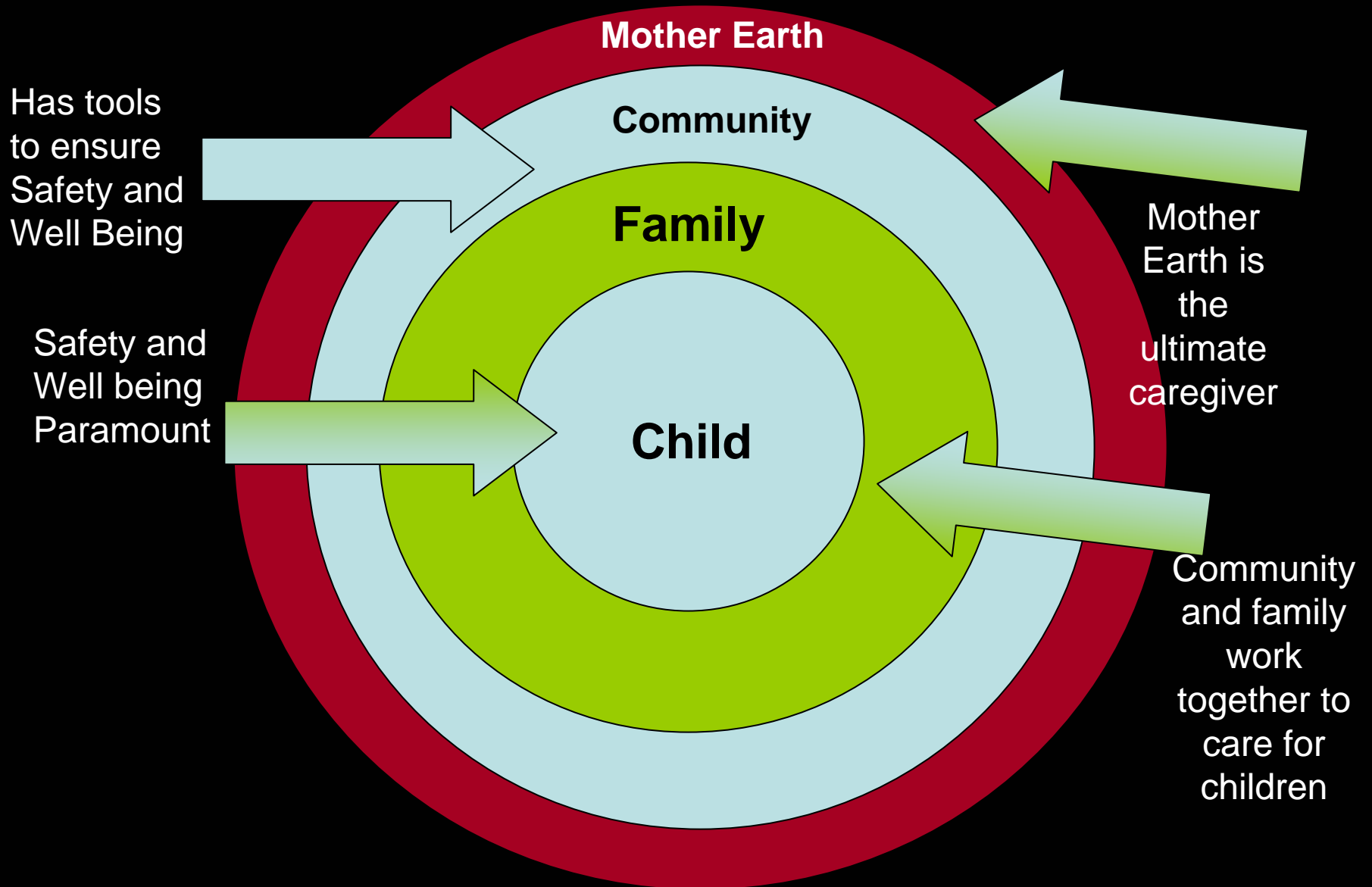




Caring for  
our  
Children

Rethinking Development Conference: Antigonish, Nova Scotia

# Aboriginal World View: Caring for OUR children



Our object is to  
continue until there  
is not a single Indian  
in Canada that has  
been absorbed into  
the body politic

