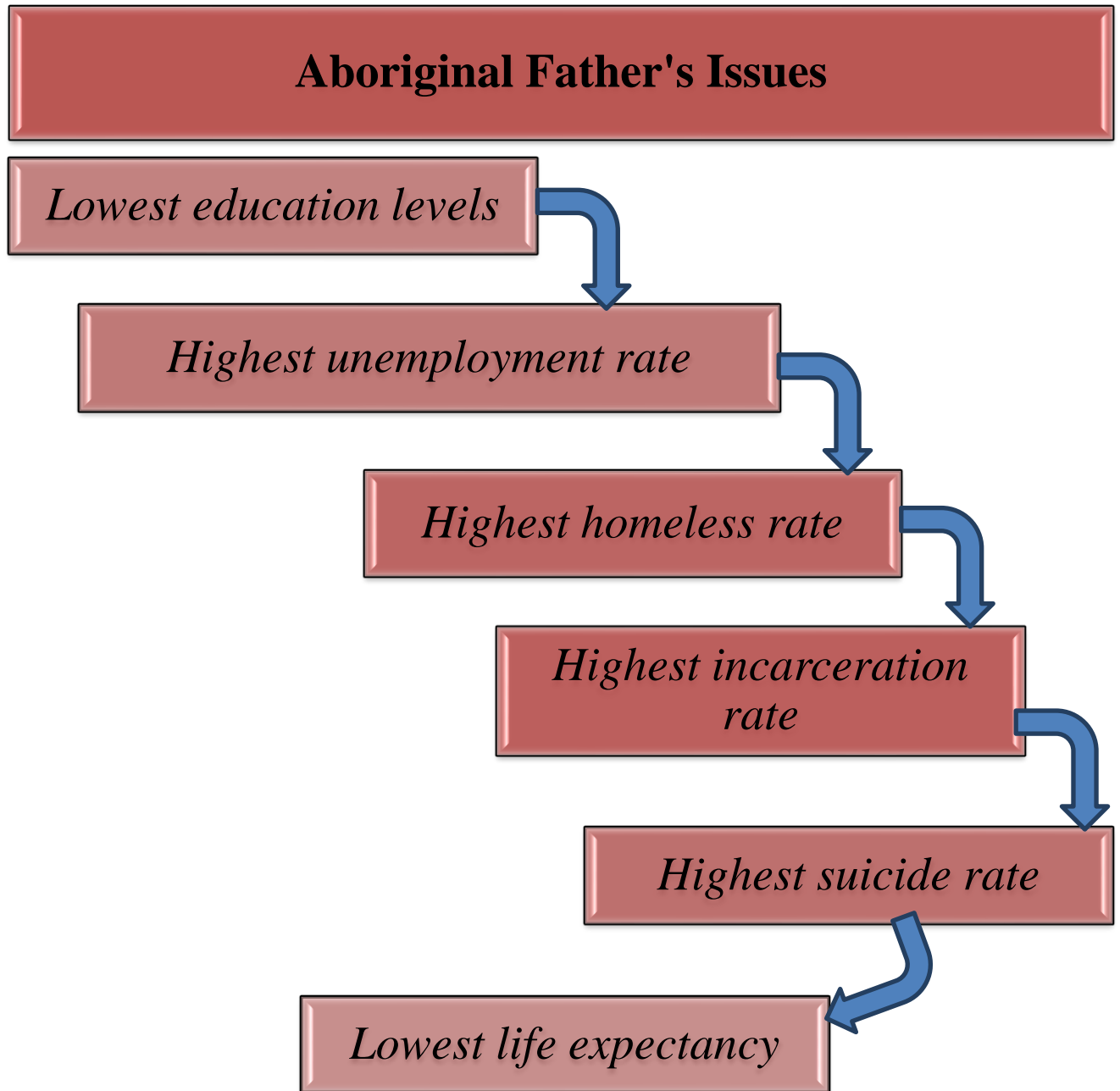
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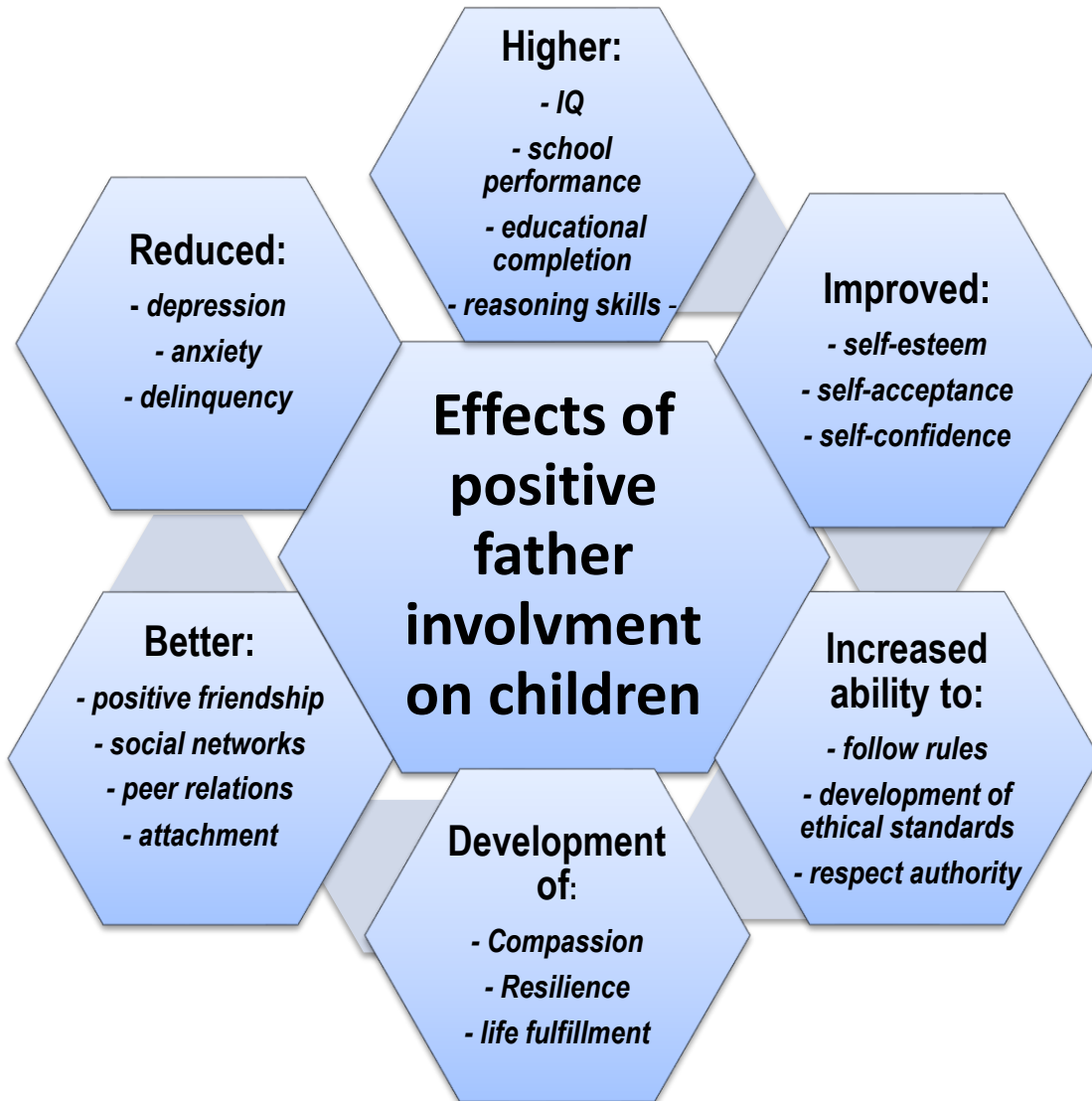
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Appendix 1: Aboriginal Father's Issues

