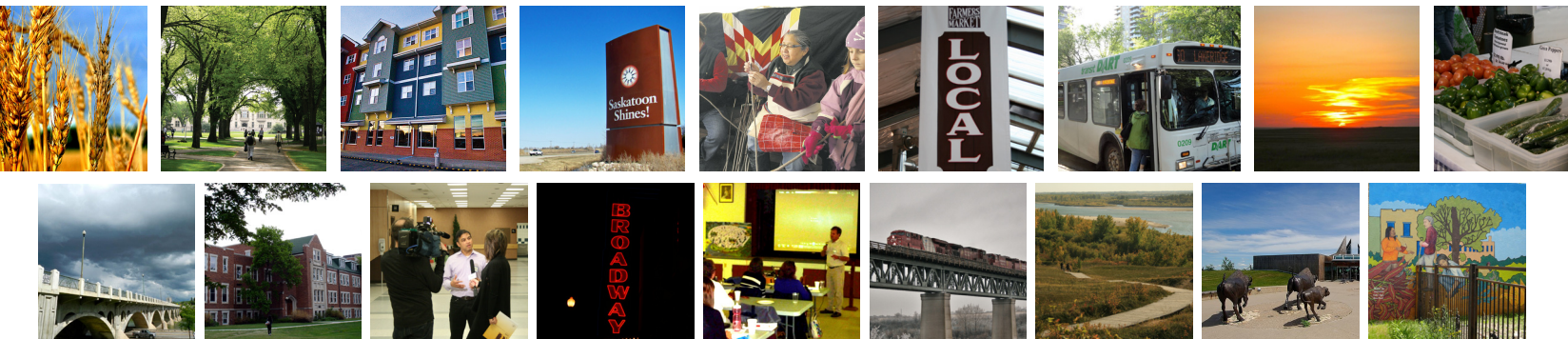




CUISR
COMMUNITY-UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH

Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education: Pre-Service Evaluation

Duvaraga Sivajohanathan, Isobel M. Findlay, and Renata Andres



Community-University Institute for Social Research

Building healthy, sustainable communities

Since 1999, the Community-University Institute for Social Research (CUISR)—formally established as a university-wide interdisciplinary research centre in 2000—has remained true to its mission of facilitating “partnerships between the university and the larger community in order to engage in relevant social research that supports a deeper understanding of our communities and that reveals opportunities for improving our quality of life.”

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1. Saskatoon Community Sustainability
2. Social Economy
3. Rural-Urban Community Links
4. Building Alliances for Indigenous Women’s Community Development
5. Analysis of community-university partnerships

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CUISR research projects are funded largely by SSHRC, local CBOs, provincial associations, and municipal, provincial, and federal governments. Beginning in 2007, CUISR’s reputation for high quality community-based participatory research (CBPR) enabled us to diversify our funding by responding to community agency requests to conduct research projects for them for a fee.

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Student training: CUISR provides training and guidance to undergraduate and graduate students and encourages community agencies to provide community orientation in order to promote positive experiences with evaluators and researchers.

PARENT RESOURCES FOR INFORMATION, DEVELOPMENT, AND EDUCATION: PRE-SERVICE EVALUATION

DUVARAGA SIVAJOHANATHAN, ISOBEL M. FINDLAY, AND RENATA ANDRES



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ABSTRACT

Foster care involves the care and supervision of children and youth by foster parents when the biological parent or guardian is unable to provide safe care. Children enter the child welfare system (operated under provincial or territorial jurisdiction except in the case of First Nations, a federal responsibility) when they are in need of protection or at risk of neglect or abuse. In Saskatchewan, off-reserve child welfare is provided by the Ministry of Social Services, while the First Nations Child and Family Service agencies provide services on-reserve through Delegation Agreements with the Ministry of Social Services under the authority of *The Child and Family Services Act*.

The number of foster homes in Saskatchewan, as in other provinces, has been steadily declining in the past five years, inevitably leading to over-capacity placements of children in some foster homes. Recruitment and retention challenges can be attributed to changing economics and patterns of women's employment, complexities of child and youth care needs, as well as deficits in the training and support for foster parents and to some extent, caregiver compensation levels.

In 2007 the Ministry of Social Services implemented the Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education (PRIDE) model of practice for foster care and adoptive services in Saskatchewan. The PRIDE model was chosen because of its competency-based learning, its emphasis on teamwork, its inclusion of all areas of the child welfare system, and its consistency with the Ministry's focus on safety, well-being, and permanence for all children in care. The PRIDE model is now taught in all Ministry of Social Services offices and First Nations Child and Family Services agencies. All foster parents, whether they are prospective foster parents or experienced foster parents who have been fostering for years, are required to complete the training.

Although the PRIDE program was implemented in Saskatchewan in 2007 and is used in several other provinces in Canada, there has been no in-depth, comprehensive evaluation conducted. This study provides a qualitative evaluation of the implementation of the Pre-service training program in several communities, to complement the quantitative reports completed for Child and Family Services, Ministry of Social Services, Government of Saskatchewan.

This evaluation focuses on the following:

- Stakeholders' assessment of the effectiveness of the Pre-service training portion of the PRIDE program;
- Successes and challenges in the implementation of the program;
- Assessments of the components of the PRIDE program;
- Stakeholders' satisfaction with the program design and outcomes;
- Stakeholders' assessments of the cultural components designed by Child and Family Services;
- Strengths and weaknesses of the program, as well as opportunities for improvement.

This report explains the context and background for this study's evaluation of the PRIDE pre-service training program, includes a literature review tracking existing research on PRIDE evaluations, including best practices, and elaborating the rationale for the current study, before explaining the methodology and its limits, presenting findings and discussion, and concluding with key findings around program accessibility, content, relevance, and delivery.

INTRODUCTION

The intent of this study is to complete a qualitative evaluation of the implementation of the Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education (PRIDE) pre-service training program in several communities, to complement quantitative reports completed for Child and Family Services, Ministry of Social Services, Government of Saskatchewan. This evaluation focuses on stakeholders' assessment of the effectiveness of the pre-service training portion of the PRIDE program. This study seeks to identify the successes and challenges in the implementation of the program; to assess the components of the PRIDE program; to identify the stakeholders' satisfaction with the program design and outcomes; to identify stakeholders' assessments of the cultural components designed by Child and Family Services; and to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program, as well as opportunities for improvement. Based on the data collected, the researchers conclude with a summary of major findings on the PRIDE program.

This report elaborates the context and background for this study's evaluation of the PRIDE pre-service training program, includes a literature review tracking existing research on PRIDE evaluations, including best practices, and elaborating the rationale for the current study, before explaining the methodology and its limits, presenting findings and discussion, and concluding with major findings around program accessibility, content, relevance, and delivery.

Background

Foster care involves the care and supervision (designed on a temporary or transitional basis) of children and youth by foster parents when the biological parent or guardian is unable to maintain care. Foster care exists within a challenging legal, policy, and regulatory environment where children enter the child welfare system (operated under provincial or territorial jurisdiction except in the case of First Nations, a federal responsibility) for a range of reasons from access to services to protection from risk of neglect or abuse (Ponti et al., 2008). Off-reserve child welfare is provided through the Ministry of Social Services, Government of Saskatchewan, while First Nations Child and Family Service agencies provide services on-reserve through Delegation Agreements with the Ministry of Social Services.

The number of foster homes in Saskatchewan, as in other provinces, has been steadily declining in the past five years, inevitably leading to over-capacity placement of children in some foster homes. Recruitment and retention challenges can be attributed to changing economics and patterns of women's employment, complexities of child and youth care needs, as well as past deficits in the training and support for foster parents and to some extent, caregiver compensation levels. Training of foster parents is linked to foster parent retention and satisfaction, placement stability, and permanency (Piescher, Schmidt, & LaLiberte, 2008).

Children entering foster care often suffer from poor health conditions compared to other children. Their special health needs—related to risks such as poverty, drugs and alcohol, mental health, poor medical care and records, inconsistent care, or barriers to service access—are “often chronic, under-recognized and neglected” (Ponti et al., 2008, p. 129). They have often experienced traumatic loss or events (Dorsey et al., 2008). The social determinants of health play a large role in the reported health inequities. The World Health Organization (2011) found that early child development, that is, the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive domains of development, strongly influences well-being, mental health, criminality, and economic participation throughout life. As such, it is important that many of these children who are placed into foster homes receive the care and support needed for healthy development. Further, among the most salient features of the family environment are social resources such as parenting skills (Irwin, Siddiqi, & Hertzman, 2007). Foster parents require adequate training and supports to develop the strengths and skills necessary to care for children with special needs.

Without standardized training provided to foster parents and workers across the province, training has until recently differed across regions or agencies, adapting or complementing as necessary the NOVA training in place for approximately fifteen years previous to the implementation of PRIDE. In September of 2000, the Ministry began a review of the current foster care training. The review confirmed the NOVA program was outdated and not able to meet the current needs of children, and caregivers. An international literature review was conducted and the PRIDE program was identified as a comprehensive model of practice which was consistent with the Ministry’s child welfare philosophy.

The lack of consistency in training was highlighted by many reports produced by the Saskatchewan Children’s Advocate Office (CAO), in particular the Karen Quill Report (1998). The publication of the Karen Quill Report brought to light many systemic flaws in a child welfare system in Saskatchewan under stress. In this report, the CAO stressed the importance of increased communication between the Ministry of Social Services and foster home care providers, increased training for workers to ensure compliance with policies, standards, and guidelines to safeguard children, and the provision of adequate support and training to foster parents.

Similarly, the Saskatchewan Government’s 2003 “Baby Andy” report identified issues such as the need for increased communication, increased government support (including federal government), better coordination and information sharing, effective accountability mechanisms, and one consistent training program for all child welfare professionals among the Ministry of Social Services and the First Nations Child and Family Services agencies. As a result of the Karen Quill Report, the “Baby Andy” report, and recommendations from the CAO, the provincial government and child and family agencies committed to province-wide efforts to improve the quality of foster care through a consistent approach. And the government invested in a First Nations Unit to monitor implementation of the recommendations, including the introduction of Kinship Care (recognizing the significance of involving family members or others close to the child in the care of the child) to strengthen bonds to family, culture, and community and Circling (a cultural component to case practice involving traditional approaches to family issues and child safety) to better address child welfare issues.