Duncan Campbell Scott

Certificate of Indian  
Status This is to certify  
that Name an Indian  
within the meaning of the  
Indian Act, Chapter 27,  
Statutes of Canada  
(1985)

Indian Status Card, DIAND

“They almost wiped  
us out with small  
pox.. It went down to  
500 people... the  
small pox was  
deliberate

Guujaaw, Haida Nation

# Residential Schools



They encircled reserves to stop runaways and then moved door to door taking school age children over the protest of parents and children themselves.. Children were locked up in police stations or cattle pens until the round up was complete

Bennett and  
Blackstock, 2002





Fifty years ago mainstream child welfare approaches have been applied to assess and respond to child maltreatment in Aboriginal families in much the same way –

# Basic Principals of Child Protection

Has tools  
to ensure  
Safety and  
Well Being



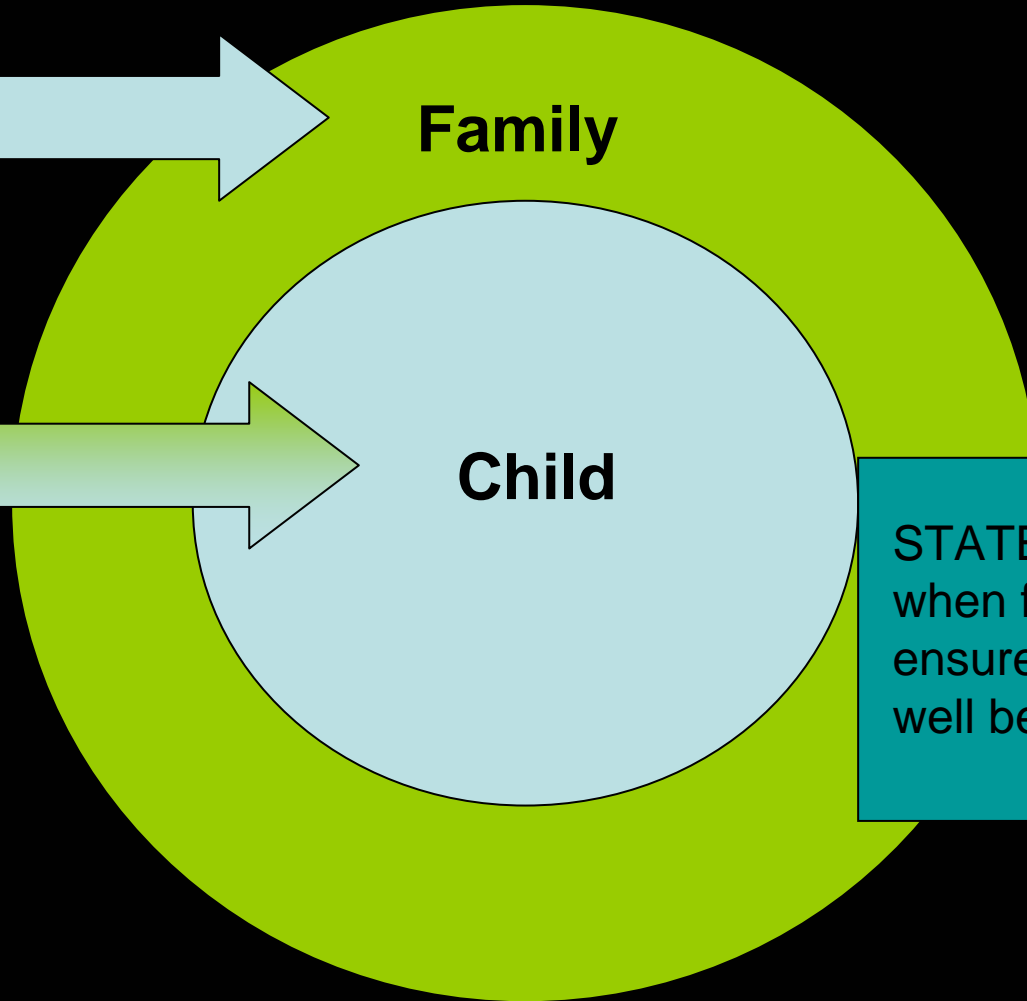
**Family**

Safety and  
Well being  
Paramount



**Child**

STATE steps in  
when family fails to  
ensure safety and  
well being



But was this the best model to respond to a community in crisis as a result of residential schools and colonization?

