Summary Report

KIDS COUNT

2nd National Child Welfare Data Exchange Meeting

February 27-28, 2023

McGill University Faculty Club
450 McTavish St, Montreal, Quebec

A report submitted to the Public Health Agency of Canada

Funding for this meeting was provided by:

Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada | Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

Canada Research Chairs | Chaires de recherche du Canada

Public Health Agency of Canada | Agence de la santé publique du Canada

With collaboration and coordination from:

Université de Montréal
McGill University
University of Toronto

This report was prepared by:

Tonino Esposito, PhD
Associate Professor, School of Social Work, Université de Montréal
Canada Research Chair on Social Services for Vulnerable Children

Barbara Fallon, PhD
Professor, Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work
Associate Vice-President, Research, University of Toronto
Canada Research Chair in Child Welfare

Nico Trocmé, PhD
Professor & Director
School of Social Work, McGill University

Johanna Caldwell, MSW
Researcher, Canada Research Chair on Social Services for Vulnerable Children
School of Social Work, Université de Montréal

Marie Saint-Girons, MSW
Researcher, Canada Research Chair on Social Services for Vulnerable Children
School of Social Work, Université de Montréal

Stéphanie Précourt, PhD candidate
Researcher, Canada Research Chair on Social Services for Vulnerable Children
School of Social Work, Université de Montréal

This document constitutes Annual Deliverable #4 in Contract #4500417770 between the Public Health Agency of Canada and Université de Montréal.

Suggested Citation:
Esposito, T., Fallon, B., Trocmé, N., Caldwell, J., Saint-Girons, M., & Précourt, S. (2023). Summary report: Canadian child welfare administrative data knowledge exchange meeting. Public Health Agency of Canada: Ottawa, ON.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

Kids Count: the 2nd National Child Welfare Data Exchange Meeting was conceived to focus on the use of administrative data to better monitor and reduce known disparities in involvement with child welfare services for children, families, and communities of different ethno-racial, Indigenous, and socio-economic backgrounds. A plethora of evidence points to significant disproportionate and disparate involvement in child welfare systems, particularly for Black and Indigenous children across Canada and other jurisdictions. Large scale inquiries have resulted in consistent recommendations for monitoring and reducing these disparities through improving data quality, availability, and partnerships both within and across jurisdictions and agencies (Commission d'enquête sur les relations entre les Autochtones et certains services publics, 2019; Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

Held February 27-28, 2023, the Kids Count meeting hosted over 50 participants, 17 knowledge sharing presentations, and multiple strategic discussions. Attendees came from practice settings, First Nations child welfare agencies, academic research institutions, and provincial, territorial, and federal government bodies. Together they considered practical and ethical use of administrative data to monitor disparities in child welfare systems across jurisdictions and discuss strategies to support the development of information systems to inform initiatives to reduce disparities and support overrepresented communities. These questions are being asked within community agencies, at the provincial/territorial level, and by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) in efforts to develop a national-level Canadian Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS), which would harmonize available data to illustrate Canada-wide trends in child welfare involvement.

Objectives of the Kids Count meeting were as follows:

1. Strengthen the network of researchers, administrators, and advocates interested in using child welfare administrative data to monitor and improve child welfare services in Canada.
2. Explore methodological, contextual, ethical, and policy issues relevant to the interpretation of data on disparities in the provision of child welfare services for children, families, and communities of different ethno-racial, Indigenous, and socio-economic backgrounds.
3. Identify needs for Indigenous child welfare agencies seeking to develop information systems that support decolonized approaches to supporting children and families.

The 2023 meeting followed the inaugural Child Welfare Administrative Data Knowledge Exchange Meeting held in February 2020. During that meeting, 40 stakeholders gathered in Montreal to discuss strategies for optimizing existing administrative child welfare data; exploring methodological issues related to extraction, cleaning, and analyses of these data; discuss governance, ethical, and partnership dimensions of existing initiatives; and to support cross-jurisdictional comparison in the context of devolved child welfare administration across Canadian provinces and territories. For a full account of the 2020 meeting, please see the available summary report (Esposito et al., 2020).

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) provided funding to support this meeting. Research funds from Dr. Barbara Fallon, Dr. Nico Trocmé, and Dr. Tonino Esposito's Research Chairs supported the event and expanded participation in the meeting.

In the remainder of the report, please find annotations regarding the complete set of presentations and discussions that took place during the full two-day meeting (Section II) and a reflection on the themes and resulting future priorities (**Section III**). Please refer to **Appendix A** for the full meeting agenda and **Appendix B** for a full list of participants and their affiliations.

II. PRESENTATIONS & DISCUSSIONS

This section provides annotated descriptions of presentations and discussions that took place over the course of the two-day meeting. They are drawn from the presentation content and notes taken during Q&A sessions and roundtable discussions. Any resources cited herein are listed in the References section at the end of the report.

DAY 1

Presentations on Day 1 focused on administrative data and policy related to disparities in involvement with child welfare systems in Canada. Specifically, the presentations responded to the following questions:

- What do we know about the disparities regarding involvement with child protection systems for children, families, and communities of different ethno-racial, Indigenous, and socio-economic backgrounds?
    - ⇒ What are the gaps in data regarding these disparities?
    - ⇒ How have these disparities been measured (longitudinally, cross-sectionally) and disseminated beyond research communities?
    - ⇒ How can these disparities continue to be monitored in the years to come?
- How can administrative data impact policy improvements to address disparate child welfare intervention in Canada?

Introduction & Overview of the First Nations component of the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse & Neglect-2019

Barbara Fallon

The First Nations component of the Canadian Incidence Study has been conducted three times previously (2003, 2008, 2019). Results of the 2019 study come in the context of a dynamic First Nations child welfare landscape due to changes in funding and legal mandates such as the federal legislation *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families* (Bill C-92) and several decisions coming out of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal regarding discrimination against First Nations children. Several findings were presented from the 2019 FN/CIS (Fallon et al., 2021). Compared with non-Indigenous children, the disparity index for First Nations children being investigated by child welfare was 3.6 times higher. Disparities grew consistently across the service disposition following the initial investigation, reaching a disparity of 17.2 times for formal out-of-home placements.

Conclusions from the study include the need to design interventions around the points of decision-making that are driving First Nations overrepresentation in child welfare systems, grounding practice in the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), and empowering Indigenous jurisdiction, sovereignty, and self-determination on and off reserve. Several knowledge dissemination products emerging from this study available on the Canadian Child Welfare Resource Portal (CWRP; cwrp.ca).

Overview of the results of the First Nations Component of the Quebec Incidence Study of Child Maltreatment and Serious Behaviour Problems Investigated by Child Protection Services in 2019 (FN/QIS-2019)

Nico Trocmé, Tonino Esposito

The results of the 2019 Quebec Incidence Study of Child Maltreatment and Serious Behaviour Problems Investigated by Child Protection Services were presented (see full study here: Hélie et al., 2022) along with findings from Component 3 of another project, Trajectories of First Nations Youth Subject to the Youth Protection Act, a project conducted with the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Comission (see findings here: FNQLHSSC., 2016). Based exclusively on clinical-administrative data, the Quebec Incidence Study (QIS) study has taken place every five years since 1998. It includes a random sample of children evaluated by all of Quebec's regional Directors of Youth Protection. In 2019 First Nations partners collaborated with the study to produce a First Nations component of the QIS. The FN/QIS-2019 compared incidence of child welfare involvement for First Nations children with Non-Indigenous children. The study was conducted in close collaboration between the research team and a working group that included First Nations representatives from several organizations. Sixteen regional youth protection organizations transmitted data, along with one of the First Nations agencies, while four First Nations agencies did not transmit data for the purpose of the study. This meant that First Nations children were significantly underrepresented in the study and Non-Indigenous children were slightly underrepresented. Accordingly, weighting was done to adjust for the missing data from non-participating institutions. The rate of children investigated was 3.5 times higher for First Nations children compared with Non-Indigenous children, and this disparity was the most pronounced for infants and toddlers, with a 6.1x disparity for children under one year old. These disparities were most pronounced for situations of neglect and risk of neglect.

Administrative data were also used to examine differences in population-based disproportionality and service-based disparity over time, finding that First Nation children were 1.4x more likely to be intervened by child welfare in Quebec following an investigation, 1.8x more likely to be placed in out-of-home care and 2x more likely to receive child welfare intervention following case closure (FNQLHSSC., 2016). This may be explained in part by policies that impose a maximum placement duration, perhaps prompting reunification before the family is ready. It may also be an indication that the system of support around families is not effectively addressing the unique challenges within these families. Clinical factors contributing to these disparities are conjugal violence and caregiver addiction for young children (0-5), learning difficulties and family violence for middle-age children (6-11), and drug use, family violence, and behavioural difficulties for teens (12-17; Esposito et al., 2021). While three-quarters of children who experience out-of-home placement return home, about half of them are removed from their home again, indicating instability in reunification for many children (Esposito, Chabot, & Trocmé, 2016). The presenters raised broader questions about the utility of simply documenting disparities or whether there is a need to go deeper into the trajectories and context of child welfare involvement. While the administrative system used in Quebec has many advantages for research on disparities, it has become increasingly difficult to access given the elimination of a centralized ethics procedure, and the lack of infrastructure to support research collaboration.

First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health & Social Services Commission

Nancy Gros-Louis McHugh, Patricia Montambault, Richard Gray

The Commission presented findings of a qualitative study conducted in partnership with First Nations communities in Quebec to better understand the meaning of "neglect" from a First Nations perspective. The study suggests that that in some communities, there is still fear of child removal because of existing barriers to prevention services, which can exacerbate risk of neglect-related child protection intervention. Results of the study indicated that neglect is not seen as something to blame parents for, and there was a strong belief that no parent would intentionally neglect a child – rather, neglect relates to families not having adequate support to heal from trauma. Trauma has been passed on from generation to generation, through severed connections to culture and traditions through colonial laws and policies. Following these results, a culturally safe prevention and protection service model was proposed which puts the child at the center and acknowledges that a variety of factors, past and present, in the children's direct or indirect environment influence wellbeing. The results indicate the need for the child protection system to consider colonial impacts and related intergenerational trauma through providing supportive family interventions so as not to create new trauma. The study also points to a conceptualization of wellbeing that reflects First Nations values (the Commission is developing indicators at present). A provincial information governance center is being developed by the FNQLHSSC in close partnership with Quebec First Nations organizations which will allow First Nations to be more informed about their own histories and allow for ownership and interpretation of data about First Nations communities – a system that can also support documentation of family needs and help monitor child protection involvement. Several action items were proposed as follows: adopting a common action plan that promotes engagement of various stakeholders, strengthening collaborations to avoid over-solicitation and burdening of communities, leveraging provincial legislation Bill 15 to upgrade the Quebec information system to include First Nations' perspectives, and to develop long-term agreements between First Nations parties and researchers.