Aboriginal Father's Issues

Lowest education levels

Highest unemployment rate

Highest homeless rate

Highest incarceration rate

Highest suicide rate

Lowest life expectancy

Appendix 2: Effects of Positive Involvement on Children

Higher:
- IQ
- school performance
- educational completion
- reasoning skills

Reduced:
- depression
- anxiety
- delinquency

Improved:
- self-esteem
- self-acceptance
- self-confidence

Effects of positive father involvment on children

Better:
- positive friendship
- social networks
- peer relations
- attachment

Increased ability to:
- follow rules
- development of ethical standards
- respect authority

Development of:
- Compassion
- Resilience
- life fulfillment

Appendix 3: Facts & Figures (Fallon et al., 2013)

- 13% of young adults report that their biological fathers have been incarcerated.
- 50% of inmates reported living with their child prior to being incarcerated
- 80% reported sharing the care of the children with the mothers before being incarcerated
- 30% reported having visits with their children while incarcerated
- 3% of non-aboriginal fathers are raising children alone
- 6% of aboriginal fathers are raising children alone compared to other men in Canada,
- Aboriginal men are 9 times more likely to be incarcerated and 3 x more likely to commit suicide.
- Lone parent families headed by men increased 14.6%, more than twice the growth of lone parent families headed by women (6.3%).
- 25% of biological fathers had a history of childhood involvement with child welfare
- 8.6% have been in substitute care
- 71.6% of mothers had a history of childhood involvement with child welfare
- 50% of fathers were considered irrelevant to both mothers and children by child welfare workers.
- 60% of fathers who were identified as a risk to children were not contacted by social workers
- 50% of the time they were considered a risk to the mother they were not contacted.
- 60% of incarcerated males report having at least one biological child.
- For every child who drops out of high school it costs society $360,000 to $540,000.
- For every child that becomes a heavy drug user it costs society $865,000 to $965,000.
- For every child who becomes a career criminal it costs society $2.6 – 4.6 million dollars.
- 35 years old is the average age of homeless fathers.
- 89% of them are not married to the mother of the children.
- 63% do not spend time with their children.
- 67% do not provide financial support to their children.
- 45% have children from multiple partners.
- First Nations children 6 to 8 times more likely to be placed in an out-of-home placement than non-Aboriginal children.

Appendix 4: Annotated Bibliography

Ashbourne, L., Daly, K., Brown, J., (2011). Responsiveness in father-child relationships: the Experience of fathers. *Fathering: A Journal of Theory, Research, and Practice about Men as Fathers*, 9 (1), 69-86.

Qualitative interviews with 215 fathers describe the emergent and responsive nature of the father-child relationship and its consequent influence on fathers themselves. Using a social constructionist or dialogic model of relationships, we highlight the importance of understanding the experience of fathers as they are actively engaged in responsive, relational, and interactional activities with their children. Fathers' descriptions of responsiveness highlight father-child interaction "in the moment," attention to children's expression of needs, and the influence of fathers' own sets of priorities and values. A critical element of responsiveness to children is that it requires shared time between fathers and their children. Responsiveness within the father-child relationship facilitates children's development and also provides fathers with opportunities to develop and understand themselves differently. The current study contributes to understanding men's development and the fathering experience by specifically exploring the influence on men of engaging in fathering, of attending to their children and experiencing their own responsiveness.

Ball, J., (2009). Fathering in the shadows: Aboriginal fathers and Canada's colonial legacies. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 624, 29-48.

An inaugural study of Aboriginal fathers' involvement in Canada conceptualized a temporal horizon within which to situate challenges and opportunities for Aboriginal father's involvement in caring for children following decades of colonial interventions that have diminished Aboriginal men's roles. Through five community-university partnerships, conversational interviews were held with 80 First Nations and Métis fathers in British Columbia, Canada. Using a grounded theory approach, a conceptual model was constructed identifying six key ecological and psychological factors that combine to account for Aboriginal men's experiences of fatherhood: personal wellness; learning fathering; socio-economic inclusion; social support; legislative and policy support; and cultural continuity. Elements within these domains, such as childhood experience of attachment and exposure to father role models, social capital, and generativity have been addressed in other models and research about fathers' involvement. Aboriginal fathers' accounts additionally bring into focus systemic barriers to positive fathers' involvement, including socioeconomic exclusion due to failures of the educational system, ongoing colonization through Canada's Indian Act, and mother-centrism in parenting programs and child welfare practices. Policy and program reforms are suggested that could increase Aboriginal fathers' positive and sustained engagement with their children.

Ball, J., (2010). Aboriginal fathers' involvement in reconstituting circles of care. *American Journal of Community Psychology,* 45, (1-2), 124-138.

This qualitative study, part of a Canadian national study of fathers' involvement, opened up First Nations and Métis fathering as a new area of inquiry. Conversational interviews with 80 Aboriginal fathers illuminated the socio-historical conditions that have shaped Aboriginal men's experiences of learning to be a father and becoming a man in the context of changing gender relationships and the regeneration of circles of care. Aboriginal fathers' experiences unfold in a socio-historical context fraught with difficulties. However, the study findings suggest cultural strengths and sources of resilience unseen in research and community programs driven by Euro-western perspectives. This research can inform efforts to reduce systemic barriers and reconstitute positive father involvement following disrupted intergenerational transmission of fathering in Canada and elsewhere.

Ball, J. (2012). 'We could be the turn-around generation': Harnessing Aboriginal fathers' potential to contribute to their children's well-being. *Paediatric Child Health*, 17 (7), 373-375.

