

The Saskatchewan First Nations Family and Community Institute (SFNFCI) would like to thank The House of Commons' Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs for the opportunity to present in support of Bill C-92, An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families.

Comparative Analysis

SFNFCI has provided an analysis of the Bill-C92 in relation to a Saskatchewan First Nations Community-Based Research Report completed on Child Welfare Reform. The Voices for Reform report was a First Nations community-based research project focusing on solutions for Child Welfare reform. The report was representative of Saskatchewan First Nations voices where 95% of the survey respondents identified as Aboriginal. When the age of participants is considered, 44% of participants were between the ages of 18-29; 43% of the participants were between the ages of 30 – 59, and; 13% were over 59 years of age.

Bill C-92 has addressed and is aligned to many of the areas Saskatchewan First Nations community members have identified where change is needed. We would also like to recognize some areas that need to be further addressed and strengthened as outlined below:

1. Section 16(1)(e) should be expanded to read: with any other adult that is committed to maintaining child connection to child culture and community.
2. The 4th whereas clause page 1 excludes male/boys, why?
3. Section 3(e) can be strengthened with reference to Jordan's Principle to address gaps in services due to jurisdictional disputes.
4. Legislation does not commit government to fund services – it's referenced in last whereas clause (page 2) as "government acknowledges ongoing call for funding "but it is not included the previous whereas clause that states government is committing to: cooperation and partnerships; achieving reconciliation (Calls to Action); engaging Indigenous peoples. Why can't government commit to funding agencies based on need?
5. Collaborative and strategic partnership support to develop interrelated infrastructures and systems that impact, or are currently impacting child welfare. I.e., Family Courts

See Appendix A – Cross Reference of Voices for Reform and Bill-C92, and, Appendix B - Voices for Reform Executive Summary

Saskatchewan First Nations Working Together

In addition to the review of Bill C-92, Saskatchewan First Nations want to demonstrate the readiness and willingness to move forward with the implementation of Federal Legislation. Together SFNFCI and SK First Nations Child and Family Services Agency Prevention Workers have collectively developed Regional First Nations culturally relevant prevention policies, standards of practice and procedures that guide the work and reporting done by SK First Nations Child and Family Services.

See Appendix C – Saskatchewan First Nations Prevention Policies and Standards, and, Appendix D – Kanaweyimik Child and Family Services alignment to SK First Nations Prevention Policies and Standards

Moving Toward Outcomes that Keep Children Safe and Keeping Families Together

Saskatchewan First Nations Child and Family Services prevention workers have been proactively and collectively working to co-create and develop policies, standards and practices that support and strengthen children, youth, families and our communities. Our First Nations initiatives have demonstrated our ability to be resourceful, strength-based and solutions-focused considering the cultural diversity, rural and remoteness conditions, existing gaps with provincial policies, communication challenges, and infrastructure deficiencies.

The introduction of Enhanced Prevention Focused Approach funding in Saskatchewan in 2010 has provided First Nations Child and Family Services Agencies the ability to implement culturally appropriate early intervention and intensive support programs and services for on-reserve membership. The implementation of Bill C-92 will provide the ability to First Nations Child and Family Services agencies to expand these services to members regardless of jurisdiction.

The desired outcome for the implementation of Bill C-92 along with the commitment of flexible needs-based funding and a commitment of working together between First Nations, Communities, Families, Governments, Agencies and other service providers could result in:

- Improve child welfare practices to ensure children are protected and families are treated fairly through the reform of programs and services and practice approaches.
- Protect First Nations Inherent and Treaty Rights, children’s rights, and parent’s rights.
- Lessen the trauma of removal by promoting placement with family and community.
- Mandate that families receive intensive services (“active efforts”) to prevent child abuse and neglect and keep children safely in their homes.
- Promote the best interest of First Nations children by keeping them connected to their culture, extended family, and community, which are proven protective factors.
- Encourage the development of equitable and strategic relationships between First Nations Peoples, Agencies, Communities, Service Providers and Governments to coordinate the care of children and families.
- Commit to improving First Nations children’s and families’ access to locally available specialized services regardless of jurisdiction. I.e., Jordan’s Principle.

Together we can do so much!