Kahnawà:ke Shakotiia'takehnhas Community Services

Blair Armstrong

This presentation provided a high-level overview of the Penelope Case Management system being used by Kahnawà:ke Shakotiia'takehnhas Community Services (KSCS) in Quebec. Penelope is an administrative data system that has been customized for each program delivered by the organization, including youth protection, home care, addictions, and other services. The data contained in the Penelope system depend on what frontline workers are able to document. Since the COVID-19 pandemic there has been a decrease in data captured by the system: currently, it is estimated that around 30% of data fields are complete. This is in part explained by there being little interest regarding the utility of clinical and administrative data on the part of frontline workers. Through Penelope, summary reports and tables can be generated for administrative and management purposes, but the clinical reports are not generated, which limits the clinical applicability of the information system at present. For example, a typical report may respond to questions such as how many files are open and how many were closed during a given time period, which is useful for management and administration, but is not immediately relevant to frontline workers. Raw data can be extracted to address some clinical questions, though the clinical expertise is not shared by those in a position to do the extracts. A clear gap identified in the presentation was this disconnect between clinical workers and those who are familiar with the back end of the information system. In the past, raw data extracts were used to support clinical decisions, for example through a research partnership with McGill's Centre for Research on Children & Families. One reflection shared during the presentation is that clinically relevant data extraction and analysis depends heavily on who is in positions of management at the time. The community is considering making a change to a different data system called MYLE which might reflect the needs of the community better than Penelope currently can.

Examining Youth Service Trajectories in Quebec: Black children's transition from child welfare to juvenile justice

Alicia Boatswain-Kyte

This study explored racial disparities in transitions from child welfare to juvenile justice for Black and White youth in Quebec. The study used data regarding children investigated by child protection for the first time, and looked at whether a case ended with YCJA involvement. The study found differences that may impact transitions from youth protection to juvenile justice involvement, such as age, gender, being reported to the child protection system for behavioural difficulties, language spoken, and migration (being born outside Canada). The study found that Black youth were at a higher risk of being followed by the YCJA after being involved with youth protection, controlling for some clinical factors. The study findings point to the importance of paying attention to underlying causes of youth criminal justice involvement.

The differential association of socioeconomic vulnerabilities and child protection involvement across geographies in Québec

Tonino Esposito

This presentation examined the lifetime risk of involvement with the Quebec child protection system and variation in these rates across neighborhoods according to socioeconomic status (SES) and child population density. Using child protection clinical administrative data and social geographic data in Québec, and multilevel latent longitudinal modeling to make initial predictions on geographic variation in child protection involvement across geographies in Québec, the study found that over 10% of children will experience a finding of their security or development being compromised (see Esposito et al., 2022 for initial prevalence results; SES and density publications forthcoming). Around half of these children (5.5% of the child population) will be placed outside of their homes at some point before turning 18. These rates, however, differed across geographies of Quebec. When broken down into quintiles by SES, there was a linear relationship in which the most socioeconomically vulnerable tier had the highest rates of child protection involvement while children in the least vulnerable areas had the lowest levels of child protection intervention. Disaggregating the province geographically by child population density illustrated a different pattern: children in the least densely populated areas experienced the highest child protection involvement. However, children in the most densely populated areas experienced the second highest rates of child protection intervention. To interpret the results, there seems to be an effect beyond families themselves that account for some of the variation in child protection involvement. These could relate to limited availability and access to family support services, lack of culturally adapted services, or several other factors. The risk tolerance and other practice factors across different regions of the province may also account for some of the variation. The broad takeaway from this study is that it is crucial to consider that poverty may have different impacts depending on where children and their families are living. Results are comparable to those observed in the USA, which was surprising given the more supportive family policy paradigm in Quebec. However, there is a lack of access to information in Quebec regarding the impact of economic support to families so it's difficult to integrate this with the analysis. This study demonstrates the power of linking longitudinal administrative data with other Census and geographic data to illustrate systemic factors that influence the context beyond the child protection system.

First Nations component of the OIS

Amber Crowe, Jeffrey Schiffer, Barbara Fallon

This presentation provided an overview of the First Nations Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect-2018, Mashkiwenmi-daa Noojimowin: Let's Have Strong Minds for the Healing (full publication available: Crowe, Schiffer, et al., 2021). The FN/OIS is a collaboration between the Association of

Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario (ANSCFAO), select First Nations child welfare agencies, and an Advisory committee whose role is to ensure appropriate contextualization when disparities are presented. Multi-focal goals of the FN/OIS are to support participation of First Nations agencies in the study, to continue to analyze data on investigations involving First Nations children, to disseminate research results with appropriate contextualization, and to increase capacity for First Nations child welfare research. The historical context of colonial history in Canada, intergenerational impacts, and the legacy of residential schools and the "sixties scoop" are all relevant for the current context. Currently, in Ontario there is a mix between fully mandated agencies and those that have different agreements related to prevention and protection service. There is a growing focus on prevention, holistic services, and Indigenous wellbeing agencies, and a growing federal recognition of Indigenous people's right to self-governance over child and family services, through Bill C-92.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission included calls to action related to reducing the number of First Nations children in care through monitoring and assessing neglect investigations, providing resources for families to stay together, and for publication of annual reports on the number of children in care (Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Data from the OIS-2018 show a disparity index for different ethno-racial groups in Ontario: compared to investigations of White children, Black children were 2.1 times more likely, Latin American children were 2.3 times more likely, and Indigenous children were 2.5 times more likely to be investigated for child welfare concerns. First Nations children were 3x more likely to be investigated compared to non-Indigenous children in 1998 and 2018, and the disparity in 2008 was 5x higher. Overrepresentation in the child welfare system builds across the investigation cycle: in 2018, First Nations children were 6x more likely to be transferred to ongoing services compared to non-Indigenous children, 3x more likely to receive court application, 7x more likely to be in kinship out-of-home care, and 7x more likely to be in formal out-of-home care. In terms of the nature of the investigation, First Nations children were more likely to be investigated because of concerns related to neglect and risk of future maltreatment, but less likely to be investigated because of concerns related to physical abuse compared to non-Indigenous children. Household, caregiver, and child functioning risk factors were identified in a greater percentage of First Nations than non-Indigenous investigations.

Multiple implications from these findings were presented. They point to the need need to focus more on equitable service delivery across both on- and off-reserve jurisdictions to ensure Indigenous children and families have access to Indigenous services regardless of where they reside. Presenters also noted that these findings should lead to more research examining peripheral factors around child welfare involvement, not just their experiences within the system. This is particularly relevant because of the high number of First Nations children living off-reserve who are involved in child welfare services, who are largely served by mainstream agencies.

Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario

Micheal Miller, Lorraine Hill

This presentation described the process of moving toward an Indigenous Information System (IIS) as an alternative to a compliance-based child welfare data system. Established in 1994, ANCFSAO is an umbrella organization whose membership includes 13 Indigenous child wellbeing agencies who serve 90% of the First Nations in Ontario. The organization's mandate is to support building a better life for Indigenous children and youth through culturally-based services; well-being oriented education, training, policy development, analyses, research, and advocacy; supporting an Indigenous data governance, OCAP® and privacy framework; and provision of technical expertise to the member agencies.

In 2015, a resolution was passed that Ontario First Nations had not received appropriate support on utilization of the Child Protection Information Network (CPIN) system that they were expected to use. There were attempts to urge the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) to pursue funding and correct the CPIN system to be more appropriate for use with First Nations. In 2019-2020 there was a decision to explore the feasibility of an Indigenous Information System (IIS), and it was communicated to the Ministry that no further ANCFSAO agencies would use CPIN.

An IIS would be applicable to Indigenous agencies and independent First Nations under Bill C-92. The IIS would shift away from a compliance-focused paradigm that is meant to meet the needs of the Ministry, does not allow for access by First Nations, is not based on First Nations data governance principles, and separates protection from holistic services. Instead, the IIS would address the needs of First Nations agencies and communities in several ways: by being a collectively designed, owned, and governed system; by supporting an outcome-based family preservation service model, by giving First Nations leadership access to their own data, by integrating OCAP® principles and First Nations data sovereignty, and maintaining a holistic view of child, family, and community wellbeing. The benefits of such a system would be numerous, and would make it possible to tell a child's whole story. It would allow for improved cross-sector collaboration, adaptation of service needs, and advocacy for adequate funding rather than fixed funding formulas. Developing performance indicators and outcomes related to Indigenous wellbeing (i.e, the work of IFSD on the Measuring to Thrive framework) can inform the creation of Indigenous standards and Indigenous child and family wellbeing assessment tools. Data collection based on outcomes will consider substantive equality, cultural continuity, holistic wellbeing, best interests of the child, and prioritization of preventive supports.

The initial plan for timing was for IIS to be in place for September 2024, but due to missing provincial and federal funding it is postponed; though the CHRT had funded the first two phases, they are currently looking for investment for the third phase and this will likely take a few more years to actualize.

Results from the Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect

Kofi Antwi-Boasiako

This presentation focused on trends in child maltreatment-related investigations involving Black and White families in Ontario, filling a knowledge gap in Canada. Using data from the Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (OIS) to examine 20 years (1993 to 2013) of child welfare data relating to these two racial groups, the study presented examined whether there has been an increase or decrease in the rate of child welfare investigations of Black and White families during this time. The study also looked at the system's response following these investigations (substantiation, transfer to ongoing services, placement in out-of-home care, and referrals to other services). The study found that from 1998 to 2003, rates of investigation for Black families almost quadrupled, while rates for White families almost doubled. In the 10-year period between 2003 and 2013, rates of substantiation, transfer to ongoing services, out-of-home care, and referral to other services was higher for Black families than White families, demonstrating disparities over most service dispositions over time in Ontario. Possible explanations for these findings include changes in risk related to the social safety net, Black families' social location, changes in the threshold for risk of harm, worker bias, and institutional policies and practices such as mandatory reporting and the implementation of structured decision-making tools. Implications for improved practice include several approaches, including listening to Black families' stories about their lived experiences, involving Black families in the development and implementation of practice and policy changes, asking detailed questions to determine appropriateness of child welfare referrals, connecting Black families to appropriate community resources, reflective practice by workers to increase their own awareness of bias, and participating in training to address differences in populations encountered in child welfare. Future work explores the perspectives of child welfare workers and community service providers on Black children's overrepresentation in Ontario's child welfare.

One Vision One Voice

Nicole Bonnie, Keishia Facey

This presentation outlined ways in which race-based child welfare data can be analyzed, interpreted, and leveraged to promote practice innovation, modified policies and institutional transformation. One Vision One Voice (OVOV) is an organization housed within the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS) that focuses on addressing anti-Black racism and supporting improved outcomes and equitable services for African-Canadian children, youth, and families in Ontario's child welfare system. Using a cross-sectoral approach, OVOV places attention on how multiple systems, particularly education, policing, and health care, interact to create and maintain racial disproportionality within child welfare.

OVOV is using data to transform child welfare for Black families. Research findings from the OIS have provided OVOV with the necessary contextualized theory and research that underscores and highlights the impact of anti-Black racism on the experiences of Black families before and during their involvement with Ontario Children's Aid Societies. The Understanding the Over-Representation of Black Children in Ontario Child Welfare Services Report (Bonnie & Facey, 2022) - prepared with the OIS-2018 Research Team at the request of OVOV – has been critical leverage to put other projects into place. Black children are 7% of Ontario's population but 17% of the child welfare population. They are 2.2x more likely to be investigated, 2.5x more likely to have a substantiated child welfare concern, 1.7x more likely to be transferred to ongoing services, and 2.5x more likely to be placed in out-of-home care. Research is pointing to systemic and individual racism that Black children and youth regularly encounter across many sectors in Ontario. The interlocking interactions of Black families navigating multiple institutions must be framed within a historical continuum of oppression. Accordingly, it is necessary to look beyond child welfare, into how social determinants of health feed into the overrepresentation of Black children. For Black children in Ontario child welfare, investigations were more likely to be referred by school personnel and police than by non-professional sources, and are most likely to relate to concerns about physical abuse rather than other maltreatment concerns. There are many child functioning, caregiver risk factors, and household circumstances (e.g., housing, income) related to these investigations.

