

ABORIGINAL SERVICES CHILD PROTECTION PRACTICE AUDIT REPORT

KNUCWENTWECW SOCIETY (IMA)

Fieldwork completed August 22, 2008

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Report completed by Darlene Thoen

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ABORIGINAL SERVICES CHILD PROTECTION PRACTICE AUDIT REPORT

Knucwentwecw Society (IMA)

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the audit is to improve and support child service, guardianship, family service and investigative practice. Through a review of a sample of cases, the audit is expected to provide a baseline measure of the current level of practice, confirm good practice, and identify areas where practice requires strengthening. This is the third audit for the agency. This audit is a re-audit following an audit that was conducted in November 2007. In the 2007 practice audit, the agency identified several areas of concern prior to the audit occurring and the auditors identified the same concerns. These areas of concern were reviewed in the re-audit.

The specific purposes of the audit are:

- to confirm good practice and further the development of practice;
- to assess and evaluate practice in relation to existing legislation and the Aboriginal Operational and Practice Standards and Indicators (AOPSI);
- to determine the current level of practice across a sample of cases;
- to identify barriers to providing an adequate level of service;
- to assist in identifying training needs;
- to provide information for use in updating and/or amending practice standards or policy.

Aboriginal Regional Support Services is conducting the audit using the Aboriginal Practice Audit Tool. Audits of delegated agencies providing child protection, guardianship, family services and resources for children in care will be conducted according to a three-year cycle.

2. METHODOLOGY

This was a practice audit involving the Aboriginal Regional Support Services of the Ministry of Children (MCFD). There was one practice auditor from MCFD.

One auditor conducted field work from August 18, 2008 to August 22, 2008. The computerized Aboriginal Case Practice Audit Tool (ACPAT) was used to collect the data and generate office summary compliance reports and a compliance report for each file audited. In selecting the files to audit, there were problems determining the actual percentages of files and the accurate number of open files. This was mainly due to the agency having a number of files opened when they should have been closed. There were a total of 10 open Resource files, 36

open Family Service files, 55 open Child Service files, 17 open Investigations and 2 open Notepads at the time of the audit. A sample size of 5 Resource files, 5 Family Service files, 8 Child Service files and 5 closed investigation files were audited. In total 23, or approximately 15% of the agencies open family service, child service and closed intake and investigation files and 50% of the open resource files were audited. These files were randomly selected to ensure that a cross representation of files from each team member was reviewed. As this was a re-audit of the agency, only the work conducted by the agency during the last 10 months was audited.

Upon arrival at the agency, the auditor met with the supervisor to review the audit purpose and process. A separate meeting occurred with the Executive Director. The auditor was available to answer any questions from staff that arose during the audit process. At the completion of the audit, the auditor met with the Executive Director and the supervisor to discuss the preliminary findings of the audit. At this meeting, the next steps of the audit process were discussed including the report and the recommendations process.

3. AGENCY OVERVIEW

a) Delegation

Knucwentwecw Society is currently delegated at C6 Child Protection delegation. This level of delegation enables the delegated agency to provide the following services:

- Child protection;
- Temporary custody of children;
- Permanent guardianship of children in continuing custody;
- Support services to families;
- Voluntary Care Agreements;
- Special Needs Agreements;
- Establishing Residential Resources

Knucwentwecw Society signed their initial agreement in 1995 and in 1999, a Delegation Confirmation Agreement was signed confirming the agency's authority to provide child welfare services. The vision of the Knucwentwecw Society is to provide services, which re-enforce the child's cultural and traditional heritage, while protecting the children and supporting the families of the Northern Shuswap.

b) Demographics

Knucwentwecw serves the five First Nations communities of Canim Lake, Canoe Creek, Dog Creek, Soda Creek and Williams Lake. The population of these

communities totals approximately (this total does not include Dog Creek as auditor did not have population information for this community) 2113 people (Source: *Registered Indian Population by Sex and Residence 2006, December 2006, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada*).

