Alberta's Disruption of Families

[Original title: Sustaining Our Children's Connection to Our Indigenous Epistemology as a Vision of Reconciliation]

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Introduction

It has been three years since my presentation at the 2015 Indigenous Scholars conference on apprehended Métis children and institutionalized disruption of family. Since then, there has been a formal apology offered from the Government of Alberta to survivors of the Sixties Scoop, and to their families and communities. The Government of Alberta provided the following overview of the Sixties Scoop, for which Alberta's Premier apologized:

> The Sixties Scoop refers to a period of time in Canada when an unknown number of Indigenous children were taken from their parents and communities by child intervention services and placed with mostly non-Indigenous families. Many children lost touch with their families, communities, culture, and traditional language. This caused lasting negative issues with mental, spiritual, emotional and physical health and well-being. Survivors and their families are still feeling the effects of the Sixties Scoop today. (Government of Alberta, n.d.)

The Government of Alberta acknowledged in the Sixties Scoop apology that:

> Indigenous children were taken from their birth families, from their communities, put in non-Indigenous homes, without meaningful steps, in some cases without any steps at all, to preserve their culture, their identity, their relationship with their community, and, even most importantly, with their family (Notley, 2018, p. 2).

This Scoop is still happening today. During Oral Question Period, MLA Dave Hanson (2018, May 28) offered a ministerial statement immediately following the apology, expressing regret: "the troubling thing ... is that while we can look back at the past and say we were in error, we are allowing this to continue under our watch today."

This paper seeks to outline one of the complex ways in which the Sixties Scoop remains today—through kinship care. This work will illuminate the vulnerabilities that Indigenous peoples are faced with, and it will contextualize the vulnerabilities that are created in and by the very child welfare system (Alberta's Child and Family Services) that purports to preserve families and within a system that purports to be apologetic (Government of Alberta). The integrity of Child and Family Services (CFS)

and the integrity of the Alberta government's policies and intentions are compromised by their actions.

This work calls for the mitigation of such vulnerabilities such that Indigenous families will be more secure and communities will be more connected. This work calls for meaningful reconciliatory action from the Government of Alberta such that the continual disruption of Indigenous families is no longer a systemic problem, and the integrity of policies, legislations, and the formal apology will be fully practiced and actualized.

Alberta Kinship Care: Encouraging Continual Disruption of Indigenous Families

Alberta's child welfare policy provisions continue to perpetuate disruption of Indigenous communities and families through the apprehension of children, followed by permanent non-familial placements. Children are being denied uninterrupted connection to their biological families with whom they are entitled to be connected by birthright, and with devastating impacts that reverberate through Métis and other Indigenous communities. Alberta's kinship care program creates legal pathways that destabilize the security of a permanent placement with an extended family member for children receiving kinship care. This fairly new and sophisticated strategy of leveraging the legal system to sever Indigenous children from their families is drafting a legacy in Canadian/Indigenous relations that is as disgraceful as history's precedent in the residential school system that perpetuated continual disruption to Indigenous communities.

This paper first describes and examines Alberta's kinship care program and the incongruence between what the government sets out to do and what actually results from the governing policies in practice. Second, the inadequate provisions of governing policies in child welfare are placed in the context of epistemological disruption through the examination of the definition of kinship. Third, the impacts and outcomes of this dissonance on Métis children in care are described. In the final section, action-oriented suggestions to improving kinship care through policy amendments and accountability measures are provided.

