Building Innovations in Community-Based Services for Children and their Families

A Report of the Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria

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COMMUNITY SOCIAL PLANNING COUNCIL
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Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

Purpose of the Report

Time and time again we hear about how some children and families in our communities fall through the cracks and become unintended victims of the lack of integrated services and supports that meet their needs. The BC Representative for Children and Youth has documented and investigated many of these tragedies and often came to the conclusion that a commitment to the development of a meaningful, well-resourced system of integrated services and supports would have worked to prevent tragedy.[1]

This report explores place-based integrated service delivery models as a concrete and innovative solution to filling the cracks in the system, for building better "villages" to raise our children and support our families when and where they need it.

The overall purpose of this report is to advance and stimulate discussion on how to best address the needs of our most vulnerable residents in the Capital Region. Rather than relying on models imposed by government departments we present evidence of what has worked in other jurisdictions to build a planned and proactive system of supports to prevent crisis and respond to the needs of families often facing difficult circumstances. We believe that we can learn from these models within and outside of our region to purposefully develop an innovative, place-based and integrated system of family services in the Capital Region.

Methodology

This report draws on a number of academic, government and popular sources to develop a foundational understanding of the context in which this discussion is taking place, and of what integrated, place-based service delivery actually means and looks like. This report is also informed by informal discussions with service providers and practitioners in the Capital Region who provided insight into the community-based social services context in the Capital Region. The report recommendations were reviewed by members of an advisory committee made up of representatives of service providers and other stakeholders involved in supporting vulnerable children and families in the Capital Region.

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[1] (Representative for Children and Youth 2009); (Representative for Children and Youth March 2012)

Findings

It is fairly common knowledge that social services, particularly for children and youth, in British Columbia have encountered numerous challenges for many years. The past 20 years have seen a number of attempts to revamp the child welfare system through several provincial public consultations, two judicial reviews into child deaths, and an overhaul of the legislation that regulates the child welfare system.[2]

This first section of the report provides some context to, and critique of, the current system of child welfare and protection in British Columbia. Both judicial inquiries discussed in this section provide detailed and clearly articulated recommendations on how to improve the system of services that protect vulnerable children and their families, and how to provide adequate and appropriate supports to vulnerable children and families to prevent tragedy.

The investigations of the Representative for Children and Youth have shown that these recommendations have not been heeded. In particular, Aboriginal children remain overly represented in the child protection system (over 55% of all children in care are Aboriginal)[3] and recent reports from the Representative's Office demonstrate the lack of effective, appropriate, adequate and responsive place-based supports and services for vulnerable children and their families. A brief examination of policy frameworks and ministry service plans indicates no clear articulation and framework for policy regarding the need for inter-service planning, coordinated and collaborative service delivery.

It is firmly established that the current system is still in need of major changes. While attempts at changes have been made in the past, as outlined above, they appear to have never been completed, and in some cases completely abandoned. What we need now is a response that addresses the critiques, acts on recommendations, builds on community-based assets, and incorporates promising practices that are happening locally and from other jurisdictions.

The second section of the report explores how a locally developed model of integrated, place-based service delivery is a concrete solution to addressing the needs of vulnerable children and families in our communities. It reviews innovative policy development processes that democratically develop enabling policy frameworks, and presents key guidelines for effective, collaborative policy development initiatives.

The discussion of policy development is followed by an exploration of the efficacy of place-based, integrated service delivery models in meeting the needs of vulnerable children and their families. It examines how these types of service delivery models form the basis for partnership, collaboration and cooperation between stakeholders through a review of the literature that discusses the benefits and challenges with integrated, place-based service delivery models. In order to demonstrate that these types of

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[2] (Bennett, Sadrehashemi and Smith, et al. 2009)
[3] (Ministry of Children and Family Development February 2012)

service delivery models are feasible, two case studies from Ontario, among other examples, are highlighted. These examples provide a point of departure from which to start an informed discussion on how to implement an integrated service delivery model in the Capital Region.

Conclusion and Recommendations: Implementing an Innovative Integrated Service Delivery Model in the Capital Region

The Capital Region already has an extensive community services sector engaged in responding to meeting different needs amongst children, youth and families. Amongst these agencies and their funders there are already significant efforts to conduct outreach, plan and network to better coordinate services. The Victoria Native Friendship Centre provides a key focus for services to Aboriginal Families along with a number of Aboriginal family serving agencies. The Pacific Centre Family Services Association has been coordinating responses to the needs of families on the West Shore, the fastest growing area of the Region. The Youth Service Providers Network brings together community agencies that work to respond to the needs of vulnerable young people. The Children and Family Services Committee of the Community Social Planning Council has started to work on how a children and families service planning and evaluation system could be developed for the region. The United Way has established an "*all that kids can be*" funding priority. Success by Six and the Partnership in Learning and Advocacy for Young Children (PLAY) promote service collaboration for particular child populations.

This means that there are substantial networks and assets to build upon. However there are also over 250 non-profit community service agencies[4], 13 municipalities, three school districts, nine First Nations and a large number of provincial government offices and agencies with mandates that affect children and families.

To make this complex and fragmented system even more difficult to navigate, changes in government contracts for community services over time have resulted in less, shorter term and more insecure funding, together with procurement processes that engender competition and stifle collaboration. The result has been a consistent perception by stakeholders of increased gaps in the social safety net for vulnerable families, as well as a diminished capacity to identify emerging needs and plan early intervention to prevent crises. At worst the system has become incapable of even communicating between its components to prevent tragedies from occurring, as noted in reports of investigations by the Office of the BC Representative of Children and Youth. As this reality presents itself day in and day out support by government for developing and planning an appropriate regional and community-based service system is neglected. As a result it becomes harder and harder for community service agencies to leverage their social capital, their community members, partners and volunteers to add the one key ingredient for any successful social system: a caring

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[4] (Hazeldine 2011).

community where neighbours look out for neighbours and share in looking after those who are experiencing challenging times.

There is therefore a need for concerted action to take evidence-based action to strengthen a more integrated, planned and pro-active service system to support children and families, in their communities. Based on evidence from a number of models identified in this report a series of interrelated strategies need to be considered:

1. **A network of "hubs"** to strengthen service integration, co-location and access at the local area level.

2. **A region-wide service planning and evaluation system** (as in the Calgary Child and Family Service Authority model) that would, based on empirical evidence:
   i. Evaluate trends and emerging needs.
   ii. Identify population and geographic gaps in service provision.
   iii. Support demonstration projects to develop innovative practices.
   iv. Coordinate service co-location and collaboration initiatives.
   v. Promote cross-jurisdiction cooperation, and
   vi. Co-construct with government agencies policies and programs appropriate to local needs.
   vii. Leverage research and development investments from post-secondary institutions and funders to maximize social innovation in the region.
   viii. Connect with other communities in BC (and elsewhere) to link up with similar initiatives and learn from one another.

3. **Development of that system through a regional framework development process that:**
   i. Engages stakeholders and communities in cross-regional and multi-stakeholder consultations.
   ii. Develops shared mission, vision and guiding principles.
   iii. Advocates for a regional planning process supported by government and other funders.
   iv. Identifies existing collaboration and integration models to strengthen and scale up.

Introduction

Time and time again we hear about how some children and families in our communities fall through the cracks and become unintended victims of the lack of integrated services and supports to meet their needs. The BC Representative for Children and Youth has documented and investigated many of these tragedies and often came to the conclusion that a commitment to the development of a meaningful, well-resourced system of integrated services and supports would have worked to prevent tragedy.[5]

This report explores place-based integrated service delivery models as a concrete and innovative solution to filling the cracks in the system, for building better "villages" to raise our children and support our families when and where they need it.

The first section provides a brief overview of the child protection system since the late 1970s, and includes discussions of the two largest reviews of the system, Gove and Hughes. It then turns to a review of current ministry service plans and policy frameworks to uncover whether there are appropriate policy frameworks in place to support the integration of community and social services at the local level.

The second section looks at the importance of place-based service delivery models and why integration is important. It presents some examples from across Canada of effective models of policy development and integrated service delivery. The section concludes with a high level assessment of the state of services and assets in the Capital Region and then offers some recommendations and suggestions as to how to move forward with the development of a place-based, integrated model of services and supports that protect the most vulnerable children and families in the region.