c) Professional Staff Complement

At the time of the audit in November 2007, the agency had one Supervisor and the Executive Director carrying all the cases of the agency. These two staff members had been carrying the caseloads . There were also two social workers who were taking their delegation training and had completed their C3 delegation however they were not assigned a caseload. The resource position was vacant. Since the agency hired a permanent supervisor , the two social workers completed their C6 delegation training and received their delegation and the resource position was filled. In addition, the agency hired a youth worker. She will be working mainly in the two larger communities

The agency has spent most of the last few months focusing on closing all files that were overdue to be closed. While there remains a number of files yet to be closed, the agency has been able to close all the overdue resource files. As well, the staff have been working with the contractors who were brought on to address the areas of concern from the 2007 audit, specifically, improving the documentation on the resource files, creating separate physical family service files from the child service files and training and mentoring agency administrative staff in accurate, organized filing systems.

4. STRENGTHS OF THE AGENCY

One of the biggest strengths of the agency is that most of the children are in placements with family or within their own community. The agency has done a very good job in maintaining the connection between those children in care and the important contacts with their family, extended family and community. The agency makes great efforts to locate family members who could be possible resources for children in care. It is clear that Knucwentwecw places a priority on placing children with family members and within their community.

Another strength of Knucwentwecw is the leadership found in the Executive Director. Despite a very serious staffing crisis, the Executive Director remained centered and committed to seeing the agency through the difficulties. She was instrumental in developing a work plan to address the areas of concern and worked with the Aboriginal Regional Support Services Team Practice Analyst to locate the best people to assist the agency to restore the quality of the work that was done over the past few years.

5. CHALLENGES FACING THE AGENCY

The biggest identified challenge to service through the audit process is the backlog of child service and family service files that need to be closed. The supervisor has taken this workload on herself as she has experience in closing files that may have limited information available. She has focused the new social workers' attention on the open files that have intake, guardianship and support services involvement. For the supervisor, working on the backlog has been very time consuming as she is responsible for case supervision and also holds some case management responsibilities.

A second challenge identified was database training for both Tribes and MIS. additional training is needed

6. DISCUSSION OF THE FOUR PROGRAMS AUDITED

As previously stated, the audit reflects the work done by the staff in the agency's delegated programs over the past ten months.

a) Resource files

As previously stated, 5 out of 10 open resource files were audited. During the last audit, this program had the lowest compliance ratings of the four programs audited. During this audit, it was clear from the audit of the files that significant work had been done to improve the overall documentation on the files. All the documentation required in the standards except training are clearly identified on the files. Only three standards, application and orientation, home study and training, did not meet 100% compliance. The contracted resource social worker and the agency staff worked diligently to bring the documentation up to better standards as well as closed the backlog of resource files so that the current caseload is an accurate reflection of the open resource files.

b) Family Service Files

As previously stated, 5 out of 36 open family service files were audited. A number of positive aspects in the family service files included: appropriately receiving requests for service, documented supervisory approval for services, aboriginal community involvement in the provision of services, social workers knowledge of existing interagency protocols in the communities and voluntary care agreements.

Documentation missing from the files included: support service agreements, information of appropriate referrals for service, family service planning for support services and overall case documentation (e.g. feedback from service providers and referrals).

The family service files were the second area that the agency worked on in response to the last audit. A MCFD office manager was contracted to develop the files and train the agency administrative staff on file requirements. Some of the information currently on file is more reflective of the child service files that it was originally documented on. It is the expectation of the agency that the future documentation will be more family service focused.

c) Child Service files

As already stated, 8 out of 55 open child service files were audited. A number of positive aspects found included: documented efforts to preserve the Aboriginal identity and providing culturally appropriate services, involving family and community when deciding where to place a child, meeting the child's needs for stability by ensuring there is continuity in their relationships, planning a move for a child in care, preparation for independence, reporting a reportable circumstance, following procedures when a child is missing, lost or runaway and documentation of the social worker's knowledge of the existing interagency protocols in the communities.