There are between 22,500 and 28,000 First Nations children in the care of the Canadian child welfare system... three times the number that attended residential schools in the 1940's.

First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, 2002; Child Welfare League of Canada, 2003; Blackstock, 2002

# First Nations CIC Increase by Region 95-01

- BC 90.4%
- Alberta 52.7%
- Sask. 160.3
- Man. 11.4%
- Ontario 163.8%
- Quebec 93.8%
- Yukon 5.0%
- Atlantic 130%

❖ Data represents on  
reserve children only

The population of Status Indian children decreased 1% during this same time period

Statistics Canada

20 years ago First Nations began establishing their own FNCFSA to deliver child welfare on reserve and stem the tide of children leaving their communities- they are required to follow provincial statutes and regulations that have substantively failed Aboriginal children

So why is it that governments require First Nations to follow their child welfare policies – even though there is little evidence they benefit Aboriginal children?

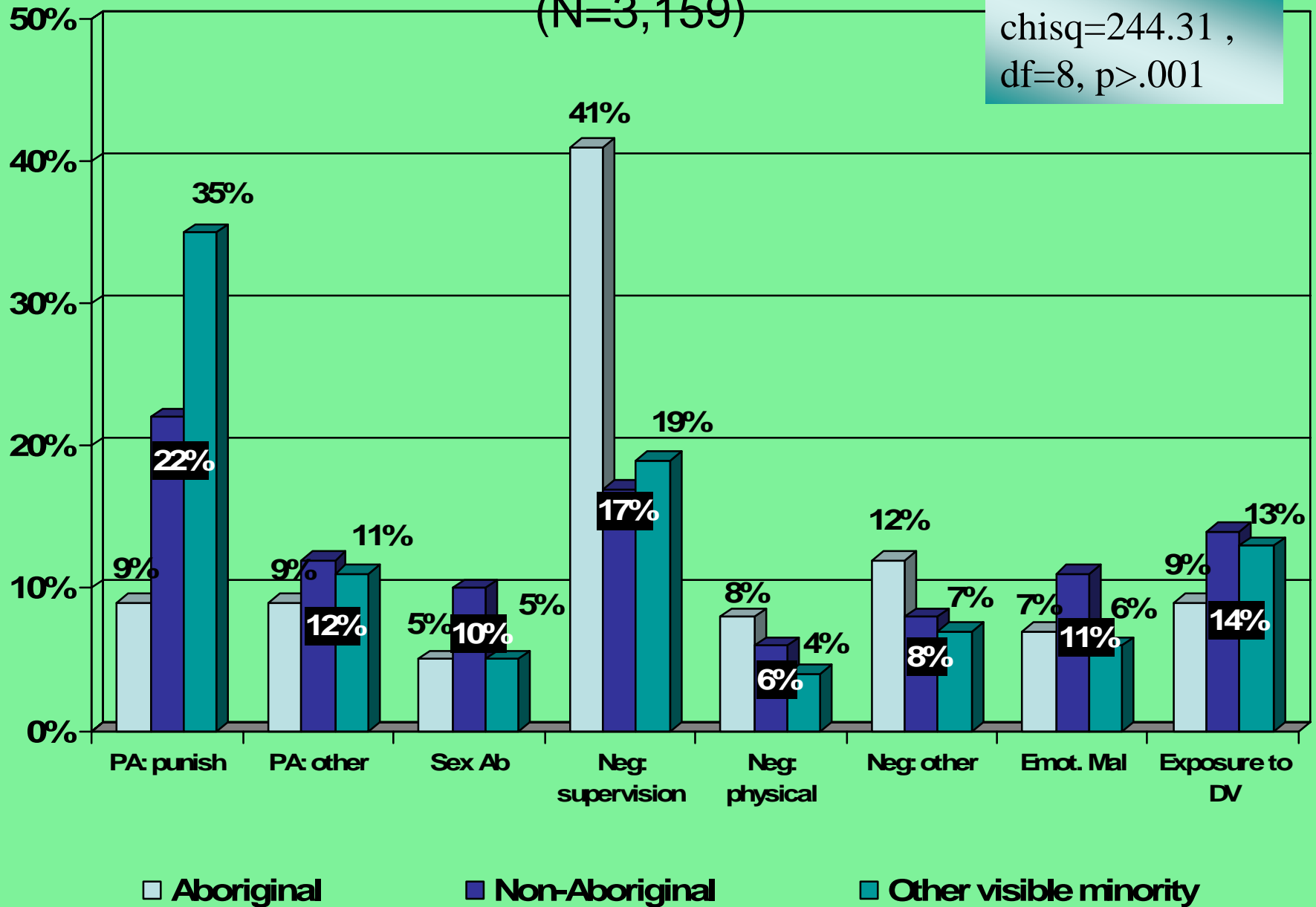


Maybe it is because we were not aware that Aboriginal children come to the attention of child welfare for different reasons than non Aboriginal children

# Primary form of maltreatment by Aboriginal status for substantiated or suspected maltreatment 1998 CIS\*

(N=3,159)