CFS and Kinship Care in Alberta: Intentions Described

In Canada, the federal government assigns child welfare policy development and provision of care to the jurisdiction of each province. Therefore, child welfare matters are provincially legislated, and care provisions are regulated by each province. In Alberta, children are apprehended by the provincial Child and Family Services (CFS) authority when their well-being has been deemed to be compromised and when a safety assessment

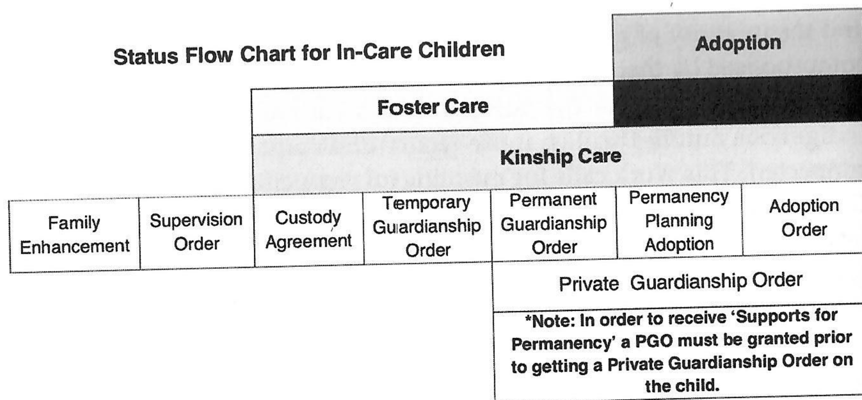

Figure 1. Status flow chart for in-care children. (Government of Alberta, 2017b, p. 20)

determines that they are at risk of abuse or neglect and have no protection (Government of Alberta, 2017b, p. 17). This is not supposed to result in severance of children from their families and communities; reunification of the family unit is meant to be the intention (Government of Alberta, 2017a, p. 10; Government of Alberta, 2017b, p. 10). Extended family members are to be considered, it appears, at the moment there is removal from the family (see Figure 1).

When a child is placed with their extended family under kinship care, they are financially supported, and the child and family are provided additional support as required. If it is determined that a child cannot be returned to his or her guardian due to particular circumstances, or reunification with the guardian within a "reasonable amount of time" as defined by the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* (2000, pp. 38-39) is no longer an option, an application for a permanent guardianship order (PGO) is made by the Director of CFS. The Director is designated by the Ministry to carry out the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* (CYFEA).

If reunification is not possible, preservation of the family unit is still a matter to be considered. This intention can be maintained through facilitating placement with extended family or by making permanent placement through a private guardianship or adoption order. The Government of Alberta (2017c) expresses this principle under the Child Intervention Practice Framework, which states that to "Preserve Family—We believe children and youth should be safe, healthy and live with their families, therefore we focus on preserving and reuniting families and building on the capacity of extended family and communities to support children, youth and families."

In sum, the apparent foundational understanding by CFS of the importance of maintaining family seems evident in the outlined framework: if a

child is apprehended, placement with extended family is valued. It appears that the Child Intervention Practice Framework, and kinship care specifically, are anchored in maintaining familial connections for children in care. This should presumably result in practice that then works to preserve the connection between child, family, and community.

Alberta's Kinship Care Program: Intentions and Outcomes

Unfortunately, the prospects of a child being permanently placed with extended family are undermined by Alberta's concurrent plan policy and practice. The concurrent plan is a process whereby a plan for reunification of children with family (Plan A), is made concurrently with a plan for alternative permanent placement (Plan B) in anticipation of a breakdown in reunification. In the Government of Alberta's Human Services *Enhancement Policy Manual* intervention section (Chapter 4), the concurrent plan policy states that

> The concurrent plan must be initiated within 42 days of the date of an application for initial custody, a TGO [Temporary Guardianship Order] or a PGO [Permanent Guardianship Order]. The concurrent plan must be submitted to the court as evidence a TGO or PGO application. (Government of Alberta, 2018, Subsection 4.2.1, p. 198)

The goal is permanency for the child, and the plan focuses on "long-term enduring relationships and stability of placement for the child" (Government of Alberta, 2018, Subsection 4.2.3, p. 206)

If concurrent planning is undertaken to identify a permanent placement, the likelihood of an extended family member from a child's home community being identified as a potential caregiver is heavily dependent on the individual efforts and abilities of each caseworker. For example, if a Métis child is apprehended in the city where they were born and have resided for five years, there is certainly a risk that the concurrent planning policy will result in individuals who are in close proximity to the child being considered as being a fit option for a potential permanent placement rather than extended family. The concurrent planning policy does not compel or even guide caseworkers to consider extended family. Taking the initiative to seek out extended family members requires additional efforts and time that overloaded caseworkers may not feel they have. Consequently, extended families—on both maternal and paternal sides—are not routinely pursued at the concurrent planning stages.

