



Child Apprehension & Trauma-Informed Principles

CAAN

Communities, Alliances & Networks

Knowledge Bundle 2



Dr. Peter
Centre



“Ninety percent of the Indigenous identity is dedicated to the prevention of illness and misfortune.”

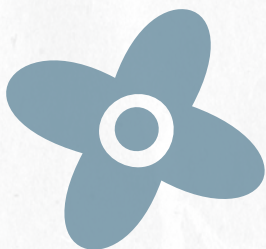
– Roger Roulette, Ojibwe Language Specialist
(1958-2022)



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The Timeline of Child Apprehension & Its Connection to Substance Use Among Indigenous People

Indigenous families and communities were spiritually connected to the land, language, culture, and traditional parenting practices. However, this was disrupted when the Canadian government introduced legislation that acted as colonial tools to assimilate Indigenous children and negatively impacted Indigenous families and communities. Today, Indigenous children are overrepresented in the child welfare system, contributing to intergenerational trauma and substance use.



The Gradual Civilization Act (1857)

Influenced the Indian Act by introducing the ideologies of paternalism and enfranchisement of Indigenous peoples as British subjects.¹ It sought to remove the rights and assimilate them. Cultural practices, values, and social norms were discouraged.

The Indian Act (1876)

The Indian Act (1876) Framed Indigenous peoples as wards of the state and gave the Canadian government power over Indigenous identity, education, cultural practices, governance, and political structures.

The Sixties Scoop (1951 - mid 1980s)

After a change of section 88 in the Indian Act, the responsibility of child welfare was transferred to provincial governments. In the 60s, there was a 40% increase in Indigenous children in the system. Between the 70s and 80s, about 85% of Indigenous children were adopted into non-Indigenous households. These children experienced further separation from their families, racism, identity struggles, neglect, and abuse.

The Child Welfare System (Currently)

Today, there are three times more Indigenous children in the system in comparison to the peak of children in residential schools (1940). In the 2015 Cedar Project Study, 65% of participants reported having been apprehended (at a medium age of four years old). 49% reported binge smoking and 55% reported injection drug use.

Sacred Medicines

Gender-Based Violence & Colonial Violence

Indigenous parents and their children could benefit from reconnecting to traditional parenting practices.

The sacred medicines promote both health and wellness that can benefit families. Each medicine has its own symbolic meaning and prosperities.

These medicines can be used for traditional ceremonies or in everyday life within the home.



Tobacco

Tobacco is believed to have been the first plant that the Creator gave to Indigenous peoples. When used as an offering, it provides the opportunity to communicate thoughts and feelings with the spirit world through prayer. Tobacco is always offered before picking other medicines and it activates all plant spirits. It must also be offered when one is seeking help and guidance from an Elder, Medicine Person, or Healer.



Sage

Sage is used for smudging, ceremonies, and traditional teachings. It's properties cleanse negative energy that can be present within one's mind, home, or within an object. Within homes, families can hang it above their doors for good luck or used for tea to help with digestion.



Cedar

Similar to sage, cedar can be used for purification and protection in homes and ceremonies. Cedar can also be used in combination with tobacco in fires to call attention to the spirit world to let them know an offering is being made. When used in baths, it promotes healing from trauma and has a calming effect. Families can also put it in their tea to help recover from colds and flu.