After a review of foster care programs across Canada and the United States, in 2007 the Ministry of Social Services implemented the Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education (PRIDE) model of practice in Saskatchewan to improve the quality of foster and adoptive services. The PRIDE training program was chosen over others because of its competency-based learning, its emphasis on teamwork, its inclusion of all areas of the child welfare system, and its consistency with the Ministry's focus on safety, well-being, and permanence for all children in care (Marchment, 2011). A major component of the PRIDE model is a focus on recruitment and retention by enhancing training and support to foster families. The PRIDE model is now taught in all regions covered by Ministry of Social Services and First Nations Child and Family Services agencies. All foster parents, whether they are prospective foster parents or experienced foster parents who have been fostering for years, are required to complete the training.

Although the PRIDE program was implemented in Saskatchewan in 2007 and is used in several other provinces in Canada as well as a number of US states, there has been no in-depth, comprehensive evaluation conducted resulting in a "dearth of empirical research," according to Piescher, Schmidt, & Laliberte, (2008), who note a published study by Christenson & McMurtry (2007).

In 2010, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Social Services' Research and Evaluation Unit conducted a baseline evaluation using pre- and post-surveys from those who completed the PRIDE pre-service training in 2008. The knowledge and attitudes regarding the PRIDE *competencies* were compared at the beginning and at the end of the PRIDE pre-service training. It was found that the pre-service training was effective and has resulted in some change of knowledge and attitudes towards caring for children. However, this study did not assess the quality and delivery of the training.

Later, as an introduction to the province-wide evaluation of the PRIDE pre-service training program, Marchment (2011) conducted a preliminary study looking at how successful the PRIDE program was as a model of practice within the Ministry of Social Services southwest region. Success was measured by reviewing the implementation of the program, knowledge of and confidence level in using the PRIDE competencies in practice, overall satisfaction and preparedness in fostering, gaps in training and other identified needs. Both quantitative (that is, surveys) and qualitative (that is, interviews and focus groups) measures were utilized while conducting this program evaluation. Overall, the study found that on the surface the PRIDE program appears to have been a success within the southwest region. Most foster parents felt that overall they were satisfied with the PRIDE program (Marchment, 2011). However, there were some gaps and identified needs that emerged through this study, including deeper issues such as the inability of the PRIDE model to be fully integrated given a child welfare system which has high numbers of children in care, overcrowded foster homes, and increased workload levels (Marchment, 2011). Directions for further research included evaluations of the PRIDE program within the remaining regions of the Ministry of Social Services as well as the First Nations Child and Family Service agencies throughout the province, because the results from the Marchment (2011) study could not be generalized.

HISTORY OF PRIDE

The PRIDE program was developed by the Illinois Department of Child and Family Services and the Child Welfare League of America. The project involved the collaboration of 14 state child welfare agencies, one private family foster care agency, one foster parent association, two national resource centres, one foundation, and several universities and colleges (Child Welfare League of America, 2010). PRIDE is “a training program intended to strengthen the quality of foster care and adoptive services, by providing a standardized, consistent, structured framework for the competency-based recruitment, preparation, assessment, and selection of resource families, and for foster parent in-service training, ongoing professional development, support, and retention” (Child Welfare League of America, 2010).

The PRIDE training is modeled around these five competencies:

1. Protecting and Nurturing Children

Foster parents and adoptive parents are expected to provide a safe, healthy environment for children with unconditional positive support. This includes, but is not limited to, maintaining a physical environment conducive to proper growth, using non-physical methods of discipline; and recognizing and responding appropriately to the signs of neglect and emotional maltreatment, physical and sexual abuse, and alcohol and drug abuse.

2. Meeting Children’s Developmental Needs and Addressing Developmental Delays

Foster parents and adoptive parents are expected to meet the developmental needs of children by building self-esteem, supporting cultural and spiritual identity, providing positive guidance, using appropriate discipline, supporting intellectual/ educational growth, and encouraging positive social relationships. This includes, but is not limited to, knowing the effects of separation and loss; helping children cope with feelings; maintaining Lifebooks; and developing positive self-esteem through grooming and hygiene.

3. Supporting Relationships between Children and Their Families

Foster parents and adoptive parents are expected to support relationships between children and youths and their primary/ birth families to the fullest possible extent. This includes, but is not limited to, respecting and supporting children’s ties to siblings; knowing the possible impact of visits upon the feelings and behavior of children; knowing how to talk with children about their family relationships; and learning ways to support their identity.

4. Connecting Children to Safe, Nurturing Relationships Intended to Last a Lifetime

Foster parents are expected to promote permanency planning leading first to family reunification or other safe and nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime. This includes, but is not limited to, understand-

ing the process and impact of a child's transition from a foster family to the birth family, including kin; to an adoptive family; to becoming that child's adoptive family; to long term family foster care; to private guardianship; or to independent living. Adoptive parents are expected to make a commitment intended to last a lifetime.

5. Working as a Member of a Professional Team

Foster parents (and adoptive parents until adoption finalization) are expected to participate as essential and effective members of a professional team. This includes, but is not limited to, knowing the mandate, structure, and regulations of the agency; understanding the laws that define abuse and neglect, and the legal process related to child placement and family reunification; and knowing the absolute necessity to respect confidentiality for children and families.

The Child Welfare League of America recommends that jurisdictional and/or specific information, especially as related to the legal process of adoption, be inserted as indicated in the curriculum. The PRIDE program has three training components: pre-service, which focuses on the recruitment, preparation, assessment, and selection of prospective foster parents and adoptive parents; Core in-service which provides ongoing basic training, support and retention of foster families; and Advanced and Specialized Modules, which provide training for families caring for children with special needs.

PRIDE is an evidence-informed model that incorporates best child welfare practices. The Child Welfare League of America states that "the cornerstone of the PRIDE training program is the integration of pre-service training with the assessment of prospective foster parents to ensure that they have the willingness, ability, and resources to demonstrate these competencies" (Child Welfare League of America, 2010). Since prospective foster parents sometimes have unrealistic ideas about what is expected of them and what the children will be like, as part of PRIDE pre-service training, they participate in exercises and activities intended to prepare them to work with children and youth before a child is placed in their home (Child Welfare League of America, 2010).

Although the PRIDE training has been used in other provinces and states, the Aboriginal component is unique to Saskatchewan. First Nations Child and Family Services agencies wanted a training program that reflected their culture, values, and beliefs. Further, because approximately 70% of children in foster care in Saskatchewan are Aboriginal, the Ministry of Social Services identified cultural awareness as a necessary pre-service competency for foster parents (Saskatchewan Aboriginal Cultural Curriculum Trainer's Manual, 2010). As a result, the Saskatchewan Aboriginal Cultural Curriculum was developed in consultation with Elders representing several Saskatchewan First Nations. This component is intended to highlight the importance of culturally sensitive and appropriate homes for Aboriginal children and youth.

Currently in Saskatchewan, the PRIDE pre-service training program consists of nine three-hour sessions of group training plus an additional three hours for the Aboriginal cultural component. The program content emphasizes the importance of mutual assessment for informed decisions throughout (Child Welfare League of America,

2010) and the connection between “respecting and affirming cultural identity with promoting self-esteem.”

LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review was conducted to identify existing evaluation research on the PRIDE training programs. Research on the effectiveness of the PRIDE model, including evaluations of the PRIDE program, is limited in both Canada and the United States. At the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare at the University of Minnesota, Piescher, Schmidt, and LaLiberte (2008) developed a report for the Foster Family-based Treatment Association on “Evidence-Based Practice in Foster Parent Training and Support: Implications for Treatment Foster Care Providers.” This report examined different models of foster parent training, both pre-service and in-service, based on a comprehensive review of empirical literature, and categorized training practices as effective, efficacious, promising, or emerging. As a result of the lack of empirical research to support the effectiveness of PRIDE, this report rated PRIDE as an emerging practice, in that no formal evaluations had been completed. This study references different foster parent training programs; however, it does not provide an in-depth analysis of each program.

At the same time, Dorsey et al., (2008) conducted a comprehensive research synthesis on training programs for foster parents, in a paper titled “Current status and evidence base of training for foster and treatment foster parents.” They concluded that although training is widely supported and PRIDE is one of the most widely used training curricula in the United States, there is virtually no empirical evidence for the type of training that foster parents rather than biological parents receive. However, they also found that many other training curricula and approaches have been evaluated but many have failed to employ a rigorous research design. They point, for example, to confusion and conflation of foster care (designed as a time-delimited placement) and treatment foster care designed as “treatment-oriented approach for youth with problems” where foster parents have a specific therapeutic role working with professionals in a comprehensive plan. The findings from these evidence-based reviews call for studies to evaluate PRIDE training empirically, due to the need for foster parent training programs to be supported by evidence rather than inertia.

In Idaho, Phillips (2007) conducted an evaluation of the PRIDE training program using the foster parents who exited the program between December 2006 and June 2007. Out of the 174 foster parents, 64 participated in exit telephone interviews regarding their foster parent experiences with the PRIDE training program and fostering children in general. Some foster parents indicated that the helpful aspects of the PRIDE training were learning specific skills or strategies to deal with specific behaviours and learning about differing perspectives on fostering, whereas others said they knew most of it already and found the training to be of low quality (Phillips, 2007). As a result of varying opinions and some of the bias that might be expected of those exiting the program, Philips recom-

mended that a comprehensive evaluation of the PRIDE training program be conducted. Although this study looked at foster parents leaving fostering, it gives an overview of the experiences and reflections of foster parents and serves as a gateway for a formal evaluation of the PRIDE program.

Also in Idaho, Christenson and McMurty (2007) evaluated whether the Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE pre-service training and resource family development program meets the goal to prepare kinship and non-kinship foster and adoptive parents to provide family foster care and adoption services. Further, they also looked at the support of kinship and non-kinship foster/adoptive families to identify potential program improvement needs. These knowledge tests were administered to participants prior to training (pre-tests) and at graduation from training (post-tests). The results indicated a significant difference in non-kinship participant competence of those who complete the PRIDE pre-service training and resource family development program (Christenson & McMurty, 2007). However, the results of this study indicated that the training may not meet all needs of kinship care providers. Its findings were not generalizable to diverse populations beyond Idaho.

Christenson and McMurty conducted a follow-up where they administered knowledge tests to participants a year and a half after training completion in order to evaluate whether the PRIDE pre-service training and resource family development program provided a standardized, structured, and effective framework for preparing and retaining foster and adoptive parents. The evaluation results showed that there is a significant difference in participant competence in those who participated and completed the PRIDE pre-service training program and that learning persists long after the training, yet participants did not feel that they were treated as professional members of a team, an area worthy of further study (Christenson & McMurty, 2009). This study is the only longitudinal evaluation of the PRIDE program, and has yet to be duplicated in other regions.