Also, the expectations put on a child to simultaneously adjust to a temporary placement, to anticipate reunification possibilities, and to plan for permanency elsewhere makes the execution of concurrent planning problematic. Working towards maintaining both plans would not only be exhausting for all involved but could also be contradictory for

the child. It would be confusing and damaging for any child to, on one hand, be encouraged to have healthy connected relationships with one's parents while, on the other hand, be anticipating a transition to permanency within their current placement home—this contradiction could be felt physically, in the aim to create a more settled environment, or emotionally, in the encouragement of the use of names such as "Mom" and "Dad" with temporary caregivers. If caregivers have intentions other than reunification, this could create conflicts with the promotion of a reunification plan and even contribute to its breakdown. An example of this is the K.G. case.

In the K.G. case, respite workers provided temporary care but they wanted to identify a potential child, to create a family of their own. When the caregivers' goal is a potential permanent placement of the child in their household, there are conflicts with efforts toward preservation of the child's biological family. This is often why it is emphasized to caregivers that reunification and preservation of the child's family is of utmost importance. In the K.G. case, the respite workers promoted a parent-child bond with K.G., encouraging the use of "Mom" and "Dad" during overnight visits. Satisfied with the parent-child dynamic, the respite workers moved ahead to secure guardianship of K.G. This all occurred prior to K.G.'s paternal extended family being notified that she was in care.

In theory, foster families and respite workers are meant to be in alignment with Child and Family Services (CFS), and their expressed intention of reunifying families. In practice, this is not always so. Becoming a foster parent as a means to eventual adoption has become acceptable conduct in Alberta. The system allows respite and foster care workers to abuse their roles—to access children in care, children who are vulnerable to familial dissolution—in order to identify a potential child with which they can create a family. Families are at risk of disruption if these individuals become Plan B options in concurrent planning, prior to contacts being made with available extended family members. The caregivers, having more face-to-face time with the children, are able to cultivate relationships with the child. These relationships can be and ultimately have been used against the family when securing custody of the child family member in care. The decision to permanently disrupt families has been made in favour of maintaining the evolving, budding relationships being formed between temporary caregivers and children, at a cost of maintaining the principles of reunification and preservation of family.

Reaching out to extended family needs to be a legislated requirement, not just an option. Extended families in their home community (home being where the extended family is rooted/resides) are sometimes not

even made aware of the existence of the child, especially if their family member (the child's parent) has disconnected themselves from their home community. If the child's parent has not provided the CFS agency information with regard to potential extended family placements, then the onus on the caseworker to connect with communities is increased but the obligation is not. For example, if the child's case includes written consent "to involve a Métis resource in case planning, support and service provision for the child and family" (Government of Alberta, 2018, p. 140), only then *may* the CFS agency involve a Métis agency in matters involving the child. At the time of the K.G. hearings, a provincially-delegated agency, Region 10, existed to have involvement with children connected to the Métis Settlements. This is the only way in which K.G.'s family came to know about her existence and, according to legal judgement, the information came too late.

It is not until a private guardianship order or an adoption order is applied for by a non-familial applicant that a CFS agency will verify with home community delegate agencies (where they exist, such as a delegated First Nation authority) about the status change of a child who is from their community. By the time the delegated agencies connect and inform settlement members about their family member's placement needs, as in the case of K.G., the child's Plan B caregiver option in their community of residency has already proven to intentionally have crafted a relationship "bond", with the help of professionals, that limits the plausibility of ensuring family preservation through reunification with extended family. This pattern is being reinforced through the court system by collaborating legal professionals (see reference listing of 2010, 2014, and 2018 CanLII cases for examples). Foster care workers and respite workers often encourage parent-child bonds with the support of child mental health "experts." The experts then testify to the existence of this "bond" in court. Satisfied by the legal argument, judges rule in favour of providing custody to non-familial caregivers using the justification that it would be disruptive to the "bond" that now exists. The weighting given to expert testimony and to inappropriate assessment evaluations of attachment was instrumental in the severance of K.G. from her family and community.

