

Whispered gently through time - First Nations quality child care

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A national study

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Abstract

Beginning in 1994, various national and First Nations initiatives in Canada have increased the availability of child care for Aboriginal children. However, the speed of these initiatives has not allowed time for First Nations communities to define their wishes for the care of their children. This report documents the opinions of First Nations communities on quality child care and presents recommendations for program development. An extensive literature review examines Canada's Aboriginal population, the historical context of Aboriginal-White relations in Canada, the need for Aboriginal child care services, traditional child-rearing practices, First Nations jurisdiction and authority in child care, research on quality child care, and diversity issues in child care. Interviews with key informants and focus groups in First Nations communities were conducted in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Ontario, which have very different contexts in terms of provincial legislation and licensing and the extent and duration of First Nations child care programs. Participants identified historical, social, and political influences affecting development of Aboriginal child care services; aspects of quality child care related to the physical environment, caregivers, caregiver training, educational and cultural programming, content of teaching, parent and community involvement, and child grouping; and supports and barriers created by child care regulatory schemes. Extensive recommendations are offered in each of these areas and are summarized in tabular form. Appendices include study questionnaires list of Steering Committee members, study permission forms and letters, and individual reports on the three provinces.

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