

BREAKOUT SESSIONS: MAY 20 AM

A Learning Journey: Creating an Allyship Toolkit Workbook to Support Two-Eyed-Seeing and Two-Hands-Doing (Jenna Passi, Tye Rhyno & Leslie Stonechild)

For the past several years in September, prior to the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, Wood's Homes has created and shared versions of our Indigenous Allyship Toolkit internally to staff. When this initiative began, it was rooted in the hope to support learning and the ability for teams to have shields down conversations. As the toolkit was re-imagined, programs within Wood's Homes were encouraged to set commitments, and share stories and reflections based on those commitments. Ultimately, the goal was to invite program teams on a journey of allyship and reconciliation by beginning to add clarity as to what that looks like in our work of providing mental health services. With these roots of integrating knowledge (or courage to be curious and have shields down conversations) and action (through commitments), the most recent iteration was designed as a program 'workbook' to allow programs to work through and interpret themes related to two-eyed-seeing and two-hands-doing. In doing so, we have invited program staff from across the agency to engage with written reflections and then engage in meaningful team reflective exercises to help further deepen their understanding of these two key concepts in collaborating as allies in the care of Indigenous children, youth, and families. During our presentation we would like to share the journey of creating and sharing the 2025/2026 Wood's Homes Allyship Workbook, and share stories from programs regarding how they have integrated the key aspects of two-eyed-seeing and two-hands-doing within their work.

A Reflection on Connections, Allyship and Working Together (Arlene Eaton-Erickson, Chris Schwab & Peter Smyth)

Can authentic relationships be built in child welfare practice? Can systems be created on the values of love and care? What does it take to truly connect with high-risk youth? In the early 2000's the concept of 'high-risk youth' was emerging, and social work/youth work practice was being challenged – especially within the child welfare system. A new way of working with these young people was developing. In this session you will hear about one young person's story - their experiences of disconnection, drugs, living on the streets and family breakdown. You will also hear their story of testing their social worker (and others in their life), exploring their strengths, recognizing their resiliency and finding the courage to connect. Discover how relationship, hope, strengths-based practice, and harm reduction can change lives and challenge systems. This session will be facilitated by a former 'high-risk youth' and their social workers - you will hear both sides of the story, the challenges and lessons learned along the way. You are invited to consider how relationships, hope, strengths-based practice, and harm reduction can change lives and challenge systems.

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Child and Family Services (CFS) Missing Persons Liaisons: Best Practice Support for CFS-Connected Youth Who Are Reported Missing in Manitoba (Amanda Paul)

In 2023, the Manitoba Integrated Missing Persons Coordination Centre (MIMPCC), was established as a central hub for managing missing persons investigations across the province. Housed within the Winnipeg Police Service headquarters and partnered with RCMP and other Manitoba law enforcement agencies, MIMPCC not only allows for streamlined reporting, tracking, and investigative approaches for missing persons throughout the province, but it also provides a collocated home for the first-of-its-kind Child and Family Services Missing Persons Liaison Unit. Manitoba's Child and Family Services Missing Persons Liaisons (CFS MPLs) are previous child welfare workers with an abundance of experience in frontline service and community support work. They operate as provincial employees, situated within the MIMPCC unit, providing direct support and information access to their law enforcement partners, while also providing point-of-contact, hands on support, and subject matter expertise to frontline child protection workers, community care providers, and their leadership. The CFS MPLs have been in place within MIMPCC since August of 2024 and in their first year of operation have demonstrated significant impact supporting a triaged approach to reporting of missing children in care, and individualized safety and response planning for Manitoba's CFS-connected youth. If selected, representatives from both the CFS MPL unit and the law enforcement side of MIMPCC will attend to present on the structure of the program, supportive programs such as SafeRide that are utilized for the return of children, the lessons learned in our first year, and the successes we plan to grow on in the future.

