INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF CANADA
NCCAH AND BC ACTNOW

Places for the ‘Good Care’ of Children: A Discussion on Indigenous Cultural Considerations and Early Childhood in Canada and New Zealand

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Today’s Presentation

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• NCCA and BC ACTNOW
• Purpose
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• Actualizing the Considerations
• ‘Good Care’ is ...
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First Nations of Canada
Inuit of Canada

INUIT NUNAAT

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NUNAVIK
Metis People of Canada
National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health / BC ACTNOW
Overarching Purpose

To examine program structures, policies and strategies used for the development and implementation of formalized early childhood programs and services and their consistency with community aspirations for the ‘good care’ of Indigenous children.
Research Questions

- What are some of the attributes that Indigenous peoples and communities identify as necessary for the good care of children?
- How do government and community strategies and polices guide the development and implementation of First Nations –specific early childhood programs?
- How can the development and implementation of Te Kohanga Reo in Aotearoa / New Zealand inform the development and implementation of early childhood programs and services within a framework for change in the Canadian context?
Theoretical Principles
Geographical Locations

British Columbia’s Aboriginal People

Courtesy of Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia, Canada (2007)

Courtesy of Te Ara -The Encyclopedia of New Zealand (2008)
Methodology and Methods

- a descriptive case study approach
- two Carrier First Nations communities
- two Tuhoe Maori sites
- Individual and group interviews – 63 in total
- Observations
- Document reviews and audio-visual tape reviews
- Set within cultural and political protocols of community such as visiting, stories, gifting, giving back, hospitality...
Findings: Considerations for the ‘Good Care’ of Children

- Engaging with communities
- Power differences
- Community adaptation and resilience
- Learning from top-down/bottom up relationships and government
- Placing languages, culture and identity at the forefront

- Maintaining the role of parents, extended family and community mentors
- Ensuring early childhood caregivers/teachers have multiple knowledge and skills
- Cultural continuity for the health and well-being of children, families and communities
Speaking of community involvement:

“Too often we accept government programs at face value and find out at the end of the day they don’t fit. When we develop with the community, looking at community norms and facing the challenges of wider society, these programs that come from within last much longer and are more apt to address change in the community” (Community Administrator, 2004)
Speaking of power differences:

“The day care was a foreign structure to the community” (Community Administrator, 2005)

“The community wanted a daycare but did not really understand – they did not know what child care was or what was involved (Community Administrator, 2005) ... Chief and council saw provincial licensing as an infringement on their inherent rights, yet in order to access the funding, compliance was necessary.”
Speaking of power differences:

“Te Kohanga reo had to come to terms with the regulatory environment and compliances of the early childhood sector and a mainstream department, whilst maintaining the unique kaupapa of the Kohanga reo movement. Such a system often came at a heavy cost to our kaupapa” (Te Kohanga Reo Trust Board, 2003)
Speaking of the importance of language and culture:

“It is for children to know their culture, meaning who they are, where they come from, what territory they belong to and what clan they belong to” (Parent 2004)

“It is important to teach our children about their At’Su (Grandmas). We never call people by their names we called tem by how we were related to them” (Elder, 2005)
Speaking of the importance of language and culture:

“... The Maori language has a life force and a spirit, it is the central touchstone for the culture” (Elders Conference, 1979)

Language likened to a vehicle:

“Everything that goes along with me being Maori is inside me; my culture, my histories, my stories, my everything, All those things are inside this bus. ... As I have grown, the bus has stopped at different places and added, picked up and brought on other things. I guess [it is important to] teach our children that really without the bus we don’t really get the ride” (Community Member, 2005)
Acutalizing the Considerations

- Emphasizing critical consciousness
- Emphasizing community-oriented leadership
- Living Indigenous knowledge(s) languages and culture
- Developing structural possibilities: tribal groupings
- Developing structural possibilities: family structures
- Developing programs and services for children with diverse Indigenous backgrounds
- Linking educational systems
- Ensuring adequate resources
‘Good Care’ is ...

“At base the ‘good care’ of young Indigenous children is about living Indigenous values every day, about seeing them actualized in the care of children, about the community and the collective, and about being courageous in seizing opportunities to create change.”
Future Research Possibilities

- Implement strategies suggested in this dissertation, for example programs and services centered around tribal groupings
- Examine the interface of early childhood care and education systems with formal systems
- Examine geographic differences in the delivery of early childhood programs and services to Indigenous children, for example, children residing in urban and rural settings or on and off reserve
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