Within this context of disparity in child welfare involvement, OVOV is undertaking several projects to focus on increased awareness of anti-black racism and assisting with culturally appropriate service delivery that builds on strong community engagement. For example, in collaboration with the Youth Wellness Lab at the University of Toronto, they rolled out the Disparity Mapping Project in the 2021/2022 fiscal year, which seeks to understand the disparities experienced by Black families by leveraging policy work and existing research, and by conducting focus groups and interviews with child welfare workers to identify key inflection points in generating, maintaining and exacerbating disparities. Best Practices for Children's Aid Societies or Indigenous Child and Family Well-Being Agencies will launch in 2023, and will be trauma-informed and stand in alignment with OVOV Practice Frameworks, while simultaneously considering the impact of intergenerational and race-based trauma experienced by Black families. A training for foster carers called Kujali: Caring for Black Children and Youth emphasizes cultural identity as an integral part of a child's life, especially for Black children, and focuses on the strength, resistance, joy, and resilience of Black identity. The presentation ended with calls to action regarding how to continue to advocate for change, examine how overrepresentation has evolved, and how to put it front and center. There is appreciation from the community to continue this work, and there are clear opportunities for data to be used for emancipatory practice.

Disparities in child welfare systems in Manitoba

Marni Brownell, Kathleen Kenny

This presentation provided an overview of two current projects in Manitoba focused on inequities in Manitoba's child welfare system.

The first project, presented by Marni Brownell, is Spectrum, a project sponsored by SSHRC through a Partnership Development Program. It uses administrative data linkable at an individual level. There are 100 different partners in the partnership and the partnership has conducted a demonstration project focused on child welfare. They are using data at the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy to promote social change. Manitoba has the highest rate of children in care in the country, and the highest percentage of Indigenous children. 22.4% of First Nations children spend some time in out-of-home care before their 15th birthday. An Advisory Circle, representatives from community, government, research, and student fellows comprise the project team. Three different First Nations Organizations are part of the Demonstration Project Team. Drawing from the Manitoba Population Research Data Repository (MPRDR), the study looks at children in Manitoba born between 1998 and 2018 who have had contact with child and family services (CFS). They look at two cohorts (children exposed to being in care, and children with an open file), and conduct an instrumental variable analysis to look at outcomes in health, education, and justice systems. The MPRDR contains a plethora of datasets allowing for adjustment of many covariates: 9 education datasets, 3 justice datasets, 6 registries, 21 social datasets, and 57 healthcare datasets. The results of the analyses so far were not shared because First Nations team members were not present. It was stated that the data can become great evidence when the context and stories can situate the data.

The second project, presented by Kathleen Kenny, is the Parents Project, which aims to use linked data to quantify the scope, reach and impacts of CFS on First Nations and non-First Nations parents. An advisory structure including First Nations government, community-based grassroots organizations, CFS authorities, and academic researchers has been formed. These advisors support determination of research priorities, review grant proposals, govern how project data are used and disclosed, ensure research promotes interests and wellbeing of affected communities, hold researchers accountable, and inform knowledge mobilization. Specifically, the project is taking advantage of and leveraging the power of linked and de-identified data in Manitoba, looking at a cohort of parents who had their first child in Manitoba between 1998 and 2020. To note, it was harder to link data to fathers within the available datasets and registries. Four main aims of the project are looking at: 1) parents' trajectories with CFS, 2) health predictors of child removal, 3) health effects of child removal, and 4) parent health changes after child removal that affect reunification vs. termination of parental rights. Results were not presented because the First Nations advisors were not present to co-present the data. Data limitations noted were that it is difficult to capture events of family reunification, and there are challenges with intake and investigation databases. Dr. Kenny highlighted grassroots organizations that are aiming to increase parent voice in advocacy and movement building in CFS spaces - including Fearless R2W, Parents Advocating Collectively for Kin (PACK), Community Action for Families, and the International Parental Advocacy Network (IPAN).

Disparities in child welfare systems in Northwest Territories

Amanda White, Lindsay Crompton, Bryn King

Other contributors: Cheuk Pang and Colette Prevost

Members of the Pan-Territorial Data Project, a PHAC-funded initiative and proof of concept project for the Canadian Child Welfare Information System, presented challenges and opportunities related to using child welfare administrative data to inform service delivery in Northwest Territories. Benefits of the project include the establishment of strong relationships between federal and territorial governments and enhanced organizational capacity and expertise, specifically through the development of minimum dataset specifications, an indicator framework, a data dictionary, and user guides and code that facilitate the analysis and reporting of key decisions points across the child welfare trajectory.

Through collaboration, several questions were identified, including the question - among unsubstantiated investigations where children/families are offered prevention services, how many children experience a subsequent protection investigation? The team explained how administrative data was used to answer this question and presented preliminary analysis. Example findings include, within the 12 months following the first screening of a child/youth in 2019, 59% were involved in only protection screenings, 25% were involved only in prevention service screenings and 15% were involved in both protection and prevention screenings. Of those who experienced a protection investigation and an associated prevention screening (a small portion of those investigated), 70% had a substantiated maltreatment concern, 62% received a prevention service, and 50% had a second protection investigation within 12 months of the first protection investigation. Advantages of this Initiative are that it is anchored in the real-world context of the Northwest Territories, and it has the ability to assess long-term outcomes, track the impact of policy changes over time, and inform program development. Disadvantages of this system relate to the complex challenges faced by children and families involved with child and family services that aren't well-documented in administrative data, as well as issues related to data quality. The next phase of this project will involve working with interested First Nation, Inuit and Métis partners to test ways to better recognize and implement their sovereign rights to be involved and make decisions about how child and family service data about their people is collected, managed, analyzed and used.

The Measuring to Thrive Framework

Helaina Gaspard

This presentation discussed the Measuring to Thrive (MtT) framework, a set of indicators meant to capture the well-being of First Nations children, families, and communities. The framework, developed bottom-up with First Nations child and family services (FNCFS) agency directors and other experts, aligns with two crucial orders from the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT): 1) that discrimination in FNCFS ends; and 2) that discrimination does not reoccur. A report from the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy (IFSD) provides a full overview of the Measuring to Thrive framework (see Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy, 2019). The full set of indicators includes 6 measures related to families, 42 indicators related to children, and 27 indicators related to community, recognizing that these indicators can increase risk of contact with child protection. A pilot approach to the framework is underway with FNCFS agency and First Nations collaborators testing a subset of indicators with their own data. Data sources include child welfare case data, Census data, etc. Next steps include: 1) identifying what information can be retrieved from existing data systems; 2) defining indicators for operationalization; and 3) designing tools for data collection and analysis. This framework acknowledges the importance of a well-being focused approach to child and family services, aligning measurement to a horizontal understanding of wellness. It is recognition that the funding and assessment of child and family services must consider the differentiated starting points and contexts of First Nations.

Public Health Agency of Canada, Canadian Child Welfare Information System

Wendy Hovdestad, Claudie Laprise, Lindsay Crompton, Nathaniel Pollock, Masako Tanaka

This presentation provided an overview of the Public Health Agency of Canada's work on the Canadian Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS). Taking a public health approach, the system is informed by the goal of developing population-level evidence about child welfare as a determinant of health, and to inform public health action. Accordingly, CCWIS will be a population-based data system collecting data related to children and families involved in child welfare systems across Canada, including reports, assessment, need for protection, placement, exiting care, and services. Aspects of the CCWIS approach is that it will be mutually beneficial for national, regional, and local contexts, it will involve a collaborative process of knowledge exchange and shared development and decision-making, and that it will involve an iterative process by which it is developed by first starting small and then scaling up in terms of indicators and geography. PHAC hopes to work in a way that respects and supports the sovereignty of Indigenous people regarding ownership of data. Formal collaboration is underway with Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Nunatsiavut Government.

While indicator development will be dependent on collaboration with partners, institutional consent, and data availability, they may broadly relate to incidence rates (rate per 1,000), rate ratios (e.g., disparities between different populations of children being placed), and prevalence (e.g., percentage of children in different situations experiencing placement). There are currently differences in the types of placement data reported (e.g., overall data, disaggregated Indigenous and non-Indigenous data, and distinction-based Indigenous data), which has implications for the aggregation of data from different Canadian jurisdictions. Several studies have been undertaken to contribute to the development of CCWIS to understand child welfare trends, data availability, data quality, governance models, and other relevant aspects of the project. Relevant questions left with the group are 1) What approaches to data governance should be considered for national child welfare data? 2) What are PHAC's responsibilities when collecting and analysing publicly reported data? and 3) How can we standardize and use data about Indigenous and racialized communities across different systems? PHAC recognizes that the needs of communities and agencies are varied and that a "one size fits all" approach will not be appropriate for everyone, so the approach will have to be a flexible one that acknowledges local sovereignty and human resource constraints.

Guided Discussion

The guided discussion at the end of the day included reflections on the possibilities of using administrative data to look at trajectories across systems. It also focused on related challenges, including a lack of interest in complex data, lack of front-end capacity, issues related to data governance, and a dearth of projects taking place in long-term partnerships.

Some noted that given that disparities have been extensively documented there is a need to shift gears to focus on developing programs and policies to reduce these disparities. However, others noted that the measurement of disparities still need to be improved so that we can better understand this phenomenon. Moving beyond disparities may involve a shift from consultative processes to action. Others noted that disparities won't change by working within child welfare systems, so multi-sectoral collaboration is needed. Within an Indigenous worldview, it has been long known that there are many factors involved in supporting the wellbeing of children. Researchers should focus more on program and policy evaluation and implementation. For example, many provinces have completely stopped birth alerts, but the impact of this shift has not yet been evaluated. Research is also needed to support replacing the concept of child neglect with less parent blaming concepts.

To support the development of effective multi-sectoral approaches, it will be important to track data on services beyond youth protection. Currently available adminstrative data is limited to service activities within protection systems. These measures say little about child and family outcomes and are blind to services provided outside of the protection system. Some noted that this narrow measuement focus ignores the long-standing community based approaches that have developd in Black and First Nations communities.

The discussion expanded to the challenge of shifting the research gaze beyond how colonialism and anti-Black racism impact families to look at Whiteness – how does it live within our institutions and what are the forces that uphold it? It is also important to not necessarily see money as a mitigating and protecting factor for Black families as many middle-class families are still not shielded from the gaze of the child welfare system.

A question arose related to governance given the arrival of Bill C-92, which recognizes the self-determination of First Nations over child welfare processes. This may conflict with efforts to move forward harmoniously across the country and even within provinces. How to provide support to ongoing data governance that respects sovereignty was raised as a question. There are multiple stand-alone systems that don't necessarily communicate with each other, so tools are needed to support dialogue related to data exchange and comparison. While funds have been made available to First Nations communities, it is not clear whether this includes infrastructure for program evaluation.

DAY 2

A combination of presentations and roundtable discussion on Day 2 focused on how data may inform policy and practice to overcome disparities and promote the wellbeing of children in child welfare systems. Specifically, Day 2 focused on the following questions:

- How can child welfare data capacity be sustained and further developed at a national, provincial, and agency-level?
- How do we mobilize research regarding disparities to address the elements that make children more vulnerable to child welfare involvement and inform policy and practice?

A summary of the presentations and roundtable discussions is as follows:

Disparities in child welfare systems in British Columbia[1]

France Cormier

This presentation provided an overview from the perspective of the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) regarding current and future reporting related to Indigenous and ethnic disparities in child protection. In BC, the MCFD has access to data on child welfare across the province, including data from all delegated agencies. The MCFD administrative data is rich and complex: it comes from 18 information systems, with a total of 20TB of data holdings.