Families Being Heard (Suzanne Robertson & Richelle Ready)

In Manitoba, over 9,000 Indigenous children are in the care of Child and Family Services (CFS). This overrepresentation stems from settler colonialism, harmful government policies, residential schools, and the "60s Scoop." Although the 1999 "Devolution" process aimed to improve cultural safety and reduce these disparities, Indigenous mothers' voices remain marginalized. Using Western research viewed through an Indigenous lens, this study examined the experiences of 12 Indigenous mothers involved with CFS. Their stories revealed ongoing power imbalances and systemic oppression across five themes: being "set up to fail," navigating unrealistic case plans, facing intimidation, enduring judgment, and managing emotional strain. The findings show that CFS still mirrors colonial structures and that Devolution's goals remain unmet. The mothers call for stronger family supports, culturally grounded services, collaboration among institutions, and better access to Indigenous traditions, healing, and Elders.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS: MAY 20 AM

More Than a Courtesy: Grouphome–School Relationships as a Critical Site of Care and Alberta Education’s ‘opt-in’ Framework (Matthew Halton)

Relationships between group home staff and schools are often overlooked in child welfare but are vital to youth wellbeing and belonging. This presentation extends analysis from my Relational Child and Youth Care Journal article to Alberta’s current legislative context affecting girls and gender- and sexually-diverse youth. New “opt-in” requirements for school supports—such as sports, sexual health education, and chosen names or pronouns—create barriers for youth in group care, where guardian consent may be delayed or denied. Within this setting, group home staff play a key advocacy role, navigating complex dynamics between youth, schools, and policy. Using a relational and ecological framework, the session explores how strong staff–school relationships can protect and empower youth, highlighting ethical tensions, advocacy practices, and paths for greater collaboration.

Rethinking the use of Parenting Capacity Assessments in Child Intervention (Peter Choate)

Parenting Capacity Assessments (PCA) have been used across Canada to determine if a parent involved with child intervention can care for their children. However, little attention has been to the cultural validity of the process along with the ways in which courts and CI workers use these reports. Truth and Reconciliation Commission has called upon child protection to consider Indigenous contexts regarding parenting which is also needed in other former colonized countries. Current assessment approaches use Euro-centric definitions of parenting and family functioning. In parallel, international migration and refugee movements have brought other cultural imperatives to child protection work. The Indigenous, immigrant and refugee voices are essentially missing from prior work as are families with disabilities, same sex families and other identity groups.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS: MAY 20 AM

Saskatchewan Child and Family Programs - Youth Engagement Initiative (Salim Otiso)

One of the Saskatchewan Ministry of Social Services (MSS) goals is to engage and support youth to successfully transition from care into adulthood. In September of 2020, Child and Family Programs implemented a multi-year Youth Engagement Initiative (YEI). The YEI included the establishment of the Youth Advisory Teams (YATs) to inform and guide the ministry on what support and services were needed as they transition from care. The YAT membership is the young people (youth) aged 15-21 who are currently in care and/or those who have previously received services through MSS.

The Youth Engagement Initiative has been incredibly successful and innovative in engaging young people with lived experience to inform the Ministry of the changes they would like to see. It has shaped a new way in which the ministry works with those it serves. The ministry has reflected this intention by continuing to commit the prioritization of engaging and collaborating with the YATs on ways to improve programs, services and policies that directly impact youth involved with Child and Family Programs. This presentation highlights this initiative, description of the team, its collaborations and successes.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS: MAY 20 PM

Affirming Equity-Driven and Intercultural Approaches in Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Families who have Children with Disabilities (Rosslyn Zulla, Andrea MacLeod & Lucero Vargas-Almeida)

As the City of Edmonton becomes increasingly diverse, there is a corresponding growth in immigrant and refugee families who have children with disabilities. This demographic shift calls for a service delivery infrastructure that is responsive, relational, and grounded in equity-driven practice. In this interdisciplinary panel discussion, we bring together practitioners to speak about intercultural competence, including its definition, core characteristics, and its critical role in supporting families with intersecting realities. Through case examples drawn from practice, we will illustrate both the benefits and challenges of implementing intercultural and wrap-around approaches in clinical, educational, and community settings. We will discuss how these approaches foster trust, enhance engagement, and contribute to improved outcomes for families navigating complex systems. We will also briefly contextualize the current policy landscape, including legislative mandates such as Bill 13, and consider how shifts in regulatory and training expectations may influence organizational commitments to equity, diversity, and inclusion. We will focus on practical strategies to sustain and strengthen equity-driven approaches within practice and at the organizational level. Participants will leave with concrete recommendations to promote intercultural responsiveness, advocate within their professional contexts, and build service environments that affirm dignity, belonging, and quality of life for immigrant and refugee families who have children with disabilities.