Documentation missing from the files included: development of a comprehensive plan of care (CPOC), monitoring and reviewing the child's comprehensive plan of care, discussing the rights of children in care with the child and caregiver, information on the social worker's relationship and contact with the child in care, providing the caregiver with information on the child and reviewing appropriate discipline standards, providing initial and ongoing medical and dental care for the child, overall case documentation, interviewing the child about his or her care experience and notification to the Public Guardian and Trustee.

d) Investigation files

As previously stated, 5 closed investigations were audited. A number of positive aspects found included: appropriately receiving reports of suspected abuse and neglect, documenting supervisory approval, documenting the initial plan of investigation, informing the police, documentation of the social worker's knowledge of existing interagency protocols in the communities, seeing and interviewing the parent and following the time limits for investigations.

Three of the investigations audited were initially coded as offer support services which results in a different documentation requirement on MIS than an investigation. There was a lack of documentation to support this decision and important information was missing from the intakes which may have been documented had the intake been coded investigation. The offer of support services resulted in a scoring of non-compliance on many of the investigation standards as the auditor considered the initial reports required an investigation response.

Documentation missing from the investigations included: conducting a Prior Contact Check (PCC), assessing the initial report, deciding whether to investigate, determining the response time, following all the steps in an investigation, seeing and interviewing the child, reporting the investigation results. In some of the cases, not all the required case documentation was completed.

7. COMPLIANCE TO PROGRAMS AUDITED

One auditor audited the resource, family service, child service and investigation files at Knucwentwecw Society. The 'not applicable' scores were not included in the total.

a) Compliance to Resource File Practice

Five (5) of the ten open resource files were audited. Overall compliance to the resource standards was **70%**. The files were audited for compliance to the Aboriginal Operational and Practice Standards and Indicators, C6 Child Protection resources including:

- Application and orientation of caregiver
- Home study of caregiver
- Training of caregiver
- Signed Agreements with caregiver
- Providing caregiver with written information regarding child
- Monitoring and reviewing homes.

The following provides a breakdown of the compliance ratings:

- 1. Standard 28: Supervisory Approval Required for Family Care Home Services (AOPSI Standard 28 Voluntary Services) – 5 files (100%) compliant.**
- 2. Standard 29: Family Care Homes – Application and Orientation (AOPSI Standard 29 Voluntary Services) – 1 file compliant; 1 file non-compliant; 3 files not applicable.**
- 3. Standard 30: Home Study (AOPSI Standard 30 Voluntary Services) – 1 file compliant; 1 file non-compliant; 3 files not applicable.**
- 4. Standard 31: Training of Caregivers (AOPSI Standard 31 Voluntary Services) – 5 files (100%) non-compliant.**

5. **Standard 32: Signed Agreement with Caregivers (AOPSI Standard 32 Voluntary Services)** – 5 files (100%) compliant.
6. **Standard 33: Monitoring and Reviewing the Family Care Home (AOPSI Standard 33 Voluntary Services)** – 3 files (100%) compliant; 2 files not applicable.
7. **Standard 34: Investigation of Alleged Abuse or Neglect in a Family Care Home (AOPSI Standard 34 Voluntary Services)** – no files applicable.
8. **Standard 35: Quality of Care Review (AOPSI Standard 35 Voluntary Services)** – no files applicable.
9. **Standard 36: Closure of the Family Care Home (AOPSI Standard 36 Voluntary Services)** – 1 file (100%) compliant; 4 files not applicable.

b) Compliance to Child Service Practice

Eight (8) of the 55 open child service files were audited. The overall compliance was **61%**. The files were audited for compliance to the Aboriginal Operational and Practice Standards and Indicators, C6 Child Protection family service including:

- The quality and adequacy of the plan of care
- The frequency and adequacy of the care plan review
- The level of contact with the child
- Placement stability and deciding when and where to move a child
- The degree of stability and continuity provided to the child while in care
- Informing the child and caregiver of the rights of children in care
- Informing the child and caregiver of appropriate discipline policy
- The level of file documentation.

The following provides a breakdown of the compliance ratings:

1. **Standard 1: Preserving the Identity of the Child in Care and Providing Culturally Appropriate Services (AOPSI Standard 11 Voluntary Services)** – 8 files (100%) compliant.
2. **Standard 2: Development of a Comprehensive Plan of Care (AOPSI Standard 12 Voluntary Services)** 1 file (100%) non-compliant; 7 files not applicable.
3. **Standard 3: Monitoring and Reviewing the Child's Comprehensive Plan of Care (AOPSI Standard 13 Voluntary Services)** - 3 files compliant; 4 files non-compliant; 1 file not applicable.