Recently, in the United States, Cooley and Petren (2011) assessed the perceived competency of foster parents, subsequent to pre-service training, in tasks of foster parenting across 12 domains. Although this paper is not directly related to the PRIDE training program, it seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. Do foster parents perceive themselves as competent in tasks of foster parenting subsequent to pre-service training?
2. What have foster parents learned through their experience subsequent to pre-service training?
3. What are foster parent suggestions for training?

Parents rated themselves as highly confident subsequent to pre-service training in all 12 domains of competency and suggestions by foster parents for more comprehensive training included more specific training for working with particular populations of children, greater exposure to veteran foster parents, and more role playing and real life scenarios (Cooley & Petren, 2011). Disparities between the qualitative and the quantitative data in this study warrant further examination. However, this study does report that one of the major downfalls of the pre-service training programs for foster parents, such as PRIDE, is that these programs don't focus on learning and acquiring the necessary skills for helping youth in foster homes.

Best Evaluation Practices

Effective evaluation practices were studied, in order to determine whether focus groups, surveys, one-on-one interviews, or a combination of two would be the most effective for this program evaluation. A study conducted by Saint-Germain, Bassford, and Montano (1993), systematically comparing the results of surveys and focus groups in studying the barriers to breast cancer screening services for older Hispanic women, concluded:

The findings of the focus group interviews, in most cases, confirmed the findings of the previous population surveys. In many cases, the focus group interviews went beyond the information obtained in the survey, amplifying our understanding of the various facets of barriers to breast cancer screening and specifying more exactly how some of the barriers work in practice. (p. 363)

However, it is important to note that although focus groups provide in-depth information, there is a trade-off in the breadth of information gathered, as surveys tend to cover more topics (Morgan, 1996).

Fern (1982) compared the relative productivity of individual interviews and focus groups and determined that each focus group participant produced only 60% to 70% as many ideas as they would have in an individual interview. Compared to individual interviews, which aim to obtain individual attitudes, beliefs, and feelings, focus groups elicit a multiplicity of views and emotional processes within a group context (Gibbs, 1997). The main purpose of focus group research is to draw upon the participants' attitudes, feelings, beliefs, and experiences by capitalizing on communication among research participants to produce in-depth information, which would not be feasible using other methods, such as surveys or individual interviews. Further, focus groups allow group dynamics and help the researcher capture shared lived experiences and uncover aspects of understanding that often remain hidden in the more conventional in-depth interviewing method. Focus groups give a voice to the participants by giving them an opportunity to define what is relevant and important (Liamputtong, 2011). As such, it was decided that focus groups would be most beneficial in yielding the most appropriate qualitative results for this study.

METHODS

This qualitative study was undertaken to evaluate the pre-service component of the PRIDE program. The evaluation was initiated in late summer 2012 and continued over several months after obtaining research ethics approval from the Behavioural Research Ethics Board at the University of Saskatchewan, July 2012. Participants in this study consisted of experienced foster parents, PRIDE trainers, resource workers, child protection and child care workers and others involved in the foster care system, who have undergone the PRIDE pre-service training. The Ministry wrote to Executive Directors of First Nations and Family Service Agencies as well as foster parents and child welfare workers informing them of the study and inviting their voluntary

participation while stressing that their confidentiality and anonymity would be protected and that their decision to participate or not would in no way affect their futures (Appendix A).

The Ministry of Social Services provided contact information for each of the Child and Family Services offices, as well as the mailing address of current foster parents in the province. CUISR made contact with each of the Ministry offices to schedule a time and date for the focus groups. In addition to circulating posters (Appendix B), CUISR researchers mailed letters inviting participation in the study. These letters highlighted the risks and benefits of participating in this study, ensured confidentiality, and provided details regarding the respective focus group date and time (See Appendix C for this letter of invitation). In order to contact on-reserve foster parents, CUISR made contact with the appropriate First Nation Child and Family Services agencies' Executive Director and the agencies sent out letters of invitation, provided by CUISR, to their foster parents (See Appendix D for this letter of invitation).

Participation in this study was voluntary and all participants were given information about the study and asked for written consent at the beginning of each focus group (See Appendix E for the consent form). Each focus group ranged from one to nine participants, was about 90 minutes in length, and was audio-recorded with participant agreement for transcription purposes (See Appendix F for Transcript Review forms and Appendix G for transcript release forms).

CUISR researchers in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Services developed an interview guide for both caseworkers and foster parents (See Appendix H). Foster parents and caseworkers were interviewed separately with the exception of the First Nations agencies. Aboriginal foster parents on-reserve were given a \$20 honorarium in order to cover transportation and childcare expenses.

Focus groups were conducted in Prince Albert, Lloydminster, North Battleford, Yorkton, Radisson, Weyburn and two First Nations Child and Family Services agencies. As a result of minimal participation of foster parents in focus groups, an additional focus group was conducted with the Saskatchewan Foster Families Association and telephone focus groups were scheduled for each of the Ministry Child and Family Services offices. Potential participants were again mailed letters of invitation from CUISR. Verbal consent was obtained from telephone focus group participants.

There were a total of 16 foster parents and 38 caseworkers (consisting of trainers, resource workers, and child protection workers) that participated in this study. All foster parents that participated were experienced foster parents who had been fostering for several years prior to the implementation of the PRIDE program. That the study secured no participation from new foster parents is a limitation of the study that skews its findings. Further, all participants had taken the PRIDE training when it was first implemented in 2007/2008. Consequently, many could not recall the training or provide input when asked about the training. The researchers had to remind foster parents and some workers about the competencies in order to aid in the recollection of the training.

The minimal participation of foster parents in these focus groups can be attributed to difficulties faced at the

administrative level. Focus group times and dates could not be scheduled more than two weeks in advance at Ministry offices due to staff schedules. Consequently, letters were mailed to foster parents within the two weeks of the scheduled focus group. Many interested foster parents reported that they did not receive the letter in time and/or did not have sufficient time to make arrangements to participate in focus groups (that is, time to arrange for a babysitter).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In evaluating the PRIDE pre-service program, the study explored the experiences of foster families and child welfare professionals who have participated in the PRIDE model of practice training. Findings and discussion follow the order of the focus group questions beginning with each of the competencies, participant knowledge and confidence in relation to each, questions about the training, the strengths and weaknesses of the program as well as barriers to access, and ending with questions about the effectiveness of the cultural component.

PRIDE Competency One: Protecting and Nurturing Children

This competency focuses on topics such as these:

- Proving a safe, healthy environment for children with unconditional positive support
- Maintaining a physical environment conducive to proper growth
- Using non-physical discipline
- Recognizing and responding appropriately to the signs of neglect and emotional maltreatment and abuse (physical, sexual, alcohol and drug)

When asked how knowledgeable foster parents felt about protecting and nurturing children after taking the PRIDE pre-service training, they explained that it is a competency that they already practice. One experienced foster parent commented:

Well, we've been fostering for a long time, so pretty much all the, some of the sections in the PRIDE training were repetitive of the stuff we'd already taken. So when it comes to the nurturing and protection of the children that come into your care, we have a strict guideline of how we protect our children, stuff like that, and I'm kinda pretty strict when it comes to, like, before I get anybody to look after my children, I ask that a police record check is done, and stuff like that, and with . . . our therapeutic worker, she will also do a home check, or a home visit, with whoever is going to be looking after our children. So between the two of us, or

I guess myself, my husband, and [the therapeutic worker], it's kind of a mutual thing that I guess I want to protect the children that come into my care like I would protect my own children.

Although many foster parents said it was a lot of common sense, some noted that learning this competency helped reinforce existing practices: "I was already doing it anyway, so it . . . just kind of helped like, okay, what I'm doing is what I'm supposed to be doing. So it was reinforcing."

Trainers were concerned that although foster parents report confidence in their knowledge, it isn't a competency that receives much thought until it's brought up during training. These comments are typical of trainer perspectives:

Just because it's common sense doesn't mean you're thinking about it all the time, and we want to bring it up to the forefront to get you thinking about that again.

It's good to bring it up, and it needs to be talked about, but I don't know how much of an impact it actually has on their parenting.

PRIDE Competency Two: Meeting Children's Developmental Needs and Addressing Developmental Delays

Topics include these:

- Building self-esteem
- Supporting cultural and spiritual identity
- Providing positive guidance
- Using appropriate discipline
- Supporting intellectual/ educational growth
- Encouraging positive social relationships
- Knowing the effects of separation and loss
- Helping children cope with feelings
- Maintaining Lifebooks
- Developing positive self-esteem through grooming and hygiene

Most foster parents said that the PRIDE pre-service training gave them good information in meeting children's developmental needs and addressing developmental delays. Foster parents stressed the importance of this competency, as it teaches them about the stages and development of children at various ages. They noted that many children that

are brought into their homes have developmental delays: “I definitely learned a lot from that... and we deal with delays with these children, especially the children in my home.” This foster parent also remarked on the ongoing learning with and from the regular social worker visits.

Trainers from across the province agreed on the importance of having this information presented during the pre-service training as it provides realistic information to prospective foster parents about the needs of children:

I think that’s really good. I think they need to know; even if they have parented before, they likely haven’t parented children with the same set of needs that children in foster care have. So I think that’s quite important.

They [foster parents] don’t necessarily anticipate the real high developmental needs of the children in their care, nor are they knowledgeable about the services in the community necessarily.

One resource worker explained the competency’s importance in terms of parents not anticipating “having a 4-year-old who’s not potty trained, or having a three-year-old who is very delayed in speech, because they’ve had children who’ve been in their home their whole lives . . . and been nurtured since they were born.” Another worker stressed the importance of understanding typical milestones, so the competency is “very relevant and important.”

In a 2011 survey of foster parents in Saskatoon conducted by the Ministry of Social Services, new foster parents felt that PRIDE pre-service training made them more confident in meeting children’s developmental needs and addressing developmental delays than experienced foster parents. Further, in this survey, foster parents, both new and experienced, expressed the need for learning coping skills and management techniques.:

I can’t overemphasize the need for learning coping skills and management techniques. An example would be in dealing with reactive attachment disorder.