Indirect Advocacy as a Tool for Systemic Change within Evolving Child-Serving Systems (Terri Pelton, Kim Spicer, Autumn & Jacob)

Child-serving systems are shaped by complex and changing social conditions. Advocacy must extend beyond individual support to address systemic factors influencing outcomes for young people. This session provides an overview of how the OCYA uses indirect advocacy to drive system-level change. The presentation explores how investigative reviews and special reports identify recurring concerns and translate lived experiences into public findings and recommendations. Investigative reviews examine the circumstances of young people who have been seriously injured or who have died while involved with child intervention or youth justice systems. Special reports focus on broader systemic issues affecting children and youth. Participants will learn how indirect advocacy moves from investigation and reporting to collaboration and follow-up to support accountability and system improvement. By connecting individual experiences to broader structural issues, indirect advocacy creates opportunities to influence policy, practice, and service delivery.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS: MAY 20 PM

Making Room at the Table: Youth Perspectives on Policy and Participation (Emmie Henderson-Dekort)

This presentation examines how young people experience involvement in policymaking and whether they feel truly heard, valued, and influential. Based on a focus group with members of Children First Canada's Young Canadians' Parliament, the study explores what meaningful, rights-respecting participation looks like in practice. Despite growing inclusion in policy spaces, youth described barriers such as tokenism, adultism, and weak follow-through that limit their impact. Grounded in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the research exposes gaps between rhetoric and reality while positioning young people as experts in their own lives. Emerging themes include an "illusion of listening" and youth-driven ideas for change—like shared decision-making, accountability, and power-sharing partnerships. The presentation shares a "message from youth to youth," offering guidance for young advocates and recommendations for professionals across child welfare and policy sectors.

Measuring What Matters: The ALIGN Well-Being Toolkit as a Pathway to Relational, Culturally Grounded Practice (Jacqlyn Padavell & Joanne Wygiera)

This session introduces ALIGN's Well-Being Toolkit, a transformative resource designed to strengthen child and family services across diverse communities through holistic, relational, and culturally grounded approaches to wellness. While the Toolkit can be used universally with all families, it was co-created with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit partners and guided by Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and those with lived experience to ensure that Indigenous perspectives and practices are embedded throughout. This grounding creates space for Indigenous parallel process and ethical practice within any organizational context. The Toolkit also supports communities exercising self-determination under Bill C-92, offering a framework that honours multiple worldviews while fostering connection, belonging, and collective well-being. The Toolkit provides a holistic, strengths-based framework that integrates traditional knowledge with contemporary practice to enhance well-being at individual, family, and community levels. Core features include cultural responsiveness, community engagement, and an emphasis on interconnected physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual wellness. Through its domains of well-being and guiding principles, the Toolkit helps agencies measure what truly matters—connection, belonging, and collective resilience. Participants will learn about successful implementations, explore practical applications, and engage in reflective discussions on embedding cultural identity, relational accountability, and community voice into service delivery. The session highlights how the Well-Being Toolkit empowers Indigenous communities and partner agencies alike to design and deliver programs that reflect their values, strengthen collaboration, and foster healing and thriving families.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS: MAY 20 PM

Shifting the Caring Landscape: An Opportunity for Building Child Welfare in Nunavut (Tagaaq Evaluardjuk-Palmer, Lydia Attuat Mukyungnik, Gail Baikie & Patricia Johnston)