4. **Standard 4: Supervisory Approval Required for Guardianship Services (AOPSI Standard 4 Guardianship Services)** – 8 files (100%) compliant.
5. **Standard 5: Rights of Children in Care (AOPSI Standard 14 Voluntary Services)** – 1 file non-compliant with a factor; 7 files non-compliant.
6. **Standard 6: Deciding Where to Place the Child (AOPSI Standard 15 Voluntary Services)** – 7 files compliant; 1 file non-compliant.
7. **Standard 7: Meeting the Child’s Need for Stability and Continuity of Relationships (AOPSI Standard 16 Voluntary Services)** – 8 files (100%) compliant.
8. **Standard 8: Social Worker’s Relationship & Contact with a Child in Care (AOPSI Standard 17 Voluntary Services)** – 4 files compliant; 4 files non-compliant.
9. **Standard 9: Providing the Caregiver with Information and Reviewing Appropriate Discipline Standards (AOPSI Standard 18 Voluntary Services)** – 7 files (100%) non-compliant; 1 file not applicable.
10. **Standard 10: Providing Initial and Ongoing Medical and Dental Care for a Child in Care (AOPSI Standard 19 Voluntary Services)** – 4 files compliant; 4 files non-compliant.
11. **Standard 11: Planning a Move for a Child in Care (AOPSI Standard 20 Voluntary Services)** – 4 files (100%) compliant; 4 files not applicable.
12. **Standard 12: Reportable Circumstances (AOPSI Standard 21 Voluntary Services)** – 1 file (100%) compliant; 7 files not applicable.
13. **Standard 13: When a Child or Youth is Missing, Lost or Runaway (AOPSI Standard 22 Voluntary Services)** – 1 file (100%) compliant; 7 files not applicable.
14. **Standard 14: Case Documentation for Guardianship Services (AOPSI Standard 14 Guardianship Services)** – 3 files compliant; 5 files non-compliant.
15. **Standard 15: Transferring Continuing Care Files (AOPSI Standard 15 Guardianship Services)** – no files applicable.
16. **Standard 16: Closing Continuing Care Files (AOPSI Standard 16 Guardianship Services)** – 1 file compliant; 2 files non-compliant; 5 file not applicable.

17. **Standard 17: Rescinding a Continuing Custody Order and Returning the Child to the Family Home (AOPSI Standard 17 Guardianship Services)** – no files applicable.
18. **Standard 19: Interviewing the Child about the Care Experience (AOPSI Standard 19 Guardianship Services)** – 3 files (100%) non-compliant; 5 files not applicable.
19. **Standard 20: Preparation for Independence (AOPSI Standard 20 Guardianship Services)** – 3 files compliant; 1 file non-compliant; 4 files not applicable.
20. **Standard 21: Responsibilities of the Public Guardian and Trustee (AOPSI Standard 21 Guardianship Services)** – 1 file (100%) non-compliant; 7 files not applicable.
21. **Standard 24: Guardianship Agency Protocols (AOPSI Standard 24 Guardianship Services)** – 8 files (100%) compliant.

c) Compliance to Family Service Practice

Five (5) of the 36 open family service files were audited. The overall compliance was **53%**. The files were audited for compliance to the Aboriginal Operational and Practice Standards and Indicators, C6 Child Protection family service including:

- Information and referral for service
- Supervisors approval regarding voluntary service
- Family Service Plan and components for support
- Review of Family Service Plan
- Support Service Agreements with families
- Voluntary and Special Needs Agreements
- File Documentation.

The following provides a breakdown of the compliance ratings:

1. **Standards 1: Receiving Requests for Services (AOPSI Standard 1 Voluntary Services)** – 3 files compliant; 2 files non-compliant.
2. **Standard 2: Supervisory Approval Required for Voluntary Services (AOPSI Standard 2 Voluntary Services)** – 4 files compliant; 1 file non-compliant.
3. **Standard 3: Information and Referral for Voluntary Services (AOPSI Standard 3 Voluntary Services)** – 1 file compliant; 4 files non-compliant.