PRIDE Competency Three: Supporting Relationships between Children and Their Families

Topics include these:

- Supporting relationships between children/ youth and their primary/ birth families to the extent possible
- Respecting and supporting children’s ties to siblings
- Knowing the possible impact of visits upon the feelings and behavior of children
- Knowing how to talk with children about their family relationships
- Learning ways to support their identity

Supporting relationships between children and their families is a vital competency. One foster parent stressed that sometimes the child’s best interests need protecting, but that can be done while supporting the parent:

Very important, if at all possible. Like it just depends, I guess. If the parents are in a good place, are not having issues, are not in hurtful relationships or could hurt the children, then I guess I would tend not to try to deal with the fact of maybe helping out that parent and then when the parent is in a good place, continue with visits. We've had to deal with different issues with our children in our care, with their parents and different things that they've done, and just to maintain the family contact. For instance, one of my parents, I could smell alcohol on her, and what I did was I said, from now on, for the next little while, there can't be any more unsupervised visits. And I confronted her about it, and we have a relationship where we can talk, and I just said, in order to keep your family contact, your visits with your daughter, I will start doing supervised visits with you. I said, they won't be at your home, we'll do them outside your home, just in case she has, because she does have drug and alcohol problems, issues and stuff like that. And I said, if you have any problems whatsoever, if you need to talk to someone, just call me, and she was quite happy to do so. And she kind of let me know different issues she was having, and stuff like that, and so I think, even though there are issues like that, it's still good to keep the contact because the child that is in your care still needs that contact with their parent, regardless if they're in a bad way or not in a bad way. With foster parents at least we can protect these children by doing these supervised visits.

Although foster parents were able to identify this as being a very important competency, these experienced foster parents felt it was repetitive, as they had already learned it in previous training programs:

Again, that was repetitive. It's something that we had learned years ago, and continued to keep, like we have really good relationships with all our children's parents, and we keep, like, their contact; we're in contact on a regular basis.

One resource worker felt the competency very important: "I don't think a lot of foster parents anticipate having a lot of involvement with the birth families and birth parents. So it's good for them to hear how we can all work as a team, and how interaction with the families can be positive, regardless of the circumstances of the kids coming into care." Foster parents gain "more respect for the birth parents" in the process. Another worker commented that it is "huge learning" for foster parents to understand that even when "the child may have been harmed . . . the most important persons to those children are still their parents."

PRIDE trainers identified this competency as one that foster parents don't often anticipate, yet it "had the biggest impact. . . . It was good to get an understanding on how the kids feel and how the families feel." Trainers also noted that as a result of the PRIDE training, foster parents are more open and more supportive of visitations with birth families and birth parents. Further, it has helped even experienced foster parents become open to the idea of supporting visitations with birth families:

I think PRIDE has helped, with the newer foster families, that they've been trained to see that hey, that is the norm, and yeah, you have to de-escalate a few people, but it opens the eyes and opens doors that I haven't seen open in many years.

I think it's huge. You can't even measure it. It's needed. It's valuable for all ends, and really for the long term outcomes, you've got to keep it going and support them.

I think the whole family part of training is really good. It kind of gives foster parents the expectation that they have to, that the kids have to have that connection with their families.

With supporting family relationships, I think that's probably the one competency that PRIDE pre-service probably focuses on the most and does the best job of. I think of the one activity that we go where you're having in-home family visits, and that's the goal of fostering is that for foster families to work with our birth families, and I think that the notion of fostering before that wasn't so and with PRIDE coming in that's the biggest improvement that we've had.

However, trainers also felt that this competency also frightens many prospective foster parents. It was identified as the competency that requires a lot of discussion and examples from trainers:

They're surprised, that a child coming into their care, and particularly if they've been horrendously hurt, that we could possibly still be setting them up for visitation. So it's a learning curve, particularly for those that are coming new to the foster care program,. Some people say, I can't do that; I can't have contact, because I know what that parent has done to that child.

I'm also the pre-service trainer, and I know that during this part of the training, that it says over and over again about the families coming into your home, like the parents coming into the foster parents' home, and it scares the foster parents. So you're basically telling them, mostly they visit in the office, and you kind of have to steer them away because right then and there, they're already, instantly scared.

PRIDE, you deliver it word for word, right, and so some of it is things like I have to reassure that it's not always the case, because they do get really frightened, especially if they have to deal with birth parents.

A First Nations Child and Family Service agency reported that the training around this competency in PRIDE caused confusion amongst foster parents as their agency does not support in-home visits:

The part in that PRIDE pre-service, on that chapter, they stress that the parents have visits in the foster homes. Of course that's not done in most, in our agency, and that part, I find, kind of confuses the foster parent. We don't apply it to our agency because we don't have the parents having visits in the foster homes.

PRIDE Competency Number Four: Connecting Children to Safe, Nurturing Relationships Intended to Last a Lifetime

Topics include these:

- Promoting permanency planning leading to family reunification or other safe and nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime
- Understanding the process and impact of a child's transition from a foster family to the birth family, including kin, to an adoptive family, to becoming the child's adoptive family, to long-term family foster care, to private guardianship, or to independent living
- Understanding adoptive parents are expected to make a commitment intended to last a lifetime

Foster parents often felt that they were already practicing this competency by creating nurturing relationships with these children. They also noted that it was beneficial to have it brought up during training as it provides reinforcement:

They kind of reinforce what you're already doing. And it's kind of like, ooh, wow, that's exactly what I'm already doing.

Trainers expressed concerns that foster parents sometimes misinterpret this competency often thinking it means that they will maintain this relationship over a lifetime. However, birth parents play a vital role in the relationship once the children are reunited with them. Trainers also expressed the view that PRIDE could be less ambiguous in this competency:

I think the part that says "that lasts a lifetime," they don't understand. They're not being taught necessarily that it depends on what the family wants, too, because I've got a lot of foster parents that want to maintain contact forever and ever and ever, and if the birth family isn't open to it, then foster parents are fighting and angry because they've been taught that in PRIDE. They don't understand that part.

I think, too, that foster parents believe that the relationship they have with that kid will last forever. It's false because foster parent-children relationships don't generally last forever.

PRIDE Competency Number Five: Working Together as a Member of a Professional Team

Topics include these:

- Participating as essential and effective members of a professional team
- Knowing the mandate, structure, and regulations of the agency
- Understanding the laws that define abuse and neglect, and the legal processes related to child placement and family reunification

- Knowing the absolute necessity to respect confidentiality for children and families

When asked about this competency, all participants shared similar frustrations. Several PRIDE trainers and resource workers expressed concerns that what is taught in this competency differs from practice due to a knowledge gap between workers and parents. Resource workers explained that the lack of PRIDE training received by child protection and childcare workers contributed to this knowledge gap. One explained that “workers and parents were supposed to be trained together, side by side, to develop consistency. The original focus was to unify the whole province. It is watered down.” Not all workers in the region had the training, some would have to pay, and even “do it on their own time,” which undermines the purpose.

Further, some workers felt that PRIDE doesn’t clearly state the roles and expectations of each member of the team, often leading to confusion:

Foster parents, after taking PRIDE, they feel like they’re really valuable, and this is how we operate and they’re a valued member of the team, but again because the [child protection and child care] workers don’t have the knowledge about it, they make decisions without consulting with the foster parents, because they don’t feel that they need to. There’s a real gap there as a team. I hear that from foster parents a lot.

But I do think there’s a big misunderstanding around what being part of a team is. With PRIDE, that’s one of my issues about PRIDE from the beginning is I don’t think that’s been made clear, and I’ve had foster parents call me as a manager and say, PRIDE says I can. Well, no, it doesn’t. PRIDE says you can be part of the decision-making, but it doesn’t say you can just make the decision.

It’s woven into all the competencies, and it’s really spoken to you each training session. Would I say that foster parents feel that way, when they get out in practice? I think sometimes they don’t.

I think some foster parents do [feel like part of a team]; I think some probably don’t. I think that part of the problem with being part of the team is there’s a million people who impact what the outcome might be. You have a piece, the Ministry has a piece, and the parents have a piece, and at the end of the day, none of us really controls what’s going to happen in the end.

Frustrations were also heard from foster parents who unanimously felt that they were not being treated as part of a team, although one parent found her experience changed when she began to work with a therapeutic worker after the experience of “the regular care foster system, with having a different worker for every child you’ve got in your care, and the fact that they seem to be too busy to do their visits.” Now she found her “social worker always hands on with us, and always available. And, yeah, we were always included in everything.”

However, some foster parents did feel that this is an important competency, and often stated that communication between parents and workers has increased after the implementation of PRIDE but not having all workers

trained is crippling the relationship.

By contrast, some foster parents felt that there is a huge gap in communication between themselves and Social Services:

What is a professional team? Because Social Services has no clue. Like work horses, a team needs to work together. If we are working this way and Social Services is working that way there is no team. There is no team with Social Services.

Further, foster parents in rural communities reported feeling more connected and a part of the decision-making process than urban communities:

I think we have a benefit, though, in rural communities, making our foster parents feel part of a team because it is a smaller, closer-knit, type of community.

PRIDE Pre-Service Training Program: Strengths

Overall, the PRIDE program is well received by resource workers and trainers as it responds to the need for a standardized training program in Saskatchewan:

I think it's needed. I think we need a good, standardized foster parent training program.

If you just sign somebody up, somebody phones and you sign them up as a foster parent a week later, I think they would be like, "we had no idea what we were getting into. So I think PRIDE helps with that. But again, some people feel it is just common sense, you know, why are we here?"

I think foster parents who only know the PRIDE method are better prepared than the older foster parents who went through the old model and now we expect them to do differently.

The biggest positive is foster parents are better prepared to be foster parents, and I think kids are having better experiences in foster care because of it. And at the end of the day, it's about the service our kids get.

Trainers reported that the PRIDE training allowed foster parents to make more connections, leading to more recruitments and ultimately stronger homes:

A big part of the training, too, is that it brings foster parents together more, so they're making more connections, and more connections means recruitment, which means... stronger homes.

Trainers also discussed the importance of setting standards and having a screening process for new foster parents so that there were clearly communicated, realistic expectations to support parents in making good choices and to give decision makers strong grounds for acceptance or refusal, for ongoing support or closure of homes:

We provide better care for kids, and we're screening foster parents out, whereas before we may not have.

Another positive is we always thought that something big had to happen before a foster home could be dismissed, but now if you're not meeting a competency, we have the grounds to say, sorry, we have to close your home.

I think people who come away from the pre-service training then are left with a lot to think about as to whether they can or cannot do this. It gives them a very clear picture of what some of the expectations are of them as foster parents. So that's very successful. I think the program certainly speaks to the need of these children coming into care. Taking off some of those rose colored glasses for some people.

At the end of this training, they are able to make a better decision about whether or not they and their family should become involved.

Because of the number of previous training programs and courses offered, experienced foster parents felt that the PRIDE pre-service training provided them with no new training that they hadn't already received. However, they did note that having a provincial standardized training program is vital and that PRIDE provided a good overview of the challenges to and opportunities of fostering. Some foster parents felt it should have come years ago and recommended that it continue to be used:

We've been fostering for a long time, so pretty much all of the sections in the PRIDE training were repetitive of the stuff we'd already taken.

I just think that the PRIDE, what they're doing, is awesome, and having the Aboriginal culture part of it brought in, I think that's important.