The overall purpose of this report is to advance and stimulate discussion on how best to address the needs of our most vulnerable residents in the Capital Region. Rather than relying on models imposed by government departments we present evidence of what has worked in other jurisdictions to build a planned and proactive system of supports to prevent crisis and respond to the needs of families often facing difficult circumstances. We believe that we can learn from these models within and outside of our region to purposefully develop an innovative, place-based and integrated system of family services in the Capital Region.

Methodology

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[5] Representative for Children and Youth (2009).

looks like. This report is also informed by informal discussions with service providers and practitioners in the Capital Region who provided insight into the community-based social services context in the Capital Region discussed in the final section of the report. The report recommendations were reviewed by members of an advisory committee made up of representatives of service providers and other stakeholders involved in supporting vulnerable children and families in the Capital Region.

Limitations of the study

This study is exploratory. The recommendations posed here emerged from a literature review, policy scan; Internet based research and informal interviews with service providers. The purpose of the study was to explore the variety of innovations in service delivery models for children and their families in other jurisdictions across Canada and the United States. Next steps for this project include focus groups with service providers, families and youth to explore what, out of the recommendations proposed here, would be effective and applicable for the Capital Region.

Furthermore, the unique needs of Aboriginal children and their families require more focused attention. More work is needed with local Aboriginal social service and family serving organizations, and local First Nations in identifying how an integrated, place-based system of services and supports would support the work they already do.

Vulnerable Children and Families in Our Province and Our Region

It is well established that children who live in poverty experience higher rates of vulnerability and need more supports than children who live in higher income families.[6] Over the past decade, child poverty rates in British Columbia have remained consistently above the national child poverty rate. While there have been modest improvements since the record high of 2003 when BC's child poverty rate reached 24.6%, BC still maintains the second highest child poverty rate in the country.[7]

In 2010, BC had the second highest child poverty rate in Canada at 14.3% with Manitoba having the highest child poverty rate at 17.6%.[8] This means that there were approximately 137,000 children who lived in poverty in BC in 2010,[9] more than the combined populations of Victoria, Esquimalt and Oak Bay. In comparison, the overall child poverty rate for Canada is 13.7%. In 2009, children under 6 had the highest poverty rate at 20.2%, which translates into 51,900 young children in the province, which was an increase of 4,100 children from 2008.[10]

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[6] (Anthony, King and Austin 2011)
[7] (First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition 2012)
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.
[10] (First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition 2011)

Provincially, child poverty rates are higher for children of recent immigrants (42%), children of Aboriginal ancestry (36%), children of female lone parents (33%), children in racialized families (33%), and children with a disability (27%).[11]

Recent Early Development Instrument data from the Human Early Learning Partnership at UBC indicate that 28.6% of children in British Columbia are developmentally vulnerable by the time they go to school. Vulnerability refers to the portion of the population that, without additional support and care, may experience future challenges in school and society.[12]

Capital Region

The Capital Region is becoming less affordable for families, making it increasingly difficult for vulnerable children and their families to meet their needs. In 2013, the Living Wage was calculated at $18.73/hour.[13] As an affordability measure, the rise of the living wage indicates that families making a living wage and below in the Capital Region need more supports. The low-income rate for the Capital Region hovers around 13% and 10% of workers in the Capital Region live at or below the low-income cut-off.[14]

Capital Region: Indicators of Children in Need

Early Childhood Development Vulnerability Indicator (EDI) for the Capital Region ranges from 23% to 26% across the Capital Region School Districts. This means that around one in four children in the Capital Region are considered developmentally vulnerable by the time they go to school.

Children in Care in 2011
10.9 children per 1,000 children under 19 in government care – same rate as 2010 and higher than BC rate at 9.1

Sources: (Human Early Learning Partnership 2011); (Victoria Foundation 2012)

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[11] (First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition 2011)
[12] (Schroeder, et al. 2009)
[13] (Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria 2013)
[14] (Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria 2012)

Structural Context: A Short Review of the History of the Child Protection System

It is fairly common knowledge that social services, particularly for children and youth, in British Columbia have encountered numerous challenges for many years. The past 20 years have seen a number of attempts to revamp the child welfare system through numerous provincial public consultations, two judicial reviews into child deaths, and an overhaul of the legislation that regulates the child welfare system.[15] Time and time again, residents of British Columbia are reminded of how the system has failed to protect vulnerable children and their families[16]. While there have been leagues of committed community based service providers, social workers, youth workers, child care providers, teachers, police officers, and many others who have worked diligently to support and protect vulnerable children and their families (even in the face of austerity and budget constraints)[17], their efforts have often been hindered by cumbersome and disjointed policy frameworks, disjointed and unconnected service delivery models, a lack of meaningful funding levels and political commitment. This section provides some context for a discussion on solutions to this with a very short history of the provincial ministry now called the Ministry of Children and Family Development and attempts to address the challenges of the child and family welfare system in British Columbia.

Furthermore, any discussion of the context of child welfare policies in Canada must be grounded in the recognition of the catastrophic effects of colonialism, the Residential School System and subsequently the Sixties Scoop[18], which saw the removal of tens of thousands of Aboriginal children from their homes over several generations.[19] Steps are being taken to address this through what the National Collaborating Centre of Aboriginal Health calls the reconciliation movement" in child welfare which is

> *[B]ringing Aboriginal peoples and the mainstream social work profession together to acknowledge the uncomfortable truths in child welfare's past and present, and to build a new relationship based on self-determination.[20]*

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[15] (Bennett, Sadrehashemi and Smith, et al. 2009)

[16] A recent example is: on February 7, 2013, the Office of the BC Representative for Children and Youth released a report: *Who Protected Him? How B.C.'s Child Welfare System Failed One of Its Most Vulnerable Children* which presents the results of an investigation of a tasering incident of a 11 year old boy by RCMP in Prince George in April 2011.

[17] (Bennett and Sadrehashemi 2008); (Bennett, Sadrehashemi and Smith, et al. 2009); (Schmidt 2012).

[18] The Sixties Scoop refers to a period of time in the 1960s and 1970s, that as a result of a change to the Indian Act which gave provinces more jurisdiction over First Nations people living on reserve, large numbers of Aboriginal children were apprehended and placed into ministry care or adopted into non-Aboriginal homes (National Collaboration Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2009-2010).

[19] (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health 2009-2010)

[20] Ibid.

Since the 1970s, Aboriginal people have been forming child welfare agencies across Canada. In BC, these agencies operate in a delegation model where Aboriginal agencies tend to share the same powers as provincial social workers and retain overall authority in the delivery of child welfare services.[21] The BC process of delegation is discussed below.

A Short History of the Provincial Ministry Responsible for Children and Families

Since its inception, the Ministry responsible for children in this province has experienced many challenges including inadequate legislation to address the totality of issues involved in child protection and welfare, and limited resources. It has also been the target of a number of budget cuts. Over the past 30 years, the ministry has seen a number of public consultations, introduction of new legislation, and two judicial inquiries.[22]

The *Family and Child Services Act* enacted in 1981, was the first new piece of legislation concerned with child protection and welfare in British Columbia since 1939. This legislation was in part a response to the Royal Commission on Children and Families that took place in the mid-1970s (1974-1975) that recommended wide-sweeping changes to laws affecting children and their families.[23] The legislation was also a response to a public consultation about new child welfare reform.

The Act had a number of flaws. It did not address recommendations from the Royal Commission on Children and Families nor did it address the recommendations that came out of the public consultations. It did not define the rights of the child, define when a child would be in need of protection and did not make preventative measures mandatory.[24]

In 1983, the Ministry responsible for child welfare at the time experienced a massive budget cut where 600 workers were eliminated; those particularly impacted were child protection and family support workers.[25] In 1988, the ministry, then called the Ministry of Social Services, was reorganized. Where previously one office provided access to all Ministry programs, income assistance, child and family services and services for people with mental disabilities were organized into separate offices.[26] This resulted in a loss of social workers in Children's Services offices.

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[21] Ibid.