4. **Standard 4: Involving the Aboriginal Community in the Provision of Services (AOPSI Standard 4 Voluntary Services)** – 5 files (100%) compliant.
5. **Standard 5: Family Service Plan Requirements and Support Services, Voluntary Care, and Special Needs Agreements (AOPSI Standard 5 Voluntary Services)** – 1 file compliant; 4 files non-compliant.
6. **Standard 6: Support Service Agreements (AOPSI Standard 6 Voluntary Services)** – 1 file compliant; 2 files non-compliant; 2 files not applicable.
7. **Standard 7: Voluntary Care Agreements (AOPSI Standard 7 Voluntary Services)** – 1 file (100%) compliant; 4 files not applicable.
8. **Standard 8: Special Needs Agreements (AOPSI Standard 8 Voluntary Services)** – no files applicable.
9. **Standard 9: Case Documentation for Voluntary Family Service Files (AOPSI Standard 9 Voluntary Services)** – 5 files (100%) non-compliant.
10. **Standard 24: Transferring Voluntary Services Files (AOPSI Standard 24 Voluntary Services)** – no files applicable.
11. **Standard 26: Closing Voluntary Service Files (AOPSI Standard 26 Voluntary Services)** – 1 file (100%) non-compliant; 4 files not applicable.
12. **Standard 27: Voluntary Services Protocols (AOPSI Standard 27 Voluntary Services)** - 5 files (100%) compliant.

d) Compliance to Child Protection Practice

Five (5) closed child protection investigations were audited. Overall compliance to the child protection standards was **56%**. The files were audited for compliance to the Aboriginal Operational and Practice Standards and Indicators, C6 Child Protection including, but not limited to:

- Supervisory consultation regarding child protection;
- Prior contact check and registration;
- Assessment and emergency response;
- Deciding whether to investigate and determining the response time;
- Initial plan and steps in investigation;
- Recording and reporting the investigation results;
- Time limits for investigations to be completed;
- Developing risk and assessment and risk reduction plans;

The following provides a breakdown of the compliance ratings:

1. **Standard 1: Receiving Reports of Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (AOPSI Standard 1 Child Protection Services)** – 5 files (100%) compliant.
2. **Standard 2; Prior Contact Check and Registration (AOPSI Standard 2 Child Protection Services)** – 2 files compliant; 3 files non-compliant.
3. **Standard 3: Immediate Risk and Emergency Response (AOPSI Standard 3 Child Protection Services)** – No files applicable.
4. **Standard 4: Assessing the Child Protection Report (AOPSI Standard 4 Child Protection Services)** – 2 files compliant; 3 files non-compliant.
5. **Standard 8: Cooperative Planning and Dispute Resolution (AOPSI Standard 8 Child Protection Services)** – no files applicable.
6. **Standard 9: Less Disruptive Measures and Removals (AOPSI Standard 9 Level 15)** – no files applicable.
7. **Standard 10: Deciding Whether to Investigate (AOPSI Standard 10 Child Protection Services)** – 2 files compliant; 3 files non-compliant.
8. **Standard 11: Determining the Investigation Response Time (AOPSI Standard 11 Child Protection Services)** – 1 file compliant; 3 files non-compliant; 1 file not applicable.
10. **Standard 12: Supervisory Approval Required for Child Protection Services (AOPSI Standard 12 Child Protection Services)** – 4 files compliant; 1 file non-compliant.
11. **Standard 13: Initial Plan of Investigation (AOPSI Standard 13 Child Protection Services)** – 3 files compliant; 2 files non-compliant.
12. **Standard 14: Informing the Police (AOPSI Standard 14 Child Protection Services)** – 1 file (100%) compliant; 4 files not applicable.
13. **Standard 15: Steps in the Investigation (AOPSI Standard 15 Child Protection Services)** – 2 files compliant; 3 files non-compliant.
14. **Standard 16: Developing and Implementing a Child Safety Plan (AOPSI Standard 16 Child Protection Services)** – No files applicable.
15. **Standard 17: Child Protection Agency Protocols (AOPSI Standard 17 Child Protection Services)** – 5 files (100%) compliant.