I think that having it mandatory for all foster parents is very, very important, because I know there's lots of people that don't want to be bothered with the time it takes to learn all this, but with the different issues that have been plaguing the foster parents today, I think it's important and they should continue to keep that going, and before they place children in any of the homes.

I think they should continue it, and continue to make it mandatory that every person who is in that home and every adult in that home, needs to be taking that training before they have children placed in the home.

The full knowledge of everything to do with fostering a child, bringing all of that knowledge to the table, all the information that's brought up—that is helpful for the foster parents.

PRIDE Pre-Service Training Program: Weaknesses

Resource workers, PRIDE trainers and foster parents were asked to identify any weaknesses of the pre-service training program. Participants from both First Nations Child and Family Services agencies and the Ministry identified similar weaknesses. Trainers and resource workers identified the rigid structure of the delivery of the program as a weakness. Since PRIDE is a licensed program, it's required to be delivered verbatim with few deviations from the material. Further, they felt not being given flexibility to have discussions about the themes and content is not supportive of effective adult learning:

There's no ice breaker kind of activities, to get them up and moving and willing to participate before we get into the weakness, that redundant reading from the book. And we're reading a lot of stuff, but it's not in their PRIDE book, so they can't really refer back to exactly what we're saying.

People are being told to read the information, and see you've got a room full of adults being read to, and they're insulted. And they should be. They're literate. They can go and read at home. I don't think it looks at the stages of adult learning. And what's involved in adult learning—what group of people in the whole world uses that model for adult education? And it isn't effective.

You have them sitting there for three hours—they've been to work all day, they have kids, it's 6 o'clock, and they've got three hours where they're just exhausted. I think it's a waste of time when we read to adults. And we've got a good program, so why don't we present it in a positive way that people are going to appreciate. Now, the manuals have changed from never reading to please read, or instructing people to read it out loud. People don't have anything to say at the end, because they haven't listened.

One parent arguing for a parent-centred approach summed it up: "Love the philosophy of PRIDE but hate the delivery method." A First Nations Child and Family Services foster parent shared similar thoughts and expressed the need for more discussion and less reading:

But what gets me is, and we've all had kids, I think, that they didn't come with an owner's manual, an instruction manual, so what gives the Ministry of Social Services, and some guy who is probably white like me, sitting there in his suit and tie, making a hundred thousand dollars a year, saying, we're gonna do this to parents. Give them instruction manuals, how to foster kids.

Another weakness of the PRIDE training addressed unanimously by all participants in all regions of the province pertained to the training being out of date and lacking Canadian content, although it should be noted that Canadian content was inserted in the PRIDE training manuals at the outset. All participants felt the material was too Americanized, resulting in a large portion of the training focusing on values, behaviours, and customs that are not applicable to Canada. PRIDE trainers described the difficulty of engaging parents when presenting Americanized material:

In PRIDE pre-service, because it is U.S.-based, a lot of foster parents get hung up on that and get frustrated. We're not even talking about what we're dealing with. But it's a licensed program; we have to read it as it's written, but they're not really receptive to that part of things. It's a tough one.

...if we could somehow adapt it to being Canadian, to Canadianize it. My foster parents say, "Well that was stupid, all we did was talk about U.S. statistics, or things that don't even apply to us". To be honest, when I did the training in another area, they were reading U.S. legislation because they were reading from the book, and reading U.S. legislation. And a couple of trainers were looking at each other like, we're not supposed to be reading that. But it was in the book, and we have to read the book.

The videos in the program are from 1980s. They don't reflect the demographic in our area at all. And they're old. Like, we need some updating, you know.

I think some people get stuck on something that bothers them, and then they can't focus. They can't move on to anything else, because they're stuck on something.

Foster parents found the American content and out of date videos to be rather distracting and frustrating. However, some parents found the old videos humorous, saying that's what they remembered the training by: old and American. Some found the materials unrealistic, misleading, and out of touch with children and youth today:

I probably shouldn't say this, but I think they should throw the PRIDE program out, re-write it for the 21st century. They show these old movie things. The parents never lose their temper, they never raise their voice, things like that. That's not natural. We've gone through I don't know how many kids in the last fifteen years, and, yes, I've raised my voice a couple times. To sit them down and talk to them like they are young adults, or ten-year-olds, or whatever. And that has to be done, and they do not address that in PRIDE training. Well, kids today, they have cell phones. They have iPads...

You're talking about the U.S., some of these things don't apply here in Canada.

The videos, they're all African American actors. They're not realistic. They should go to a reserve, or come to somewhere in the country and spend the day and take pictures or movies of people with foster kids and how they do it, and then incorporate that into the training. Deal with Canadian problems, rather than America, because they're different.

Many foster parents felt that the PRIDE training program should be replaced with Canadian content. Many suggested re-writing it or implementing another Canadian training program:

And surely God we've got somebody in Canada that's got the brains to do something like that. They don't have to go to the States and buy a second-hand car.

Although the participant acknowledged that CORE may address the issue, one foster parent identified a weakness in not addressing “reactive attachment disorder” as a feature of children “neglected by their parents” and representing severe demands on foster parents. It is especially difficult when foster parents have to ready such children in two weeks for adoptions they feel unlikely to work. The participant was concerned that decisions were made without the input of those who know the child best. According to the foster parent, they are the ones who spend “24 hours a day, every day, 365 days a year” with the child, and “that social worker has no idea what that child does, what is good for them, and stuff like that.” “I think there needs to be more conversation, more, like the notes they [social workers] take when they come into your home and you’re discussing what’s going on. I think those notes need to be recorded, or filed, put into the computer system. And a lot of times they’re not. And so, when you go back, and you’re, that social worker is no longer there, and they’re saying, well, I don’t have anything that says you’ve any issues with anything.”

Yet another foster parent suggested that foster parents should get more information on the role of the social worker because too often parents report they don’t know what “social workers were supposed to be doing for both the foster parent and the foster child.”

PRIDE Pre-Service Training Program: Barriers

There were a number of themes that emerged as barriers to receiving and completing the PRIDE pre-service training. Foster parents noted that finding suitable childcare for their children was a barrier to attending the PRIDE training program. Living in rural areas or having children with special needs were cited as the largest barriers to finding childcare. Further, the pre-service training recommends that both parents undergo training at the same time, which makes finding a babysitter mandatory. Foster parents suggested that having childcare or an on-site babysitter would be beneficial.

Many resource workers identified the unavailability of training at multiple times during the year as a potential barrier to interested foster parents. Many offices offer the training about twice a year:

We haven’t had anything available here for a while. I don’t even know when last it was done. Probably three years ago, I’m thinking. We’ve been sending people elsewhere.

Times can sometimes be an issue, because we do it at night.

I know a lot of people kind of get excited and get on board, and by the time training rolls around, they’re like, ah, maybe not, because it’s three months later.

As a result of training not being offered regularly in all regions, foster parents are often sent to other centres to receive training resulting in around 20 hours of travel time. While some offices promote this, some were able to see how impractical this practice is:

The location of training is a big deal in our region. We have people who are six hours away from any major centre, so delivering, the chances of having enough participants in the far north is unrealistic, but it's also unrealistic to take those people, send them six hours away, and put them up in hotels for a week.

The most common reason cited by both First Nations Child and Family Services agencies and Ministry offices for not offering training in each of the regions is the lack of trainers:

Being the only trainer is one of the problems, because it's lengthy, and another worker would be good, because to do it alone it's too much.

Many trainers and workers suggested having a team of provincial PRIDE leaders specialized in the training program deliver the training regularly in each of the regions. Current trainers explained that it has been years since they took the training and as a result have to re-learn the program amidst all the other demands of their job. Having a provincial team of trainers would also improve the quality of training and the overall experience of the training program:

I do think the idea of a team of people to do the training is ideal because you can move them around to do the training wherever it makes sense. And those people could just concentrate on training as their job.

According to foster parents, the experience with the training program largely depended on the trainer. Foster parents felt that trainers who were engaging and promoted discussion made the program a memorable experience, which in turn aided in the retention of material:

A woman there doing the training that was actually a foster parent that had adopted children, and I found just the stories, the different things she talked about, was just more interesting I guess... They were awesome teachers.

Honestly, when I took the training, 3 years ago, I didn't retain anything I took because I was bored out of my mind.

They gave us the opportunity to talk, and to talk about the different components and how we felt and stuff like that, and it was, we got to hear different sides, because there was a lot of people. And I remember just enjoying that.

I thought, please just put me in a hotel room with a book and I'll just read it. And it was really painful; it really was. It was badly presented. People drew pictures; people went to sleep.

The length of the training program was also identified as a barrier to many foster parents. Trainers explained the difficulty of scheduling training modules at various times during the year, due to work and family commitments of foster parents. Since the PRIDE training needs to be done in a sequence, those who miss a session have to wait for it to be offered again which could be months or take in another office. One resource worker explained the barrier of

time commitment:

I have foster applicants, and they come in saying, we really want to foster—I had a couple in February who were ready to go, really wanted to foster, and then I walk them through everything they need to do prior to being approved in the PRIDE training. And they go, wow, 27 hours? We're farmers, I don't know if we can commit to that. I'm like, if we did it two consecutive weekends, fine, but if the weather's nice they need to be out harvesting, or whatever. And so if you miss one session, you can't do any further down the road, so... So then we gotta wait, another three months, for Saskatoon? Or another who knows how long for here or anywhere else.

We struggle with it on an ongoing basis in terms of presenting the training is that we have been told that we can't train on Sundays. So we're asking people to scramble on Friday nights to get here and we train from 7 to 10. And then all of Saturday.

It's hard enough to get three weekends from foster parents, prospective foster parents, let alone adding a fourth weekend. In the rural area, there's never a good time. Now we're into harvest, so when do you start? In the middle of winter, you have to take into consideration weather. In the spring, you're back into farming, seeding. So summertime, you're not going to get anybody to the table.

Many child protection and child care workers expressed concern that the fact that they had received no PRIDE training themselves definitely creates barriers. Since they work daily with foster families, they felt the lack of training and their unfamiliarity with what parents learn in the context of PRIDE. One of the reasons identified for not having child protection and child care workers trained is the high turn-over of staff (many of whom are women who go off on maternity leave, for instance) and the lack of availability of the training at multiple times during the year. Many of these workers explained the importance of being trained in PRIDE and expressed their frustrations with not having received the training. They explained that the government has put so much emphasis on PRIDE, what it can do and the model of care for children, and felt that they're doing it a disservice by not having everybody with the same amount of training:

I don't know what they're learning, so how do I know if I'm helping them with what they're learning, if we don't know what they're learning?