Thank you,

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Executive Director SFNFCI

Marlene Bugler
Executive Director, Kanaweyimik Child and Family
Service Agency, SFNFCI Board Vice Chair

Appendix A

Cross Reference of

Voices of Reform to Bill

C-92

Voices for Reform: Saskatchewan First Nations Community Based Research Findings for Child Welfare Reform	Bill C-92, An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families.	
Theme & Recommendations	Areas of Support	Short-comings
REFORM PROGRAMS & SERVICES <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Access to services that are holistic, interconnected and reflective of local culture 2. Investments in resources to support families and communities 3. Services that are locally available in rural and remote communities 	Principles (2), Sections 10(2) align with the first bullet <i>access to services that are holistic, interconnected and reflective of local culture</i>	Bullet 2 & 3 not covered in draft legislation and will require attention in the co-development of regulations, policies, strategic action plans, and funding terms & conditions
HONOUR YOUTH <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mentorship opportunities to motivate and empower youth 2. An Action Plan that ensures youth are included and listened to 		The bullets are not covered in draft legislation at all and will require attention in the co-development of regulations, policies, strategic action plans, and funding terms & conditions
SHIFT PRACTICE APPROACHES <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A First Nations case management system 2. First Nations standards of practice and measurement 3. A culturally respectful child welfare framework that goes beyond child protection 4. Policies that strengthen families through kinship and community connection 	Sections 10(2), 14(1) and 32(2) (2) align with bullet 3 <i>a culturally respectful child welfare framework that goes beyond child protection</i> AND bullet 4 <i>policies that strengthen families through kinship and community connection</i>	Bullets 1 and 2 are not covered in draft legislation and will require attention in the co-development of regulations, policies, strategic action plans, and funding terms & conditions
BUILD CAPACITY <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engaged service providers who participate in the community 2. Strategic partnerships based on shared protocols for collective outcomes 3. Human Resources initiatives that offer incentives and contribute to healthy working environments 	Section 2(3) aligns with the bullet <i>strategic partnerships based on shared protocols for collective outcomes</i>	Bullet 3 is not covered in draft legislation and will require attention in the co-development of regulations, policies, strategic action plans, and funding terms & conditions
ADDRESS SYSTEMIC FACTORS <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establishment of a National Children’s Advocate or Children’s Commissioner 2. Equitable, flexible funding that addresses community needs 3. Capital investments into First Nations child and family service agencies 4. Training and education on the legal aspects of First Nations child welfare 		Bullets addressing systemic factors are either weakly covered, or not covered in draft legislation.

Appendix B

Voices for Reform

Overview & Executive

Summary Report

Voices for Reform Project Overview

In December 2016, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) invited First Nations organizations across Canada to engage First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) stakeholders in discussions about reform of First Nations child welfare services. In Saskatchewan the engagement process was divided into two parts - one of engagement of First Nations leadership and the other was to engage stakeholders in the delivery of on-reserve child welfare services.

The Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) received the contract to engage the leadership throughout Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan First Nations Family and Community Institute (SFNFCI) was selected to undertake the child welfare stakeholder engagement activities in Saskatchewan.

SFNFCI worked collaboratively with FSIN to minimize duplication and support the sharing of pertinent project information to contribute to a collective voice on options for child welfare reform in Saskatchewan.

One of the early activities of the project was hosting a meeting with the Minister's Special Representative, which took place at the SFNFCI offices in Saskatoon on March 2, 2017. This meeting brought the Minister of Indian Affairs' Special Representative Dr. Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux together with 12 Saskatchewan FNCFS agencies (represented by 26 FNCFS staff: Executive Directors and front line staff), SFNFCI representatives, and facilitator Dr. Raven Sinclair and her team. A separate report was compiled on this portion of the engagement project; where applicable the comments and information generated through that meeting have been included in this report.

The engagement activities were responsive and conducted in a culturally appropriate way representing all First Nations throughout Saskatchewan. The majority of targeted activities (both research and engagement) were conducted on-reserve under the direction of a specialized Project Research Team.

Message from Knowledge Keeper

This engagement project is in line with the Treaties as agreed to on this our mother earth and Saskatchewan. We as the Indigenous First Nations agreed upon these Treaties through the guidance of Elders and the Creator. As a traditional knowledge keeper working in collaboration with the Saskatchewan First Nations Child Welfare Engagement Project it is an honor and a privilege to align our way of knowing and understanding within the research and the findings of this report.