[22] (Bennett and Sadrehashemi 2008); (Bennett, Sadrehashemi and Smith, et al. 2009).

[23] Ibid

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

More New Legislation: The *Child, Family and Community Services Act*, Briefly

When the NDP government was elected in 1991, it launched another public consultation process to address the growing criticism that child welfare policies and practices were failing to keep children safe, and that policies also failed to recognize the importance of family, particularly among First Nations communities. The public consultation had two streams: one looking for views from non-Aboriginal people on child welfare reform and the other stream focused on collecting the views of Aboriginal people on child welfare reform.[27] Findings from the two reports from these consultations, *Making Changes* and *Liberating Our Children*, had an influence on the language in the new legislation that emerged from this process.

In 1994, the *Child, Family and Community Services Act*, was enacted which was an attempt to address the issues raised through the public consultation processes. Part 1: Introductory Provisions of the legislation, outlines the guiding principles, service delivery principles and best interests of the

Child, Family and Community Services Act: Guiding Principles

(a) children are entitled to be protected from abuse, neglect and harm or threat of harm;
(b) a family is the preferred environment for the care and upbringing of children and the responsibility for the protection of children rests primarily with the parents;
(c) if, with available support services, a family can provide a safe and nurturing environment for a child, support services should be provided;
(d) the child's views should be taken into account when decisions relating to a child are made;
(e) kinship ties and a child's attachment to the extended family should be preserved if possible;
(f) the cultural identity of Aboriginal children should be preserved;
(g) decisions relating to children should be made and implemented in a timely manner.

Source: Child, Family and Community Services Act: Part1, Section 2

Justice Gove's Recommendations, Briefly:

- Administrative changes and an increase in professional development for front line staff
- The creation of a provincial advocate for children and youth as an office of the legislature
- Changes to the legislative framework to make it more child-centred

child[28] which are meant to serve as guides to interpretation and administration of the *Act*.

The Gove Inquiry, 1995

In the intervening years between when the new legislation was passed and when it was actualized in Ministry policy and procedures, Justice Thomas Gove was

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[27] (Bennett and Sadrehashemi 2008).
[28] (Province of British Columbia 1996).

appointed to launch an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the death of Matthew Vaudreuil, a five year old Aboriginal child who had died of asphyxia in his mother's care. Shortly after Matthew's death it became evident that his case had been mishandled.[29]

Justice Gove's investigation highlighted a number of issues with the child protection system in BC. Among the concerns outlined in his report were that too many professionals were involved in the lives of families, and there was a lack of resources including staff, poor staff training and uncoordinated services.[30] He was highly critical of the family-centred approach to service delivery:

"The family-centred approach to service delivery is particularly problematic in British Columbia, where many front-line child protection social workers lack the qualifications, training and skills to identify children who are at significant risk in the care of their parents."[31]

One of Gove's major recommendations was for a complete overhaul of the entire child welfare system. At the centre of the system would be Community-based Children's Centres.[32] The idea, based on the child welfare system in Hawaii, was that these centres be sites of multi-disciplinary collaboration and coordination and that core child welfare services be commonly employed and commonly funded.

The centres would have a myriad of child-centred services, and he suggested that they may also deliver income assistance for families with children and youth and also provide space for support services including child and youth recreation, job training for youth and Aboriginal

Gove's Vision of Community Bases Children's Centres:

- ◆ Child protection, family support, guardianship and adoption
- ◆ Services to children with developmental disabilities
- ◆ Child and youth mental health services
- ◆ Children's public health nursing programs
- ◆ Infant and child development programs
- ◆ Alcohol and drug treatment services for children and youth
- ◆ Youth forensic psychiatric services
- ◆ School-based child and youth care services
- ◆ Special education services
- ◆ Family court counseling services
- ◆ Special education services
- ◆ Youth probation and related community justice services
- ◆ Child care subsidies and funding for child care resources

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[29] Ibid.
[30] (Gove 1995); (Bennett and Sadrehashemi 2008).
[31] (Gove 1995).
[32] Ibid.

court-worker and counseling services.[33]

Justice Gove also recommended that Regional Child Welfare Boards would oversee the administration and operations of the centres, and that members of the boards would be appointed from elected public officials in the particular region to govern these Children's Centres.[34]

Surprisingly, Gove paid little attention to the needs of Aboriginal children even though they are over represented in the child protection and government care system; up to 40% of children in care are Aboriginal.[35] The only obvious recommendations related to Aboriginal children were in terms of amending legislation to "achieve early and timely determination of certainty about Aboriginal ancestry for purposes of notice ..."[36]

The Hughes Review, 2006

In 2005, retired judge Honourable Ted Hughes was appointed to once again review the child protection system and make recommendations for improvements particularly in the areas of child death reviews, child and youth advocacy and the means to monitor the child protection system.[37]

The Hughes inquiry was precipitated by the death of Sherry Charlie, a Nuu Chah Nulth girl, who died in the care of an uncle. Sherry had been placed in her uncle's care in a kinship care agreement with the ministry. The kinship agreement program was designed to help maintain stability for children and to ensure that fewer Aboriginal children were removed from their families and communities. Children in these circumstances are not considered to be "in care" and families do not receive the same level of support afforded to foster families.[38]

In contrast to his predecessor, Hughes made several recommendations on how to change the child protection system, including a review of all kith and kin agreements, increased collaboration with Aboriginal communities, provisions for a separate Aboriginal child welfare system developed in collaboration with Aboriginal communities, service enhancements, and increases in resources particularly to Aboriginal service providers.[39]

Similar to Gove's recommendation of a provincial advocate for children and youth, Hughes recommended the creation of an independent Office of a Representative for Children and Youth, an independent office of the Legislature, to monitor, audit and investigate the child protection system in BC.[40] This Office would also be mandated to

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

[35] (Walmsley 2005)

[36] (Gove 1995)

[37] (Bennett and Sadrehashemi 2008).

[38] (Bennett, Sadrehashemi and Smith, et al. 2009)

[39] (Hughes April 2006)

[40] (Hughes April 2006)

support and advise families who need assistance with dealing with the child protection system.[41]

On May 18, 2006, the Provincial Government passed the Representative for Children and Youth Act, which established the legislative assembly's ability to appoint a new officer of the legislature as the Representative for Children and Youth. On November 27, 2007, an all-party committee unanimously approved the appointment of Mary Ellen Turpel–Lafond as the Representative for Children and Youth for a 5-year term. The Representative was reappointed to a second five-year term on November 15, 2011 extending to November 15, 2016.[42]

Decentralization, Regionalization, and Delegation

In 2001, acting on some of Gove's recommendations and responding to criticisms from Aboriginal organizations and First Nations leaders, the Ministry moved towards the regionalization of service delivery through the creation of regional authorities, and towards the delegation of authority to Aboriginal agencies for administration of the Act[43].

Hughes recommendations included:

◆ Support to Aboriginal delegated agencies for management and service delivery

◆ Support for decentralization efforts, while maintaining a strong central agency to ensure compliance with provincial standards by regions, and eventual authorities, and that the Ministry meets its responsibilities for public accountability.

Once delegation agreements are signed, how Aboriginal authorities administer child protection depends on the type of delegation model and the type of agreement Aboriginal authorities have with the provincial and federal governments.[44] In British Columbia, delegation grants authority to Aboriginal agencies to administer the Act, a power previously held completely by ministry staff. The types of services and supports provided by Aboriginal agencies are still determined by the agreement with the Ministry.