 Links between children's well-being and their mothers' health, literacy, and behaviours are widely understood and accepted. Canada, similar to many other countries, has made longstanding investments in maternal and child health programs. Yet, both research evidence and conceptualization of the social determinants of health provide a solid rationale for securing fathers' involvement in their children's health and development. Research shows that although children can thrive without a father's involvement, regular contact with a positively involved father is strongly associated with good developmental and health outcomes.

Bellamy, J., (2009). A national study of male involvement among families in contact with the Child welfare system. *Child Maltreatment, 14 (3), 255-262*.

Few studies inform the frequency and type of adult male involvement in families in contact with child welfare, and even fewer explore how male involvement relates to child welfare outcomes. This study employed data from a sample of 3,978 families in contact with the U.S. child welfare system, drawn from the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being. The nature of male involvement in these families and its relationship to (a) caseworkers' perception of children's risk for maltreatment report and (b) entry into out-of-home care were explored. Results indicate that most caregivers report male involvement, distinct types of male involvement are related to the likelihood of out-of-home care, and households that include non-parental adult males are perceived by caseworkers as relatively risky. No male involvement indicator tested, however, was related to maltreatment report. Implications include the need to appropriately assess, include, and engage adult male family members across diverse family systems.

Berlyn, C., Wise, S. & Soriano, G. (2008). Engaging fathers in child and family services: Participation, perceptions and good practice. *Occasional Paper No.22, Canberra National Evaluation Consortium (University of NSW and Australian Institute of Family Studies*.

This occasional paper describes father participation in selected Stronger Families and Communities Strategy (SFCS) programs and services and identifies successful strategies for engaging with fathers. The paper provides the context for a discussion of how well fathers are included in child and family services, and their engagement in programs specifically designed to enhance parenting competencies and relationships. The research employed a mixed methodology: a survey of SFCS program managers on father engagement and in-depth fieldwork with a sample of selected services and programs. Service managers and facilitators participated in one-on-one interviews, and focus groups were held with father participants.

Brown, L., Callahan, M., Strega, S., Walmsley, C. & Dominelli, L. (2009). Manufacturing ghost fathers: the paradox of father presence and absence in child welfare. *Child and Family Social Work,* 14 (1), 25-34.

Fathers exist in the lives of women and children involved with child welfare authorities, and yet, they are rarely seen by child welfare. This invisibility exists whether or not fathers are deemed as risks or as assets to their families. Using an analysis of fundamental child welfare policies and practices and relevant literature, the paper examines how 'ghost' fathers are manufactured, and how this phenomenon affects families and professionals in child welfare. An analysis of gender, class, race and culture of child welfare discourses shows how these fathers are seen as deviant, dangerous, irresponsible and irrelevant, and even further, how absence in child welfare is inextricably linked to blaming mothers. In failing to work with fathers, child welfare ignores potential risks and assets for both mothers and children.

Cameron, G., Coady, N. & Hoy, S. (2012). Perspective on being a father from men involved with child welfare services. *Child and Family Social Work*, 19 (1), 14-23.

Fathers can make positive contributions to their children's well-being. However, involving the literature and this research indicate that fathers are much less likely to be engaged with child welfare services than mothers. This paper reports the findings of life story research with 18 fathers involved with child welfare. It focuses on these men's perspectives of fatherhood and their relationships with their children. Also, reactions to these fatherhood stories from father and service provider focus groups are examined. The findings challenge common perceptions of these fathers and highlight similarities and differences in perspectives between fathers and service providers. Implications for engaging fathers in child welfare practice are discussed.

Coady, N., Hoy, S. & Cameron, G., (2013). Fathers' experiences with child welfare services. *Child and Family Social Work*, 18 (3), 275-284.

The lack of engagement of fathers by child welfare services is well-documented in the literature as a serious problem. Towards addressing this problem, this paper reports the findings of interviews with 18 fathers about their involvement with child welfare services in Ontario, Canada. Qualitative analysis of the interviews yielded themes about what men saw as the positive and negative aspects of their involvement with child welfare. Positive aspects of service involvement for fathers included understanding and supportive workers, useful assistance from workers, being connected to useful resources and being given a 'wake-up call'. Negative aspects of service involvement included uncaring, unhelpful and unprofessional workers; prejudice against fathers; and experiencing the child welfare system as unresponsive, uncaring and rigid. Implications for practice are discussed with a view to improving the engagement of men in, and their experiences with, child welfare services.

Coakley, T. (2013).   The influence of father involvement on child welfare permanency outcomes: a secondary data analysis. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 35 (1), 174-182.
Children have a higher risk for poor psychosocial outcomes when their fathers are absent or uninvolved. These children are more likely to live in poverty, drop out of school, and engage in risky behaviors like using alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs. Only 54% of nearly a half million children in foster care had contact with their fathers in the past year compared to 72% of children from the general population. Data on the involvement of fathers whose children are in out-of-home placements are scarce and child welfare agency efforts to involve fathers and children's permanency outcomes also are not well documented. This present study entails a secondary data analysis of 60 foster care case records to assess the influence of father involvement on children's permanency outcomes. The findings indicate that when fathers are involved their children have shorter lengths of stay in foster care and they are more likely to be reunited with birth parents or placed with relatives after foster care than in non-relative placements. This study contributes to the emerging research on father involvement and explores agency practices that might account for long-term and non-relative out-of-home placements. Implications for child welfare practice, policy, and research are discussed.

Dads make a difference. (2004). Cowichan *Valley Citizen.*
The training is designed for people who work with families in any capacity. The program focuses on how to engage overburdened fathers in the lives of their children by building upon the strengths of fathers, of families, and of parent-child relationships. Another important facet of the training is how to create father-friendly environments within existing agencies and programs in our community. Overall the workshop is aimed at helping develop the skills to foster, encourage and maintain a greater degree of father involvement.

Dominelli, L., Strega, S., Walmsley, C., Callahan, M. & Brown, L. (2011). "Here's my story": fathers of "looked after" children recount their experiences in the Canadian child welfare system. *British Journal of Social Work*, 41, 351-367.

Fathers tend to be excluded and 'invisible' participants in the child welfare system. We interviewed fathers with 'looked after' children in a child protection system in Western Canada. They wanted active roles in children's lives and to become engaged fathers, whether the children were theirs by birth or not. Their stories exposed the strategies they used to convince social workers that they were 'good enough' fathers. In the telling, they revealed the barriers they surmounted to create meaningful relationships with these children. In this paper, we focus on the stories fathers used to describe their involvement in caring for children. These were: 'misrepresented dad'; 'survivor dad'; 'mothering father'; 'denied identity dad'; and 'citizen dad'. We conclude that the fathers' narratives depict a complex typology that transcends the 'good father'–'bad father' binary that informs practice and consider how social workers can involve fathers more effectively in child welfare practice by actively listening and drawing on their strengths.

