

**Knowledge Mobilization Project:**

Information for agencies working with urban Indigenous communities

**Did you know that…**

* 52.2% of children under 14 in child welfare care are Indigenous children, despite representing less than 8% of Canada’s child population1.
* The lack of Indigenous representation among health professionals and child welfare workers is a key concern for families in their interactions with the system.
* Organizations working with Indigenous families in the urban context create a sense of community and provide a more positive experience for families as they navigate the child welfare system, not only through providing programming needs, but also through relationship building between the organization itself and families.
* Services that nurture cultural identity and prioritize Indigenous ways of knowing and being are a key protective factor in reducing entry into child welfare settings.
* Community organizations can fill gaps in services for families, especially during times of transition for children moving out of care and back to living with their family members. These services have a profound impact on the success of families in preventing children from re-entering care.
* Re-establishing a child and family’s place in the community is an effective treatment method and can also help prevent re-entry into care.
* Bill C-922 is the first statute to recognize inherent Indigenous jurisdiction over Child and Family Services (CFS) as an Aboriginal (S.35) right in Canada. As called for in the Truth and Reconciliation Final Report, the statute establishes national minimum standards for CFS delivery for all Indigenous children and families, living on or off reserve.

**Indigenous families and communities have supports through…**

* Powerful and long-lasting connections between Indigenous families and their communities, regardless of time spent away or geographic distance.
* A definition of health and wellbeing that takes into consideration an individual’s sense of belonging, contribution to the collective and social cohesion. A healthy sense of communal identity is attainable through the deeply rooted ancestral practices, such as visiting, social gatherings, potlucks and ceremonies.
* Indigenous epistemologies, ancestral concepts, and ways of knowing the world that are built into language, cultural practices, traditions and ceremonies.

**Intersecting factors that shape the experience of urban Indigenous families include…**

* Colonialism, race, gender, and socio-economic status.
* Surveillance of people who are in poverty, particularly racialized people, by institutional authorities or community members.
* Social determinants, such as housing and income security, that limit the capacity of parents to regain the necessary stability to return children home from provincial care.

**When working with urban Indigenous families and communities, we recommend…**

* Strengthening community-based Indigenous organizations as foundational sites for delivery of preventative programming.
* Having a programming model that includes the entire family, including intergenerational supports such as grandparents and other kin, providing access to Indigenous ways of knowing and fostering successful retention rates.
* Increasing awareness of culturally appropriate services, so that families know where to turn in a crisis situation.
* Building relationships between organizations and the Department of Community Services to coordinate services and improve communication, making it more seamless for families to access resources.
* Hiring Mi’kmaq and other Indigenous support workers to work in non-Indigenous organizations and critically assessing required credentials to ensure they do not pose barriers to hiring.
* Greater Indigenous representation among health professionals and child welfare workers, with mandatory cultural safety training as part of the orientation process for non-Indigenous staff. This is key to maintaining the momentum behind relationship building and education provision with families.
* Specific training to help child welfare workers understand how parenting practices differ between Indigenous and non-Indigenous families. This is crucial to ensuring that parenting programs are useful for Indigenous communities.
* Addressing structural factors that influence Indigenous families in their interactions with child welfare − specifically tackling racism and poverty/income insecurity and jurisdictional wrangling and filling gaps in services to the urban Indigenous community. Other determinants of health and wellness, such as education and housing, should also be addressed.
* Working with schools and colleges to ensure that students in health and social work programs are trained to understand Indigenous history, cultures, and traditions and the role these play in health and wellbeing, as well as their obligations under Jordan’s Principle and Bill C-922.

**Additional Information and Resources:**

For more information please contact us at strongcommunities-families@laurentian.ca or

call: 902-494-6693

**Other communities overrepresented in the child welfare system…**

* Are African Nova Scotian and newcomer communities, which often face similar challenges to urban Indigenous communities here in HRM.
* Have common strengths of culture as well as close family and community ties.

Supports and resources are essential to strengthening and keeping Indigenous families together. You can see the list of resources shared with community members accompanying this infographic.

**Source:** Torres, S., Waldron, I., Ross, N., Metallic, N., Grant, W., Guasdal, W., & Moriah, J. (2022)

*Examining Protective Factors for Children’s Welfare: The Case of Indigenous, African Nova Scotian & Immigrant and Refugee Children in the Halifax Regional Municipality*. Laurentian University, Sudbury, Ontario.

**Project Purpose:** To identify support systems and strategies to strengthen the capacity of families from urban Indigenous, African Nova Scotian, immigrant and refugee populations in the Halifax Regional Municipality to mobilize communities to prevent the entry or re-entry of children into provincial care.

1 Statistics Canada (2022, January 17)*. Reducing the number of Indigenous children in care.* <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1541187352297/1541187392851>

2Bill C-92, An Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children, Youth and Families, S.C. 2019, c. 24. <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/annualstatutes/2019_24/page-1.html>

**Indigenous Community Resource List:**

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| **Organization Name**  | **Programming Offered** | **Location** | **Contact** |
| Mi’kmaq Friendship Centre  | Multiple programs available | 2021 Brunswick St. Suite 209 | (902)-420-1576 |
| Native Council of Nova Scotia | Multiple programs available ranging from pre-natal programs to parenting, counselling, youth programs, shelters.  | n/a | 1-800-565-4372[www.ncns.ca](http://www.ncns.ca) |
| Helping all our families | Parent program, family wellness, a culturally appropriate support to Indigenous families, consulting the family to design a needs-based specialization plan.  | n/a | Lisa.giles@mymnfc.com (902)-420-1576  |
| Atelhai Inuit Program | Transition support, gatherings for Inuit and their families, traditional cooking & clothing classes. | n/a | (902)-420-1576 |
| Mi’kmaq Child Development Centre | Provincially funded daycare, Aboriginal head-start program, community action program for children aged 0-7.  | n/a | (902-420-1576 |