Since the process began, a number of criticisms have been raised. Overall, the main critiques have focused on 1) the length of time it has taken to follow through with both delegation and regionalization, 2) the fact that not all stakeholders (particularly Aboriginal organizations) participated in consultations and planning, 3) the lack of a

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[41] (Hughes April 2006)
[42] Accessed online at http://www.rcybc.ca/Content/AboutRCY/History.asp.
[43] (Bennett and Sadrehashemi 2008); (MacDonald 2008)
[44] (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health 2009-2010)

shared vision, 4) the dearth of resources for the process, 5) the observation that the governance models were Ministry driven, 6) and that issues pertaining to jurisdiction were not yet resolved.[45] [46]

The process of decentralization and the establishment of a regional model for child welfare and protection have also experienced major challenges. One of the main barriers to implementing the regional models was the lack of resources, which is also cited as a barrier to the successful transition of all children and youth related services to one ministry. When the Liberals were elected to government in 2001 they introduced sweeping and devastating budget cuts resulting in an 11% budget reduction of the then new ministry of Children and Family Development. This meant that service provision was reduced to serve only families in immediate crisis and many programs were eliminated.[47]

Furthermore, the Hughes Review included recommendations specific to delegation and decentralization. They were: 1) support for Aboriginal delegated agencies in terms of management and service delivery, and 2) further support for the decentralization process while maintaining central agency capacity to ensure compliance and appropriate administration of the Act.[48]

Since her appointment and the establishment of the independent Office, the Representative for Children and Youth has monitored the Ministry's process in implementing Hughes' recommendations. In her final report in 2010, the Representative observed that the process of decentralization and delegation was not complete and that the model of regionalization the Ministry was pursuing would lead to "inconsistency, reduced accountability for decision making and a critical lack of oversight."[49]

However, it is important to note, that since then there have been some major changes at the Ministry including the replacement of the Deputy Minister. The previously tenuous relationship between the Ministry and the Representative is improving. The Ministry, in partnership with the Federation of Community Social Services of BC, also launched the Residential Review Project in 2011, which in 2012 included a comprehensive review across all service streams and consultation processes with stakeholders. The final report outlines seven strategic directions with recommendations that support the implementation of the strategic directions.[50] It will be important to monitor the implementation of the strategic directions in order to track improvements

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[45] (MacDonald 2008)

[46] This list is by no means exhaustive, and there are a number of important issues within the points identified here. For more information and a detailed review of the process, please see Kelly MacDonald's report, *The Road To Aboriginal Authority* (included in the bibliography).

[47] (Bennett and Sadrehashemi 2008); (Schmidt 2012).

[48] (Hughes April 2006)

[49] (Representative for Children and Youth November, 2010)

[50] (Federation of Community Social Services of BC and the Ministry of Children and Family Development June 2012)

in service delivery and opportunities for integrated and collaborative service delivery approaches.

Investigations by the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth

Since Hughes, the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth has investigated many cases of child mistreatment and child death, including two highly publicized cases where children died at the hand of a parent. Both investigations cited the lack of communication and coordination between the child welfare, criminal justice and mental health systems, concluding that had these systems been working in a coordinated fashion, the deaths of the children would have been preventable.[51]

The report *Honouring Kaitlynne, Max and Cordon Make Their Voices Heard Now* states that,

> *"[E]ach arm of the system of supports and protections for vulnerable children and adults in BC […] must be attuned to the risks facing their clients especially children and that these arms need to be prepared to refer and accept referrals from other services … [a] call for more integration and coordination is hollow if all it means is that child protection workers bear the full burden of responsibility when other systems fail to respond."[52]*

Sadly, these shocking stories are two among many and illustrate with disturbing clarity the ongoing flaws in our systems of care for the most vulnerable people in our communities. Without question, a lack of coordinated responses and supports for vulnerable children and families results in avoidable tragedy. Placed within the context of a fraught ministry as described in the section above, it is no wonder that improvements to the system have been slow.

The investigations conducted by the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth provide important evidence to support the claim that the current system of services and supports are not working to meet the needs of children and their families.

Ministry Policy Frameworks and Service Plans

Strong, Safe and Supported: A Commitment to BC's Children and Youth

Strong, Safe and Supported was a policy document released by the provincial government in 2008 in response to the Hughes Review. The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) outlined its framework for service delivery in this

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[51] (Representative for Children and Youth 2009); (Representative for Children and Youth March 2012).

[52] (Representative for Children and Youth March 2012)

document.[53] The five 'pillars' or thematic areas that were described as "elements of an effective child, youth and family development service system" supported the framework.[54] The pillars were: prevention, early intervention, intervention and support, the Aboriginal Approach, and quality assurance.

Under the auspices of the early intervention pillar, the Ministry acknowledged that in order for children and their families to receive seamless support, there must be cross-ministry and program collaboration. The ministry listed an "increase in community hubs providing family support programs"[55] in key actions related to this pillar.

Under the *Aboriginal Approach* pillar, the Ministry committed to "continue the devolution of decision making and service delivery responsibilities to Aboriginal people and communities through mechanisms such as Aboriginal Authorities and delegated agencies."

Unfortunately, the document provided only high-level and vague descriptions as to how the proposed framework would actually be implemented. The Representative for Children and Youth wrote a scathing critique of the plan citing a lack of substance and detail as to how practice would change, particularly in terms of Hughes recommendations.[56]

MCFD Service Plans – 2011/12 to 2013/14

A review of the 2011/12 – 2013/14 service plan for MCFD does not include any articulation of any clear plan to facilitate actual service integration, or coordinated and collaborative service delivery, although this has been recommended by Gove, Hughes and the Representative.

The ministry states that programs will be integrated but the plan does not indicate how that will happen in a concrete way. The plan states,

> *"Supports and interventions for children, youth and families will be drawn from integrated programs and services offered by both the Ministry and through a strong-cross governmental approach."[57]*

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[53] (Ministry of Children and Family Development 2007)
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.
[56] (Representative for Children and Youth November, 2010).
[57] (Ministry of Children and Family Development February 2012).

MCFD on the Integrated Case Management System (ICM):

"ICM has been developed in response to the repeated calls over the years to improve information sharing across government to support better outcomes for British Columbians who need government services and assistance.

ICM is intended to ensure critical case information remains safe, secure and accessible to protect and support the citizens of British Columbia."

Source:
Verbatim from MCFD website, accessed online at:
http://www.integratedcasemanagement. gov.bc.ca/

Furthermore, the only indication of the cross-governmental or integrated approach is the implementation of the Integrated Case Management System (ICM). Unfortunately since its implementation, the ICM has encountered considerable problems and has raised many concerns regarding its efficacy.

Due to the overwhelming outpouring of concern from front-line staff and others using the system, the Representative for Children and Youth released a public statement which outlined the problems with the system and her expectations around how the Ministry should address the critical problems with the system.[58]

"While I appreciate that the current minister and deputy minister at MCFD inherited a poorly planned process, this does not excuse me from my public duty as an overseer of the child welfare system to provide a public warning to government that the system does not work. I now expect the government to quickly, effectively and efficiently address the problems, and to report publicly on how this will be done and on progress made. Immediate steps are necessary to prevent harm and stabilize the front line staff who are overwhelmed by this ill-planned process." [59]

The integration of an information system does not address the need for an integrated system of services and supports. Both Gove and Hughes stated that a ministry wide, and government wide purposeful integration of services was necessary to protect vulnerable children and youth across the province.[60]

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[58] (Representative for Children and Youth 2012).
[59] Ibid.
[60] (Gove 1995); (Hughes April 2006).

Ministry Service Plan 2012/13 to 2014/15

The government's commitment to a "Strong, Safe and Supported" policy framework is not reflected in the recent Ministry service plan. Instead, it appears to have been replaced with 6 service lines: Early Childhood Development and Child Care Services; Services for Children and Youth with Special Needs; Child and Youth Mental Health Service; Child Safety, Family Support and Children in Care Services: Adoption Services; and Youth Justice Service.[61]

The Ministry states that within the latest government *Families First Agenda for Change*, it is committed to 'modernizing its approach to supporting families." This service plan appears to have more detail on how changes will be implemented than the previous policy framework. In terms of implementing a framework to support integrated services, the plan outlines the Ministry's commitment to:

◆ Review and explore new ways to improve service delivery through active partnerships with other ministries, sectoral and community based agencies, and academics;

◆ Partnerships with the Union of BC Municipalities, community organizations, the private sector and other ministries to develop strategic plans to mitigate the effects of poverty on families in seven communities in BC.[62]

It is curious that only seven communities in BC are the beneficiaries of targeted approaches to address the effects that living in poverty has on children and their families. A more thorough review of the implementation of this plan is warranted but beyond the scope of this paper.