Dubowitz, H., (2009). Commentary on fathers and children and maltreatment. *Child Maltreatment,* 14 (3), 291-293.

The articles on fathers and child maltreatment in this special issue offer welcome insights into an important area that continues to be understudied and poorly understood. The ecological framework set forth by Bronfenbrennerm (1979) and applied to child maltreatment by Belsky (1980, 1993) has been broadly accepted for understanding the etiology of child maltreatment. It is clear that fathers constitute an important aspect of children's ecology, influencing their lives, directly and indirectly. Thus, understanding fathers' roles and involvement in children's lives is critical for fully understanding the underpinnings of child maltreatment and for developing optimal practice and policies.

Fatherhood Institute. Help us achieve a great dad for every child. Retrieved from:
http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/2013/help-us-achieve-a-great-dad-for-every-child/

Dads matter hugely to their children. If you have a positive relationship with your dad, you're likely to do better at school, be happier, have higher self-esteem, and even form better relationships when you're an adult. But all too often fathers get forgotten or sidelined, and governments, public services and employers act as if mothers are the only ones who really matter. We need this to change.

Featherstone, B., (2006). Why gender matters in child welfare and protection. *Critical Social Policy,* 26 (2), 294-314.

This article argues that the lack of a gender analysis in New Labour policy in relation to child welfare and protection has led to problematic gaps at the level of policy and service provision. It explores why the

widespread mobilization of terms such as 'parent' and 'child' obscures important and persistent issues in relation to gender equity in care-giving, sexual violence and help-seeking. Whilst there is some attention being paid to the needs of fathers, including the need to involve them in service provision, this attention is tokenistic and inadequately grounded in practice realities. The valorization of the 'new', particularly in the context of a New Labour project grounded in using language in a very considered way, offers opportunities to consider the 'power of language' at the same time as it obscures the 'language of power'. Gender is a particular casualty in such a climate.

Ferguson, H. & Hogan, F. (2004). *Strengthening families through fathers: developing policy and practice in relation to vulnerable fathers and their families*. Dublin: The Department of Social and Family Affairs.

The key research question which this study addresses is how the exclusion of men from the majority of child care and family support work that goes on can be reversed. It focuses particularly on vulnerable fathers, defined as fathers who are known, through their involvement with social services, to be struggling with being a good enough father. The study includes a qualitative study based on in depth interviews with fathers, mothers and children.

Fleming, J., (2007). If we get the mums and kids in, we are doing well: father's absence in the context of child welfare; a review of the literature. *Children Australia*, 32 (3) 13-20.

This paper looks at the area of father absence in child welfare, which is a growing topic of interest in Australia and elsewhere. It is based on the author's PhD research which is seeking to explore the reasons why fathers and father figures are not always present in child and family welfare. In many child abuse cases fathers are missing from the assessment/intervention. The methodology is qualitative using a grounded theory approach. Initial findings are eliciting that workers do in fact engage fathers/father figures albeit on a very limited level and also that workers do find it difficult to articulate their practice with fathers as opposed to mothers. The paper will outline some of the current key practice issues that workers and managers can face when delivering services to families where there is father absence.

Foster, M., McCombs-Thornton, K., (2013). Child welfare and the challenge of causal inference. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 35 (7), 1130-1142.

Causal inference refers to the assessment of cause and effect relationships in observational data—i.e., in situations where random assignment is impossible or impractical. Choices involving children in the child welfare system evoke core elements of causal inference—manipulation and the counterfactual. How would a child's circumstances differ if we changed her environment? This article begins with one mathematical approach to framing causal inference, the potential outcomes framework. This methodology is a cornerstone of newer approaches to causal inference. This framework makes clear the identification problem inherent in causal inference and highlights a key assumption often used to identify the model

(ignorability or no unobserved confounding). The article then outlines the various approaches to causal inference and organizes them around whether they assume ignorability as well as other key features of each approach. The article then provides guidelines for producing good causal inference. These guidelines emerge from a review of methodological literature as broad ranging as epidemiology, statistics, economics, and policy analysis. These steps will be illustrated using an example from child welfare. The article concludes with suggestions for how the field could apply these newer methods.

Franck, E. (2001). Outreach to birthfathers of children in out-of-home care. *Child Welfare*, 80 (3), 381-399.

This article presents findings from a study of casework outreach to birthparents of children in out-of-home care. The study explored whether the birthfather was being ignored as a resource for discharge planning. It examined the outreach and interventions |of caseworkers in three New York City out-of-home care agencies. Casework activity levels were found to be higher for birthmothers than for birthfathers, and a complex relationship among the variables of gender, outreach, and response was revealed. The nature and value of more specific outreach toward birthfathers of children in care and the risk of ignoring men in the birth family system are discussed.

Gordon, D., Oliveros, A., Hawes, S., Iwamoto, D. & Rayford, B. (2012). Engaging fathers in child protection services: a review of factors and strategies across ecological systems. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34 (8), 1399-1417.

Current policy regarding child protection services places increasing demands for providers to engage fathers whose children are involved in the child protection process. This requisite brings to the fore the ongoing challenges that fathers have historically faced in working within these systems. Despite this need, there is little empirical evidence regarding the factors and strategies that impact the engagement of fathers in interventions relevant to child protection services. This comprehensive and systemic review synthesizes the available literature regarding factors and strategies that may foster paternal involvement in the child protection system and their services. We organize the literature concerning paternal engagement in child and family services around an ecological model that examines paternal engagement from individual, family, service provider, program, and community and policy levels. We consider factors and strategies along a continuum of engagement through intent to enroll, enrollment, and retention. This review advances theory by elucidating key factors that foster father engagement. The review also highlights the gaps in the literature and provides strategies for how researchers can address these areas. Future directions in the arenas of practice and policy are discussed.

Halberstadt, A. &Lozada, F. (2011). Emotion development in infancy through the lens of culture. *Emotion Review* 3 (2), 158-168. DOI: 10.1177/1754073910387946

The goal of this review is to consider how culture impacts the socialization of emotion development in infancy, and infants' and young children's subsequent outcomes. First, we argue that parents' socialization decisions are embedded within cultural structures, beliefs, and practices. Second, we identify five broad cultural frames (collectivism/individualism; power distance; children's place in family and culture; ways children learn; and value of emotional experience and expression) that help to organize current and future research. For each frame, we discuss the impact on parents' socialization practices and infants' subsequent outcomes relating to emotion-related experience, expression, and understanding. We also generate testable hypotheses to further our understanding of the relationships between the five frames and emotion development in infancy.

Pattnaik, J., Roettger, M. & Swisher, R. (2013). Incarcerated fathers. Implications for father involvement. *Father Involvement in Young Children's Lives, a Global Analysis*, 107-122.