In the evolving landscape of child welfare reform under Bill C-92, Inuit communities in Nunavut occupy a distinct yet critical position. Unlike other jurisdictions where Indigenous communities have asserted jurisdiction over child and family services, Nunavummiut have an opportunity to reflect on historical and ongoing colonial realities, Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (IQ; Inuit Indigenous knowledge), and cultural ways of knowing before formally engaging in this legal and political process. This positioning allows for a comparative lens—one that brings forward the legacies of colonial intervention and the unique cultural, economic, and socio-political dynamics shaping Inuit governance today. Such reflection demands careful deliberation before moving into visioning or legislative processes. Central to this is the need for open, honest engagement with Inuit families and communities about the structures that continue to shape child welfare in Nunavut. While governments, national organizations, and regional Inuit associations play formal roles in shaping policy, Inuit families remain excluded from key conversations and decision-making. This raises a critical question: who should be hosting C-92 discussions in Nunavut? Public documentation and regional dialogue remain limited, leaving grassroots efforts to drive this work forward. This presentation shares insights from Keeping the Children Home (KtCH), a grassroots collective of Inuit Elders, community members, allies, and collaborators across organizational and academic contexts. Rooted in Inuit knowledge systems, KtCH uses a strategic convergence approach—integrating research, cultural understandings and community action, with social advocacy. We highlight lessons from Nunavut, key preconditions for engagement with C-92, and offer a community-based framework for reimagining child welfare grounded in Inuit self-determination.

The Narrative Experience of Mothers Impacted by Birth Alerts: an Exploratory Study (Peter Choate Chris Tortorelli)

This presentation will focus on the emerging themes from conversations with mothers and those close to them who have been impacted by the birth alert process. The birth alert practice in Canada was established by child welfare authorities in the early 2000's and has resulted in child welfare's involvement shortly after the birth of a child who is deemed to be at risk due to precipitating factors such as past or current child welfare involvement, homelessness, substance use, and/or domestic violence. Medical professionals were required to notify child welfare at the time of the birth of the child. The practice initiated by child welfare and the report on Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls was made public due to concerns raised about the practice and the increased impact on Indigenous women, families and communities. We will provide early information about the impact and the prior along with the ways in which birth alert practices have evolved since the MMIWG report. In addition, we will highlight the role of undergraduate student research assistants in this important work.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS: MAY 20 PM

Two-Eyed Seeing in Action: A mixed-methods Evaluation of Wraparound to Promote Resilience and Well-Being Among Indigenous Youth in Canada (Pauline Calinisan & Tonia Nickel)

Indigenous youth in Canada experience disproportionate health and social inequities linked with intergenerational impacts of colonialism, systemic racism, and service fragmentation. Wraparound— a holistic, youth-driven, team-based service model – has shown promise in supporting young people with complex needs; however, few evaluations embed Indigenous worldviews centering youth voices in defining outcomes of success. We worked in collaboration with service providers, youth with lived experience, and an Indigenous Elder to develop a culturally grounded mixed methods evaluation in adaptation of Wraparound for Indigenous youth with multisystemic involvement that reflected the Two-Eyed Seeing framework, the Five Rs of Indigenous research, and the Medicine Wheel. Results of this realist-informed evaluation integrated both quantitative and qualitative approaches and involved six Indigenous youth (ages 16–21) living in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Quantitative measures included pre- and post-program indicators of wellbeing, such as school engagement, housing stability, self-harm behaviour, and system involvement. Qualitative methods included post-program storytelling interviews, photovoice projects, and a talking circle. Findings demonstrated significant improvements across several objective indicators, including better mental health support, greater school attendance, increased housing stability, and reduced involvement with child welfare and justice systems. Youth narratives and photovoice projects highlighted enhanced self-confidence, stronger identity, and increased connection to life domains.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS: MAY 21 AM

Child Welfare in Transition: New Possibilities for Care (Jennifer Hedges)

This presentation delves into the urgent need for transformation in child welfare systems in Canada to end the disproportionate impact on marginalized communities. The presentation begins with a review of reform efforts in Canada to address systemic issues in child welfare. Critical analysis is used to identify how the current system continues to perpetuate oppressive policies and practices that reinforce inequalities. In response, Dr. Hedges will describe movements advocating for the abolition of child welfare systems and what social workers need to consider in dismantling existing structures. The presentation wrestles with the challenges of working within oppressive social service delivery systems while also working to transform them. To support social workers navigating this space, the presentation concludes by examining the role of advocacy, critical reflexivity, and collaborative approaches toward a more just and culturally responsive child welfare system.