A Clear Lack of Investment in Social Services

One of the shifts that occurred in the Ministry in the early 2000s centered on how the contracting out of government services was conducted. A recent study, *Towards a Community Benefit Model of Procurement in Community Services*, examined how the process changed whereby social service ministries in the province procured contracts for service delivery.

In the early 2000s, contracts for BC government services, including those delivered by the community and social services sector, switched to a model of short-term contracts and competitive bidding. [63] A decade later, the report finds that this model, particularly for longer-term critical community services, has damaged the quality of services for British Columbians through:

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[61] (Ministry of Children and Family Development February 2012).

[62] Ibid.

[63] (Amyot February 2013)

- Inconsistent service as contracts are cancelled, renewed and transferred between competing organizations – often with time-lags in which vulnerable British Columbians are left without any access to the services they depend on;

- Undermining the financial stability of service providers by forcing non-profits to chase short-term contracts – sometimes at the cost of their financial sustainability;

- "Service fragmentation" – a breakdown of the sector's ability to collaborate with government and with each other, leading to issues and clients "falling through the cracks."[64]

The current social service sector has been affected by an increased reliance on the community services sector to provide services previously provided by the state at the same time there has been a policy shift away from core toward project funding. Overall, this has resulted in inconsistency in practice as agencies are forced to come up with new ideas time and time again. [65]The current procurement model therefore is inappropriate in its ability to meet the demands set out by the shifts towards increasing the responsibilities of community based agencies to provide appropriate and adequate social services and supports. While the evidence in this report paints a dire picture, it does propose a new model of service procurement that has the ability to address the current challenges.[66]

Where to from here?

This first section of the report provided some context to, and critique of, the current system of child welfare and protection in British Columbia. Both judicial inquiries discussed in this section provided detailed and clearly articulated recommendations on how to improve the system of services that protect vulnerable children and their families, and how to provide adequate and appropriate supports to vulnerable children and families to prevent tragedy.

The investigations of the Representative for Children and Youth have shown that these recommendations have not been heeded. In particular, Aboriginal children remain overly represented in the child protection system (over 55% of all children in care are Aboriginal)[67] and recent reports from the Representative's Office demonstrate the lack of effective, appropriate, adequate and responsive place-based supports and services for vulnerable children and their families. A brief examination of policy frameworks and ministry service plans indicates no clear articulation and framework for policy regarding the need for inter-service planning, coordinated and collaborative service delivery.

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[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid.

[66] For more information on what this model would look like, see Sarah Amyot, Towards a Community Benefit Model of Procurement in Community Services (Victoria: Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria , February 2013).

[67] (Ministry of Children and Family Development February 2012)

It is firmly established that the current system is still in need of major changes. While attempts at changes have been made in the past, as outlined above, they appear to have never been completed, and in some cases completely abandoned. What we need now is a response that addresses the critiques, acts on recommendations, builds on community-based assets, and incorporates promising practices that are happening locally and from other jurisdictions. The following section of this report provides an examination of how a locally developed model of integrated, place-based service delivery could be a concrete solution to addressing the needs of vulnerable children and families in our communities.

Reworking the System: Adopting Innovative Solutions and Strategies

As the truncated overview of the child welfare system in BC above suggests, it appears there is an eminent need to rethink and rework how services to vulnerable children, youth and their families are delivered. With government services actively being decentralized, and downloaded onto local communities[68] – a process over 20 years in the making – communities, academics, service providers and other stakeholders are starting to think about how to effectively integrate community-based supports, and respond to community needs. The following section explores how place-based models of integrated service delivery hold the potential to address the current challenge and provides some concrete examples of how go to about creating and implementing an innovative reworking of the system of supports for vulnerable children, youth and their families.

Policy Framework Development that Helps Not Hinders

Policy frameworks are key for effective place-based, integrated initiatives to work. These frameworks provide the overarching goals and principals from which decisions and strategies are developed and also provide direction for planning and development.[69] In order to meet the demands associated with these types of social service delivery models elaborated below), how policy frameworks are constructed is key to the frameworks being effectively rooted in the needs, beliefs and principles of the community for, and with which, they are being developed. There has been a movement in Quebec to democratize the policy development process as well as the implementation process. This type of policy development process may provide a model for key strategies and a framework to begin a regional process in our jurisdiction.

Public Policy Co-Production and Co-Construction

The co-production and the co-construction of public policy are considered frameworks for the democratic development of public policy. Co-production simply means that policy implementation is a shared responsibility between ministries (senior levels of government), non-governmental organizations or the private sector[70]. Co-construction takes co-production one step further by promoting a shared responsibility at the *design stage* of policy development[71]. While frameworks for democratized policy development take a number of different forms or expressions, Vaillancourt stresses the

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[68] (Amyot February 2013).

[69] (Watson September, 2011).

[70] (Vaillancourt 2009, 285).

[71] Ibid (289)

importance of the willingness of the state to support an open form of government in order for co-construction to actually work.[72]

In Sweden, the co-production framework defines the state's role as providing funding and regulation, and the non-profit sector's role (what he refers to as the third sector), as providing management and the delivery of services. Sharing power and sharing responsibility with the necessary variety of stakeholders is key to successful co-construction, and implementation.[73] An example of how this process is used is the co-construction of collective childcare within Swedish municipalities. As stakeholders, parents and childcare personnel work together with the appropriate government bodies to develop and then implement public policy that best addresses their needs because they were part of the process.[74]

In Quebec, the co-production and co-construction of *social housing with community supports* is an example of how the presence of relevant stakeholders ensures that the population targeted by the particular policy and practice responds to their needs and allows for greater participation in decisions and policies that affect their living conditions.[75] Vaillancourt cites the example of how initial research in 1995 into innovative practices of social housing provision, which improved the living conditions of those housed (people with mental health challenges, homeless, single, etc.), began a process whereby subsequent research and stakeholder groups used the evidence to demonstrate the need for stable funding particularly for social housing with community based supports. By 2007, the Quebec government announced a new policy that institutionalized funding of the community support component in social housing sector.[76]

While co-production and co-construction are concerned with the process of policy development, enabling policy frameworks are another key component in developing an environment that encourages social innovation through place-based integrated services. That said, co-production and co-construction should be the means by which policy frameworks and associated policies are developed.

Lessons to Inform Policy Framework Development

"*Good policy development lies as much in the 'how' as the 'what'.*"[77]

From an analysis of policy frameworks from different jurisdictions across Canada, Marshall Watson (2011) has collected a helpful summary of important lessons to consider when developing policy and policy frameworks. The list below offers critical insight particularly in terms of policy development processes emerging from non-

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[72] (Vaillancourt 2009).
[73] (Pestoff in Vaillancourt 2009).
[74] Ibid.
[75] (Vaillancourt 2009, 289).
[76] (Vaillancourt 2009).
[77] (Watson September, 2011).

governmental organizations, but should be applied in any policy development process especially where there is an attempt at collaboration, co-production and co-construction:

1. **Build on Available Resources:** Research other policy frameworks focusing on promising practices and features that fit the particular context and issue that is being tackled. Watson cites the example of the City of London, Ontario, which based its social policy framework on other municipalities from across Canada.[78]

2. **Rigorous Research and Consultation Process:** Building on the work of others is not enough, the work must also be grounded in extensive research and stakeholder consultations to ensure the policies are meaningful and actually reflect the needs of the community. *"Policy development needs to be based on comprehensive research and analysis since citizens and stakeholders can see through empty rhetoric."*[79]

3. **Context is Important:** Policy framework development must be informed by the broader social, political and economic contexts as these contexts directly affect the strength and ability of the policies to do what they were developed to do in the first place.

4. **Timing:** Watson recommends monitoring government policy cycles to take advantage of 'explorative' phases when government policy makers are able and keen to explore policy options with other stakeholders. He also adds that being prepared for such moments will also assist in elevating the policy development being recommended.