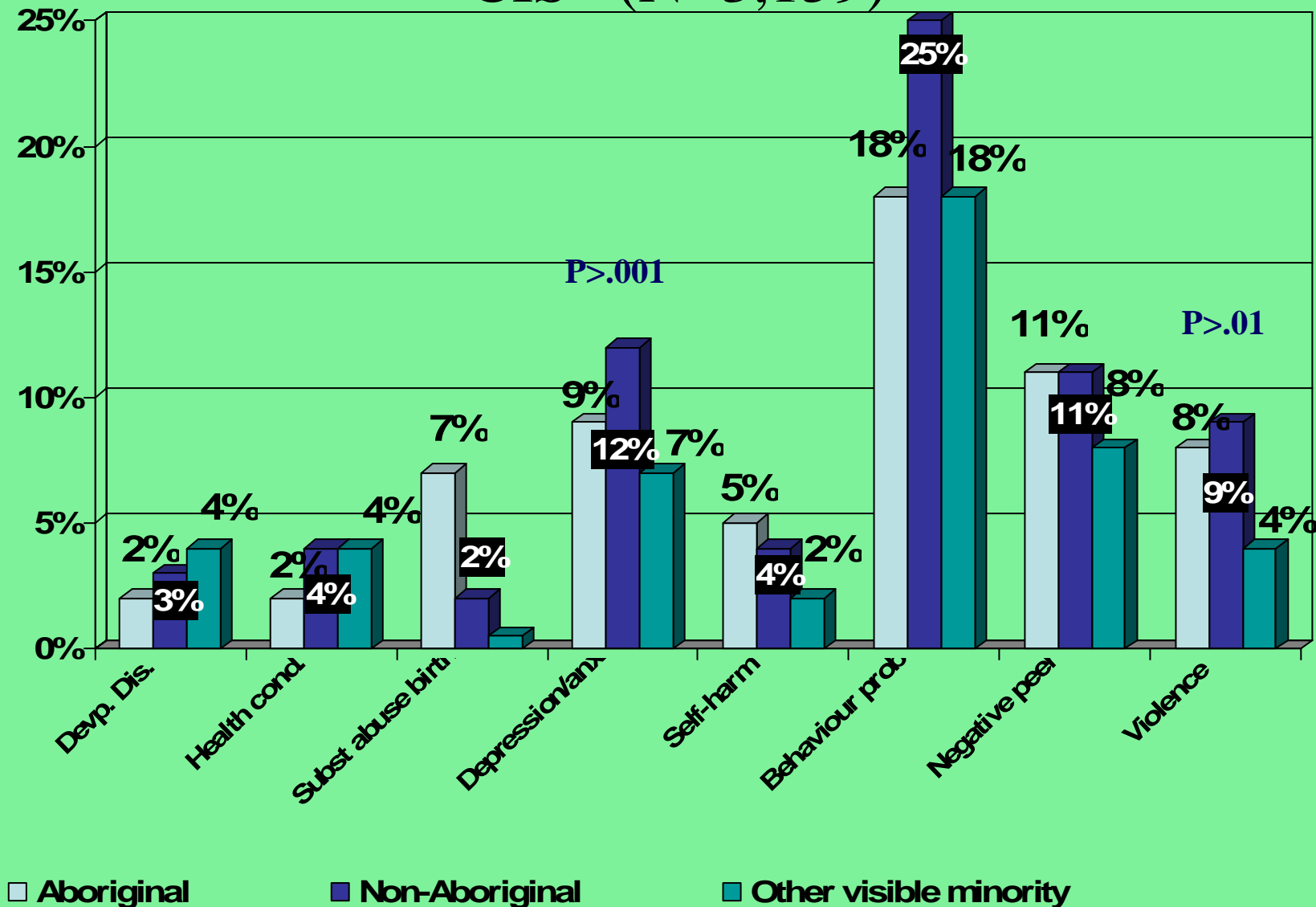
chisq=244.31 ,  
df=8, p>.001



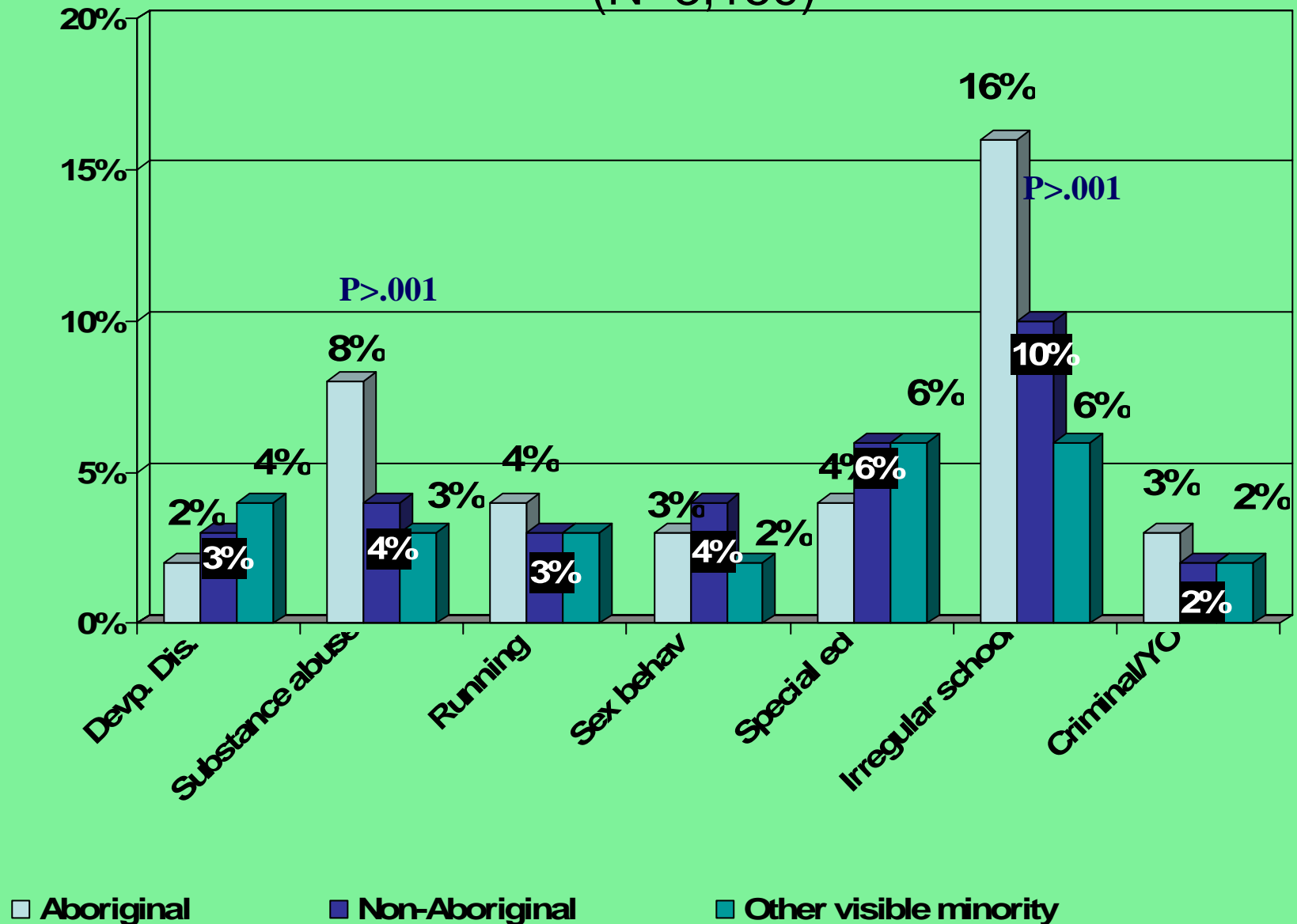
We did not know that Aboriginal children are removed at twice the rate of their non Aboriginal peers despite there being no significant difference in child functioning