Creating the Transformative Care-Education Theory through an Examination of the Education Neglect of Children in Care (Nicole Scott)

Children in care (CIC) in Manitoba face persistent educational disparities, with low high school graduation rates serving as a major barrier to post-secondary access and future well-being. Despite long-standing concerns, the educational neglect (EN) of CIC remains underexamined, perpetuating their invisibility within policy and practice. This study investigates how the perceptions of school social workers and education staff contribute to a deeper understanding of the EN of CIC. Insights from Indigenous knowledges and developmental cognitive neuroscience provide context for understanding healthy child development and the effects of adverse childhood experiences. Given that most CIC in Manitoba are Indigenous, this demographic reality was carefully considered across all aspects of the study. This qualitative inquiry engaged 17 participants across Manitoba through semi-structured interviews. Data were analyzed using Charmaz's grounded theory methods, guided by the Critical Theory of Coloniality (CTC). Three major themes emerged: (1) colonization, neoliberalism, and power—illuminating how structural inequities perpetuate the marginalization of CIC; (2) educational repair—emphasizing the need for coordinated and individualized supports that emphasize attachment and belonging; and (3) Healing education—centering trauma-informed, relational, and culturally responsive approaches to learning and care that empower CIC. From these findings, the Transformative Care-Education Theory was developed. The study underscores the urgent need for collaborative policy mandates, culturally grounded training, and cross-sector partnerships to confront educational inequities faced by CIC. This study contributes to transformative approaches in the practice, policy, and professional education of social workers and educators while also holding relevance for related disciplines engaged in supporting CIC.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS: MAY 21 AM

Direct Advocacy at the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate: Uplifting Young People's Rights, Interests, and Viewpoints (Pam Nocente, Reagan Hyde & Kate Gutteridge)

This session will introduce the updated Individual Advocacy Services Policy Manual from the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate (OCYA), highlighting how the office supports young people involved with the child intervention and youth justice systems to understand and exercise their rights. Through practical examples, policy shifts, and reflections from direct advocacy work, we'll explore how this new framework strengthens culturally responsive, child-centered advocacy. Participants will gain insights into how advocates build trusting relationships, elevate young people's voices, and navigate systems. This session will also explore how changes in child-serving systems have encouraged us to evolve our practice, including how we incorporate An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families into our advocacy services and Legal Representation for Children and Youth (LRCY) practice.

Enhancing Service Navigation for Children with Neurodevelopmental Disability in the Child Welfare System (David Nicholas, Grant Bruno, Rosslyn Zulla, & Lonnie Zwaigenbaum)

Children with neurodevelopmental disabilities (NDD) and their caregivers are overrepresented in the child welfare system and often face fragmented supports across sectors like health, education, and disability services. This session highlights gaps in coordination and shares strategies from a SSHRC Partnership Grant engaging partners across Alberta to build an inclusive navigation network linking community services. Through community-led initiatives in urban, rural, northern, Indigenous, and newcomer contexts, the project is developing and evaluating navigation supports grounded in equity, diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and decolonization. Emerging results point to improved cross-sector collaboration and timely access to NDD services through a growing national Community of Practice.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS: MAY 21 AM

Myths and Mantras: Getting Real in our Work with Youth Involved in the Child Protection System (Peter Smyth)

As workers we can have beliefs or latch on to mantras about practice and the best ways to work with youth involved with the child welfare system. However, these can contradict approaches to practice we claim to also use as they are neither trauma informed, nor strength based. We may think we are doing our best for the youth, but these myths and mantras could be doing harm. These need to be challenged and we need to reflect on trends that are actually based in more traditional punishment interventions rather than relationship-based approaches. Maybe we do need to “work harder than our clients;” maybe youth will grieve when we are not in their lives anymore; maybe hand-holding does not create dependency; perhaps being manipulative is actually a sign of resiliency; maybe non-paid supports are not enough for youth. This workshop will challenge how distorted beliefs can become unchallenged truths to practice. The goal is to spark discussion on how such thinking evolves, why it becomes accepted, and the potential consequences for the youth. We will dig into these and other assumptions to challenge participants on their practice in a constructive way.