They [foster parents] know more about PRIDE and the competencies than we do, because we were given a fifteen-minute presentation on the five competencies, whereas they had a five-day, weekend, thing.

I think it's important that we learn, like we take the training so that we know what the expectation is of the foster parents. If we know what the expectations are, then we can use some of the examples from the training or whatever to help the foster parent with the struggle.

However, some workers do get some training but it's "a little snippet of kind of the basic intro. These are the five competencies, basically. They don't get to sit in the actual pre-service training." For example:

Some workers had been given like a half day training on PRIDE, which is not enough. I think they need the whole entire program so that they understand exactly what foster parents are being taught because they're the ones working with the kids with the foster parents.

Currently, PRIDE training is not mandatory for child protection workers. A recurring complaint from trainers and resource workers from all offices was that the child care and child protection workers were not trained in PRIDE, yet make decisions on care. Resource workers explained that they often get foster parents complaining that their worker won't follow the practice and steps that have been taught throughout PRIDE:

Because the child care workers don't have PRIDE training and don't have knowledge of the PRIDE program, the child care workers are the ones working with the foster parents after the pre-service training is done, so they're the ones that are supposed to be working with them to help meet those developmental needs. But those child care workers have no knowledge of what they're being taught at PRIDE. So I think there's a real lapse in information there.

There's a video in PRIDE that shows, you know, foster parents and birth parents working together, and then our workers don't implement that or don't even know that we can or should be doing that because they haven't been trained in PRIDE.

We need to practice what we preach. Because the child care/protection workers aren't educated in PRIDE, it doesn't roll out that way.

Child care workers are not aware that foster parents can be a huge part of that reunification plan, where it's doing visits out of the office, and that they can be the one to supervise that visit. And I think that if we had the training, if all of it went to the child care workers and the protection workers and, then everybody would know what the expectation is.

The benefit that I see in terms of if case workers had more complete knowledge of, say, the PRIDE model, is that when you are speaking with a foster parent, or you're doing case planning with them, if you could tie it back into the model of practice, and reinforce the training they've had, it helps them.

Many offices identified the need for Social Services to come up with a plan to implement training for all child care and child protection workers:

I recommend they make a plan as to how they're going to deliver that training to staff, like to child care workers, to protection workers, and whether it be the full program or if they do modified program where

they give them enough information in regards to the competencies and how foster parents are trained so that they have the knowledge to use that in their interactions with foster parents.

While all resource workers were trained from the outset of PRIDE implementation, child care and child protection workers received only a condensed version of the training. Inconsistent implementation may have left some new child care and child protection workers without training.

PRIDE Pre-Service Training Program: Aboriginal Cultural Curriculum

The Ministry of Social Services in consultation with Elders developed the Saskatchewan Aboriginal Cultural Curriculum. This component of the pre-service training received nothing short of praise and rave reviews from trainers and foster parents across the province. It was described as informative, engaging, and very effective. Some offices expressed concerns regarding the difficulty of securing an Elder to deliver the module, while others commented that the success of the module depended on how engaging the Elder was:

That's one component we have taken, and it was awesome. Everybody loved it; everybody got something out of it.

They really understand the Aboriginal component. They're dealing with a number of kids from nearby reserves. A lot of people have said that it's given them a better understanding of the whole picture, and not just bits and pieces of it.

However, there were a number of foster parents and trainers who have not taken this module yet due to its unavailability and were unable to comment on it. Another Métis parent did not feel the need as they "were part of it already" and did many cultural activities (powwow, National Aboriginal Day) and even sewed powwow outfits for Aboriginal children in their care. Still, the parent felt non-Aboriginal parents needed to know and understand "what the culture is all about," adding "I just think that the PRIDE . . . is awesome, and having the Aboriginal culture part of it, that's important."

Another First Nations foster parent explained it is needed because "there's a lot of white people are married to native people, and it's a mixed culture. . . . You know, I've learned a lot about the white culture in the last 20 years." Another reported that "they get three hours of the Aboriginal component, and it's not long enough. It should be an extra day just of the Aboriginal component."

Some trainers suggested that it would be useful to have information on various cultures to respond to Saskatchewan's growing diversity. Trainers felt that being able to provide foster parents information regarding a child's culture is important. They also noted that foster parents often request cultural information: "We need to have more information on more cultures, instead of just one, because we are very diverse."

PRIDE Pre-Service Training Program: Next Steps

While the pre-service training received many plaudits, the majority of foster parents were still waiting for the implementation of the PRIDE CORE training (CORE 1 and 2 were implemented in 2012; CORE 3 and 4 were implemented in 2013). Having taken the pre-service training five years ago, many parents are frustrated that the follow-up training and modules are still not available. They explained that they were not receiving the knowledge and skills training as promised and as a result were seeking information from other sources:

I think that they need to start getting these CORE components going. It's been like almost five years since we took the PRIDE. And we should have already started with the CORE.

I think PRIDE is a really good program. One of the challenges is with the roll out...

The delay between the pre-service and the CORE is kind of... It's discouraging. Just simply because you're already hyped up with all this PRIDE training and everything, and then they tell you about all these different components you're going to be able to take, and you know when you're dealing with issues with children. So yeah, I think they should hurry up.

PRIDE trainers had similar sentiments. They described the importance of having the CORE training rolled out more quickly and efficiently. Further, they noted that foster parents are not being supported by the system and continue to receive children that they do not have the required knowledge and skills to parent:

What I understand of things is that it's pre-service, and core one and two, and yet there's another 10 modules... It's a failure for our foster parents because they are not getting, we don't have the core training for, say discipline, we don't have it yet, and a few other ones, and so people are struggling in some of those areas, and we can't use other training we are supposed to use in PRIDE and we don't have it.

In other words, the full promise of PRIDE training remains unfulfilled.

CONCLUSIONS

This evaluation based on focus groups with foster parents, PRIDE trainers, resource workers, and others involved in the foster care system captured the strengths and challenges of implementing the PRIDE Pre-Service training program in Saskatchewan. With the support of the Ministry and First Nation CFS agencies and the inclusion of telephone focus groups, a total of 16 experienced foster parents (but no new foster parents—a study limitation, as previously mentioned) and 38 PRIDE case workers participated.

Adopted in 2007, the PRIDE training (mandatory for all foster parents, trainers, and resource workers) was chosen for its competency-based learning, teamwork philosophy, relevance for the whole child welfare system, and consistency with the Ministry's priorities: safety, well-being, and permanence for all children in care. In conducting the evaluation, the research team faced some of the same challenges recruiting participants that are reported in our findings. Participation in the evaluation was impacted by the timing and location of focus groups as well as child care commitments, factors that impacted participation in and satisfaction with the PRIDE pre-service training itself. The scheduling of the evaluation five years after the roll out of the training added layers of difficulty that could be avoided with regular program evaluation scheduled within two years of program implementation.

Parents, trainers, and workers alike found real strength in the standardizing of mandatory training and the opportunities training afforded to prepare foster parents, help them make better decisions, build networks, learn about Aboriginal culture, enhance care, and create "stronger homes." Still, there was a feeling that adoption was underrepresented in the training.

That child protection and child care workers did not receive the full PRIDE training foster parents received was identified as a barrier frustrating to the workers as much as to foster parents. Workers felt they could help foster parents better and could close some of the knowledge and communication gaps if they knew what foster parents had learned in PRIDE training. Implementing mandatory training for all child protection and child care workers was suggested to enhance PRIDE outcomes and improve communications with the whole Social Services team. There was also a general feeling that outcomes for children in care would also be improved if foster parents were effectively engaged in the decision-making processes.

There was widespread satisfaction with the need for and philosophy of PRIDE, its preparation of foster parents for their roles and responsibilities, and its positive impact on service for and care of children; however, findings also included concerns around program accessibility, content, relevance, and delivery.

PRIDE Pre-Service Accessibility

Foster parents reported barriers to program accessibility that included child care commitments, especially where special needs children and/or rural locations were involved. Child care was especially difficult to secure in these cases. They agreed that on-site child care would greatly enhance program accessibility, especially when it was recommended that foster parents take the training together. Farming schedules also added to the difficulties represented by the 27-hour training commitments. While rural locations could be a barrier, it could also be a strength for parents feeling more connected to the team in tight-knit communities.

Accessibility was further impacted by insufficient numbers of trainers, irregular offering of the program or evening delivery. For some foster parents, the schedule or location meant that they had to add travel to training time to get timely instruction. Others reported problems with accessing training when they missed a session and had to wait months for that session to be offered again before proceeding through the sequence of sessions. Yet others were

disadvantaged in gaining certification in a timely way. Suggestions to address these barriers included these:

- Offering the training program at accessible locations at more times during the year
- Ensuring more efficient roll out of pre-service and CORE training
- Establishing a provincial team of professional PRIDE trainers to deliver the training program across the province to ensure consistency or investing in additional staff to support resource workers in delivering this training program.

PRIDE Pre-Service Content and Relevance

While there was widespread support for the PRIDE pre-service training, there were also suggestions aplenty to enhance its content and relevance to the Saskatchewan context. Of particular concern was the outdated and American content. If some parents found humour in the outdated materials, others were frustrated by unrealistic, inauthentic, and misleading scenarios depicted. One parent bluntly suggested throwing out the program and “rewrit[ing] it for the 21st century.” Another likened the use of the program content to going to the US to “buy a second-hand car.”

Many shared their impressions that the American content neither applied to them nor explored issues in sufficient detail. Reference to US statistics, legislation, values and behaviours (though Canadian content was included in the training materials) left foster parents feeling frustrated and disengaged. There was a reported need for information on Canadian legislation, statistics, and reflecting Canadian values. Nor did foster families feel the training supported the stages of foster parent experience. They were left feeling unclear about roles and responsibilities, expectations and goals. In the case of competency two in particular, there was an expressed need for more training in coping skills and management techniques; in competency five, a need for greater clarity around the roles and responsibilities of each member of the team was reported.

The Aboriginal cultural curriculum was unanimously welcomed as an engaging, informative, and effective component of the training. If there were challenges in some areas in securing elders to deliver the module and some foster parents and trainers had yet to receive the training as a result, there were widespread plaudits on the curriculum’s value. While the Aboriginal cultural content was widely praised for its relevance and importance, its delivery also highlighted the importance of understanding all children’s cultures. Participants reported a need for information on various cultures now represented in Saskatchewan’s growing diversity.

PRIDE Pre-Service Delivery

Major concerns around program delivery focused on the inflexibility of the licensed program. One foster parent spoke for many: “Love the philosophy of PRIDE but hate the delivery method.” Most felt that it was overly book-centred rather than people-centred. Fidelity to the text of the manuals read to participants felt insulting

to many and inconsistent with pedagogies of effective adult learning. The effect was exacerbated for foster parents who had worked all day and then spent three hours being read to. Boredom was a common theme.