In the United States, father's incarceration has become an increasingly common event in the lives of children, impacting an estimated 1.5 million children annually, or about 13 % of all persons at some point in their childhood. Father's incarceration is associated with a wide range of adverse outcomes in childhood and adolescence, including: externalizing behavior, depression, drug use, and poor educational outcomes. In this chapter, we review trends in father's incarceration, differences across subgroups of the population, and discuss its consequences for father involvement and child outcomes. We also discuss the policy and practice implications of existing research in the field.

Pattnaik, J., Pattnaik, J. & Medeiros, C. (2013). Involvement of homeless fathers. Challenges and possibilities. *Father Involvement in Young Children's Lives, a Global Analysis*, 123-151.

While the field of father involvement is gaining increasing sophistication in theory and research, homeless fathers have remained invisible to researchers and policy-makers. With the rise of family homelessness around the world, there is a need for devoting scholarly interest on homeless fathers and their children. This chapter provides an overview of existing theoretical perspectives, issues, and programs relevant to homeless fathers and their children. We also offer specific and feasible recommendations for practitioners and researchers.

Stahlschmidt, M., Threfall, J., Seay, K., Lewis, E. & Kohl, P. (2013). Recruiting fathers to parenting programs: advice from dads and fatherhood program providers. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 35 (10), 1734-1741.

The benefits of high-quality father–child relationships for fathers and children alike are well documented. While evidence suggests parenting programs can improve the quality of father–child relationships, few fathers participate in such programs. This qualitative study aims to fill the gap in knowledge on best practices for recruiting urban African American fathers, a group of fathers with unique parenting challenges, to parenting programs. Focus groups were conducted with 29 fathers to gain their

perspectives on recruitment strategies. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with a nationwide sample of 19 fatherhood program providers to learn about their most successful recruitment strategies. Recruitment strategies based on emergent themes from the focus groups and interviews are presented here. Themes included using word-of-mouth recruitment, increasing advertising, and targeting advertising specifically to urban African American fathers, providing transportation and incentives, recruiting through the courts, collaborating with other community agencies, and offering parenting programming along with other programming valued by fathers such as employment assistance. Implications for developing strategies for recruiting urban African American fathers to parenting programs are discussed.

Storhaug, A. & Øien, K. (2012). Fathers' encounters with the child welfare service. *Children and Youth Services Review,* 34 (1), 296-303.

In this article, we examined fathers who were or had been in contact with the Child Welfare Services in Norway. All of the fathers included in this study had children with women who were unable to take care of them, either because of substance abuse or mental health problems. Hence, the fathers had the primary responsibility for the children. We looked at how these fathers experienced being met and assessed as caregivers by the Child Welfare Service, as well as how they experienced their own competency as caregivers. To explore these themes, seven fathers who were in contact with or had recently been in contact with the Child Welfare Service were interviewed. The discourses on fatherhood, inspired by Scourfield (2003), were used as a framework for the analysis, and interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used to analyse the interviews. We found the fathers' experiences to be considered within the discourses on "fathers as a threat", "fathers as irrelevant" and "fathers as better than mothers". In addition, we shed light on topics such as the cultural lag, being single-handedly responsible for the children, and the fathers' views on what is important in their contact with the children.

Our goal was to increase awareness about fathers who are in contact with the Child Welfare Service so that they are met in a way that helps to support them in their role as fathers for the benefit of their children.

Strega, S., Fleet, C., Brown, L., Dominelli, L., Callahan, M. & Walmsley, C., (2008). Connecting father absence and mother blame in child welfare policies and practice*. Children and Youth Services Review,* 30 (7), 705-716.

This paper reports the results of research about fathers and child welfare conducted in a mid-size Canadian city. The overall study uses a variety of modalities to assess the current state of child welfare policy, practice and discourse with fathers of children who come to the attention of child protection authorities, with particular attention to fathers of the children of mothers who were adolescent at the time of at least one child's birth. Our research includes birth/biological fathers, stepfathers and men providing emotional, financial or social support to a child or children. This paper reports on the first phase of the study, in which we reviewed a random sample of child protection case files utilising both quantitative and

qualitative methods. Our analysis and discussion is informed by a review of recent child welfare literature related to fathers and by related research team members have completed or are currently engaged in, including studies about young mothers in care, kinship care, risk assessment, failure to protect and the narratives of child welfare workers. Our intention is to contribute to reframing child welfare practice, policy and discourse in ways that are more inclusive of fathers and less blaming of mothers.

Strega, S., Brown, L., Callahan, M., Dominelli, L.& Walmsley, C.(2009). Working with me, working at me: fathers' narratives of child welfare. *Journal of Progressive Human Services*, 20 (1), 871-207.

This article examines the experiences of fathers involved in the child welfare system. Fathers who were interviewed as part of a multiyear Canadian project were atypical in that they were actively engaged with the child welfare system. Their stories show how, although not always physically present, child welfare's ghostly form is still very much a part of the daily lives of fathers and their families. These fathers had to be resourceful and resilient as they endeavored to look "promising" to the child welfare system. The critical analysis offers insights into a more father-inclusive approach to child welfare that has implications for policy and practice development.

Walmsley, C., Strega, S., Brown, L., Dominelli, L. & Callahan, M. (2009). More than a playmate, less than a co-parent: fathers in the Canadian BSW curriculum. *Canadian Social Work Review,* 26 (1), 73-96.

To understand social workers' limited engagement with fathers in child welfare practice, the authors examine the educational preparation undergraduate students receive for work with fathers, specifically the fathering content found in the required readings of child welfare, family practice and family therapy, human development and human behaviour, Aboriginal studies, and child and youth social work courses in a two-thirds sample of Canadian bachelor of social work programs. While explicit content on fathering is minimal, it can be found in some of the texts used for these courses. In human development texts, references to fathers are brief and describe fathers as more active playmates than mothers and as compensatory attachment figures. In family practice texts, discussion of fathers is more extensive and includes issues such as gender roles, house hold work, outside work, changes with the birth of the first child, divorced fathers, single fathers, gay fathers, teen fathers, and the influence of the father's culture. No evidence of Canadian content or any discussion of fathering in relation to child welfare was found. Six learning outcomes for the BSW curriculum are suggested, along with relevant resources with respect to gender awareness, variations in Canadian mothering and fathering, and practice with fathers in child welfare.

Zahoni, L., Warburton, W., Bussey, K. & McMaugh, A, (2013). Fathers as 'core business' in child welfare practice and research: An interdisciplinary review. *Children and Youth Services Review.* 35 (7), 1055-1070.