There is high quality data on Indigeneity since 2015 because of the strong overrepresentation observed within the system. Rates of Indigenous children in care are highly disparate, with recent data showing around 18x disparity for Indigenous children compared to non-Indigenous children. However, this disparity is not reflected in protection reports between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children, which is the first step in MCFD involvement. The difference increases drastically when looking at children in care – later in the process. There are efforts to address this by focusing on family preservation earlier in the child welfare process. There are also shifts in the jurisdiction of child welfare in BC toward Indigenous communities, involving Indigenous Child ad Family Services agencies, agreements under the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA), coordination agreements through federal child welfare legislation, and Treaty First Nations and other self-government agreements, all of which have implications for future administrative child welfare data.

There is currently little ethnicity or socio-economic data available. Work is being done centrally in the BC government to start collecting ethnicity data, from an anti-racism approach. The Anti Racism Data Act in BC was co-developed with First Nations leadership and through engagement with Indigenous and racialized communities in the province. Through this community engagement process, they learned that 92% of community-led reports said data could bring a positive and concrete change, including reducing systemic racism, addressing gaps in services, resolving inequities, and identifying barriers in accessing services. The creation of a central anti-racism population survey is being considered. It would include fully voluntary data provision on gender, ethnicity, indigeneity, faith, education and income. Certain practical and ethical challenges were articulated, including the fact that demand for identity-based data is increasing, but collection of high-quality data is more difficult when data provision is voluntary, centralized and de-identified. It was noted that the work is still in its infancy and as a result, includes seemingly opposing projects.

---

[1] This presentation was originally scheduled for Day 1, but had to be postponed due to logistical constraints.

COVID and Disparities in Maltreatment Response, Victimization, and Placement: An Analysis of the US National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System

John Fluke, Dana Hollinshead, Gila Shusterman
Other contributors: Rachel Wilson, Juan Nunez, and Nicole Fettig

This presentation addressed disparities in maltreatment response and victimization during COVID-19 in the United States. The National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) is a national level data aggregator that began in 1988 and is federally funded. In most years it includes data from all 50 states, and the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Disproportionality and disparity are measured at several key decision points among them: intake, CPS response, victimization, out-of-home placement, length of stay in out-of-home placement and planned permanent exit. Race/ethnicity categorization used were Hispanic/Latinx, White, Black, and Native American relying on standard US Census groupings. Urban and rural designations were also made according to population at the county level.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, reports to child welfare went down, with the highest decrease in reports observed from schools. A higher proportion of reports were substantiated, and reporting decreased more in urban areas than in rural areas. The Child protection system (CPS) response risk ratios for Black children compared with White children declined. In urban areas, the risk ratios for Black children declined compared with White children, but this did not happen in rural areas. Changes in the disparities for Native American children were not observed at the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak. CPS response and victimization risk ratios for Native American children compared with White children were elevated in urban areas.

Limitations were discussed in the Q&A period, including that NCANDS does not collect data from Tribal child welfare agencies, and it is estimated that more than half of reports for Native American children are not available in the NCANDS data, mostly from rural areas. One comment reflected on the idea that reductions in these disparities with no increases in victimization during the initial COVID outbreak support the concept that Black children are "over reported" relative to their actual risk of harm. Further questions point to the need to better understand why CPS response disparities for Native American children compared to White children are elevated in urban areas, and what underlies the elevated victimization disparities for Native American children compared to White children as well?

Policymaking Roundtable Discussion

A roundtable discussion was held as a full group and the conversation entailed an open-ended reflection in response to the broad question: **What do we need to consider when using readily available data to measure disparities?** Attendees were encouraged to include in the discussion ethical considerations, capacity building, data validity, governance, OCAP® principles, and provincial/territorial jurisdiction, including policy and practice at the agency level.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were a cross-cutting theme throughout the discussion. Several points were made regarding the ethical collection and use of data. One is that data should not be collected or extracted without a purposeful goal. Regarding principles of Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP®; First Nations Information Governance Centre, n.d.), one participant mentioned that this is fundamental to ethical use of data to understand and reduce disparities in child welfare. Several comments related to the biases that exist in available datasets that may be compounded when datasets are linked from multiple systems (e.g., health, justice, education, child welfare), particularly for Indigenous communities. In other words, racism within these institutions will be present in the informational systems used and the data collected, which could further harm communities if used to inform new policies. Participants shared comments regarding the inherent responsibility of researchers to be available to share their expertise and accompany communities and organizations and strengthen capacities. A comment was made regarding the extent of the utility of research questions themselves in reducing disparities when there is clear bias and anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism permeating worker decision-making in agencies.

Several aspects of the discussion delved further into the topics of capacity building, data quality and validity, governance (including OCAP® principles), and jurisdiction-level practice and policy considerations – none of which are free of ethical considerations themselves. Accordingly, this theme is woven throughout the descriptions of the conversation found below.

Capacity building

The discussion comments regarding capacity building touched on a need for resources, infrastructure, and technical expertise to support community-led initiatives. For example, support for customization of informational systems to meet the needs of local agencies. Similarly, there were comments emphasizing an obligation for researchers to share their technical capacity with community-based agencies to support analysis of existing data to inform agency-level decision making. This can relate to administrative child protection data, data related to prevention services, and multisystem links. A risk of using administrative data is also the lack of capacity to implement longitudinal analysis instead of relying on cross-sectional reports, which can lead to policy change that can be harmful. It was mentioned that researchers face a challenge in providing such technical support when they are not embedded in organizations. Increased partnership and collaboration across academic, policy, and agency silos would improve collaboration and capacity for data to reduce disparities in child welfare. Support to workers in understanding the practice benefits of data collection was mentioned multiple times to contribute to data quality and agency-level capacity to leverage data to improve outcomes for children and families. Building capacity for critical reflexivity in mainstream child welfare settings—among frontline workers and managers—was also mentioned as an important aspect of improved capacity in child welfare that can contributed to better data collection and reduced disparities. At the same time, it was mentioned that there is inadequate evidence regarding the effectiveness of cultural trainings for workers. Discussions of capacity building also touched on more granular elements of data validity, governance, and jurisdiction-specific policy and practice realities, which are documented below.

Data validity

Several challenges related to data validity, quality, and availability arose during the roundtable discussion. Child welfare data is generally the most valid when it relates to a financial transaction, because these data must be complete in order for payments to flow (e.g., related to a placement). At a baseline, many information systems do not have complete or correct ethnoracial and Indigeneity data, which compromises analyses, particularly related to disproportionality and disparity. One commenter suggested collaborating with communities to support correction and completion of these data. Collection of new data could be informed by practice-based questions, which could both improve agency-level approaches and programing and improve worker traction and buy-in to data collection. One challenge is that many First Nations communities use two information systems: one that addresses provincial reporting standards, and another that collects a more holistic set of data points that are oriented toward wellbeing. This results in gaps in the provincial data which may be more likely to be used in academic research. It was suggested that information systems should have data fields that are informed by a "bottom-up" approach, such as those already being identified by First Nations agencies related to wellbeing. Use of existing data, which often contains bias, must be done carefully, especially when multiple datasets are linked – these could mean that "exponentially racist" data is informing programming, particularly when algorithmic or artificial intelligence tools are applied. This relates to another comment made that interpretation of data will become more valid the more involvement there is of communities themselves. A limitation of administrative data related to child protection involvement mentioned during the discussion is that information related to services and systemic factors beyond child protection systems are not well documented. However, these factors may be an important missing piece in analyses that attempt to understand the environmental and structural characteristics around families that may increase risk or reduce support for families. In practice settings, a mechanism of performance indicators was mentioned as a way to improve accountability and data completeness, though this may be a double-edged sword as it can incentivize bias and lead to invalid data.

Governance & OCAP®

The discussion frequently circled back to the theme of governance as it cuts through other topics related to ethical considerations, capacity building, data validity, and policy and practice at a jurisdictional level. It was mentioned that governance questions, including partnership approaches, accountability, and access to data are fundamental to answering the question of how data may be used to measure disparities. The discussion included comments regarding provincial governance policies that create impenetrable silos between ministries and organizations, making it difficult for organizations to utilize data to inform their own programming. In terms of governance processes, accountability may be necessary to disentangle aggregated data, reduce "systemic amnesia," and combat a lack of will to address problematic outcomes. From an accountability perspective, an attendee from Ontario mentioned that there have been gatherings of representatives from hospitals, schools, and police settings into one room to understand sources of disparities in reporting to child welfare. The risk of not having an accountability mechanism is that research upholds a problematic system through anonymity. From an OCAP® perspective, principles for First Nations control over data have previously been defined (First Nations Information Governance Centre, n.d.). For mainstream researchers to support OCAP® principles and provide technical research support, the research questions themselves must be important and relevant for organizations – without this in place, partnerships and data sharing will be more challenging.

Jurisdiction-level policy & practice

The discussion of policy and practice included attention to decision thresholds, worker discretion, and the need for evaluation of the impact of interventions. Broadly, the question was asked how to move from avoiding risk to preventing families from coming into child welfare systems in the first place by paying more attention to protective factors. Regarding decision thresholds, multiple participants mentioned a need to triage cases differently based on the presenting needs of a family to address some disparities as an equity protocol. For example, if a family from a marginalized group that is overrepresented in child welfare presents certain needs, it's possible that they have waited longer to ask for help due to fear of interacting with the system – these cases could be prioritized to prevent further hardship and preserve wellbeing. Worker discretion can also rely on biased views of families. A participant questioned the utility of research in addressing abjectly biased practice decisions to accept a child welfare referral. The importance of evaluating the impact of protection and prevention interventions was also noted so that practice and policy decision making can be grounded in evidence regarding what has already been shown to work in that jurisdiction.

From Colonialism to Social Justice

Cindy Blackstock

This presentation presented an evolution of colonial history, social policy, and the role of evidence regarding children's wellbeing, asking the question, "Why does this data matter when there is no coherent plan to implement the results?" The presentation argued that before engaging in more research, researchers must explore the historical record to determine whether the injustice facing First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples is linked to a lack of knowledge or a lack of political/moral will to implement existing solutions. The rolling research "dusty bookshelf" phenomena achieves academic merit for researchers, political cover for wrongdoers and contributes to colonialism.

The presentation illustrated the problem by drawing connections between Canada's choice to not act on Dr. Bryce's highly publicized 1907 report documenting the preventable causes of death of children in residential schools and Canada's lethargy in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) reports. The presentation also called on social work to calibrate its efforts to respond with greater urgency to contemporary social injustices. For decades, social work has been out of touch with its social justice obligations, leaving it to others, and frequently victims of discrimination themselves, to confront systemic discrimination.

Government action or lack thereof in response to clear and credible documentation of remedies to social justice issues is a major problem and is often typified by governments viewing critiques as public relations problems versus as opportunities to enhance public service. Academia needs to be restructured to reward and support the implementation of research-based solutions with affected communities. Too often, the academic enterprise promotes the conduction of research and dissemination in research circles whilst giving little weight and support to implementation of the research findings. There is also an inherent, and often undeserved, derogation of grey literature in university circles.

