

# Child Welfare

## Relevant Details

- “The primary reason why Aboriginal children come into care is neglect. When researchers looked at the definition of neglect - poverty, inadequate housing and substance misuse are the key drivers. It is important to note that two of the three factors are largely outside of parental control”. (Policy Statement on Aboriginal Children, National Children’s Alliance)
- Vancouver Aboriginal Child & Family Services is an Aboriginal delegated agency which is being transferred authority from the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MFCDD) to deliver Aboriginal services and programs that have been historically delivered by MFCDD welfare authority under the Child, Family and Community Services Act.

### ***2004-05 Ministry of Children & Family Development Annual Service Plan Report***

- Only 14.8% of Aboriginal children in care were being cared for by Aboriginal people. MFCDD’s goal is to have all Aboriginal children being cared for by Aboriginal people to help retain connections with their communities, extended family and cultural heritage.
- 50% of the 131 Aboriginal children adopted in 2004/05 were adopted by Aboriginal people.

### ***2006-07 Ministry of Children & Family Development Service Plan***

- Aboriginal children account for approximately 9% of the BC child population, but make up 49% of children-in-care and 42% of youth in custody.
- The BC Aboriginal child population is expected to continue to grow. Consequently, the needs for programs and services to serve these children and families will increase.
- Only 33% of Aboriginal children in care were cared for by an Aboriginal delegated agency.
- The creation of five regional Aboriginal Authorities for delivery of services is expected to be complete in 2006, with the new authorities taking over authority in 2007/08.

## Who’s Involved?

### ***Vancouver Aboriginal Child & Family Services Society (745 Clark Drive)***

- The signing of the Delegation Enabling Agreement in 2001 enabled VACFSS to provide a full range of delegated Resource and Guardianship services. VACFSS now has level 13 (of 14) delegated authority.
- Services include residential, guardianship, child protection, youth, and young parents
- In 2006, hosted the Aboriginal Best Practices in Child Welfare Conference which they hope to make an annual event.
- Has an Aboriginal Elders Advisory Committee.

***Vancouver Coastal Aboriginal Planning Committee (1128 Hornby Street)***

- Transition teams have been created in each of the five MCFD regions to administer and deliver a full range of Child and Family Services to Aboriginal communities. There will also be five new authorities for non-Aboriginal services.
- The Regional Aboriginal Authorities will have responsibility for the provincial funding and service delivery system for Aboriginal communities. This change is meant to lead to a full range of culturally appropriate services, but it remains to be seen if funding will allow for it.
- It is anticipated that the Authorities will start to take over service delivery in 2007.
- The Regional Authority will administer and direct funding to agencies such as VACFSS (listed above), rather than deliver programs themselves

***Urban Native Youth Association (1640 East Hastings Street)***

- One of four Vancouver Youth Hubs that offer Ministry for Children & Family Development services to at-risk youth, primarily those involved with MCFD. Other Youth Hubs are run by Family Services of Greater Vancouver, Pacific Coast Resources Society, and Southill.
- Programs include a Safe House, Parent/Teen Mediation, Transitioning Youth to Adulthood, Mentorship Program, Day Programs.

***Native Courtworker & Counselling Association of BC (50 Powell Street)***

- Family Advocates incorporate cultural and traditional with professional assessments to assist Aboriginal families involved in the justice system to stay together.

***Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents (3455 Kaslo Street)***

- Provincial organization with five regions, including Vancouver Coastal.
- Was formed to meet the unique needs of caregivers of Aboriginal children, and the needs of communities for targeted development, recruitment, and training of Aboriginal foster families.

***Family Services of Greater Vancouver (1616 West 7th Avenue)***

- One of four Vancouver Youth Hubs that offer Ministry for Children & Family Development services to at-risk youth, primarily those involved with MCFD.
- Has contracts with Vancouver Aboriginal Child & Family Services Society to provide some Family Preservation Services.

***Deputy Child and Youth Officer, Aboriginal Services (808 West Hastings Street)***

- Has special responsibility for Aboriginal issues across the BC Child and Youth Officer's mandate.
- This position is a result of a Memorandum of Understanding with the First Nations Summit, Métis Provincial Council of BC, Union of BC Indian Chiefs, and the United Native Nations.

***Musqueam First Nation***

- As an on-reserve community, the Musqueam First Nation has a unique relationship with the provincial and federal government regarding child welfare issues. Therefore, they have a Social Development Department which is the liaison for such issues.

## Partnerships

- The Vancouver Aboriginal Child & Family Services Society is working with both Luma Native Housing and Vancouver Native Housing to develop a partnership to secure affordable housing for Aboriginal people who come forward to foster Aboriginal children.

## Committees

- Vancouver Coastal Aboriginal Planning Committee is one of five provincial organizations with a mandate to prepare for the transfer of authority to deliver those Aboriginal services and programs currently administered by the Ministry of Children and Family Development. It is expected that the transfer of the authority will be finalized in 2007. Representatives of both rural and urban Aboriginal communities are represented on the committee.

## Trends

- Province of BC is actively working to transfer responsibility for core service delivery to the Aboriginal communities.
- There is reduced funding for specific program areas, while there are some increases in areas such as Early Childhood Development.
- The BC Ministry of Children and Family Development is moving toward centralized service delivery, especially for youth. The four youth hubs in Vancouver are a prime example of this shift in service delivery.

## Gaps

- Many MCFD services require that a child or youth must have an open file in order to access services. This likely inhibits some families from accessing services that could help them to prevent their children from becoming at-risk and/or officially involved with MCFD.
- The historical mistrust of MCFD within Aboriginal communities leads some to non-service use as many worry that asking for help may put them at risk of having their children apprehended.
- Family preservation is only a small component of MCFD services. A larger focus on this area would likely lead to keeping children safely within their own homes.

## Contact Information

Addresses, phone, fax, email, and website information for any of the organizations above can be found in the Contact Information section of this manual.