When K.G.'s paternal family was made aware of her existence, her aunt immediately stepped up to take on the duty to provide care. By this time, the respite workers were committed to the "forever family" that they had been working to create with K.G. (The term "forever family" is used to refer to a child's permanent placement caregiver/family members.) The respite workers had spent much time and effort moulding her mental constructs about parents, capitalizing on her developmental capacity and

emotional vulnerability to contrive a bond that would be, in the view of judicial decision makers, unethical to disrupt. In the end, the respite workers used the contrived bond that they had created to dismantle potential permanency placements for a child and her family. Had the extended family been aggressively sought out by CFS initially, instead of making feeble "too little and too late" attempts, the likelihood of K.G. being in foster care and needing respite care would have been a non-occurrence.

Finally, judges who make rulings in the legal system on matters involving children in care are ill-equipped to make judgements about best interests with respect to Indigenous children in care. Lawyers often are not equipped with the knowledge and/or competency to support families in court proceedings, with the best interests of children prioritized above their own interests. In the Child Intervention Practice Framework, CFS states as one of the framework principles, Indigeneous Experience, that "Indigenous peoples have always had their own ways of ensuring that vulnerable members, including children, are safe, protected and nurtured. We honour this by recognizing their expertise in matters concerning their children, youth and families" (Government of Alberta, 2017c). However, this recognition of expertise is not given corresponding consideration and adherence in processes under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* (CYFEA), and this same disregard occurs in the courts, as exemplified by other cases (F.M. v S.S., 2010; S.G. v J.P.B, 2014; U.R.M. (Re), 2018).

Matters of deciding permanent placements within court proceedings are facilitated by lawyers whose responsibility is toward their client. Lawyers secure experts who will speak to the narrative that supports their client and position. This narrative is weighted by judges who are often not informed and not equipped to evaluate the reliability and validity of the child experts put before them in the context of Indigenous children, in determining the truth with respect to making a judgement about a child's best interests. This narrative is structured to align with the intentions of the client who secured the lawyers as counsel, thereby creating a resource-driven competition in court navigation skills.

Battles fought against Indigenous communities on behalf of people who assert they have a "significant connection" to Indigenous children so as to complete their own families can be a lawyer's full-time job. In practice, legal counsel, who are not mandated to conduct themselves in alignment with the principles of Alberta's Child Intervention Practice Framework, use instead the concurrent planning policy to orchestrate a case for their clients who see children in the welfare system as potential permanent family members, and who then insert themselves into the lives

of children in care, contriving bonds between temporary care providers (i.e., respite workers) whose intention is supposed to support reunification efforts rather than to compromise them. Lusignan and O'Hara (2014), for example, suggest that plans for dissolution of reunification plans should take place "when a child first comes into care" (p. 1).

Adherence to the Child Intervention Practices Framework principles is intended to ensure the well-being of children receiving interventions. Anyone involved with or who has influence in formal decisions around a child receiving intervention should adhere to these principles; ethically, lawyers should. Nonetheless, legal counsel for applicants who wish to obtain adoption or private guardianship orders are not required to work in alignment with the principles that "preserve family" and consider "Indigenous experience" (Government of Alberta, 2018). Lawyers are obligated to serve their client and their client's position even if or when the client's position arguably conflicts with the best interests of a child.