This literature review draws from a wide array of interdisciplinary research to argue that fathers need to be included in child welfare practice and research to the same extent as mothers. Social work and child maltreatment literature highlight that fathers are often overlooked and viewed more negatively than mothers in child welfare practice. There are noteworthy theoretical and practical reasons for this poor engagement of fathers in practice. However, advances in attachment theory and recent research findings from developmental and fathering literature indicate that fathers influence their children independently from mothers and equally strongly. Further research demonstrates that fathers and father figures can be both potential risk factors and protective factors in the lives of vulnerable children. Therefore, children are placed at increased risk if dangerous fathers are not engaged, and are also significantly disadvantaged if supportive fathers are not engaged. The review concludes with practical implications for child welfare practice and research.

Appendix 5: A Father Friendly Checklist for Organizations

Introduction

The National Quality Improvement Center on Non-Resident Fathers and the Child Welfare System, National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI), American Humane Association, and American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law welcome you to the *Father Friendly Check-Up™* for Child Welfare Agencies and Organizations[1]. This tool will help you assess the degree to which your organization's operations encourage father involvement in the activities and programs you offer.

Today more American children are growing up in homes without their biological father than at any other point in American history. Trends such as divorce and remarriage, as well as more births outside of marriage, result in a diminishing role of fathers in the daily lives of their children. Involving fathers in the lives of their children becomes an even greater challenge when these children are involved in the public child welfare system. This is especially true in cases where the child has been removed from the home and placed in non-relative or stranger's care. Reunifying children with their birth families, as quickly as possible, without jeopardizing the children's safety is the first priority. However, identifying family resources, especially non-resident fathers and paternal relatives, continues to be a challenge for the child welfare system.

As discussed below, most foster children are not living with their fathers when they are removed from their home and placed in care. In such cases, child welfare agencies must identify and locate the non-resident father, ideally before such placement or at least soon thereafter which is often challenging. The agency's "reasonable efforts" to prevent placement should include a fair consideration of the father's home as a placement for a child who is considered unsafe in his or her mother's home due to abuse, neglect, or maternal incapacity. They must also assess the benefits, detriments and difficulties associated with the non-resident father's involvement in the child welfare case generally. They should also consider whether there is the potential for an appropriate placement with, or other assistance to the child, from paternal kin.

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[1] For the purposes of this document, the term "Child Welfare Agencies and Organizations" includes all government entities or private entities that contract with the government to investigate and handle allegations of child abuse, abandonment and/or neglect.

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In 2006, the Urban Institute, under contract with the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, published its final report on child welfare agencies' efforts to identify, locate, and involve non-resident fathers in the child welfare process. The report, entitled, "*What about the Dads?"* reviewed 1,958 cases of children who were removed by child welfare agencies from their homes where their biological father did not reside. Telephone interviews with 1,222 child welfare agency caseworkers involved in these cases showed that:

- 88 percent of non-resident fathers were identified by the child welfare agency:
- 55 percent of non-resident fathers were contacted by the caseworker;
- 30 percent of the non-resident fathers visited their child; and
- 28 percent of non-resident fathers expressed an interest in assuming custody of their child.

Despite these diminishing numbers, the *"What About the Dads?"* report found that 70 percent of caseworkers had received training on engaging fathers. Moreover, caseworkers who received training were more likely to report having located fathers.

Based on all of the findings, the report recommends, among other things, that child welfare agencies: (1) identify and search for non-resident fathers early in cases; (2) train caseworkers on identifying, locating, and involving fathers; and (3) develop models for engaging non-resident fathers constructively (Malm, Murray, & Geen (2006). *What about the Dads?* Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau.).

This assessment is designed to help Child Welfare Agencies and Organizations take an active, positive approach in creating an environment that involves fathers and fosters the healthy development of children.

The Assessment

You will apply the assessment categories identified below to your organization.

- Leadership and organizational philosophy
- Program management policies and procedures
- Parent-involvement program
- Program physical environment
- Staff training and professional development
- Collaboration and organizational networking
- Community outreach

This assessment will encourage staff to examine their organization as well as their own attitudes about fathers.

Assessment Checklists

You will complete a series of assessment checklists designed specifically for Child Welfare Agencies and Organizations. There is one checklist for each assessment category.

The checklists consist of statements that might or might not be true about your organization. Quite simply, you will assess whether the statements are true of your organization. Complete the checklists by placing a checkmark in the boxes next to the statements that are true of your organization. If a statement on a checklist is not true of your organization, do not check the box.

Use your gut reaction to assess your organization on each statement. You might discover that you can check only a few boxes in each category. If that's the case, don't worry: a low score is not an indictment of your organization as being unfriendly toward dads. You might find that your organization includes fathers to a high degree in certain areas, but not in others. Use this assessment to identify areas for improvement, no matter what you discover.

Your Father-Friendly Score

After completing the assessment, you will receive a score for each category together with suggestions that the Quality Improvement Center on Non-Resident Fathers and the Child Welfare System has identified as best practices to increase the father friendliness of your Child Welfare organization. You will then have the opportunity to use the score from the *Father Friendly Check-Up™* to set goals and identify priorities that are unique to your organization's way of serving children and families.

Leadership and Organizational Philosophy	

Check the box only if the statement is true of your organization.

The leadership/administration of my organization:

☐	Communicates to caseworkers, attorneys and other staff that non-resident fathers (those who do not live in the home where a child has been abused or neglected) and paternal family members are a resource for the child (as a potential placement option or other care provider).
☐	Expects caseworkers, attorneys and other staff to engage and work with both non-resident and resident fathers proactively.
☐	Expects all staff to interact with fathers in a gender-responsive, non-accusatory, and non-blaming manner.
☐	Expects staff doing hiring for the organization to include fathers as participants/consultants in the new staff hiring process and in interviews.
☐	Encourages the healthy development of the *father-child* relationship.
☐	Encourages the healthy development of the *father-mother* relationship, whether or not the father and mother are together, except in cases where there is a history of domestic violence or other circumstances making such a relationship not in the child's best interests.
☐	Expects staff providing orientation and training for newly hired personnel to emphasize the importance of involving non-resident fathers in cases and to do so during the earliest days of employment.
☐	Expects staff doing hiring for the organization to emphasize through interview questioning the importance of involving non-resident fathers in cases and to determine whether candidates for employment personally support and value an aggressive approach to involving non-resident fathers in cases.
☐	Encourages couples who are considering marriage to access pre-marital education including information on parenting issues.
☐	Supports fathers on the organization's staff in balancing work and family life.
☐	Provides adequate funding and staff to effectively serve fathers.