As Indigenous people we believe that the health and well-being of an individual refers to a person's whole being which includes aspects of the four dimensions of self, the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual being. When people are faced with personal health issues it is believed that this is a reflection of an imbalance or disharmony in the circle. As part of our

healing journey we must nurture and develop all four dimensions to regain our cultural life balance.

We use a circle of rocks that represents the circle of life or the medicine wheel. The five rocks symbolize our connection to the land and all the medicines that we rely on for good health and healing. We refer to the rocks as “grandfathers” and “grandmothers” that guide us and give us strength and direction in our work and throughout life. Tobacco is one of the four sacred plant medicines that we’ve used throughout this engagement project to honour and send prayers that guide and give us strength as we address some sensitive and challenging issues.

The centre rock represents **CULTURE** as the foundation of all living things and is held in highest regard and respected in all that we do. The four rocks (or functions of Child Welfare) move in a clockwise circular motion starting with **FAMILY**, we work towards developing and maintaining strong, healthy families; the **CHILD** must be nurtured especially when in crisis and should always be connected to their families, community and culture; **COMMUNITY** must provide culturally appropriate supports to keep children safe from harm and **GUARDIANSHIP** involves legal orders that should provide culturally appropriate services and alternate homes for a child living out of their home.

First Nations Child Welfare is a connection to the natural laws and is integrated from a high and spiritual source. The sacred covenant our Indigenous Elders included in our collective Treaties applies to this engagement project. We have always maintained this and to deny our connection to all the elements (earth, air, fire and water) is to create a child welfare system absent of culture and spirit.

Kinanaskomitinawaw - Thank you

Executive Summary

This Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) sponsored project engaged First Nations child welfare stakeholders in discussions about reform to federal First Nations child welfare services. After hosting a meeting with the Minister’s Special Representative, Dr. Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux, on March 2, 2017, SFNFCI brought together a team of qualified professionals and experts to oversee, design, develop and deliver a plan capable of meeting the project objectives within the established timeframe of this project.

Inspired by Indigenous traditions and protocols of doing things in a good way, a Project Advisory Committee was founded to guide the work of the project. The Project Advisory committee was comprised of a respected Elder, First Nations Child and Family Service (FNCFS) Agency Executive Directors and representatives from the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN), Indigenous Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), and Ministry of Social Services (MSS). Under their guidance, information collection and engagement strategies were determined and a timeline of key activities was established.

Community Engagement Liaisons were recruited through First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) agencies across the province and Research Assistants were also hired to execute various tasks associated with the project's community engagement activities.

The research was completed in the spirit of the OCAP (ownership, control, access, and possession) principles that establish how First Nations data should be collected, protected, used and shared.

A conceptual model was developed as a framework for the study. The model emphasizes culture and identifies the four functions of child welfare from a First Nations perspective:

- Family Centered – focus on families and the promotion of healthy family connections
- Child Centered - focus on the interests and needs of children and young people
- Community Centered (Stewardship) -focus on range of child protection services
- Guardianship - focus on issues of legal guardianship of a children/youth in out-of-home care

Along with results of a comprehensive literature review, the conceptual model informed the development of the study's main research tools, which were both quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative tools were a detailed survey which was adapted for **seven separate participant groups (youth, boards of directors, out of home caregivers, families in care, service providers, FNCFS executive directors and FNCFS staff)**.

Multiple qualitative methods, including key informant interviews and focus groups, were used to collect more narrative based data. The research advisory committee identified key informants to be interviewed who were connected to First Nations child welfare, and purposive and convenience sampling were used to recruit focus group participants. A total of twenty-four focus groups were conducted with 211 participants.

In addition to participating directly through these research activities, many more people across the province were engaged through information booths at Treaty Days, conferences, meetings and by presentations on the project.

Despite the limited timeline of the project, an impressive 4499 people were engaged by this project, through both engagement and research activities. A total of 1333 who were engaged participated in more in-depth research activities through surveys, focus groups and key informant interviews.