Delivery depended enormously on the particular trainers involved. There were those who could make the experience engaging and memorable, but for too many there was little time for foster parents to discuss the issues they faced. The consensus was that it was a good program that would benefit from more interactive delivery methods so that parents would listen, engage more actively in their learning, and retain more of the program content. Suggestions for stronger delivery included online, take home work, workshops, and group work.

As in the case of the content and relevance of the materials, there was an expressed need for greater flexibility to supplement and update the PRIDE materials. Ongoing concerns about US content may have been the result of staff training issues. A specific invitation in the Child Welfare League of America's Foster PRIDE/ Adopt PRIDE: About the PRIDE Model—recommending “that state, county, and/or specific information, especially as related to the legal process of adoption, be inserted as indicated in the curriculum”—supports such flexible adaptation of the materials, which in fact happened at the outset.

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APPENDIX A - LETTER TO FOSTER FAMILIES AND CHILD WELFARE WORKERS

July 5, 2012

Dear Foster Families and Child Welfare Workers:

The Ministry of Social Services, Child and Family Services and Research and Evaluation Divisions, along with the Community University Institute for Social Research (CUISR) will be reviewing the experiences of foster families and child welfare social workers who have participated in the PRIDE (Parent Resources for Information Development and Education) model of practice training.

You will be contacted by CUISR in the near future. Focus group meetings will be arranged with foster families, social workers and other key stakeholders in the Yorkton, Fort Qu'Appelle, Estevan,

Prince Albert, Melfort, North Battleford and Lloydminster service centres. CUISR will be doing an analysis and providing the Ministry with a report to assess if the PRIDE model of practice within the Saskatchewan child welfare system is effectively meeting the needs of foster parents and child welfare professionals.

Your valued assistance and input will enable us to best enhance future program deliveries. We are asking for assistance with this study and hope you will agree to participate in one of the groups. The information you provide will be confidential and help us to understand: 1) foster parents' and social workers' experiences; 2) whether the Pre Service training and Saskatchewan Aboriginal Cultural Component effectively prepare caregivers and social workers; 3) will the additional professional development CORE In-service training modules better assist caregivers in meeting the special needs of foster and adoptive children; 4) your level of satisfaction with various aspects of the PRIDE model of practice and 5) your opinions on a number of other issues, such as supports you feel still need to be implemented within the child welfare system.

Your participation in this research is voluntary and if you decide not to participate, this will not affect you in the future. The information from the study will be used for research purposes only and will be kept private. Reporting of the information we collect will not identify you in any way.

Should you have any questions about the evaluation, please call me at (306) 787-7820. Also, if you have any concerns or need clarification regarding any part of the evaluation, please contact **Duvaraga Sivajohanathan MPH (c) duvaraga.sivajohanathan@usask.ca or Isobel Findlay (Principal Investigator and Co-Director) findlay@edwards.usask.ca or call the Community-University Institute for Social Research at (306) 966-2120 in Saskatoon.** The results of this research will be made available to you if you are interested.

Sincerely,

Darlene Bohach
Supervisor, Training
P.R.I.D.E Program
Child and Family Services

APPENDIX B - FOCUS GROUP RECRUITMENT POSTERS



All **foster parents who have received the PRIDE pre-service training** are invited to participate in a focus group about their experience.

Participation is voluntary and confidential, and will require approximately 90 minutes of your time.

If you are interested in learning more about this study, please contact James Popham at 306-966-2120 or e-mail cuisr.research@usask.ca



The research study has been approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Saskatchewan and is funded by the Ministry of Social Services, Government of Saskatchewan.



All **PRIDE program employees** are invited to participate in a focus group about their experience with the training program.

Participation is voluntary and confidential, and will require approximately 90 minutes of your time.

If you are interested in learning more about this study, please contact James Popham at 306-966-2120 or e-mail cuisr.research@usask.ca



The research study has been approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Saskatchewan and is funded by the Ministry of Social Services, Government of Saskatchewan.



XXX

All **Aboriginal foster parents who have received the PRIDE pre-service training** are invited to participate in a focus group about their experience.

Participation is voluntary and confidential, and will require approximately 90 minutes of your time.

Participants will be provided with a \$20 honorarium to cover travel and child care expenses.

If you are interested in learning more about this study, please contact James Popham at 306-966-2120 or e-mail cuisr.research@usask.ca



The research study has been approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Saskatchewan and is funded by the Ministry of Social Services, Government of Saskatchewan.

APPENDIX C - LETTER OF INVITATION

Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education, Component One: Pre-Service Training Evaluation

Dear PRIDE parent/staff:

We are writing to invite you to participate in a research study to evaluate the implementation of the Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education Program (PRIDE) pre-service training program in Saskatchewan. All foster parents who have undergone the training are eligible to participate. This study is funded by the Ministry of Social Services, Government of Saskatchewan, and has been approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Saskatchewan.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in a focus group involving 6-8 people, which will take place at a time convenient to focus group participants and at [a location specified by researchers in your town]. The focus group will take about 90 minutes and will ask you questions related to your experience with the PRIDE pre-service training program. With your permission, the focus groups will be audio-recorded so that we can accurately reflect on what is discussed. The tapes will be reviewed only by members of the research team who will transcribe and analyze them. They will then be destroyed.

Participation is confidential. Study information will be kept in a secure location at the University of Saskatchewan. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but your identity will not be revealed.

Others in the group will hear what you say, and it is possible that they could tell someone else. Because we will be talking in a group, we cannot promise that what you say will remain completely private, but we will ask that you and all other group members respect the privacy of everyone in the group.

The results of the study, in the form of a formal final report, will be given to Ministry of Social Services, Government of Saskatchewan; the Ministry will circulate the report to the various towns and reserves. You may request a summary of findings.

Your participation is voluntary and you may answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the study at any time without explanation or without any penalty. Whether you choose to participate or not will have no effect on your access to services, or how you will be treated. The benefits of this study include the potential to enhance the program, though we cannot guarantee those results.

If you have questions about your rights in this study, please contact the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board at ethics.office@usask.ca or (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call toll free (866) 966-2975.

Your time and interest in this study are very much appreciated. If you have further questions about this study or would like to participate, please contact James Popham at 306-966-2120 or cuisr.research@usask.ca before July 19.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Isobel M. Findlay
Edwards School of Business and University Co-Director, CUI SR
Tel: (306) 966-2385; findlay@edwards.usask.ca

Research Team:

Principal Investigator: Dr. Isobel M. Findlay, Associate professor, Management and Marketing, Edwards School of Business, University of Saskatchewan; 306-966-2385; findlay@edwards.usask.ca

Graduate research assistants: Duvaraga Sivajohanathan, Master of Public Health program, University of Saskatchewan; duvaraga.sivajohanathan@usask.ca ,and Renata Andres, Community-University Institute for Social Research (CUI SR): rea086@mail.usask.ca

Strategic Research Coordinator: James Popham, CUI SR, University of Saskatchewan; Telephone: 306-966-2120, fax: 306-966-2122; cuisr.research@usask.ca

APPENDIX D - LETTER OF INVITATION TO ON-RESERVE PARENTS

Parent Resources for Information Development and Education, Component One: Pre-Service Training Evaluation

Dear PRIDE parent:

We are writing to invite you to participate in a research study to evaluate the implementation of the Parent Resources for Information Development and Education Program (PRIDE) pre-service training program in Saskatchewan. All foster parents who have undergone the training are eligible to participate. This study is funded by the Ministry of Social Services, Government of Saskatchewan, and has been approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Saskatchewan.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in a focus group involving 6-8 people, which will take place at a time convenient to focus group participants and at a location specified by researchers on your reserve. The focus group will take about 90 minutes and will ask you questions related to your experience with the PRIDE pre-service training program. With your permission, the focus groups will be audio-recorded so that we can accurately reflect on what is discussed. The tapes will be reviewed only by members of the research team who will transcribe and analyze them. They will then be destroyed.

Participation is confidential. Study information will be kept in a secure location at the University of Saskatchewan. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but your identity will not be revealed. Others in the group will hear what you say, and it is possible that they could tell someone else. Because we will be talking in a group, we cannot promise that what you say will remain completely private, but we will ask that you and all other group members respect the privacy of everyone in the group.

At the end of the focus group, you will receive \$20 to reimburse you for childcare and travel expenses. If you withdraw from the study before the conclusion, you will still be reimbursed the same amount.

The results of the study, in the form of a formal final report, will be given to Ministry of Social Services, Government of Saskatchewan; the Ministry will circulate the report to the various towns and reserves. You may request a summary of findings.

Your participation is voluntary and you may answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the study at any time without explanation or without any penalty. Whether you choose to participate or not will have no effect on your access to services, or how you will be treated. The benefits of this study include the potential to enhance the program, though we cannot guarantee those results.

If you have questions about your rights in this study, please contact the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board at ethics.office@usask.ca or (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call toll free (866) 966-2975.

Your time and interest in this study are very much appreciated. If you have further questions about this study or would like to participate, please contact James Popham at 306-966-2120 or cuisr.research@usask.ca before July 19.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Isobel M. Findlay
Edwards School of Business and University Co-Director, CUI SR
Tel: (306) 966-2385
Email: findlay@edwards.usask.ca

Research Team:

Principal Investigator: Dr. Isobel M. Findlay, Associate professor, Management and Marketing, Edwards School of Business, University of Saskatchewan; 306-966-2385; findlay@edwards.usask.ca

Graduate research assistants: Duvaraga Sivajohanathan, Master of Public Health program, University of Saskatchewan; duvaraga.sivajohanathan@usask.ca and Renata Andres, Community-University Institute for Social Research (CUI SR); rea086@mail.usask.ca

Strategic Research Coordinator: James Popham, CUI SR, University of Saskatchewan; Telephone: 306-966-2120, fax: 306-966-2122; cuisr.research@usask.ca

APPENDIX E - PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education, Component One: Pre-Service Training Evaluation

Primary Investigator: Isobel Findlay PhD
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Strategic Research Co-ordinator: James Popham PhD (c)
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Renata Andres
Community-University Institute for Social Research
University of Saskatchewan
306-966-2120
rea086@mail.usask.ca

Purpose(s) and Objective(s) of the Research:

The Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education Program (PRIDE) program is a training program intended to strengthen the quality of foster care and adoptive services in Saskatchewan. The intent of this study is to complete a qualitative evaluation of the implementation of the pre-service training program in several communities, complementary to existing quantitative reports completed by other parties for Child and Family Services, Ministry of Social Services, Government of Saskatchewan. This evaluation will focus on stakeholders' assessment on the effectiveness of the pre-service training portion of the PRIDE program. This study seeks to identify the success and challenges in the implementation of the program; to assess the components of PRIDE program; to identify the stakeholders' satisfaction with the program design and outcomes; to identify stakeholders' assessments of the cultural components designed by Child and Family Services; and to identify the strengths and weakness of the program, and opportunities for future improvement. Based on the data collected, the researchers will make recommendations to the Ministry of Social Services on the PRIDE program.