☐	Provides families with balanced information on father involvement by discussing the negative impact of father absence and the positive impact of involved fathers.
☐	Believes that a child welfare organization's services should be provided as much to fathers as they are to mothers.
☐	Expects caseworkers, agency attorneys and other staff to use fathers as a resource for the child (for example, for information such as health histories, to identify potential assistance to the child from paternal relatives, and to identify potential kinship foster placements).
☐	Has developed a vision or mission statement that includes serving fathers.
☐	Encourages staff to communicate to families that fathers are just as important as mothers in raising healthy children.
☐	Helps families understand father involvement from a holistic perspective (i.e., physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual involvement).
☐	Expects staff to include a father component in new staff orientation and training activities.
☐	Encourages staff to connect fathers with individuals and community-based organizations that can provide them with the resources needed to become involved, responsible, committed dads.
☐	Works with mothers to involve fathers in the lives of children.
☐	Examines and expresses their own attitudes and beliefs about supporting fathers.
☐	Supports fathers with tools, information, policies, and programs that help them in their fathering roles.
☐	Experiments and remains flexible in creating, promoting, delivering, and evaluating family-directed services.
☐	Displays a positive attitude about fathers and men when interacting with families.
☐	Supports fathers in their cases in balancing work and family life.

☐ **Total Score**

Check the box only if the statement is true of your organization.

The policies and procedures of my organization:

☐	Include a clear expectation that caseworkers and other staff will **identify** fathers early in child welfare cases and continue to attempt to identify them throughout the life of the case.
☐	Include a clear expectation that caseworkers and other staff will **locate** fathers early in child welfare cases and continue to search for them throughout the life of the case.
☐	Include a clear expectation that caseworkers and other staff will **contact** fathers early in child welfare cases and continue to contact them throughout the life of the case.
☐	Provide clear case documentation methods to include specific identifying information about fathers.
☐	Include a clear expectation that caseworkers and other staff will utilize child support enforcement staff to identify and locate fathers.
☐	Include a clear expectation that caseworkers and other staff will utilize parent locator services and locator technologies including the use of public assistance records, motor vehicle records, hospital records, and other public records to identify and locate fathers.
☐	Encourage fathers/men in their cases to balance work and family life.
☐	Ensure that a father who has not abused/neglected his child and who acts to gain custody is always subject to the same procedures and requirements that would be applied to a child's mother in the same situation.
☐	Include a clear expectation that caseworkers, agency attorneys and other agency staff will make all relevant and appropriate case information available to fathers (for example, case plans, changes in placements, court dates).
☐	Ensure that fathers are included in, and know and understand what is expected of them under case plans, and are provided with resources to meet those expectations.
☐	Ensure that fathers are consistently treated in a gender-responsive, non-accusatory, non-blaming manner.
☐	Include a clear expectation that all policies and procedures will promote involvement of non-custodial parents and their kin in the life of the child.
☐	Include a clear expectation that caseworkers, agency attorneys and other agency staff will proactively engage and work effectively with fathers in

	conducting the work of the organization.
☐	Ensure that forms for families and staff (for example, intake forms, applications and questionnaires) are gender neutral except where gender-specific information is vital to the case.
☐	Ensure that caseworkers, agency attorneys and other agency staff explain to fathers their rights and responsibilities while also emphasizing the importance of their involvement in child welfare and court processes.
☐	Include referrals to resources that help dads with personal development, parenting, and family life in general.
☐	Use measurement tools and methodologies for evaluating the effectiveness of services provided to fathers.
☐	Evaluate the effectiveness of staff in working with fathers when reviewing staff performance.
☐	In situations where the mother does not want the non-resident father involved with the child, include procedures for caseworkers to assess promptly and fairly whether the father's involvement would create a risk of physical or emotional harm to the child.
☐	Help both the mother and the father resolve differences among them, with the goal of the best interest of the child in mind.
☐	Provide a system and tools to hire casework staff with the knowledge, skills, and sensitivity to interact productively with fathers, as well as with mothers, and children.

☐   **Total Score**

Parent-involvement Program

Check the box only if the statement is true of your organization.

My Organization:

☐	Uses approaches and programs with fathers that are intended to promote meaningful and sustained father engagement in the life of his child.
☐	Includes a strengths-based approach to working with fathers that begins with where the father is in his development, not with where staff thinks he should be.
☐	Provides services that have equal regard and respect for parenting approaches typical of fathers and mothers.
☐	Offers services specifically directed at fathers.
☐	Provides families with balanced information on father involvement discussing the negative impact of father absence and the positive impact of involved fathers, as well as information on father involvement when there is a history of domestic violence.
☐	Periodically surveys fathers to determine their needs, concerns and interests related to the organization's child welfare work.
☐	Provides fatherhood resources in the form of materials and information emphasizing the importance of responsible fathering and fathering skills.
☐	Uses fatherhood resources, parenting curricula and educational materials that reflect the diversity of fathers served by the agency/organization.
☐	Provides effective measurement tools and methodologies for evaluating efforts directed at fathers.
☐	Expects staff to support the belief that fathers can be excellent parents.
☐	Expects staff to make every effort to interact with fathers.
☐	Promotes father engagement by involving fathers and the father's extended family in case planning early in a case.
☐	Provides information for fathers that includes the benefits of a healthy marriage on child development and men's well-being.
☐	Provides information for fathers that helps prepare men for marriage or helps fathers strengthen their marriage.
☐	Refers fathers to community-based father support groups when such groups are available and when referral is appropriate.
☐	Presents information to fathers in ways that match men's typical learning styles (i.e., hands on, interactive, visually engaging, opportunities for discussion and debate, etc.)
☐	Hires male staff to deliver child welfare services with the specific goal of

	enabling the agency/organization to interact more effectively with fathers.
☐	Hires service delivery staff, of either gender, that mirrors the fathers served in culture, race, language, age, etc.
☐	Refers fathers to peer-led programs for parents in the child welfare system when such programs are available and when referral is appropriate.
☐	Expects staff to avoid using language that is divisive and that stereotypes men/fathers and women/mothers.
☐	Maintains lists of recommended father-oriented and male-oriented resources (for example, fatherhood classes and support groups, employment services, educational services, legal services) and expects staff to promote the use of these resources with fathers when appropriate.
☐	Expects staff to be aware of and refer fathers to special community-based events that celebrate fatherhood and fathers.

☐ **Total Score**

Program Physical Environment

Remember: Think about your organization's overall physical environment that surrounds families being served (for example, waiting areas). Also, think about the ways in which your organization's physical environment reflects/reinforces the values held by staff members. Is the environment clearly more "female oriented" than "gender neutral"?