Concurrent planning allows people to leverage their legal applications for private guardianship. While concurrent planning is supposed to be a permanency-focused process that aligns with the child intervention principles, legal counsel can orchestrate their client's win, even if that win is not in alignment with the principles and consequently contravenes the child's best interest, costing the child great loss. This loss for the child is expressed in the lost opportunity to achieve the goal to return a child to his or her family (Government of Alberta, 2017a, p. 10; Government of Alberta, 2017b, p. 10). The more careworkers work aggressively towards concurrent planning, the less possibility the extended family has of securing guardianship, since concurrent planning can result in a "bond" that is used as a weapon against extended family members who have lost guardianship over the child.

An understanding of the distinct dynamics between Indigenous peoples and the CFS system is apparent in policy but not in practice. In the Government of Alberta's overview on how to become a kinship caregiver, CFS claims that "Whenever possible, children and youth in care live in culturally-appropriate placements where they can maintain a sense of belonging with members of the community" (Government of Alberta, n.d.b). Cultural connectivity has been given minimal to no regard in the courts. The maintenance of contrived bonds with caregivers who were meant to be temporary is evaluated as being more important than cultural and community connections, as referenced in court cases (F.M. v S.S., 2010; S.G. v J.P.B, 2014; U.R.M. (Re), 2018). When temporary caregivers who are employed to maintain the family use their role to be instrumental in the permanent severance of family connection, there exists a major inconsis-

tency between policy and practice, a lack of understanding about kinship, and a lack of regard for extended family as the ideal placement option.

Kinship and Familial Disruption

The definition of family is becoming twisted through policy, and the understanding of the principles of kinship and family are being used as weapons to disrupt Indigenous communities of kin. Extended family members are essential to the maintenance of child welfare traditionally and their significance continues to be maintained today in Indigenous communities. A child is part of a family and it is families that make our communities. When a family is able to provide adequate support and care for their family members, the ideal child placement maintains communities through preservation of families.

Preservation of family is not to be mistaken for construction of a mythical European fairytale of a "forever family." This "forever family" represents a very different goal and, in this goal's achievement, the preservation of the child's biological family will be compromised. Unfortunately, these conflicting goals have been evaluated as being synonymous with each other. That is, individuals are utilizing the courts to obtain custody on the rationale that their constructed family should be upheld in the courts, despite the logical outcome being the disintegration of the child's rightful biological family. The CYFEA requires judges to consider, with respect to the best interests of a child, that "the family is the basic unit of society and its well-being should be supported and preserved; [as well as] the importance of stable, permanent and nurturing relationships for the child" (Government of Alberta, 2000, pp. 12-13) but in no particular order of importance. Whether the contrived family is maintained or the kinship (biological) family is preserved, and which of the two is prioritized, is dependent on the ability of a presiding judge to understand and differentiate between the two goals. The outcome is often connected to access to resources by the applicants and their navigation skills in the courtroom, and whose lawyer wins the legal argument.

The CYFEA allows for anyone to make application for private guardianship for any child who is under a private guardianship order (PGO) granted to the director (Government of Alberta, 2000, p. 55). If an extended family member (e.g., aunt) and a significant non-familial person (e.g., respite caregiver) both put forward competing applications for placement, they are equal in competition formally and both eligible to make application to the court for private guardianship. The presiding judge has no programmatic way to consider the difference between preservation of family as is intended to be understood in the context of child welfare policy

and how it is applied in the context of law. This often has resulted in rulings that award custody to non-familial caregivers based on the preservation of the constructed family at a cost of dismantling the child's biological family.

Indigenous families are dependent on the acute awareness of a judge to make a judgement to maintain their family but this creates great insecurity for Indigenous communities. Although intended to be impartial, the courtroom judge is influenced by their own lived experiences, constructs of family, and preconceptions of Indigenous peoples and communities. They are reliant on making their ruling in favour of one applicant over another based on the experts who put forth testimony. It is demonstrated by the Sixties Scoop and its continuance, and it is implied by the Government of Alberta in its Sixties Scoop Apology that the practice of removing of children from Indigenous families has been normalized in Alberta. Current child welfare cases being managed in the courtroom demonstrate Alberta's maintenance of deeply rooted patterns of oppressive disruption to Indigenous families and communities. The management of child welfare cases through the courts continues to uphold the perpetuation of family and community disruption.