The landmark human rights case First Nations Child and Family Caring Society vs. the Attorney General of Canada case (initially filed in 2007) demonstrates how academics can work effectively to implement evidence informed solutions. Over the 72 days of the trial, evidence was tendered based on the experience of children and families coupled with some academic research, and Canada's own documents. This combination of mutually reinforcing evidence led to the substantiation of the complaint and billions of dollars in services for First Nations children and families. Researchers from disciplines such as economics, social work and history were called as expert witnesses. As an expert witness, the academic has a primary duty to the Tribunal/court to provide independent and credible opinions based on research. If you are called as an expert witness, you will be tested through cross-examination on the quality of your work, peer review is important, there must be humility in talking about the consistency and inconsistency of the data, and researchers must be prepared for adjudicator questions. Training students to testify as experts and undergo cross examination ought to be core to any graduate studies social work program as even the PhD defense does not match the level of scrutiny one will undergo in cross-examination.

The need for evidence will evolve throughout the implementation period (social justice movement). For example in the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal case, there was an initial need to substantiate the discrimination and outline solutions, and now evidence is required to prove Canada's non-compliance (and its associated impacts on children) and to develop long term solutions to address any outstanding discrimination and prevent its recurrence.

To sum up, this presentation argued that researchers ought to critically appraise the historical record to determine if the injustice persists due to lack of knowledge or lack of action. If it is the latter, then researchers ought to partner with credible social justice movements to ensure remedies to social injustice are implemented. This will include summarizing existing literature in publicly accessible and engaging formats, using access to information statutes to help determine the motives of government power holders, developing research with an implementation vision and strategy (research is the tool, not the result), and develop peer reviewed publications to be used in the service of the social justice strategy. Several key lessons learned were presented: research for implementation is the remedy, it's better to change the atmosphere in other formats (Twitter, newspapers), there is a need to do multidisciplinary work (e.g., economics, health), and you need to think about what kind of person you want to be: personal and research credibility both matter. Social science and humanities researchers we must develop the moral courage to go beyond the academic research factory to address systemic discrimination and social injustice. It is not enough to publish papers while the public suffers.

III. THEMES & FUTURE PRIORITIES

a. Synthesis of meeting themes

Some cross-cutting themes emerged from the presentations and discussions held over the course of the two-day meeting that speak both to better monitoring of child welfare disparities and the need to reduce these disparities through data that reflects the lived realities of children and families within their communities. Broadly, these themes relate to procedural aspects of data oversight, collection, analysis, and mobilization for policy change that prioritize holistic understanding of child wellbeing. These themes are described in turn below.

STRENGTHENING DATA GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY

Our discussions reinforced the notion that ethical data governance and accountability must come prior to questions of data collection, method, or implementation of research findings. This issue has been articulated more concretely by First Nations in the form of the principles of Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP®; First Nations Information Governance Centre, n.d.). However, the importance of data governance structures that retain data sovereignty within communities extends beyond First Nations alone. Colonial histories of disenfranchisement, removal of families from land and children from families, and unethical application of scientific research on Indigenous and other marginalized groups reinforce the necessity of good governance and accountability to be a foundation for good data collection, analysis and future use of data in advocacy or policy applications. While data sovereignty principles have been articulated, without infrastructure and resources to implement these principles consistently and meaningfully they are limited in their application to research. In other words, for data to be actionable, the infrastructure must be in place to support robust governance frameworks. For researchers based in academic institutions, this reinforces the necessity for ongoing partnerships and relationship building with community leaders and knowledge keepers throughout the research process: the governance structure ought to inform the methodologies to some degree. At the same time, data sovereignty and local ownership of data may create complexity related to efforts to streamline Canada-wide data collection.

DATA REFLECTING LOCAL REALITIES

Existing data collected within provincial frameworks is often biased, rooted in colonial institutions, and sometimes misused. Accordingly, the limitations of current data systems are clear, particularly for Indigenous communities when they are compliance based and not holistically designed. For example, in many cases First Nations agencies are using two different systems – one to comply with provincial reporting requirements and another to collect holistic data that tells a story about the children and families involved with the agency, as well as the contexts in which they live. The Measuring to Thrive framework is attempting to address this by generating a cohesive set of indicators that relate to child wellbeing. While more indicators may better reflect on-the-ground realities that are relevant for children and families, holistic data collection creates more labor for frontline workers who, accordingly, need to be invested in collecting these data. Within a paradigm of data governance and accountability that values community-driven research is the necessity for identification and definition of relevant indicators that inform what data is collected. As one participant mentioned, no data should be collected without a purpose. At the same time, if certain indicators are no longer measured, disparities become less visible which may undermine advocacy efforts to reduce them. To synthesize reflections shared during the meeting, the challenge and opportunity in the field is to find ways to decolonize the data going forward while continuing to monitor disparities and make evidence actionable to support child wellbeing and reduce child welfare disparities.

OPTIMIZATION OF DATA FOR RESEARCH ON DISPARITIES

There are opportunities to optimize analyses of data that are already collected and stored in child welfare information systems to understand the extent of and mechanisms contributing to disparities in child welfare. An inclusive governance process may point toward areas of highest impact to optimize existing data. Several examples illustrate the importance of digging deeper into available data to illustrate a fuller picture:

> Reunification stability. Administrative child welfare data in Quebec show that First Nations children are just as likely as non-Indigenous children to return home after an out-of-home placement (First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission, 2016). However, First Nations children are more likely to be removed a subsequent time, illustrating the role of study duration and indicator selection in monitoring disparities and identifying potential points of intervention to reduce them. Without documenting the subsequent out-of-home placement following a family reunification attempt, the disparity – which is significant in terms of child wellbeing and stability – would be invisible.
>
> Use of ethnoracial categories and poverty as independent variables. In terms of disparities, these factors reflect complex historical and structural inequities that cannot be measured as one factor. When using available data to examine disparities, research must be careful to highlight these structural inequities however possible to mitigate the risk of individualizing disparities in child welfare outcomes. Such care in method design is directly impactful in terms of how analyses may be interpreted and used for application in policy settings. Two examples illustrate the risk of relying on 1) ethnicity and 2) poverty as independent covariates, along with the importance of context in designing research methods:
>
> - In Quebec, when modelling the likelihood of a Black child to have a substantiated report, there is no effect when this is measured at a provincial level. However, when modeling the same risk in urban settings in the province, there is a huge effect for Black children (Boatswain-Kyte, Esposito, & Trocmé, 2020). To use ethnoracial group membership as an independent variable assumes an equal distribution of the population across the province, but this is not reflected in the actual distribution of the population. Accordingly, it has a different outcome when the geographic level is changed, meaning that additional factors are contributing to the ethnoracial disparity that is measured.
> - Similarly in Quebec, equally poor families living in neighbourhoods experience differential risk of child protection involvement (e.g., Esposito et al., *forthcoming*). In this case, there is an exogenous effect of poverty variation across regions, meaning there are other factors contributing to the pattern, perhaps related to appropriateness of services, risk threshold variation, or other characteristics across regions that are reflective of and influenced by structural inequities.

The examples above are meant to provide tangible illustration of opportunities for existing data to show a fuller picture of disparities in child welfare, but also to call attention to the necessary caution when ethno-racial identity, Indigeneity and poverty are simply used a covariates in probabilistic modeling. The examples also show a gap in relying heavily on child and family-level child welfare administrative data to understand child welfare disparities – additional data sources showing structural, contextual, and geographic trends need to be considered and analyzed to explain the nature of certain disparities in child welfare systems.

LEVERAGING RESEARCH FOR BETTER POLICY

To make a meaningful impact in reducing disparities, research must translate to policy and to agency-level practice. Monitoring disparities without further dissemination and utilization of the data to reduce those disparities is inadequate. When data grounded in local realities are informing research on disparities, clearer points of potential practice and policy intervention may emerge. Specifically, research showing the impact of certain policies, programs, and services can identify tangible opportunities for service referrals to be more impactful once children are involved with child welfare, and efficacy of prevention services that reduce the risk that they ever will be. The policy and practice change that will reduce disparities within child welfare systems will largely take place outside of those systems. Leveraging research for action means academic researchers resisting the incentive structure that pushes for more publications but does not fund implementation of research findings.

b. Next steps

The Kids Count meeting this year laid the groundwork for continued collaboration, knowledge sharing, and cross-sectoral research focusing on monitoring and reducing disparities within child welfare systems across Canada. At the same time, it raised several questions related to the limitations of administrative data alone to inform policy and practice improvements that prioritize child wellbeing. The generative presentations and discussions held in 2023 will inform future initiatives of this growing network, derived from the themes articulated above and described in more detail here.

Substantively, several topics emerging from this year's meeting will be prioritized at the 3rd National Child Welfare Data Exchange Meeting in 2024/2025. As was articulated during our discussions together, these topics will go beyond analysis and documentation of known disparities in child welfare systems to examine opportunities for action and implementation. First, sharing from partnership-based projects that have been successful will support development of templates for community-informed research and advocacy work that both leverages technical research skills and is driven by the stated needs of children and families. Second, we will make space for discussion of projects that have undertaken meaningful evaluation of child welfare-adjacent services to prevent child welfare involvement and reduce disparities. This element necessitates going beyond child welfare services themselves to ask holistically about service availability, systemic risk and protective factors, and structural and historical reasons for these disparities. It also requires a look at dissemination approaches and how or whether research influences policy. Third, we will focus on data governance approaches that 1) prioritize Indigenous data sovereignty, 2) allow everyday practice to feed data collection approaches, and 3) build collaboration and partnership between practitioners and researchers. The next meeting will also continue to create space for examination of pan-Canadian efforts to harmonize fundamental child welfare indicators such that national trends can be captured longitudinally, and cross-jurisdictional analysis can be done across Canadian provinces and territories. Finally, the importance of the network that is growing through these data exchange meetings cannot be understated. As was clear from the 2023 meeting, partnerships and collaborative projects that emerge when practitioners, policy makers, and researchers are in the same room together are fundamental to actionable projects that make a tangible difference in the lives of children and families.

To support the 2024/2025 meeting, the organizers plan to submit a Connection grant application to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). The hope is that this grant would provide additional financial support beyond that provided by PHAC to expand participation in the annual meeting and allow for periodic reflection groups between meetings. This grant will be framed around the themes articulated above, emphasizing the value of connecting across sectors and Canadian jurisdictions. Securing this grant will strengthen the sustainability of this growing network of practitioners, child wellbeing advocates, policy makers, and scholars whose shared goal is to not only monitor child welfare disparities but to leverage research to take actionable steps to reduce those disparities.

IV. REFERENCES

Bill C-92, An Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children, Youth and Families, S.C. 2019, c. 24. https://www.canlii.org/en/ca/laws/astat/sc-2019-c-24/latest/sc-2019-c-24.html

Boatswain-Kyte, A., Esposito, T., Trocmé, N. (2020). A longitudinal jurisdictional study of Black children reported to child protection services in Quebec, Canada. *Children and Youth Services Review, 116*, 1-19. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.105219

Bonnie, N., & Facey, K. (2022). Understanding the over-representation of Black children in Ontario child welfare services. One Vision Once Voice. Ottawa, ON. https://www.oacas.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Black-Children-in-Care-OIS-Report-2022-Final.pdf

Commission d'enquête sur les relations entre les Autochtones et certains services publics. (2019). Public inquiry commission on relations between Indigenous Peoples and certain public services in Québec: listening, reconciliation and progress: Final report. https://www.cerp.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/Fichiers_clients/Rapport/Final_report.pdf

Crowe, A., Schiffer, J., with support from Fallon, B., Houston, E., Black, T., Lefebvre, R., Filippelli, J., JohCarnella, N., and Trocmé, N. (2021). Mashkiwenmi-daa Noojimowin: Let's Have Strong Minds for the Healing (First Nations Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect-2018). Toronto, ON: Child Welfare Research Portal. https://cwrp.ca/sites/default/files/publications/Mashkiwenmi-Daa%20Noojimowin_Let%E2%80%99s%20Have%20Strong%20Minds%20For%20The%20Healing_First%20Nations%20Ontario%20Incidence%20Study%20Of%20Reported%20Child%20Abuse%20And%20Neglect%202018.pdf

Esposito, T., Caldwell, J., Chabot, M., Blumenthal, A., & Trocmé, N. (*Forthcoming*) Socioeconomic risk and child protection involvement in Quebec: a longitudinal prevalence study.