5. **Clearly State the Vision:** A clearly articulated vision should set the tone and direction of the framework, *"inspire action, convince the reader to engage with and buy into the rest of the policy document."*[80] Furthermore, the vision is critical not only for framing the policy framework but also for shaping subsequent program and policy development.[81]

6. **Encourage Horizontal Policy Development:** Watson notes that policy frameworks are most effective when they encourage, particularly government departments, to work together across departmental and ministry lines. More often than not, the issues addressed by social policy are varied, complex, and often interconnected. Thus, Watson argues, policy frameworks must encourage policy responses to be equally interconnected.[82]

7. **Community Engagement and Consultation:** Engagement and consultation with the community provides opportunities to harness local knowledge, which

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[78] (Watson September, 2011).
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.

needs to inform the policy development process. In addition, engagement and consultation must occur at different stages of the development process, in order to ensure the direction of the process and the actual policy framework is still responding to community needs.

8. **Develop Policies that 'Work':** Policies do not only provide the framework for decision making but also guide how programs are developed and implemented. Watson states that policy statements must be presented alongside implementation plans particularly in terms of attaining "government buy-in" because presenting a concrete implementation plan requires less effort on the government's part, "it is often easier to get government to buy into a program or an initiative that's tangible [...] than it is to get government to buy into a whole new values system or set of principles up front and then turn them into policy."[83]

With examples of effective strategies for meaningful policy development in mind, the next section explores the concept of place-based, integrated service delivery models with a focus on how these models are applied and how they can inform the development of an enabling policy framework to support them as effective, tangible means to address complex socio-economic issues and work to support and protect vulnerable children and their families.

Why Do Place-Based, Integrated Service Delivery Models Work?

Place is essential to everything we do: we work in place, we play in place, we care for each other in place, and we live our lives in place. Therefore it makes sense that strategies to support children and their families are based in the place where they live, work and play.[84]

Place-based initiatives as seen as effective mechanisms to address complex, systemic issues because the very foundation of the concept is that in order to effectively address complex-socio-economic issues in a given place, solutions need to reflect the needs, culture and context of it. In general terms, place-based initiatives are "collaborative means to address complex socio-economic issues through interventions defined at a specific geographic scale."[85]

Furthermore, effective policy responses to complex socio-economic issues must be generated at the local level to ensure that solutions are rooted in concerns of local communities and that they reflect the specific needs and capacities of the people who live there.[86] Place based initiatives have several key characteristics including: "multi-

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[83] (Watson September, 2011)

[84] (Bradford November 2008); (Reimer and Markey 2008).

[85] (Bellefontaine and Wisener 2011).

[86] (Bond 2010).

sectoral stakeholders, leveraging local knowledge and assets and shared stakeholder ownership of the initiative, which entails pooled resources and entwined accountability."[87]

Place-based responses to the socio-economic challenges faced by children and their families take on many forms. In the Unites States, it appears that the most discussed, and to date, effective models of place-based services and supports are large scale community development projects. These projects, including the Harlem Children's Zone and the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Making Connections projects, emphasize the need for transformative change at the neighbourhood or 'place' level that address the roots of poverty and social exclusion such as lack of adequate income, inaccessible affordable health care services and accessible, high quality education.[88]

While place-based strategies offer innovative and responsive solutions to the complex needs of communities, there are challenges with this approach that require consideration. This is not an exhaustive list but represents some key issues identified in the literature.

➡ Place-based strategies require a commitment from all levels of government, especially at the civic and provincial levels. These commitments can look like long-term funding stability, and/or inter-ministry collaboration and policy development.

➡ Place-based strategies are based upon a shared commitment to thinking beyond the status quo, which may be difficult for some stakeholders to overcome.

➡ Place-based initiatives pose a challenge when it comes to measuring outcomes[89]

➡ Comprehensive place-based strategies are often expensive, time consuming, and operationally complex and challenging. The involvement of key players in the communities working together to effect positive outcomes and change is very important to the successful implementation of a place-based initiative.[90]

In addition to the considerations in the list above, the interconnectedness of families and the neighborhoods in which they live should be at the forefront of the development process. A shared vision, set of principles, and organizational strategies are a must for any place-based initiative. [91]

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[87] (Bellefontaine and Wisener 2011).
[88] (Anthony, King and Austin 2011).
[89] (Bellefontaine and Wisener 2011).
[90] (Morikawa and Berardino 2010).
[91] (Austin, Lemon and Leer 2005).

Manitoba's Neighbourhoods Alive!

Manitoba's Neighbourhoods Alive! program supports "long-term, community-led, social and economic development" and neighbourhood revitalization through a citizen and community led approach to community planning and neighbourhood revitalization. The program supports targeted neighbourhoods through funding streams designed to support community development efforts in a range of areas, from housing to crime prevention to education and training to community recreation.

In June 2012, the comprehensive place-based approach animated through Neighbourhoods Alive! was brought into law through the passage of the Community Renewal Act. The act mandates the development of community renewal plans in consultation with residents, establishes a Community Renewal Advisory Committee made up of community-based stakeholders to provide advice on community renewal issues, and creates a Deputy Ministers' Committee on Community Renewal to ensure ongoing support and high-level leadership on issues of community renewal.

Children's Service Council of Palm Beach County Florida

The *Place-Based* strategy encourages and supports cross community collaboration and partnerships between organizations and community members. Supporting these relationships means that organizations and community members can: align their work and prevent duplication, learn together and share resources, and work together to find creative solutions to improve the quality of live for their communities. "The Place-Based Strategy connects the child, the family, the neighbourhood, community agencies and health and human service organizations in such a way that everyone benefits from positive child outcomes" (CSCPBC), 2012).

Sources: (Amyot February 2013)*;* (Childrens' Services Council Palm Beach Florida 2012)

An important aspect of place-based initiatives is that they provide frameworks for the integration of services and supports.

Integration is a Framework for Partnership, Collaboration and Cooperation

Place-based, integrated approaches are effective models of service delivery that address the unique and often diverse needs of a given community while simultaneously ensuring there is "no wrong door;" that when someone needs support and/or protection, it is accessible, culturally appropriate and sensitive, safe and effective.[92]

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[92] (Gove 1995); (Bond 2010).

What do integrated approaches look like?

Integrated models of service delivery and supports look like an inter-connected web of social services and supports at the community level that are supported by enabling policy frameworks at the systemic level that encourage and support formal planning and integration activity between organizations.[93] Furthermore, integrated services have the ability to address "multiple domains of influence" through responsive programs and supports that address the various factors in a community that contribute to a child and their family's vulnerability.[94] The most important aspect of an effective model of integrated service delivery is that "there is no wrong door" – that when, children, youth and their families are in need can access appropriate services and supports through multiple entry and assessment points.[95]

At the community level, these models may use co-location as a component of integration strategies – where a diversity of community-based social services and supports share a physical location – but integration does not necessarily have to use co-location to be effective.[96] Co-location does make it easier for organizations to coordinate services, share resources and collaborate around service delivery[97] but as Salhani argues, integration by its very nature "can be viewed as a powerful mechanism for meeting the challenges of fiscally and organizationally efficient and effective service delivery and successful client outcomes."[98]

At the systemic level, integration must exist at all levels to be effective and sustainable.[99] This means that policy frameworks must support and enable integration to happen across ministries, between different levels of government, and at the local community level with organizations and professionals.

What are the benefits of integrated approaches?

As indicated at the beginning of this paper, social services and community-based supports have become fragmented and disconnected as a result of uncoordinated legislation, disconnected or ineffective policy frameworks, fiscal challenges and insecure funding. A commitment to service integration can effectively address this situation.

➡ **Counter Silo Effects** – integrated service delivery models counter the effects of programmatic legislation and organizational silos by re-aligning services, using resources effectively by avoiding duplication, timely and accessible information

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[93] (Bond 2010).
[94] (Austin, Lemon and Leer 2005).
[95] (Bond 2010).
[96] (Bond 2010); (Ungar 2011).
[97] (Salhani 2009); (Ungar 2011).
[98] (Salhani 2009).
[99] Ibid.

sharing and through the development of transparent and seamless services that respond to the complex needs of children and their families.[100]

➡ **Benefits for Users and Organizations** – for those who access services and supports, integrated service delivery models allow for timely access, multiple access points, improved assessments and appropriate referrals. For organizations, the benefits include resource sharing, greater coordination, effective program development and collaboration, and an increased collective knowledge of gaps and needs in a given community.[101]

➡ **Community Development** – integrated service delivery models can foster and build greater community resilience through sustainable and accessible services. Integrated approaches are more conducive to building stronger relationships and fostering meaningful collaboration between organizations and service users. In a study of three service delivery models in Ontario, it was found that an integrated, community based approach to service delivery was found to create a larger, more creative variety of services and interventions.[102] These approaches also provide a framework to extend supports beyond crisis intervention and immediate needs to broader community development and effective social planning.