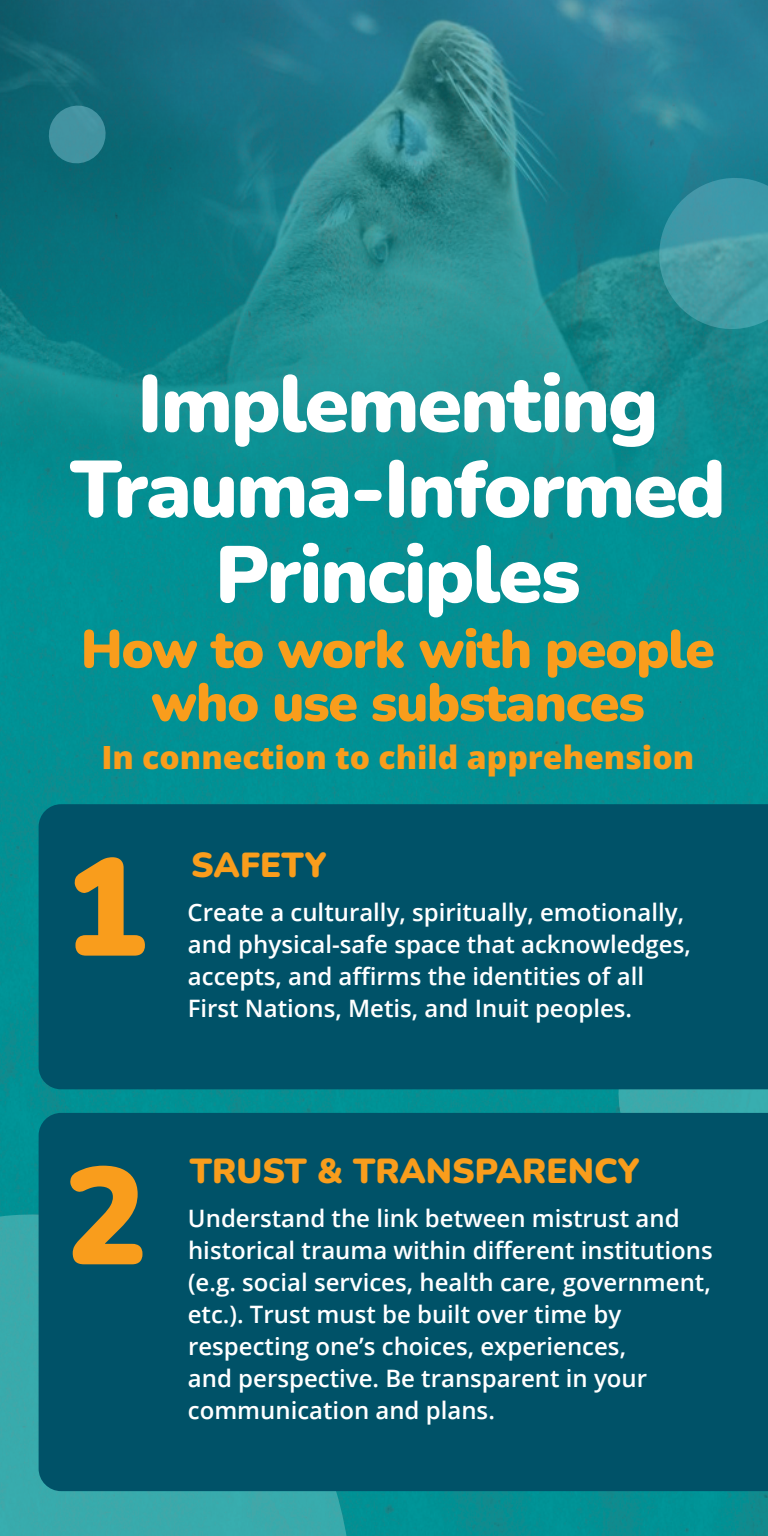
Sweetgrass

Sweetgrass is known as the sacred hair of Mother Earth. Similar to sage and cedar, braided sweetgrass can be used for smudging in ceremonies. Its sweet scent provides a calming effect, as it reminds people of Mother Earth's kindness, love, and how gentle she is.



Juniper

Similar to cedar, juniper can provide calming and healing properties. In the form of tea, it can relieve coughing, fevers, pneumonia, arthritis, stiffness, and even to speed up childbirth. It is used as an incense to cleanse before rituals. Juniper can be used to give thanks to Indigenous ancestors, connecting to the spirit world, and when praying for Elders.



Implementing Trauma-Informed Principles

**How to work with people
who use substances**

In connection to child apprehension

1

SAFETY

Create a culturally, spiritually, emotionally, and physical-safe space that acknowledges, accepts, and affirms the identities of all First Nations, Metis, and Inuit peoples.

2

TRUST & TRANSPARENCY

Understand the link between mistrust and historical trauma within different institutions (e.g. social services, health care, government, etc.). Trust must be built over time by respecting one's choices, experiences, and perspective. Be transparent in your communication and plans.

3

PEER SUPPORT

Center power and control by providing opportunities for Indigenous people with lived experiences to offer support in programs. They are experts on harm reduction and community needs.

4

COLLABORATION AND MUTUALITY

Design, develop, and implement harm reduction services by and for Indigenous people with lived experiences. Equally distribute the power in decision-making between staff members and service users.

5

EMPOWERMENT, VOICE, AND CHOICE

Utilize a strengths-based approach by focusing on existing strengths and attributes. Empower service users to make their own decisions in their journey without judgment or interference. They know what is best for them.

6

RECOGNIZE CULTURAL, HISTORICAL, AND GENDER ISSUES

Recognize how child apprehension contributed to cultural disruption, identity loss, trauma, gender-based issues, and substance use. Utilize trauma-informed care and culturally safe practices.



Wise Practices for Addressing Substance Use & Child Apprehension

(W)holism

Utilize a strengths-based approach by focusing on existing strengths and attributes. Empower service users to make their own decisions in their journey without judgment or interference. They know what is best for them.

Trauma-Informed Care

Recognize one's experience with multiple traumas, its impact, and signs & symptoms. Apply trauma-informed principles into practices to foster safety, empowerment, trust, and connection.

Cultural Safety

Affirm the identities of all First Nations, Inuit, and Metis peoples, including those who are gender-diverse. Provide appropriate cultural representation, connections, and guidance. Each nation and individual has unique differences.

Family-Based Harm Reduction Programs

Create opportunities to support families to heal together. Offer programs focusing on connecting Indigenous knowledges, traditions, teachings, ceremonies, and land to parental support. As well as pre- natal and post-natal care.

Depart From the Colonial Child Welfare Model

The child welfare system was built on the ideology that Indigenous households were not ideal for children. Child apprehension should be the last resort. Social and structural issues that impact families need to be addressed.



Looking for more information?

Visit our website www.caan.ca to learn more about harm reduction services and promising wise practices when working with Indigenous peoples, their families, and their communities.



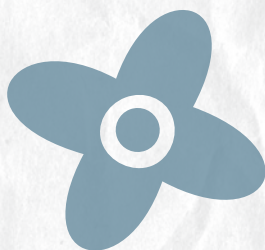
CAAN – Reducing
Harms of Colonialism
Short Video

Additional Resources

- Integrate HIV services into services that target gender-based violence.
- Provide culturally safe and trauma-informed training to healthcare and service providers.
- Offer (w)holistic practices to address one's mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being.
- Provide educational services for Indigenous youth that focus on empowerment, healthy relationships, and safe sex practices.
- Decolonize by honoring self-determination, pronouns, names, and contributions of Indigenous women and gender-diverse people.
- Disclose policies on protecting the confidentiality and display your commitment to ensuring a safe space. Hire staff with lived experiences to offer services, conduct research, and create policies.
- Provide small group dialogue opportunities for participants to feel open to safely discussing their HIV status, substance use, experiences with violence, and feelings.
- Have an Elder and/or Indigenous counselor present to offer additional support.
- Improve accessibility by offering transportation and virtual services in northern, remote, or isolated communities.

References

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To Learn More

Visit our website www.caan.ca
to access our information sheets that
provide wise and promising practices
recommendations to implement in
your services.



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