16. **Standard 18: Seeing and Interviewing the Child (AOPSI Standard 18 Child Protection Services)** – 1 file compliant; 3 files non-compliant; 1 file not applicable.
17. **Standard 19: Arranging a Medical Examination of a Child (AOPSI Standard 19 Child Protection Services)** – 1 file (100%) non-compliant; 4 files not applicable.
18. **Standard 20: Seeing and Interviewing the Parent (AOPSI Standard 20 Child Protection Services)** – 4 files compliant; 1 file non-compliant.
19. **Standard 21: Deciding Whether or Not the Child Needs Protection (AOPSI Standard 21 Child Protection Services)** – 1 files compliant; 3 files non-compliant; 1 file not applicable.
20. **Standard 22: Action Taken When the Child or Parent Cannot be Located (AOPSI Standard 22 Child Protection Services)** – no files applicable.
21. **Standard 23: Reporting the Investigation Results (AOPSI Standard 23 Child Protection Services)** – 3 files non-compliant; 2 files not applicable.
22. **Standard 24: Time Limit for Investigations (AOPSI Standard 24 Child Protection Services)** – 5 files (100%) compliant.
23. **Standard 25: Deciding Where to Place the Child (AOPSI Standard 25 Child Protection Services)** – no files applicable.
24. **Standard 26: Take Charge (AOPSI Standard 26 Child Protection Services)** – no files applicable.
25. **Standard 29: Reportable Circumstances (AOPSI Standard 29 Child Protection Services)** - no files applicable.
26. **Standard 30: Case Documentation for Child Protection Services (AOPSI Standard 30 Child Protection Services)** – 2 files compliant; 3 files non-compliant.
27. **Standard 31: Transferring Protective Family Service Files (AOPSI Standard 31 Child Protection Services)** – no files applicable.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Date: September 29, 2008

Present: , Executive Director, Knucwentwecw Society
 Ray Bronson, Deputy Director, Aboriginal Policy and Service Support
 Denise Connell, Senior Analyst, Aboriginal Policy and Service Support

Mary Simpson, Practice Analyst, Aboriginal Policy and Service Support
Darlene Thoen, Practice Auditor, Aboriginal Policy and Service Support

The following recommendations and responses were developed in consultation with Knucwentwecw Society and MCFD Aboriginal Policy and Service Support. The timeframe for completion of the recommendations is three months from the final sign off date.

Knucwentwecw Society management will:

1. Resources:

- a) Review and remind staff of the requirement to document all training offered to and attended by the caregivers as required in AOPSI Standard 31 Voluntary Services.

2. Family Service:

- a) Ensure a checklist is located on Family Service files so that social workers know the case documentation requirements of AOPSI Standard 9 Voluntary Services. The checklist will be reviewed with the staff to ensure they are familiar with the contents.
- b) Agency management will randomly select Family Service files on a regular basis to ensure compliance with AOPSI Standard 9 Voluntary Services is met.

3. Child Service:

- a) Ensure that a checklist is located on the Child Service files so that social workers know the case documentation requirements of AOPSI Standard 14 Guardianship Services. The checklist will be reviewed with the staff to ensure they are familiar with the contents.
- b) Agency management will randomly select Child Service files on a regular basis to ensure compliance with AOPSI Standard 14 Guardianship Services is met.
- c) Review Continuing Custody Child Service files to ensure that the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee have been notified as required in AOPSI Standard 21 Guardianship Services. The agency management should review all open files and then, with time permitting, complete the closed file review and notification where necessary. The agency may write a letter indicating that in review of their files, there is no indication on file to substantiate that the Office of the Public Guardian

and Trustee was notified of the Continuing Custody Order status and therefore, it is being done now.

4. Investigation:

- a) When considering a Family Development Response approach to a Section 13 report, the agency social worker will thoroughly document the decision and reasoning for the Family Development Response.