What are the challenges with integrated approaches?

One of the overarching challenges facing the successful and effective implementation of an integrated approach to service delivery is that it requires a system-wide change. Salhani sums it up nicely when he states,

> *"Integrating services means nothing less than profoundly changing the entire organizational culture surrounding the issue: the traditional way that people at all levels of the system care to think about and practice policy development; governance and community service delivery relationship; professional practices; and the means by which people work together to meet the needs of children and families."[103]*

Other challenges reflect more the specific, operational aspects of service integration. The development of integrated approaches are without questions labour and resource intensive, and time consuming given that extensive community, organization and cross-sector partnership building, consultation and agreement that must occur to build effective and efficient systems, and policy frameworks.[104] Furthermore, administrative and human resources also require alignment and consideration – the little things can add up.

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[100] (Bond 2010).

[101] (Bond 2010); (Salhani 2009).

[102] (Hazineh, Cameron and Frensch 2005).

[103] (Salhani 2009).

[104] (Bond 2010); (Salhani 2009).

Salhani explains that the model of child protection and social service delivery in BC has more potential for effective integration than other children services models in Canada particularly because "... the government consolidates all or most aspects of the issue in one ministry ..." and the assumption is that collaboration and integration of policy, funding and service delivery will occur.[105]

While the challenges appear daunting, there are examples were place-based, integrated approaches being developed or have already been developed. In Toronto, the United Way is a central organization in the development of community service hubs that act as economies of scale for a number of organizations and services that share resources, operating costs and 'back office duties' (United Way Toronto). There are also efforts in the Downtown Eastside in Vancouver through the Responsive Intersectional Children's Health, Education, and Research (RICHER) Initiative. RICHER provides primary healthcare services to low-income families but also provides links to other social supports including job and housing services, offers nutrition and cooking classes and provides a space for informal social activities.[106][107]

The key then to effective, responsive, accessible and sustainable social services and supports is that they are embedded in a place-based, integrated model that is supported by an enabling policy framework that mobilizes cross-government and cross-sector collaboration, community input and cultural sensitivity. The following describes one model that was specifically designed for the Canadian context.

Promising Models: Regional Multi-Service Child and Family Centre Model

The Regional Multi-Service Child and Family Centre Model is a conceptual model of integrated, place-based service delivery developed by Charles and Garfat (2010). The model they propose is focused on the provision of services for vulnerable and troubled youth and their families.

Charles and Garfat (2010) observe that many communities across Canada struggle with providing effective services and supports for children and families. They outline a number of reasons for the situation, many rooted in historically established structures and ideological traditions[108]. In response to what the authors argue is an ineffective system of social service provision, they propose a "regional child and family services model" that brings together a seamless continuum of resources and supports to children and families based on a shared set of values and beliefs. They explain that the model "...brings resources to young people and their families, rather than bringing the young people and families to those resources."[109]

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[105] (Salhani 2009).

[106] For more information visit the Network of Inner City Community Service Society website: http://www.niccss.ca/ and the RICHER webpage: http://www.bcchildrens.ca/Services/SpecializedPediatrics/RICHERInitiative/ContactUs.htm.

[107] (Hyslop 2012).

[108] (Charles and Garfat 2010).

[109] Ibid.

The model consists of nine specific components which include: family support and early intervention services, crisis inter-vention services, day treatment services, stabilization and emergency placement services, specialized therapeutic foster care services, specialized intermediate-term residential treatment services, aftercare and community support services, clinical consultation teams and auxiliary specialized services.[110] It is important to note that these components are not individual programs but are essential parts of an integrated, seamless, and comprehensive service model where all the components are mutually supported and interrelated, providing a "critical mass of connected services in each region …"[111]

For the model to work effectively, the authors argue that major changes need to occur in how social service providers interact with children and families, with how service providers interact with other professionals and how they interact with their own programs.[112] This means that effective, integrated models like the one they propose must be built on a shared set of beliefs and values particularly on the part of the service providers and professionals involved.

Alberta's Family and Community Support Services Program

Funding frameworks as well as funding levels have the potential to enable an effective policy framework or disable it, in that regardless of how innovative, responsive, appropriate and effective policies and programs are, if the appropriate levels of funding are not in place to allow for sustainability then the effectiveness of the initiatives become uncertain.

Alberta has a unique funding model, administered through the *Family and Community Support Services Program*, and is based on an 80/20 funding partnership between the Government of Alberta, and municipalities or Métis Settlements. It receives its mandate from the Family and Community Support Services Act and regulation.

Key Elements of an Integrated Youth and Family Services System:

- A regional integrated hub model for a specific geographic area
- Resources are allocated to clients
- Staff are not 'owned' by one particular program and are able to move freely to where they are needed
- Non-linear with multiple entry and exit points but with a single point of contact
- There is a continuum of care
- A range of ages of children can be served with age restrictions only being applied in residential situations
- Allows for collaboration and resource sharing between and within government departments and community resources

Source: (Charles and Garfat 2010)

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[110] (Charles and Garfat 2010).
[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid.

One of the key principles of the FCSS Program is local autonomy in priority setting and resource allocation. FCSS emphasizes local decision making for programming, based on the belief that communities have the desire, energy and resources to build community capacity. Each municipality or Metis Settlement determines how the dollars they receive should be allocated to best meet the needs of the community within legislated parameters.[113]

Partnership in Calgary Looks Like ...

The responsibilities of the Calgary and Area Child and Family Services Authority (CFSA) of Alberta include:

- ◆ Assessing needs, setting priorities, planning, allocating resources, and managing the provision of services to children, families and other community members in the region
- ◆ Ensuring that children and families have reasonable access to high quality services
- ◆ Ensuring that provincial policies and standards are followed in the region
- ◆ Monitoring and assessing the provision of child and family services
- ◆ Working with other CFSAs, public and private bodies, and government to coordinate services for children and families.

Calgary and Area Child and Family Services offers a range of supports and services to children, youth, adults and families residing in the City of Calgary and surrounding areas.

Calgary and Area Child and Family Services Authority (CFSA) is delegated by Alberta Children and Youth Services to provide a wide range of services to strengthen families and keep children and youth safe and protected, including: Early Intervention, Child Intervention Services (Family Enhancement and Core Protection), Child Care Licensing, Monitoring and Subsidy, Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD); Foster Care, Adoption and Permanency Planning, Protection of Sexually Exploited Children (PSECA), and Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying.

Calgary and Area Child and Family Services Authority is led by a community board and employs over 500 staff across 17 worksites. The CFSA contracts with more than 80 agencies to deliver services to children, youth and families.

Source: Verbatim from Calgary and Area Child and Family Services, accessed online at:"
http://www.calgaryandareacfsa.gov.ab.ca/home/4.cfm

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[113] Province of Alberta, accessed online at: http://www.centralalbertacfsa.gov.ab.ca/home/574.cfm

Two Examples of Integrated Community Hub and Co-location Models in Canada

Community Hubs - Toronto, ONT

Working in Partnership, the United Way Toronto:

- ◆ Consults and engages community residents
- ◆ Creates partnerships with other community organizations
- ◆ Locates affordable, accessible and appropriate space
- ◆ Create a financial feasibility plan
- ◆ Determines governance and management structures
- ◆ Designs buildings in consultation with residents and partners
- ◆ Applies for capital funding
- ◆ Carries out lease hold improvements

Source: www.unitedwaytoronto.com

Community Hubs are increasing in popularity in Toronto as a means to coordinate and integrate place-based services for communities in geographic areas where there is a high level of social and economic need. The focus of the hubs varies across sectors from arts to economic and community development to social and recreation services.[114] Hubs are based on the idea that in order to serve communities better, services, programs and organizations need to work in collaboration and coordination and not in silos.