At the end of the data collection period, the research team, in collaboration with the Project Advisory Committee, carefully considered both quantitative and qualitative results and identified five prominent themes. These themes represent groupings of the most important priorities for reform as voiced by project participants. Further analysis revealed that the themes and priorities they represent align in significant ways to the four child welfare functions of the conceptual model.

Function	Themes	Priorities	Culture
Family Centered	Programs & Services	Access to Services Availability of Resources Rural & Remote	
Child Centered	Honouring Youth	Honouring Youth Voices Transitions Out of Care	
Community Centered /Stewardship	Capacity Building	Child Welfare Perception Collaboration In Child Welfare Recruitment, Retention & Training	
Guardianship	Practice Approach	Case Planning Standards Maintaining Family Connections Diversity	
All Functions	Systemic Factors	Collective Voice Funding Infrastructure & Technology Legal Rights and Responsibilities	

It is these five themes and their related priorities that became the basis for the key actions proposed in this report. Through the process of engagement, those who participated in this project were able to voice their ideas and contribute to a shared vision of what a healthy and culturally respectful First Nations child welfare system could look like.

The main actions recommended by the collective participant voice include:

In order to **REFORM PROGRAMS & SERVICES**, First Nations voices for reform call for:

- Access to services that are holistic, interconnected and reflective of local culture
- Investments in resources to support families and communities
- Services that are locally available in rural and remote communities

In order to **HONOUR YOUTH**, First Nations voices for reform call for:

- Mentorship opportunities to motivate and empower youth
- An Action Plan that ensures youth are included and listened to

In order to **SHIFT PRACTICE APPROACHES**, First Nations voices for reform call for:

- A First Nations case management system
- First Nations standards of practice and measurement
- A culturally respectful child welfare framework that goes beyond child protection
- Policies that strengthen families through kinship and community connection

In order to **BUILD CAPACITY**, First Nations voices for reform call for:

- Engaged service providers who participate in the community
- Strategic partnerships based on shared protocols for collective outcomes
- Human resource initiatives that offer incentives and contribute to healthy working environments

In order to **ADDRESS SYSTEMIC FACTORS**, First Nations voices for reform call for:

- Establishment of a National Children's Advocate or Children's Commissioner
- Equitable, flexible funding that addresses community needs
- Capital investments into First Nations child and family service agencies
- Training and education on the legal aspects of First Nations child welfare

Importantly, these actions are not presented in order of importance or priority. They are connected to broader principles and themes that are complementary and interrelated. Guided by the words of Elders and the principle of "By First Nations, For First Nations," this project exposes the complex, multi-layered issues impacting contemporary child welfare, and points to the beneficial outcomes that may result from bringing Indigenous worldviews and ways into reform efforts.

An approach founded in culture that is sufficiently resourced and which draws upon proven strengths and relational goodwill can indeed produce valuable results with real potential to make substantial positive changes to persistently intractable social issues.

A full copy of the report is available in English as a free download at:

<http://www.sfnfci.ca/pages/research-policy-and-standards.html>

Appendix C

**Saskatchewan First
Nations Prevention
Policies & Standards
2016**

Saskatchewan First Nations Prevention Policies and Standards developed by the SFNFCI Prevention Standards Working Group 2016

Community based prevention policies and standards reflect the common goal of strengthening families to prevent children and youth from coming into care and are embedded in strength based practices. The standards support the inherent culture of all First Nations people.

Policy #1 The Culture of the community will be the guiding principle within all prevention programs and services.

Standards:

1. Prevention provides culturally relevant programs and services that are open, flexible and inclusive of all community members.
2. Prevention programs and services will promote healthy living through teachings by utilizing Elders, language, ceremony, mentoring and community resources; that will support all aspects of a person: physical, emotional, mental and spiritual.
3. Prevention programs and services will provide individualized services and culturally relevant programs in a timely manner.

Policy #2 All prevention programs and services shall be developed to support the community served.

Standards:

1. Prevention programs and services will uphold practices that support the community served to be involved with the development, implementation and evaluation of programs and services
2. Prevention programs and services will provide services to all community members of association with political bodies or views.
3. Prevention programs and services will provide ethical and proactive programs and services that utilize the strengths of our community to empower our families

Policy #3 All prevention programs and services shall support families to be independent.