Esposito, T., Fallon, B., Trocmé, T., Caldwell, J., Saint-Girons, M., & Précourt, S. (2023). Considerations for the Canadian Child Welfare Information System. Public Health Agency of Canada: Ottawa, ON.

Esposito, T., Caldwell, J., Chabot, M., Trocmé, N., Fallon, B., Hélie, S., & Blumenthal, A. (2022). Childhood prevalence of involvement with the child protection system in Quebec: a longitudinal study. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 20*, 622. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20010622

Esposito, T., Caldwell, J., Chabot, M., Delaye, A., Trocmé, N, Hélie, S., & Fallon, B. (2021). Reunification trajectories in Quebec: Acknowledging chronic family challenges to support stability. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 105437. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2021.105437

Esposito, T., Trocmé, N., Fallon, B., Delaye, A., Caldwell, J., Doucet, M. (2020). Canadian Child Welfare Administrative Data Knowledge Exchange Summary Report. Public Health Agency of Canada.

Esposito, T., Chabot, M., Trocmé, N. (2016). GFISC Users' Guide and Codebook. Université de Montréal et Université McGill, 363p.

Fallon, B., Lefebvre, R., Trocmé, N., Richard, K., Hélie, S., Montgomery, H. M., Bennett, M., Joh-Carnella, N., SaintGirons, M., Filippelli, J., MacLaurin, B., Black, T., Esposito, T., King, B., Collin- Vézina, D., Dallaire, R., Gray, R., Levi, J., Orr, M., Petti, T., Thomas Prokop, S., & Soop, S. (2021). Denouncing the continued overrepresentation of First Nations children in Canadian child welfare: Findings from the First Nations/Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect-2019. Ontario: Assembly of First Nations. *https://cwrp.ca/publications/denouncing-continued-overrepresentation-first-nations-children-canadian-child-welfare*

First Nations Information Governance Centre. (n.d.). The First Nations Principles of OCAP®. https://fnigc.ca/ocap-training/#:~:text=The%20First%20Nations%20principles%20of%20ownership%2C%20control%2C%20access%2C%20and,this%20information%20can%20be%20used.

First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission – FNQLHSSC (2016). Trajectories of First Nations youth subject to the Youth Protection Act (Component 3): Analysis of mainstream youth protection agencies administrative data, 106 pages Analysis project on the trajectories of First Nations youth subject to the Youth Protection Act - CSSSPNQL

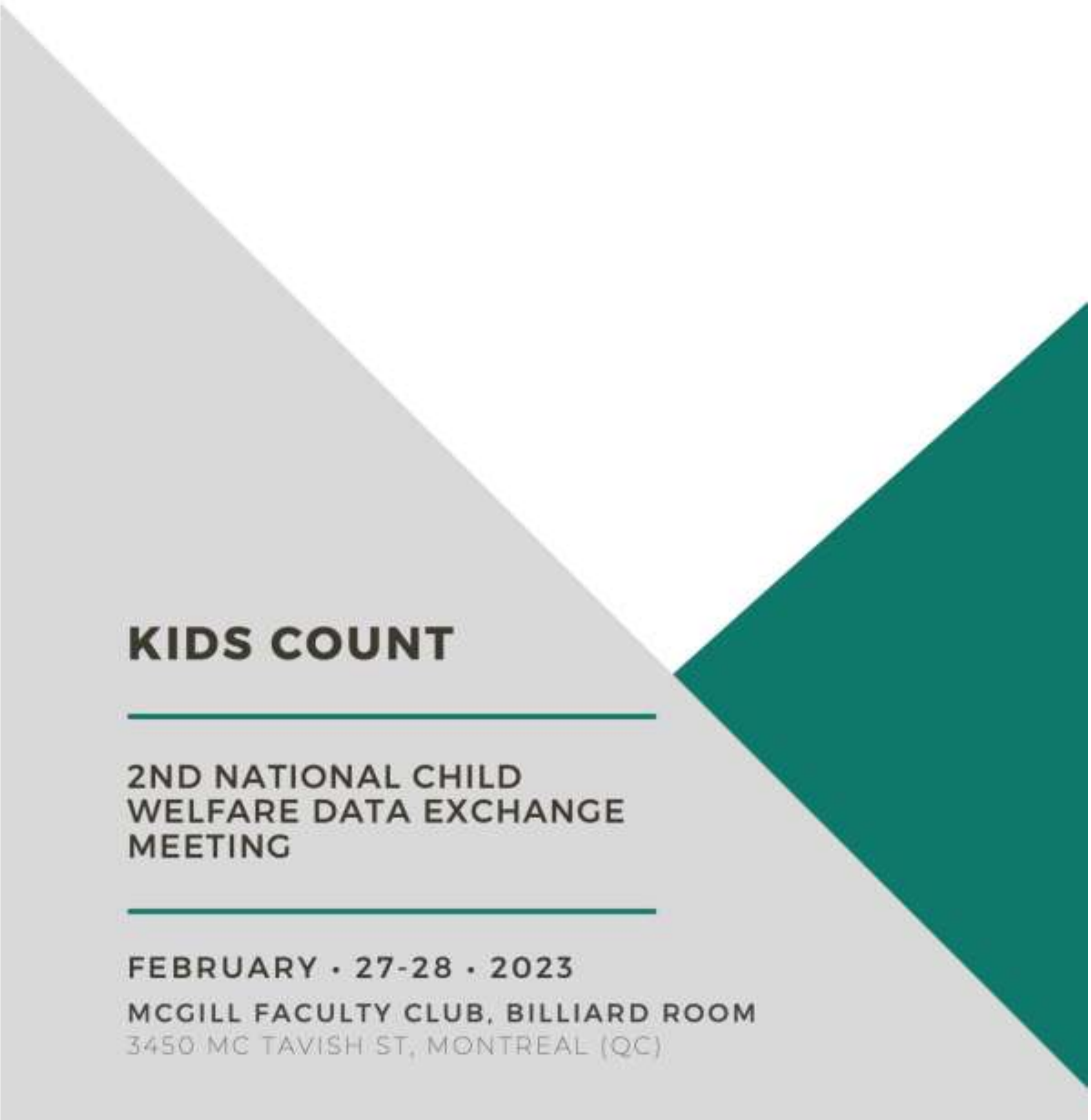
Hélie, S., Trocmé, S., Collin-Vézina, D., Esposito, T., Morin, S., & Saint-Girons, M. (2022). First Nations/Quebec Incidence Study of Child Maltreatment and Serious Behaviour Problems Investigated by Child Protection Services in 2019. Report FN/QIS-2019. Institut universitaire Jeunes en difficulté, 60p. https://files.cssspnql.com/s/lq8XHkoYoNMJelv

Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy (IFSD). (2019). Enabling First Nations Children to Thrive. University of Ottawa. https://ifsd.ca/web/default/files/FNCFS/2020-09-09_Final%20report_Funding%20First%20Nations%20child%20and%20family%20services%5B1%5D.pdf

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). Honouring the truth, reconciling for the future: summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/Honouring_the_Truth_Reconciling_for_the_Future_July_23_2015.pdf

V. APPENDICES

a. Meeting Agenda



KIDS COUNT

2ND NATIONAL CHILD WELFARE DATA EXCHANGE MEETING

FEBRUARY · 27-28 · 2023

MCGILL FACULTY CLUB, BILLIARD ROOM
3450 MC TAVISH ST, MONTREAL (QC)

MEETING FOCUS AND OBJECTIVES

The *2023 Child Welfare Data Exchange Meeting* will focus on the use of administrative data to better understand and address disparities in the provision of child welfare services for children, families, and communities of different ethno-racial, Indigenous, and socio-economic backgrounds. A consistent recommendation for monitoring and reducing these disparities is to improve data quality, availability, and partnerships both within and across jurisdictions and agencies.[1],[2] This gathering will consider practical and ethical use of administrative data to monitor disparities in child welfare systems across jurisdictions and discuss strategies to support the development of information systems to inform initiatives to reduce disparities and support overrepresented communities.

The broad **objectives** of this gathering are three-fold:

1. Strengthen the network of researchers, administrators and advocates interested in using child welfare administrative data to monitor and improve child welfare services in Canada.
2. Explore methodological, contextual, ethical and policy issues relevant to the interpretation of data on disparities in the provision of child welfare services for children, families, and communities of different ethno-racial, Indigenous, and socio-economic backgrounds.
3. Identify needs for Indigenous child welfare agencies seeking to develop information systems that support decolonized approaches to supporting children and families.

---

[1] Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). Honouring the truth, reconciling for the future: summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Retrieved from http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/Honouring_the_Truth_Reconciling_for_the_Future_July_23_2015.pdf

[2] Commission d'enquête sur les relations entre les Autochtones et certains services publics. (2019). Public inquiry commission on relations between Indigenous Peoples and certain public services in Québec: listening, reconciliation and progress: Final report. Retrieved from https://www.cerp.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/Fichiers_clients/Rapport/Final_report.pdf

PARTICIPANTS AND FUNDING

This year, we are honored to be joined by over 50 participants, who come from the following 30 organizations

- Assembly of First Nations (AFN)
- Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario (ANCFSAO)
- Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto (CCAS)
- Dnaagdawenmag Binnoojiiyag Child & Family Services
- Family & Children Services of the Waterloo Region (FACS)
- First Nations Child and Family Caring Society (FNCFCS)
- First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNIGC)
- First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission (FNQLHSSC)
- Government of British Columbia
- Government of Northwest Territories
- ICES
- Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)
- Institut National de la Recherche Scientifique (INRS)
- Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy (IFSD)
- Kahnawà:ke Shakotiia'takehnhas Community Services (KSCS)
- Kempe Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect
- King's University College at Western University
- Martin Family Initiative (MFI)
- McGill University
- Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS)
- Ministry of Health and Social Services (MSSS)
- Native Child & Family Services of Toronto
- Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS)
- Ontario Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (OCANDS)
- Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC)
- Toronto Metropolitan University
- University of Manitoba
- University of Toronto
- University of Montreal
- WRMA

This meeting is supported through Professors Tonino Esposito, Barbara Fallon and Nico Trocmé's research funds. The Public Health Agency of Canada is also generously supporting this meeting. **A report summarizing the presentations and discussions will be prepared and shared with participants of the meeting.**

KIDS COUNT
CHILD WELFARE DATA EXCHANGE MEETING

DAY 1 *Monday, February 27 2023*

THEME: DISPARITIES IN INVOLVEMENT WITH CHILD WELFARE SYSTEMS IN CANADA: ADMINISTRATIVE DATA AND POLICY

- What do we know about the disparities regarding involvement with child protection systems for certain demographic groups?
  - What are the gaps in data regarding these disparities?
  - How have these disparities been measured (longitudinally, cross-sectionally) and disseminated beyond research communities?
  - How can these disparities continue to be monitored in the years to come?
- How can administrative data impact policy improvements to address disparities of certain groups in child welfare systems in Canada?