Action-oriented Suggestions

At minimum, legal counsel working for clients who are implicated by the CYFEA and whose involvement affects a child in care need to work in alignment with the Child Intervention Practice Framework (Government of Alberta, 2018) so as to not compromise the best interests of children in care through permanent displacement from their family and home community.

CFS needs to align their practice with policy. All institutions and entities serving the needs of Indigenous children in care need to recognize Indigenous peoples' expertise in matters concerning children, youth, and families. *Informed* consultation with communities needs to continue to take place—with increased intentionality. Decision making needs to be deferred to informed Indigenous peoples, wherever possible, in matters pertaining to children in care. In addition, and more importantly, contributions need to be meaningfully integrated into policy and practice—through human resources, policy development, and in legal proceedings. Accountability measures—created by Indigenous peoples—need to be put into place to ensure practitioners know and adhere to policies involving the best interests of children and families of Indigenous communities.

Conclusion

In closing, I have drafted a best interests Indigenous child placement assessment framework (see Figure 2) meant for stakeholders to assess permanent placement options, identifying the most ideal placement by the highest number of points calculated when there are competing care providers seeking custody over a child in care. I have drafted this framework based on my own perspective as an Indigenous woman, mother, daughter, and sister. I have drawn from my own wounded-ness as a family member and community member whose family members have been directly impacted by the discrepancies between child welfare policy and provision. I have drawn from my studies in Western academia on child development, inclusive of attachment theory. I have drafted this framework after a survey overview of existing policies and frameworks implicating Indigenous children. I have based the listed priorities and sequenced indicators on my intuitive evaluation, formulated in consideration of the works of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars that I have examined throughout the years, and based on the first-hand learning from Indigenous Elders/families/community members I have experienced during my life. I have drafted this placeholder as my duty to humanity, to ensure we are ethical beings as we walk this journey of life leading the young, our future leaders. I have ordered the placement priorities so that the framework is "child-focused and family-centred", consistent with the Child Intervention Practice Framework principles (Government of Alberta, 2017). I have drafted indicators within the columns with a method that upholds all areas of child well-being, promoting in particular the unification of Indigenous families. It acknowledges the "matters to be considered" section of the CYFEA (Government of Alberta, 2000, pp. 12-15) and is drafted in a manner that actualizes the expressed Child Intervention Practice Framework principles of considering Indigenous experience and preserving the family.

This drafted framework seeks to eliminate the barriers created by the lack of resources and/or limited caregiver aptitude navigating Western institutions, barriers which continue to promote the disruption of Indigenous families. This framework also seeks to mitigate the authority that culturally-influenced opinions of legal professionals have over Indigenous family members, dictating long-term placement outcomes for Indigenous children. This effort is meant to assert the intentions of Indigenous peoples to establish our own formal accountability mechanisms for child welfare institutions to employ. The draft framework is *not yet comprehensive* and is *meant to be a placeholder* until Indigenous peoples are provided the space,

as collectives, to translate effective, already-established, Indigenous mechanisms of maintaining the welfare of children into comparable mainstream Canadian policies and intervention frameworks—mechanisms which, prior to colonization, sufficiently enabled the stability of family units in sophisticated communities of Indigenous peoples for many years. This must be done in consultation with many others, those many being much more informed than me in each of the areas impacting child welfare. Expressed mechanisms, such as my draft of a best interests Indigenous child placement assessment framework provided here, provide accountability measures meant to uphold expectations of welfare providers of children in tangible ways. This mechanism, following sanction and refinement by the Indigenous community, will provide Indigenous children in care clear pathways to their ways of knowing and ways of being, through natural immersive development with their rightful family and in their respective community. This effort will ensure this pathway does not require clearing by Indigenous families. Responding to these efforts will truly consider the best interests of Indigenous children and adhering to the responses will be reconciliatory.