Next Steps: Digital Life Skills Education By and For Government Care-Experienced Youth in Alberta (Faye Hamilton & Rebecca Stiller)

The challenge of supporting young people to gain necessary life skills while they are in difficult situations is well known to practitioners who have engaged in this work. The presenters of this session have been involved in a multi-stage community engaged participatory research project with youth in various stages of transition from care into adulthood, from youth currently in care, to those who are in their 20's and 30's. These participants have helped us to understand some of the ways in which young people want to learn life skills, some of the gaps in life skills training in their experiences, and some ideas about using technology to learn life skills. The long-term goal of this research is to create a digital life skills resource for those who have been in care or involved with Child and Family Services. This interactive session will review the learnings from the data gathered in the initial phases of this project with a particular focus on ways to use this data to support young people as they learn life skills. Participants will have the opportunity to reflect on current practice and to apply the learnings to their personal practices. Learnings from established life skills literature, Alberta specific data, and best practices in teaching will be included along with the data from the research project.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS: MAY 21 AM

The Well-Being of Black Children and Youth: Perspectives from Black Immigrant Fathers in Canada (Sulemana Fuseini)

Families play a central role in shaping the well-being, identity, and sense of belonging of children and youth. Within immigrant families, fathers often play important roles as sources of care, guidance, and stability. Yet the perspectives of Black immigrant fathers remain largely absent from research and discussions about the well-being of Black children and youth in Canada. Attending to fathers' perspectives offers insight into the lives and development of Black children and youth.

This presentation reports findings from qualitative interviews with 21 Black immigrant fathers in Regina and Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, about how they understand and support their children's well-being. The study is part of a broader project with 40 immigrant fathers in Saskatchewan, which explores how fathers describe parenting after migration, how they support their children's lives, and what they see as essential for raising thriving families.

Through semi-structured interviews conducted between September 2025 and January 2026, Black immigrant fathers articulated how they understand and support their children's well-being. Their accounts illuminate what they view as central to children's well-being and how they support it through parenting practices of care, guidance, and cultural transmission that nurture children's development, identity, and belonging. They also identified supports and resources needed to raise thriving children.

This presentation centers the perspectives of Black immigrant fathers and contributes to conversations about the well-being of Black children and youth. It offers insights that can strengthen programs, services, and policies supporting the well-being of Black children and families in immigrant communities.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS: MAY 21 PM

A Right to Home: Preventing Homelessness Among Indigenous Youth Transitioning from Child Welfare (Janine Bramadat)

The most recent Winnipeg Point-in-Time Count (2024) continues to demonstrate a strong relationship between experiences of homelessness and prior involvement with the Child and Family Services (CFS) system. Of the 2,469 individuals experiencing homelessness in November 2024, 49% had prior involvement with the CFS system. Among First Nations respondents, 60.2% reported previous involvement with the CFS system, further underscoring the disproportionate impact on Indigenous youth. A Right to Home is a responsive evaluation that examines the intersection between CFS involvement and youth homelessness. The project seeks to answer the overarching question: Despite the availability of youth support services, including post-age-of-majority funding supported by provincial and federal governments, why do youth continue to exit CFS care into homelessness? This presentation will highlight findings from Phase 1 of the project, which includes interviews with 16 First Nations youth who received services through the CFS system and experienced housing instability either while in care or after exiting the system. Preliminary findings from Phase 2 will also be shared, incorporating perspectives from both CFS-serving organizations and non-CFS youth-serving organizations. The presentation will conclude by centering lived-expert perspectives and presenting solution-focused recommendations intended to strengthen positive trajectories for youth transitioning from CFS care and mitigate their risk of experiencing homelessness.

Creating Caring Partnerships through Co-location (Cheryl Whiskeyjack & Krysta Fitzgerald)

This presentation provides an overview of the experience of co-locating mandated Child and Family Services in urban, Indigenous, family-serving agencies. In addition to co-location, the model of working in collaboration with agency staff under Collaborative Service Delivery has provided a unique approach to delivering mandated services. Partnerships at Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society and Boyle Street Community Services reflects that all people, especially traditional people are related. Families are the experts in their lives and all decision-making is shared by the three parties. Stakeholders in Children's Services have been working together for years to ensure that Indigenous children, youth, and families receive culturally appropriate and quality services. Presented by leaders at Bent Arrow and Boyle Street Coop, this session provides an overview into these relationships and unique partnerships that seek to reduce the number of Indigenous children and youth in care in Alberta.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS: MAY 21 PM