8:00 AM - 8:30 AM *REGISTRATION & BREAKFAST*

8:30 AM - 8:50 AM **WELCOME & INTRODUCTION**

Hosts: Nico Trocmé, Barbara Fallon, Tonino Esposito

DISPARITIES IN CHILD WELFARE SYSTEMS IN QUEBEC

8:50 AM - 9:10 AM **FN/QIS-2019 STUDY**

15 min. presentation
5 min. Q&A

Presented by: Nico Trocmé, Tonino Esposito

Overview of the results of the *First Nations Component of the Quebec Incidence Study of Child Maltreatment and Serious Behaviour Problems Investigated by Child Protection Services in 2019* (FN/QIS-2019) by Hélie et al. (2022). The study provides comparative data on the frequency and characteristics of investigations conducted by child protection services for First Nations and non-indigenous children in Quebec in 2019. Based exclusively on clinical-administrative data, this study highlights the over-representation of First Nations children at all stages of the youth protection process, as well as important distinctions in the nature of the situations investigated within these two populations.

3

KIDS COUNT
CHILD WELFARE DATA EXCHANGE MEETING

DAY 1

9:10 AM - 9:30 AM

15 min. presentation
5 min. Q&A

FNQLHSSC

Presented by: Nancy Gros-Louis McHugh, Patricia Montambault, Richard Gray

The FNQLHSSC will present some of the results of the research entitled *Better understanding the phenomenon of child neglect in the context of First Nations in Quebec* as well as its work aimed at monitoring the situation of the over-representation of children in the youth protection system. The health and social services governance process will be briefly presented as well as the work surrounding the definition of wellness among First Nations in Quebec and the development of indicators to measure wellness in the context of effective governance. Finally, some issues related to access to useful data that meet the needs of the communities will be raised. The project on information governance by and for First Nations in Quebec is seen as a promising initiative to address these issues.

9:30 AM - 9:50 AM

15 min. presentation
5 min. Q&A

KAHNAWÀ:KE SHAKOTIIA'TAKEHNHAS COMMUNITY SERVICES

Presented by: Blair Armstrong

This presentation will provide a brief, high level overview of the Penelope Case Management system being used by KSCS and the data it provides across the broad spectrum of services offered by KSCS addressing the various needs of our clients and communities' well-being.

9:50 AM - 10:10 AM

15 min. presentation
5 min. Q&A

YOUTH SERVICE TRAJECTORIES IN QC: BLACK CHILDREN'S TRANSITION FROM CHILD WELFARE TO JUVENILE JUSTICE

Presented by: Alicia Boatswain-Kyte

This presentation will demonstrate how clinical administrative data was used to examine racial disparities in transitions from child welfare to juvenile justice (YCJA involvement).

10:10 AM - 10:30 AM

15 min. presentation
5 min. Q&A

THE DIFFERENTIAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIOECONOMIC VULNERABILITIES & CHILD PROTECTION INVOLVEMENT ACROSS GEOGRAPHIES IN QUÉBEC

Presented by: Tonino Esposito

This presentation will examine the lifetime risk of involvement with the child protection system and variation rates across neighborhoods according to socioeconomic status (SES) and child population density. It will explore the use of child protection clinical administrative data and social geographic data in QC, and multilevel latent longitudinal modeling to make initial predictions on geographic variation in child protection involvement across geographies in QC, resulting in novel findings regarding the relationship between poverty and child protection involvement in low-density geographies in the province.

4

KIDS COUNT
CHILD WELFARE DATA EXCHANGE MEETING

DAY 1

10:30 AM - 10:45 AM *COFFEE BREAK*

DISPARITIES IN CHILD WELFARE SYSTEMS IN ONTARIO

10:45 AM - 11:05 AM

15 min. presentation
5 min. Q&A

FIRST NATIONS COMPONENT OF THE OIS

Presented by: Amber Crowe, Jeffrey Schiffer, Barbara Fallon

This presentation will provide an overview of the First Nations Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect-2018, *Mashkiwenmi-daa Noojimowin: Let's Have Strong Minds for the Healing*, highlighting the rate of incidence of child maltreatment and substantiated investigations of First Nations children compared to non-Indigenous children. The data quality issues will be identified and the presentation will raise questions about collection, measuring, and analysis of child welfare data to best address the overrepresentation of First Nations children in the child welfare system in Ontario.

11:05 AM - 11:25 AM

15 min. presentation
5 min. Q&A

ASSOCIATION OF NATIVE CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES AGENCIES OF ONTARIO

Presented by: Micheal Miller

To hold Provincial and Federal governments accountable to the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action that respects and honors First Nations data sovereignty, ANCFSAO data initiatives focus on the development of a collective Indigenous Information System that would place data in the hands of First Nations which would be inclusive of Indigenous Child and Family Well-Being assessment tools, that would adhere to the OCAP® principles, as well as working towards the development of an Indigenous data analytics center for First Nations Child Welfare data.

11:25 AM - 11:45 AM

15 min. presentation
5 min. Q&A

RESULTS FROM THE ONTARIO INCIDENCE STUDY OF REPORTED CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Presented by: Kofi Antwi-Boasiako

This presentation will focus on trends in child maltreatment-related investigations involving Black and White families in Ontario. Kofi Antwi-Boasiako will use the Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (OIS) to examine 20 years (1993 to 2013) of child welfare data relating to these two racial groups and identify some possible steps to address the disparities Black families experience in the child welfare system.

5

KIDS COUNT
CHILD WELFARE DATA EXCHANGE MEETING

DAY 1

11:45 AM - 12:15 PM
20 min. presentation
10 min. Q&A

ONE VISION ONE VOICE

Presented by: Nicole Bonnie, Keishia Facey, Bryn King

This presentation will outline the ways in which race-based child welfare data can be analyzed, interpreted, and leveraged to promote practice innovation, modified policies and institutional transformation.

12:15 PM - 1:15 PM *LUNCH*

DISPARITIES IN CHILD WELFARE SYSTEMS IN OTHER JURISDICTIONS ACROSS CANADA

1:15 PM - 1:45 PM
20 min. presentation
10 min. Q&A

DISPARITIES IN CHILD WELFARE SYSTEMS IN MANITOBA

Presented by: Marni Brownell, Kathleen Kenny

This presentation will provide an overview of two current projects in Manitoba focused on inequities in Manitoba's child welfare system. Marni Brownell will present on a project using linked administrative data to examine health, education and justice system outcomes for MB children involved in the child welfare system. Partnership processes, methods and knowledge mobilization will be discussed. Kathleen Kenny will present on the Parents Project, discussing the project's rational, advisory structure, data sources, key aims, and the outcomes being measured to better understand the population-level impacts of the child welfare system on First Nations and non-First Nations parents.

1:45 PM - 2:15 PM
20 min. presentation
10 min. Q&A

DISPARITIES IN CHILD WELFARE SYSTEMS IN NWT

Presented by: Amanda White, Lindsay Crompton, and Bryn King
Other contributors: Cheuk Pang and Colette Prevost

This presentation will explore the challenges and opportunities related to using child welfare administrative data to inform service delivery in Northwest Territories, including examples of types of analysis that may be useful in addressing disparities in the provision of child welfare services.

2:15 PM - 2:45 PM **GUIDED DISCUSSION**

2:45 PM - 3:00 PM *COFFEE BREAK*

KIDS COUNT
CHILD WELFARE DATA EXCHANGE MEETING

DAY 1

CROSS-NATIONAL FRAMEWORKS AND DATA SYSTEMS IN CANADA

3:00 PM - 3:30 PM

20 min. presentation
10 min. Q&A

THE MEASURING TO THRIVE FRAMEWORK

Presented by: Helaina Gaspard

Measuring to monitor changes in the well-being of First Nations children, families, and communities involved with child and family services is essential to ensure discrimination – consistent with Canadian Human Rights Tribunal orders – does not reoccur. This presentation will discuss the linkages between the measurement approach and long-term program reform, with consideration of the emerging lessons from collaborators piloting the framework.

3:30 PM - 4:30 PM

PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY OF CANADA, CANADIAN CHILD WELFARE INFORMATION SYSTEM

Presented by: Wendy Hovdestad, Claudie Laprise, Lindsay Crompton, Nathaniel Pollock, Masako Tanaka

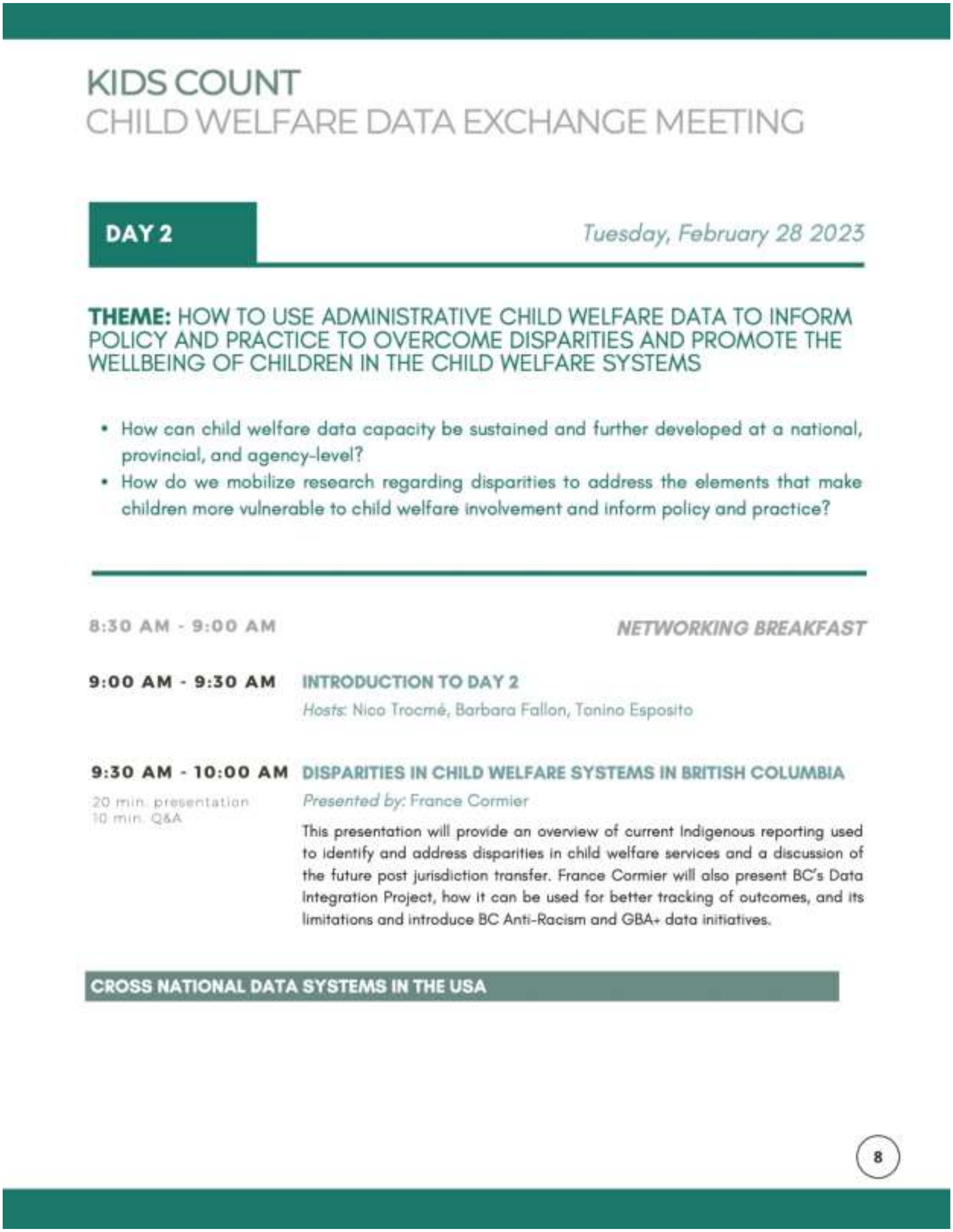
This presentation will provide an overview of the Public Health Agency of Canada's work on the Canadian Child Welfare Information System. The PHAC team will share updates about the scope, partnerships, and technical activities being undertaken to harmonize administrative data from child welfare systems across multiple jurisdictions and develop national indicators that can inform equity-oriented policy on child health and wellbeing.