Table 1
Best interests Indigenous child placement assessment draft

Best Interests Indigenous Child Placement Assessment Draft	
Each applicant caregiver is evaluated on each *Placement Priority* based on criterion they meet, on a score of 5-1). The total points for each criterion is calculated by multiplying that score by the *corresponding placement priorities multiplier* indicated to the right of the *Placement Priority*. The multiplier reflects the weight in importance of each of the *Placement Priorities* in relation to the others.	
Placement Priority: Guardian Competence—X14	
5	Guardian is willing. Guardian is able to: • Physically accommodate child (based on capacity of household and current demands of the family members on proposed caregiver) • Emotionally provide support • Provide mental health support • Demonstrate that spirituality is similar to that of the child's grand/parents
4	Guardian is willing. Guardian is able to meet 3 of 4 needs listed above.
3	Guardian is willing. Guardian is able to meet 2 of 4 needs listed above.
2	Guardian is willing. Guardian is able to meet 1 of 4 needs listed above.

Table 1
Best interests Indigenous child placement assessment draft

Placement Priority: Guardian Competence—X14 cont'd	
1	Guardian is willing. Guardian is able to meet the needs but only with extensive supports (e.g., housing, financial, mental, physical).

Placement Priority: Placement Guardian—X12	
5	Immediate family member
4	Extended family member (significant relationship to child)
3	Significant person (from child's home community and/or connected to child's family)
2	Extended family member (not yet well known by child)
1	Significant person (any others validated by CFS not yet mentioned)

Placement Priority: Child's Wishes (if they can be reasonably ascertained)—X10	
5	Child strongly desires placement
4	Child is willing
3	Child is uncertain/ambivalent
2	Child is resistant
1	Child refuses

Placement Priority: Documented Approval From—X8	
5	• Biological parents (.5 point each) • Extended family member • Delegated Authority (DFNA; Region 10 Agencies) • Director, CFS • Significant person in child's life
4	4 of 5 listed approvals
3	3 of 5 listed approvals
2	2 of 5 listed approvals
1	1 or 0 of 5 listed approvals

Table 1
Best interests Indigenous child placement assessment draft

Placement Priority: Support Required to Maintain Placement—X6	
5	No support required
4	Minimal support required (financial)
3	Some support required (financial, child supports)
2	Substantial support required (financial, child, family supports)
1	Significant support required (intensive supports required to ensure well-being of child)

Placement Priority: Location of Placement—X4	
5	In home community of paternal/maternal family, with primary caregiver out of the two biological parents as declared by the parents/proven by them only when there are conflicting claims)
4	In home community of paternal/maternal family, with secondary caregiver out of the two biological parents as declared by the parents/proven by them only when there are conflicting claims)
3	In community of residency, placed with caregiver of the same Indigenous heritage as their own (if different from home community)
2	In safe familiar location but away from the child's home community
1	In safe but unfamiliar location

Placement Priority: Extended Family Contexts—X2	
5	Caregiver is inherently connected to child's extended family and community (e.g., friend of the family from the same settlement or reserve)
4	Caregiver is inherently connected to child's community (e.g., a foster parent from the same settlement or reserve)
3	Caregiver is strongly connected to their own home community and/or extended family, and interacts with them regularly (6 times or more annually)
2	Caregiver is strongly connected to their own immediate family and interacts with them regularly (6 times or more annually)
1	Caregiver does not interact regularly with their own family (less than 6 times annually)

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I acknowledge my ancestors who ensured there would be a place for me here. I acknowledge my grandmother and all Elders, grandmothers, and grandfathers who have created space for me here. I acknowledge the Indigenous children impacted by the child welfare system. I acknowledge each family member of whom each of these children are a part and the Indigenous communities from which these families come. I would like to acknowledge the Indigenous land that has sustained all beings that have occupied the space and acknowledge that the connection to the land—spiritually, legally, ethically, politically, philosophically, or otherwise—is what will allow for sustainability of Indigenous peoples.

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