Procedures:

Participants in this study include PRIDE pre-service training program employees and foster parents who have undergone the PRIDE pre-service training in Saskatchewan. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in a focus group involving 6-8 people, which will take place at a time convenient to focus group participants and at a location specified by researchers in your town or on your reserve. The focus group will take about 90 minutes and will ask you questions related to your experience with the PRIDE pre-service training program. With your permission, the focus groups will be audio-recorded so that we can accurately reflect on what is discussed. One of the researchers will be a moderator of the focus group, while the other researcher will be audio recording and transcribing, identifying participants only by numbers. The audio recordings will be used to fill in the gaps, such that an accurate transcript is produced. Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the procedures and goals of the study or your role.

Funded by: Ministry of Social Services, Government of Saskatchewan

Potential Risks:

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

Potential Benefits:

There are no personal benefits to the participants in this study. By choosing to participate in this study, you will be helping to potentially enhance the PRIDE pre-service training program for foster parents in Saskatchewan, though we cannot guarantee those results.

Compensation:

In order to defray the costs of transportation and childcare, each on-reserve First Nations foster parent participant will receive an honorarium in the amount of \$20 at the end of the focus group. If you withdraw from the study before the conclusion, you will still be reimbursed the same amount.

Confidentiality:

All identifying information (i.e. consent forms and master lists) is stored separately from the data collected. All electronic files will be stored in password protected computer files. All hardcopy data (i.e audio tapes and transcripts) will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at CUISR. Only the researchers (specified on page 1) will have access to these files. The master list and audiotapes will be destroyed when data collection is complete and it is no longer required.

What you say will be confidential. Any information that might identify who you are will be removed before we present results in writing or in presentations. If we use your words in the report to the ministry OF Social Services or in other publications or presentations, your name will not be revealed; for example, "One woman said..." may be used rather than your name to protect your identity.

The researcher will undertake to safeguard the confidentiality of the discussion, but cannot guarantee that other members of the group will do so. Please respect the confidentiality of the other members of the group by not disclosing the contents of this discussion outside the group, and be aware that others may not respect your confidentiality.

If you wish, after the focus group and prior to the data being included in the final report, you will be given the

opportunity (i.e. 14 days) to review the transcript of your focus group, and to add, alter, or delete information from the transcripts as you see fit.

If you agree, each focus group session will be audiotaped; however, you have the right to request that the recording device be turned off any time.

Right to Withdraw:

Your participation is voluntary and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort.

Whether you choose to participate or not will have no effect on your employment at or services from Ministry of Social Services, Government of Saskatchewan or how you will be treated. Should you wish to withdraw, please contact the researchers (contact information can be found on page one). Your right to withdraw data from the study will apply until data have been pooled. After this date, it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred and it may not be possible to withdraw your data

Follow up:

The results of the report, in the form of a formal final report, will be given to Child and Family Services, Ministry of Social Services, Government of Saskatchewan, who will share it with the communities. The study participants are welcome to contact the research team (see contact information on page 1) for more information on the report or study. You may also request a summary of the report.

Questions or Concerns:

If you have any questions or desire further information about this study before, during or after participation, you can contact the researcher using the information at the top of page 1. This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office ethics.office@usask.ca (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call toll free (866) 966-2975.

Consent:

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the description provided:

I have read the information in this consent form.

I understand the purpose and procedures and the possible risks and benefits of the study.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered.

I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time for any reason and the decision to stop taking part will not affect my future relationships.

I grant permission for my focus group session to be audiotaped.

I give permission to the use and disclosure of my de-identified information collected for the research purposes described in this form.

I consent to participate in the research project. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

APPENDIX F - TRANSCRIPT REVIEW

Title of study: Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education, Component One: Pre-Service Training Evaluation

Thank you again for participating in the evaluation of the PRIDE Pre-Service Training Program.

If you have any question or comments or would like to obtain results of the evaluation, please contact James Popham (contact information provided below). If you have any questions regarding the ethics of this research study please contact the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board at ethics.office@usask.ca or (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call toll free (866) 966-2975.

___ By checking here, I choose to allow the researchers to use my transcript without contacting me to review and make changes to it.

___ By checking here, I choose to have the researchers to re-contact me in order to review my transcript. I am aware that I will only be provided with 14 days to make any changes to the transcript. Please provide us with a mailing address or e-mail address so that we would be able to contact you.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature of Participant

Signature of researcher

James Popham
Community-University Institute for Social Research (CUISR)
University of Saskatchewan
Telephone: (306) 966-2120
Fax: (306) 966-2122
email: cuisr.research@usask.ca

APPENDIX G - TRANSCRIPT RELEASE

Title of study: **Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education, Component One: Pre-Service Training Evaluation**

This transcript form is to acknowledge that the interview data accurately reflects what was said in the focus group interview with Renata Andres and Duvaraga Sivajohanathan. This data may be included in the final report .

I, _____, have reviewed the complete transcript of my contributions in the focus group interview for this study, and have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript as appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said in the focus group interview with Renata Andres and Duvaraga Sivajohanathan. I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to CUISR. I have received a copy of this Data/Transcript Release Form for my own records.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature of Participant

Signature of researcher

Please mail completed form to:

James Popham
Community-University Institute for Social Research (CUISR)
University of Saskatchewan
R.J.D. Williams Building
432 - 221 Cumberland Avenue
Saskatoon, SK S7N 1M3
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APPENDIX H - FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

PARENTS:

Introduce ourselves – Renata Andres and Duvaraga Sivajohanathan.

We're here from the Community-University Institute of Social Research at the University of Saskatchewan. We are currently evaluating the Parent Resources for Information Development and Education (PRIDE) program in Saskatchewan. We'd like to thank you for participating in the focus group.

Before we begin, we'd like to get you to complete these consent forms. We will read through the consent form together and you will then be given the opportunity to ask us any questions.

This focus group session will be divided into three sections. First, we will start by asking you questions regarding the PRIDE competencies. You will have learned about them in your training. We will then proceed to ask you general questions about your experience with the training. Finally, we'd like your insight on the Aboriginal cultural component.

Questions about the PRIDE competencies:

Competency 1:

How knowledgeable do you feel about protecting and nurturing children after the PRIDE pre-service training?

Competency 2:

How knowledgeable do you feel about meeting children's developmental needs, and addressing developmental delays after the PRIDE pre-service training?

Competency 3:

How knowledgeable do you feel about supporting relationships between children and their families after the PRIDE pre-service training?

- *How important do you think it is for children to maintain an on-going relationship with their families?*

Competency 4:

How knowledgeable do you feel about giving children safe, nurturing relationships after the PRIDE pre-service training?

- *How important do you think it is for children to be connected to their culture while in foster care?*

Competency 5:

Do you feel like a valued member of a professional team after the PRIDE pre-service training?

Questions about the training:

What was your experience with the training?

- *Would you recommend that this training program continue to be used?*
- *How valuable was it?*

How satisfied were you with the level of preparedness you felt from the training?

How has the training affected your parenting?

What do you perceive to be some of the strengths/weaknesses of the program?

What do you recommend for future improvement of the PRIDE pre-service training program?

There are barriers that foster parents face in completing the training program such as the availability of the training program at certain times, childcare, the location of the training, etc. *Were there any barriers that you faced in completing the PRIDE program?*

- *What do you think can/should be done to remove these?*

Questions about the cultural component:

A 3-hour Saskatchewan Aboriginal cultural component, teaching about the importance of the preservation of a child's culture as part of the foster/adoption approval process, has been added to the PRIDE pre-service training program.

How effective do you find this cultural component to be?

How culturally appropriate/sensitive do you find the PRIDE program cultural component to be?

- *What are the strengths/weaknesses of the cultural component?*
- *What recommendations do you have for the cultural component?*

How culturally appropriate were the materials?

- *How often do you use or refer to the materials?*

How has the cultural component impacted your parenting?

- *Increased cultural awareness?*
- *Importance of culturally safe homes for Aboriginal children and youth?*

WORKERS:

Competency 1:

How knowledgeable do you feel about educating foster parents to protect and to nurture children after the PRIDE pre-service training?

- *How important do you think this competency is for foster parents to learn? Is it making a difference in the way they parent?*

Competency 2:

How knowledgeable do you feel about educating foster parents to meet children's developmental needs, and to address developmental delays after the PRIDE pre-service training?

- *How important do you think this competency is for foster parents to learn? Is it making a difference in the way they parent?*

Competency 3:

How knowledgeable do you feel about educating foster parents to support relationships between children and their families after the PRIDE pre-service training?

- *How important do you think it is for children to maintain an on-going relationship with their families?*
- *How important do you think this competency is for foster parents to learn? Is it making a difference in the way they parent?*

Competency 4:

How knowledgeable do you feel about educating foster parents to give children safe, nurturing relationships after the PRIDE pre-service training?

- *How important do you think it is for children to be connected to their culture while in foster care?*
- *How important do you think this competency is for foster parents to learn? Is it making a difference in the way they parent?*

Competency 5:

Do you feel like a valued member of a professional team?

Questions about the training:

What do you perceive to be some of the challenges/successes in the implementation of the program?

How well do you think the PRIDE pre-service training program responds to the need for a foster/adoptive parent training program in Saskatchewan?

What was your experience with the training?

- *Would you recommend that this training program continue to be used?*
- *How valuable do you think it is?*

What do you perceive to be some of the strengths/weaknesses of the program?

What do you recommend for future improvement of the PRIDE pre-service training program?

There are barriers that foster parents face in completing the training program such as the availability of the training program at certain times, childcare, the location of the training, etc. Were there any barriers that parents faced in completing the PRIDE program?

- *What do you think can/should be done to remove these?*

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How effective do you find this cultural component to be?

How culturally appropriate/sensitive do you find the PRIDE program cultural component to be?

- *What are the strengths/weaknesses of the cultural component?*
- *What recommendations do you have for the cultural component?*

How culturally appropriate were the materials?

How has the cultural component impacted parenting?

- *Increased cultural awareness?*
- *Importance of culturally safe homes for Aboriginal children and youth?*

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