4:30 PM - 4:45 PM **GUIDED DISCUSSION**

4:45 PM - 5:00 PM **WRAP UP OF DAY 1**

5:30 PM

NETWORKING DINNER
Served in the Main Lounge of the Faculty Club (ground floor)



KIDS COUNT
CHILD WELFARE DATA EXCHANGE MEETING

DAY 2 *Tuesday, February 28 2023*

THEME: HOW TO USE ADMINISTRATIVE CHILD WELFARE DATA TO INFORM POLICY AND PRACTICE TO OVERCOME DISPARITIES AND PROMOTE THE WELLBEING OF CHILDREN IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEMS

- How can child welfare data capacity be sustained and further developed at a national, provincial, and agency-level?
- How do we mobilize research regarding disparities to address the elements that make children more vulnerable to child welfare involvement and inform policy and practice?

8:30 AM - 9:00 AM *NETWORKING BREAKFAST*

9:00 AM - 9:30 AM **INTRODUCTION TO DAY 2**

Hosts: Nico Trocmé, Barbara Fallon, Tonino Esposito

9:30 AM - 10:00 AM **DISPARITIES IN CHILD WELFARE SYSTEMS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA**

20 min. presentation
10 min. Q&A

Presented by: France Cormier

This presentation will provide an overview of current Indigenous reporting used to identify and address disparities in child welfare services and a discussion of the future post jurisdiction transfer. France Cormier will also present BC's Data Integration Project, how it can be used for better tracking of outcomes, and its limitations and introduce BC Anti-Racism and GBA+ data initiatives.

CROSS NATIONAL DATA SYSTEMS IN THE USA

8

KIDS COUNT
CHILD WELFARE DATA EXCHANGE MEETING

DAY 2

10:00 AM - 10:30 AM **COVID AND DISPARITIES IN MALTREATMENT RESPONSE, VICTIMIZATION, AND PLACEMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF THE US NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT DATA SYSTEM**

20 min. presentation
10 min. Q&A

Presented by: John Fluke, Dana Hollinshead, Gila Shusterman
Other contributors: Rachel Wilson, Juan Nunez, and Nicolle Fettig

During the initial COVID-19 lockdown period, maltreatment reporting in the US declined by 38% in comparison with the period between March and June in prior years (Shusterman et al., 2022) while the relative proportion of victimization increased. At the same time the relative rate ratio of disparities of black children to white children decreased, although the rate ratio of native American/ Alaska Natives increased. This presentation will provide a more in-depth presentation of racial disparity data during the initial COVID-19 lockdown period and explore potential sources of the differences in comparison to pre-pandemic years. Implications will be considered for policy and practice.

10:30 AM - 10:45 AM **GUIDED DISCUSSION**

10:45 AM - 11:00 AM ***COFFEE BREAK***

BREAK-OUT GROUPS

11:00 AM - 11:05 AM **INTRODUCTION TO BREAK-OUT GROUPS**

11:05 AM - 12:00 PM **POLICYMAKING BREAK-OUT GROUPS**

Participants will be invited to join one of three policymaking break-up groups based on their interest around one of the following questions:

1. What do we need to consider when using readily available data to measure disparities at a provincial and agency-level, considering the following?
    a. Ethical considerations
    b. Capacity building
    c. Data validity/quality/access
    d. Governance & OCAP principles
2. What are the limitations of the data in measuring disparities? What additional currently available sources of data or indicators can be used to monitor child wellbeing and reduce the overrepresentation of children in the child welfare system?
3. How can we help newly formed and existing Indigenous child welfare agencies across Canada to collect and analyze data about children in their care?

9

KIDS COUNT
CHILD WELFARE DATA EXCHANGE MEETING

DAY 2

12:00 PM - 12:30 PM **FULL GROUP ROUNDTABLE**

What emerged from discussions in each focus group? (Report back on strategies to optimize relationship/partnerships, capacity building, infrastructure support to better understand and overcome disparities, and ways to support Indigenous child welfare agencies)

12:30 PM - 1:30 PM ***LUNCH***

1:30 PM - 2:15 PM **DOING RIGHT VS BEING RIGHT: ENSURING EVIDENCE-BASED SOLUTIONS IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS**

30 min. presentation
15 min. Q&A

Presented by: Cindy Blackstock

2:15 PM - 2:30 PM ***COFFEE BREAK***

2:30 PM - 3:00 PM **SUSTAINABILITY OVER TIME AND NEXT STEPS**

- How can we build capacity to move monitoring and research activities from isolated studies and analyses to a sustainable infrastructure that allows us to monitor and track trends over time and support newly formed agencies?
- Objectives for 2024: how to move forward?
  - Jurisdiction-specific next steps (initiatives, meetings, participants?)
  - Topic and participants for next meeting

3:00 PM - 3:15 PM **WRAP UP AND CLOSING**

Hosts: Nico Trocmé, Barbara Fallon, Tonino Esposito

10

b. List of Participants

Name & affiliation	Title	Email
Alicia Boatswain-Kyte (McGill University)	Assistant Professor, School of Social Work	alicia.kyte@mcgill.ca
Amanda White (Government of the Northwest Territories)	Senior Project Manager	Amanda_White@gov.nt.ca
Amber Crowe (Dnaagdawenmag Binnoojiiyag Child & Family Services)	Executive Director	acrowe@binnoojiiyag.ca
Ashleigh Delaye (AFN)	Senior Policy Analyst	ADelaye@afn.ca
Barbara Fallon (University of Toronto)	Professor	barbara.fallon@utoronto.ca
Blair Armstrong (KSCS)	Research & Systems Administrator	BlairA@kscskahnawake.ca
Brenda Anstey (Government of the Northwest Territories)	Manager Child & Family Services, Programs	Brenda_Anstey@gov.nt.ca
Bryn King (University of Toronto)	Associate Professor	bryn.king@utoronto.ca
Catherine Lemay (MSSS)	National Director of Child Protection	catherine.lemay@msss.gouv.qc.ca
Chloe Ferguson (Martin Family Initiative)	Vice President	cferguson@themfi.ca
Cindy Blackstock (First Nations Child & Family Caring Society)	Executive Director	cblackst@fncaringsociety.com
Claudie Laprise (PHAC)	Senior Epidemiologist/Biostatistician	claudie.laprise@phac-aspc.gc.ca

Dana Hollinshead (Kempe Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect)	Assistant Research Professor	dana.hollinshead@cuanschutz.edu
Danick Vallée Blanchard (ISC)	Manager	danick.vallee-blanchard@sac-isc.gc.ca
Delphine Collin-Vézina (McGill University)	Director of the Centre for Research on Children and Families and Canadian Consortium on Child & Youth Trauma	delphine.collin-vezina@mcgill.ca
Donna Lyons (FNIGC)	Capacity Development Manager for the First Nations Data Governance Strategy (FNDGS)	dlyons@fnigc.ca
France Cormier (Government of Bristish Columbia)	Director of Analytics	France.Cormier@gov.bc.ca
Gila Shusterman (WRMA)	Director	gshusterman@wrma.com
Helaina Gaspard (IFSD)	Director, Governance & Institutions	helaina.gaspard@ifsd.ca
Hélène Groleau (MSSS)	Conseillère	helene.groleau@msss.gouv.qc.ca
Henry Parada (Toronto Metropolitan University)	Professor	parada.henry@gmail.com
James Allen (FNIGC)	Research Analyst	JAllen@fnigc.ca
Jeffrey Schiffer (Native Chld & Family Services of Toronto)	Executive Director	jschiffer@nativechild.org
Jill Stoddart (FAC Waterloo)	Director of Research, Development and Outcomes	Jill.Stoddart@facswaterloo.org

John Fluke (Kempe Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect)	Associate Director of Systems Research and Evaluation; Professor at University of Colorado	john.fluke@cuanschutz.edu
Kate Schumaker (Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto)	Director, Quality, Strategy & Planning	k.schumaker@torontoccas.org
Kathleen Kenny (University of Manitoba)	CIHR Postdoctoral Fellow	Kathleen.kenny@umanitoba.ca
Keishia Facey (OACAS)	Program Manager, One Vision One Voice	kfacey@oacas.org
Kofi Antwi-Boasiako (King's University College at Western University)	Assistant Professor	kofi.antwi.boasiako@mail.utoronto.ca
Kyla Marcoux (FNIGC)	Survey Manager	KMarcoux@fnigc.ca
Lindsay Crompton (PHAC)	Epidemiologist	lindsay.crompton@phac-aspc.gc.ca
Lindsay Crompton (PHAC)	Epidemiologist	lindsay.crompton@phac-aspc.gc.ca
Lorraine Hill (ANCFSAO)	Data & Systems Lead	lhill@ancfsao.ca
Mandeep Flora (MCSS)	Director, Data Strategy and Solutions Platform	mandeep.flora@ontario.ca
Marie Saint-Girons (University of Montreal)	Researcher	marie.saintgirons@mail.mcgill.ca
Mark Kartusch (Dnaagdawenmag Binnoojiiyag Child & Family Services)	Director of Development and Special Projects	Mkartusch@binnoojiiyag.ca
Marni Brownell (University of Manitoba)	Professor, Community Health Services	Marni_Brownell@cpe.umanitoba.ca

Masako Tanaka (PHAC)	Researcher	masako.tanaka@phac-aspc.gc.ca
Micheal Miller (ANCFSAO)	Executive Director	mmiller@ancfsao.ca
Mireille de la Sablonnière (INRS)	Assistant professor at the Centre Urbanisation Culture Société	Mireille.DeLaSablonniere-Griffin@inrs.ca
Nancy Gros-Louis McHugh (FNQLHSSC)	Research Manager	Nancy.Gros-LouisMcHugh@cssspnql.com
Nathaniel Pollock (PHAC)	Epidemiologist	nathaniel.pollock@phac-aspc.gc.ca
Nico Trocmé (McGill University)	Professor	nico.trocme@mcgill.ca
Nicole Bonnie (OACAS)	CEO	nbonnie@oacas.org
Patricia Montambault (FNQLHSSC)	Research Assistant	Patricia.Montambault@cssspnql.com
Pierre-Jean Alasset (ISC)	Manager & Data scientist	pierre-jean.alasset@sac-isc.gc.ca
Richard Gray (FNQLHSSC)	Social Services Manager	Richard.Gray@cssspnql.com
Stéphanie Précourt (University of Montreal)	PhD Student	stephanie.precourt.1@umontreal.ca

Sujitha Ratnasingham (ICES)	Director Of Strategic Partnerships	Sujitha.Ratnasingham@ices.on.ca
Tara Black (University of Toronto)	Assistant Professor	tara.black@utoronto.ca
Tonino Esposito (University of Montreal)	Associate Professor	tonino.esposito@umontreal.ca
Wendy Hovdestad (PHAC)	Research Associate	wendy.hovdestad@canada.ca