There are three common functions of the community hubs:

1. **Provision of key services to meet local need** – programs and services are in place that respond to, and support, the local community such as social services, health, employment, and/or business services.[115]

2. **Accessible community space** – common areas and public spaces for formal and unstructured activities and programming.[116]

3. **Co-located services/tenants** – community hubs create a critical mass of services, programs, and organizations, improves accessibility to clients and/or community

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[114] (WoodGreen Community Services Planning and Research Unit 2011).
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid.

members. Co-location can foster informal social networks that have the potential to lead to more formalized service delivery and programming structures.[117]

United Way Toronto has played a significant leading role in facilitating the development of a number of community hubs to provide much needed supports and services to underserved urban neighbourhoods. It is providing funding $1 million of capital costs for each of the eight community hubs, and $150,000 for operating costs for each hub has been committed out of the United Way's Community Fund. Development grants are also available to facilitate community partnerships and planning. The United Way is also working in partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Health to develop community health centre satellites in five or the eight community hubs.

"Community hubs have much to offer in terms of place-based service delivery models. In Toronto, they are "...emerging as effective methods of local capacity building for residents, grassroots community groups and smaller agencies that are now able to participate in the local community in more meaningful ways."[118]

The Shelldale Centre – Guelph, Ontario

The Shelldale Centre is a multi-service centre that is a partnership between health, social services and other agencies, community organizations and neighbourhood residents committed to ensuring the wellbeing of children and their families. The Centre is home to 16 social services agencies with services ranging from early childhood development, family health care, clinical counseling, child protection, family support, adult education and employment training, recreation and leisure and community safety and crime prevention. An important component of the Centre is that half of it is dedicated to "community space" for community run initiatives and informal activities.[119] Program objectives included: community involvement in child protection, cooperation among service providers, access to more resources, greater familiarity and easier access.

This Centre is located in a neighbourhood considered the most economically disadvantaged in the region of Guelph with a high unemployment rate and estimates that close to 70% of families in the area receive income assistance. It also has the highest rate of child protection cases in the region, high levels of mental health issues, low-income housing and a high concentration of new Canadians.

A Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council funded study indicated that overall, service providers, service participants and other stakeholders "...had a generally favourable assessment of the 'community-based' model"[120] however, the model was

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[117] Ibid.

[118] (WoodGreen Community Services Planning and Research Unit 2011).

[119] (Hazineh, Cameron and Frensch 2005).

[120] Ibid.

not without its challenges given constraints at the provincial level. Based on their findings, the researchers concluded that:

◆ The community-based approach was considered to create a larger, more creative variety of services and interventions for families[121]
◆ The "less-formal" approach of the community based model was favoured
◆ Accessibility was a major benefit of the model.
◆ All three research groups emphasized that the model is conducive to building better relationships and cooperation among service providers and with service participants.
◆ Shared responsibility for child protection is seen as an important strength and outcome of the model.
◆ Sustainability was highlighted as a challenge mostly to do with front-line service worker capacity and high levels of burnout.[122]

Community Assets – Resources and Potential at our Fingertips

The provision of appropriate and place-based social services and support systems for vulnerable children, youth and their families is difficult to achieve particularly in times of fiscal restraint and economic austerity. However, building on already existing resources in our communities, a widely recommended approach in the literature, which can be incorporated into integrated, place-based service delivery models ensures that the needs of the community are appropriately addressed.

Some of these community assets, particularly Aboriginal Friendship Centres, are already practising place-based service delivery. Community Schools and Neighbourhood Learning Centres can also be considered as providing place-based service delivery although there is room for more integration and diversification of services made available to community members.

Spotlight: Aboriginal Friendship Centres

Aboriginal Friendship Centres offer a range of prevention and support services to urban Aboriginal people across British Columbia. With

> " *Centres deliver services funded through a wide variety of sources, including, but not limited to various levels of government.*
>
> *As a result of our diverse funding sources, we have developed an equally diverse network of partnerships that play crucial roles in our ability to deliver quality services.* "
>
> *Source:* (British Columbia Association of Aborignial Friendship Centres 2009)

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[121] Ibid.
[122] (Hazineh, Cameron and Frensch 2005).

approximately 1,000 employees in 24 communities across BC, collectively, Friendship Centres are the largest social service infrastructure in the province.[123]

Friendship Centres are non-profit organizations that are governed by local community boards and provide a wide range of health and social services support for Aboriginal people regardless of status or residence.[124] Services provided by Friendship Centres range from career and employment support services, health and social programs, youth programs, to arts and cultural practices. Friendship Centres are also important places for formal and informal community gatherings, and for fostering support networks and relationship building.

The BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres is taking an active role in the redesign of the child and family service delivery system in BC. Friendship Centres are central in the devolution of responsibility for the provision of children and family services from the provincial government to Aboriginal communities. The Centres are able to leverage already existing partnerships and enhance existing capacity "…to provide cost-effective alternatives to direct government provision of services."[125]

Friendship Centres in British Columbia are leading the way in terms of place-based service delivery and provide a model and foundation for further service integration across populations and service mandates.

Conclusion and Recommendations: Implementing an Innovative Integrated Service Delivery Model in the Capital Region

The Capital Region already has an extensive community services sector engaged in responding to meeting different needs amongst children, youth and families. Amongst these agencies and their funders there are already significant efforts being made to conduct outreach, plan and network to better coordinate services. The Victoria Native Friendship Centre provides a key focus for services to Aboriginal families. The Pacific Centre Family Services Association has been coordinating responses to the needs of families on the West Shore, the fastest growing area of the Region. The Youth Service Providers Network brings together community agencies that work to respond to the needs of vulnerable young people. The Children and Family Services Committee of the Community Social Planning Council has started to work on how a children and families service planning and evaluation system could be developed for the region. The United Way has established an "all that kids can be" funding priority. Success by Six and the Partnership in Learning and Advocacy for Young Children (PLAY) promote service collaboration for particular child populations.

There are then substantial networks and assets to build upon. However there are also over 250 non-profit community service agencies,[126] 13 municipalities, three school districts, nine First Nations and a large number of provincial government offices and agencies with mandates that affect children and families.

To make this complex and fragmented system even more difficult to navigate, changes in government contracts for community services over time have resulted in less, shorter term and more insecure funding, together with procurement processes that engender competition and stifle collaboration. The result has been a consistent perception by stakeholders of increased gaps in the social safety net for vulnerable families and a diminished capacity to identify emerging needs and plan early intervention to prevent crises. At worst the system has become incapable of even communicating between its components to prevent tragedies from occurring, as noted in reports of investigations by the Office of the BC Representative of Children and Youth. As this reality presents itself day in and day out support by government for developing and planning an appropriate regional and community-based service system is neglected. As a result it becomes harder and harder for community service agencies to leverage their social capital, their community members, partners and volunteers to add the one key ingredient for any successful social system: a caring community where neighbours look out for neighbours and share in looking after those who are experiencing challenging times.

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[126] (Hazeldine 2011).

There is therefore a need for concerted action to take evidence-based action to strengthen a more integrated, planned and pro-active service system to support children and families, in their communities. Based on evidence from a number of models identified in this report a series of interrelated strategies need to be considered:

1. **A network of "hubs"** to strengthen service integration, co-location and access at the local area level.

2. **A region-wide service planning and evaluation system** (as in the Calgary Child and Family Service Authority model) that would, based on empirical evidence:
    i. Evaluate trends and emerging needs.
    ii. Identify population and geographic gaps in service provision.
    iii. Support demonstration projects to develop innovative practices.
    iv. Coordinate service co-location and collaboration initiatives.
    v. Promote cross-jurisdiction cooperation, and
    vi. Co-construct with government agencies policies and programs appropriate to local needs.
    vii. Leverage research and development investments from post-secondary institutions and funders to maximize social innovation in the region.
    viii. Connect with other communities in BC (and elsewhere) to link up with similar initiatives and learn from one another.

3. **Development of that system through a regional framework development process that:**
    i. Engages stakeholders and communities in cross-regional and multi-stakeholder consultations.
    ii. Develops shared mission, vision and guiding principles.
    iii. Advocates for a regional planning process supported by government and other funders.
    iv. Identifies existing collaboration and integration models to strengthen and scale up.

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