

# CYSN First Nations Rights and Titleholder Engagement Summary

## Session 1 – May 10, 2023

This summary includes themes from the May 10, 2023, First Nations Rights and Titleholder engagement session on the development of a system of supports for children and youth with support needs. This session occurred before the implementation of a new service model in 4 pilot areas (pilot family connections centre services), therefore all feedback from this engagement is assumed to be referring to status quo CYSN programs.

We gratefully acknowledge Reanna Erasmus, a member of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation with roots in the Hupacasath First Nation in Port Alberni for providing the opening and closing for this session. This session was supported by the following MCFD staff:

- Danielle Smith, Executive Director - Early Years and Inclusion Policy
- Wendy Norris - Facilitator
- Shelley Atkinson – Notetaker
- Molly Fredeen – Notetaker

Nine participants attended this session from the following communities and organizations:

- Aboriginal Supported Child Development Programs of BC
- BCAFN
- Canim Lake Band
- FNLC / UBCIC
- Hupacasath First Nation in Port Alberni
- Nawican Friendship Centre
- Nzen'man' Child and Family Development Centre Society
- Victoria Native Friendship Centre
- Yellowknives Dene First Nation

The summary comprises of the views expressed by these participants during this session. These views have been anonymized and organized into high-level key themes.

### Questions to Guide the Discussion

This engagement series used the following questions to guide discussion, sessions are intended to build from the previous ones, questions may shift or change as a result.

- In thinking about the diverse range of programs available to children and youth with support needs, what programs have made a positive impact for you, your family, your community? Tell us more.
- What CYSN services are important to you, your family, your community? Tell us more about why these are important for you.
- If there were no barriers or obstacles, what services would you want provided to you, your family, your community? What gets in the way of accessing these? How do these services support you, your family, your community?
- What services have you wanted to access for your child or youth but have not been able to?
- What are areas where services are supporting, and where there are challenges?

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## Key Points of Discussion and Themes

- Focus should be on building from what's already working.
- Services need to be child centred, not a centralized service by MCFD.

### Accessibility

"I think it's important for anyone that's working in CYSN to be flexible to come to community to meet families where they're at."

- Service access is challenging for families in rural and remote communities, particularly in winter.
- Workers don't last very long in very rural communities.
- Having a CYSN worker that is 1.5 to 2 hours away is a big barrier for families.
- 85% of our communities are considered to be in remote areas; it's a huge challenge.
- It might be a family that is coming to an appointment that has 2 or 3 kids, so there needs to be a place for children to come to not just parents.
- Scheduled appointments don't always work for families.
- Having the access to the therapies in centres and allowing a time that is right for the families that it's not on a scheduled time, but on their time.

### Indigenous led services

"Anything we did came from community, came from elders, came from here. Because it was what we needed. We live here. We do it everyday. So we know best."

- Jurisdiction and Indigenous-led services and design is the key to services for support needs.
- Decolonizing paperwork for programs
- It's important that the programs are First Nations based; that the First Nations governments have control within that program with the workers that deliver the programs.
- It's important that the authority is given to First Nations, that there is hardly any control given to First Nations governments.
- The resources should all come together to understand the needs of the community and be able to serve them without the western ideology attached.
- It is important for First Nations to exercise jurisdiction their services. Asking communities what works for them is important because a one size fits all approach doesn't work.
- MCFD equals child protection for a lot of families. Creating trust for Indigenous people to work with MCFD is ongoing work and important.

### Staffing

"I'm shocked at our waitlist it's never been this long. We need more support workers."

- Need to train people in community to fill those positions.
- We need more training within our programs to have more people that can do the work. So, community people working with professionals to deliver the program.
- Everyone is short staffed, there are many open positions.
- Retaining staff in rural areas is a big deal, burn out and staff retention issues impact waitlists too.
- There needs to be less paperwork involved so people can focus on delivering services.

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- Very basic needs are not being met - it is an issue whether it's because of a lack of funding or finding the right staff.

### **Mental health**

“Education about mental health awareness, that's pretty active...accessing this service is usually stigmatized, and people are becoming more open to talk about it.”

- Need to spend more time on youth and mental health.
- The needs are different in each area and different from year to year.
- Mental health services for youth have long waitlists and there are very few mental health centres.
- Complimentary services are needed while on waitlists to prevent crisis.