From Parallel Roles to True Partnership: Strengthening Collaboration Between Child Intervention/Welfare Systems and Foster & Kinship Caregivers (Cheryl Fix)

Although foster and kinship caregivers are often called “partners” in child welfare, they are frequently treated as peripheral service providers. Presented by the Alberta Foster and Kinship Association (AFKA), this session explores what authentic partnership between caregivers and systems looks like—and why it matters for children’s outcomes. Drawing on caregiver experiences, advocacy, and evidence-informed practice, it examines structural and relational barriers such as power imbalances and compliance-driven approaches that erode collaboration. The session shares practical strategies for shared decision-making, trauma- and grief-informed communication, role clarity, and respectful information sharing. These realistic, adaptable practices strengthen trust, placement stability, caregiver retention, and ultimately, children’s well-being.

Interrogating how Collaboration is Experienced, Negotiated, and Shared in Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Communities: A Cultural Broker and Child Protection Worker Model of Family support (Sara Torres, Monique Nutter)

This presentation shares findings from a phenomenological study on an innovative cultural broker model supporting immigrant and refugee families involved with child welfare. Drawing on document reviews and interviews with brokers, workers, and families, the study shows how acknowledging families’ migration histories shapes more trusting and effective relationships. Key outcomes include building trust and reducing fear, negotiating authority through collaborative casework, and improving crisis response and case continuity. We discuss how early, consistent broker involvement and culturally competent engagement can prevent misunderstandings and strengthen system capacity for care in partnership with community-led initiatives.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS: MAY 21 PM

Partners of Child Sex Abuse Offenders Offer Practical Implementation Guidance to Enhance Family Stabilization, Safety and Practice (Eveline Milliken)

While much research focuses on individuals who commit child sexual abuse, little attention is given to their intimate partners—non-offending caregivers tasked with supporting children after disclosure. Within child welfare systems, these caregivers are seen as both protectors and subjects of scrutiny. Drawing on a qualitative study, this presentation explores their experiences post-disclosure. Caregivers described navigating conflicting expectations: being constantly protective while coping with trauma, betrayal, and family upheaval. Many faced surveillance-oriented interventions that reinforced feelings of failure. A case study highlights the pressure to prove protective capacity amid grief and instability. Participants advocated for trauma-informed, strengths-based approaches centered on education, advocacy, and support. Recommendations include shifting from risk monitoring to collaboration with non-offending caregivers, offering guidance on abuse dynamics and communication, and prioritizing accountability for offenders. Reframing caregivers as partners can strengthen child safety, foster healing, and promote socially just practice.

Sexual Health Behaviour Trends in a Nationally Representative Sample of Canadian Migrant Adolescents from 2014 to 2022 (Daniel Ji)

Migrant youth in Canada face higher risks from inadequate contraception use than their Canada-born peers, yet their sexual health behaviors over time are not well understood. Using data from the 2014, 2018, and 2022 Canadian Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study, this research examined trends in sexual experience and contraceptive use by migrant status and sex. Across all groups, sexual health behaviors declined over time, with sharper declines among migrants. Migrant boys were less likely than non-migrants to report sexual experience in 2018 and condom use in 2022, while migrant girls reported lower contraceptive pill and dual-method use. Both boys and girls increasingly reported using no contraception, widening gaps between migrant and non-migrant youth. Findings highlight the need for accessible, culturally relevant sexual health education and services to address declining contraceptive use among migrant adolescents.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS: MAY 21 PM

wicehtowin Youville Residential School Truthing Initiative: A Community-led Exploration of Hidden Truths and Search for Missing Children (Joanne Ladouceur, Dawn Granley & Phyllis Kelly)

This community-led research project documents local histories uncovered through the ongoing search for missing Indigenous children and unmarked graves. Guided by survivors, Elders, and families, it amplifies voices long silenced by colonial child welfare systems and responds to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action on missing children and burial sites. Through oral histories, archival research, and storytelling, the project honours lost children while advancing healing, justice, and community advocacy. Oversight by a Community Advisory Committee and adherence to Indigenous protocols ensured cultural integrity, culminating in the Bringing Home the Children: Hope, Healing & Family Connections conference.