Standards:

1. Prevention programs and services will support parenting and the growth of healthy adults through shared planning and decision making; strong healthy families, supporting healthy families, empowering families.
2. Prevention programs and services will empower and support families to become more resilient, independent and self-sufficient.

Policy #4 All prevention programs and services shall work with all community resources.

Standards:

1. Prevention programs and services will work with existing community resources to promote and develop partnerships to offer all aspects of prevention.
2. Prevention programs and services will be developed along with other community resources; considering the challenges and needs of the community.
3. Prevention programs and services will foster trust and positive relationships among First Nations community and collateral resources to ensure a team approach in enhancing the work with families and community.

Policy #5 The utmost consideration will be given to understand First Nations history in the development of all prevention programs and services.

Standards:

1. Prevention programs and services will facilitate collaboration, exploration, and learning around children, youth and family's needs. Supporting and understanding community and family history, and residential schools and intergenerational impacts.
2. Prevention programs and services understands the need of healing and the effects of history on our First Nations people.

Policy #6 All prevention programs and services shall enhance the development and well-being of First Nations children, youth and families.

Standards:

1. Prevention programs and services will uphold practices that support youth to be involved with the development, implementation and evaluation of programs and services
2. Programs and services will be client centered in their offerings, this could include: 1on1 with families, community programs, family specific, community event.
3. Programs and services will work towards helping families develop a plan for themselves, client focused, help families implement their plan.

Policy #7 All prevention services shall support employees to be trained, learn culture, have tools to work in the Community

Standards:

1. Prevention programs and services will promote balance and wellness by supporting staff to feel satisfied and more confident and effective in the workplace.

For more information on the Saskatchewan First Nations Prevention Policies & Standards please visit our website: www.sfnfci.ca

Appendix D
Kanaweyimik FNCFS
alignment to SK FN
Prevention Policies &
Standards

KANAWEYIMIK CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES INC. PREVENTION PROGRAM STANDARDS

Objectives

- Support families to safely care for their children in their own homes rather than removing children from their parent's care.
- Develop resiliency in youth by providing positive recreational/cultural activities and life skills training.

Prevention Standards (underlined standard – followed by agency actions to meet the standard)

- **The Culture of the community will be the guiding principle within all prevention programs and services.**
 - Agency structure includes Local Advisory Committees in each community, one of which must be an Elder, that Elders represents the community on the Elders Council at Kanawayimik. Elders Council provides oversight to ensure that programs and services are culturally appropriate for their community. The community Elder gatherings provides Kanawayimik with opportunity to engage community Elders in program design to ensure culturally sensitive programs and services.
- **All prevention programs and services shall be developed to support the community served.**
 - Agency conducts community surveys at treaty days gather feedback from community members on community needs and priorities.
 - The Local Advisory Committees and community Elders provide Agency with information on community needs and priorities.
- **All prevention programs and services shall support families to be independent.**
 - Agency designs programs and services to engage and support families to be independent.
 - Programs such as: traditional parenting; structure parenting; grief and loss; warrior program guides parents to understand intergenerational trauma and how it has affected them, then gives them tools to move forward in a positive way and take responsibility for themselves and their recovery.
- **All prevention programs and series shall work with all community resources.**
 - Agency facilitates monthly inter-agency meetings in each community with objective to build partnerships to improve/enhance services for community members.

- **The utmost consideration will be given to understand First Nations history in the development of all prevention programs and services.**
 - Agency engages with community Elders to understand community history and we actively develop programs to meet the community needs and priorities.
- **All prevention programs and services shall enhance the development and wellbeing of FN children, youth and families.**
 - Agency programs like life skills, Warrior (intergenerational trauma recovery), traditional parenting, cadets, sports programs, cultural camps, youth conferences/camps, family camps, family engagement, community workshops, ladies and men's activities, Elders gatherings, community based youth activities all work towards enhancing development and wellbeing of children, youth and families.
- **All prevention services shall support employees to be trained, learn culture, and have tools to work in the community.**
 - Agency hosts ceremonies, cultural camps, round dances, feasts and all employees are required to attend.
 - Staff are encouraged to attend community culturally events to learn and build community connections.