

Indigenous Child Welfare Director Engagement Summary

The following includes feedback received through engagements up to September 2023.

Context

As Indigenous Peoples exercise their jurisdiction over child and family services, MCFD needs to make changes to support seamless service delivery and to improve provincial services for Indigenous children, youth, and families. A new Indigenous Child Welfare Director (ICWD) will oversee services delivered under provincial law to Indigenous children, youth, and families, and work with Indigenous Peoples to ensure services align with and uphold Indigenous jurisdiction.

The ICWD role is being introduced in response to decades-long calls from Indigenous Peoples and organizations for a new Indigenous Child Welfare Director to lead the transformation of Indigenous child and family services in MCFD. The ICWD role also evolved through the advocacy of Indigenous Peoples and organizations during the development of the *Indigenous Self-Government in Child and Family Services Amendment Act* (Bill 38). This new role will provide leadership within MCFD as Bill 38 is implemented and advance further practice and service transformations in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples.

MCFD is collaborating with Indigenous peoples and partners to co-develop the ICWD role and responsibilities and accompanying regulations. Throughout spring and summer 2023, MCFD engaged with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples, organizations, and partners through a distinctions-based process to hear priorities for the ICWD's role and responsibilities.

This feedback was used to develop a draft approach to the ICWD, to support further engagement with Indigenous Peoples. For more information, [please visit our website on the ICWD](#).

Engagement Summary

Engagement in spring and summer 2023 included:

- Biweekly working sessions for First Nations and for Modern Treaty Nations throughout June and July 2023,
- Meetings with individual First Nations by request,
- Working with Métis Nation BC to engage Métis Nation BC leadership and Métis service providers,
- Working with the Indigenous Child and Family Services (ICFS) Directors Society Secretariat to support ongoing engagement with ICFS Directors,
- Engagement with the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami Child Welfare Working Group,
- Engagement with the BC First Nations Justice Council,
- Engagement with the Provincial Director of Child Welfare's Youth Advisory Council (YAC); and,
- Engagement with the Surrey Urban Indigenous Leadership Committee.

Please note that this summary includes feedback received as of September 2023. Engagements throughout fall and winter 2023/24 will be included in future summaries.

Engagement Feedback Summary

The following are key themes shared by engagement participants in the first phase of engagement on the ICWD.

Responsibilities and Authority:

- Participants want the ICWD to have a wide range of responsibilities related to the oversight of services for Indigenous children, youth, and families, advocacy for Indigenous families and communities, and supporting Nations as they exercise their jurisdiction.
- Participants noted that to be successful, the ICWD requires the appropriate power, resources, staff, and budget needed to advocate for systemic change within all areas of MCFD, and that this work will need to be resourced by a broader division of supporting staff.

Relationships and Accountability:

- Participants shared that the ICWD should be guided by distinctions-based relationships with and accountability to First Nations, Modern Treaty Nations, Métis, and Inuit; as well as ICFSAs and other service providers, urban Indigenous people, and youth.
- Participants want the ICWD to work with diverse groups in a collaborative way, not solely guided by political Indigenous organizations.
- Participants support the creation of an Advisory Body (or multiple bodies), comprised of diverse, distinctions-based Indigenous community representatives and service providers, to support and guide the work of the ICWD. Additionally, participants want to see the ICWD work closely with the Provincial Child Welfare Director (PCWD), ICFSAs and the PDCW Youth Advisory Council.

Oversight and Transformation:

- Participants envision the ICWD overseeing and supporting practice, service delivery agreements and contracts, quality assurance, complaints, and staff training and competencies in relation to services for Indigenous children, youth, and families.
- Participants also see the role of ICWD working to ensure that MCFD's strategic direction, policies, and standards are aligned with Indigenous rights and priorities. They shared that the focus of this strategic work should be on supporting prevention and keeping children and youth connected to their families, communities, and cultures; ensuring services are aligned with Indigenous jurisdiction, transferring services to Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies (ICFSAs) with equitable funding, and recruiting and retaining Indigenous staff.
- Participants want the ICWD to support training on distinctions-based Indigenous Peoples, cultures, and histories, that are designed and delivered in partnership with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit.

Jurisdiction:

- Participants see the ICWD supporting Indigenous jurisdiction through oversight of provincial services, provision of resources to Indigenous communities, and development of new funding models. They shared that the ICWD should ensure Indigenous communities and laws are supported and respected regardless of where they are in pursuing or exercising their jurisdiction.

Belonging and Information Sharing:

- Participants want the ICWD to ensure that children and youth are identified as belonging to their Nations or People and meaningfully connected with their families and communities. They should support transparent notification of significant measures and information sharing with Indigenous communities. They should also support more information to be shared with youth. They should also reduce silos and ensure information flows between the PDCW, the ICWD, service delivery, and ICFSAs.

Supporting Youth Voices and Priorities:

- Youth participants would like the ICWD to work in partnership with the MCFD Youth Advisory Council, to support youth to have greater access to information and resources, and to ensure that youth have a greater say in their services and placements.

Hiring Process:

- Participants felt strongly that the ICWD hiring process should include distinctions-based community representation, as well as those with service delivery expertise and youth voices, meaningfully involving Indigenous peoples at all stages.
- Participants shared that hiring should prioritize an Indigenous person who represents and advocates for all Indigenous people in BC, who has experience in child and family service delivery, and who has lived experience as a former child/youth in care.

Knowledge and Competencies:

- Participants want the ICWD to be grounded in Indigenous values, worldviews, and principles. Further, that the ICWD has extensive distinctions-based knowledge of the diversity of Indigenous Peoples' contexts, rights, identities, and histories.