Check the box only if the statement is true of your organization.
The environment/atmosphere of my organization:

☐	Says, through visible father-related images in the waiting room and in caseworkers' offices that "Fathers are expected and welcome here."
☐	Has gender-neutral colors and decorating scheme.
☐	Offers reading materials (i.e., books, magazines and other literature) directed toward fathers/men as well as mothers/women.
☐	Has a staff listing containing photos of both male and female staff.
☐	Has male staff in positions where visitors are likely to have initial visual or telephone contact with the agency/organization (for example, receptionist, security guard).
☐	Has family restrooms or a diaper deck in the men's restroom.
☐	If a TV or video plays in waiting areas, some of the programs or videos appeal to men.
☐	If a library is available to families, it includes parenting and other information directed toward fathers.

☐   **Total Score**

Staff Training and Professional Development

Check the box only if the statement is true of your organization.

The staff in my agency/organization:

☐	Have been trained in how to ensure that a father/man who is contacted by the organization for the first time in connection with a case knows that he and his case participation are welcome.
☐	Are open to constructive criticism regarding personal biases, including biases against men/fathers.
☐	Are comfortable with differences in parenting styles typical of fathers and mothers.
☐	Believe that fathers are important to the healthy development of children.
☐	Believe that fathers can be excellent parents.
☐	Have been trained on the importance of identifying, locating, and contacting fathers early in child welfare cases and continuing these efforts throughout the life of the case.
☐	Have been trained in the use of parent locator services and other locator technologies in order to more effectively identify and locate fathers.
☐	Have been trained on how to work with fathers in a gender-responsive, non-accusatory, non-blaming manner.
☐	Have been made aware of community resources that offer services specific to fathers, including those involved in the child welfare system.
☐	Have been trained on how to work effectively with both mothers and fathers when the relationships are contentious, including identifying when domestic violence is a factor in the relationship.
☐	Have been trained on how to work effectively with fathers who may express their opinions strongly and loudly, but who pose no physical danger to staff.
☐	Perceive my organization's programs and services to be as much for fathers as for mothers.
☐	Avoid using language that is divisive and that stereotypes men/fathers and women/mothers.
☐	Make every attempt to interact with mothers and fathers equally when they come in together to receive services.
☐	Seek fathers' input in decision-making situations involving important aspects of children's day-to-day lives.
☐	Have participated in training that includes explicit discussion of the importance of

	fathers to the healthy development of children.
☐	Encourage mothers to cooperate with fathers in raising children and vice versa.
☐	Have been trained in gender differences in communication styles.
☐	Have been trained in including a father component in new staff orientation and training.
☐	Have been trained on the best practices of father involvement used by other child welfare organizations.
☐	Have been trained in including questions related to father involvement in new staff hiring practices such as interviews.
☐	Have been trained to recognize and appreciate father's typical parenting styles, and how they differ from mothers' styles. This includes why responsible, committed fathering is important to children's well-being.
☐	Have been trained in cultural and familial barriers to father involvement in the lives of children.
☐	Have been trained to examine their own attitudes, beliefs and behavior toward accepting and including fathers.
☐	Have been trained in helping fathers balance work and family life.
☐	Have been trained in hiring casework staff with the knowledge, skills, and sensitivity to interact productively with fathers, mothers and children.
☐	Have been trained to recognize and know male cultural patterns and the ways they become evident when males/fathers interact with others.

☐   **Total Score**

Collaboration and Organizational Networking

Check the box only if the statement is true of your organization.

My organization:

☐	Works to promote the education of juvenile and family court judges and court employees (in the various types of courts) about the ways in which children benefit when fathers are responsibly involved in the lives of their children.
☐	Develops a good relationship with local child support enforcement offices and staff members in order to be of mutual assistance in helping obtain appropriate financial support of children, learning more about individual family situations and in better promoting the welfare of children in the families served by the child welfare agency.
☐	Promotes coordination and collaboration with the larger father-engagement community, such as fatherhood programs and organizations that regularly work with fathers and families.
☐	Works to promote education for attorneys (especially those who represent fathers and children as well as those who represent the state or county in child welfare court proceedings) about the importance to children of having involved, responsible, committed fathers in their lives, as well as how to use the legal system to better engage fathers.
☐	Works to educate courts, parent attorneys, child support enforcement staff, and social service caseworkers about the importance of explaining to fathers their rights and responsibilities, while also emphasizing the importance of their involvement in child welfare and court processes.
☐	Actively works in partnership with one or more other public or private agencies to **identify** fathers of children the child welfare organization serves.
☐	Actively works in partnership with one or more other public or private agencies to **locate** fathers of children served by the child welfare organization.
☐	Actively works in partnership with one or more other public or private agencies to **contact** fathers of children served by the child welfare organization.
☐	Actively works in partnership with one or more other public or private agencies to **engage** fathers of children served by the child welfare organization.

☐   **Total Score**

Community Outreach

Check the box only if the statement is true of your organization.
My organization:

☐	Is perceived by the *community at large* as "father-friendly".
☐	Is perceived by *fathers and men* as "father-friendly".
☐	Encourages other organizations within the broader child welfare field (including court related organizations and child support enforcement) to work with fathers on enhancing positive relationships with their children.
☐	Encourages organizations in other professional fields (such as healthcare, business, faith-based, law enforcement) to work with fathers.
☐	Makes presentations, holds workshops, or presents papers at conferences on the organization's work with fathers.
☐	Participates in a network or coalition of organizations and leaders that promotes responsible fatherhood community-wide.
☐	Submits articles or article ideas on the organization's work with fathers for publication in print media (e.g., journals, magazines, newsletters, newspapers).
☐	Periodically issues press releases on the organization's success in working with fathers.
☐	Promotes responsible fatherhood in the community as a preventive measure in the fight to reduce the incidence of negative outcomes for children, such as poverty, out-of-wedlock pregnancy, alcohol and drug abuse and suicide.
☐	Is willing to share best practices in working with fathers with other organizations.

☐ **Total Score**

Assessment Category Analysis Worksheet

How to use this worksheet:

1. Transfer your scores from each checklist to the corresponding row on this worksheet.
2. Don't combine the scores from all categories to arrive at a total score, because that score can mislead you.
3. Focus on the scores within each category, because the goal is to make your organization father friendly holistically. Determine whether your score in each category rates low, medium or high on father friendliness.
4. You should first target categories in which your score is low or medium on father friendliness. Then, revisit the statements that were not true of your organization within those categories and use them as specific target areas to work on.

Checklist	Score	Legend
Leadership and Organizational Philosophy		Low (0-8); Med. (9-16); High (17-24)
Program Management Policies and Procedures		Low (0-7); Med. (8-14); High (15-21)
Parent-involvement Program		Low (0-7); Med. (8-15); High (16-22)
Program Physical Environment		Low (0-3); Med. (4-6); High (7-8)
Staff Training and Professional Development		Low (0-9); Med. (10-18); High (19-27)
Collaboration and Organizational Networking		Low (0-3); Med. (4-6); High (7-9)
Community Outreach		Low (0-3); Med. (4-6); High (7-10)

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