# Child characteristics by Aboriginal status for substantiated or suspected maltreatment 1998

CIS\* (N=3,159)  $P > .001$



# More child characteristics by Aboriginal status for substantiated or suspected maltreatment 1998 CIS\* (N=3,159)

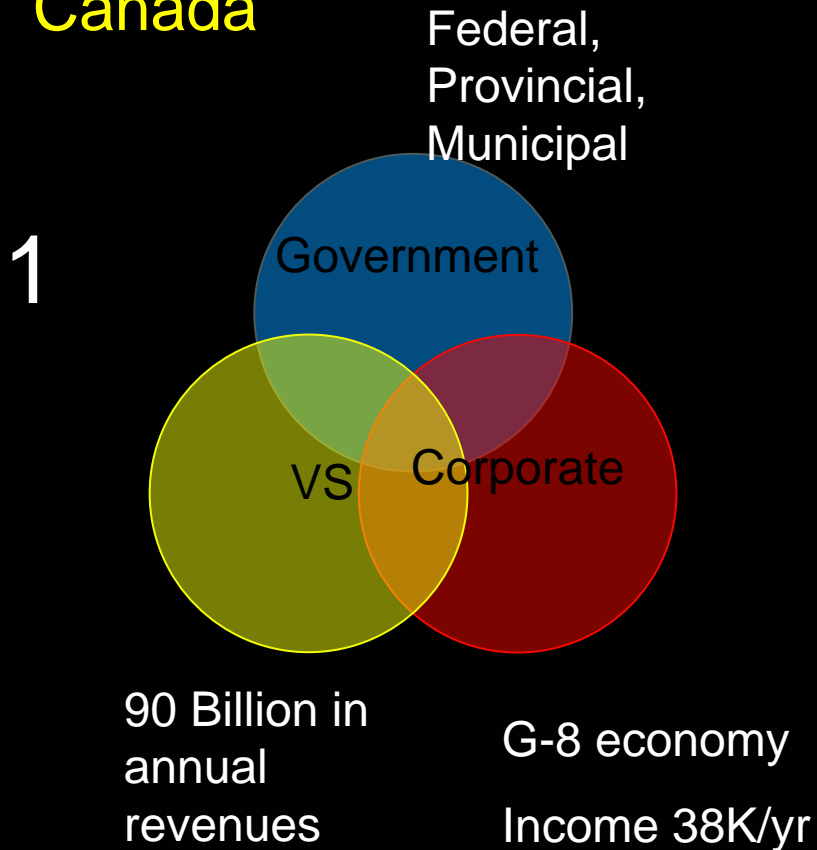


We may have not understood that the real risk factors to Aboriginal children are often outside of the control of Aboriginal parents-  
**poverty, poor housing and substance misuse**

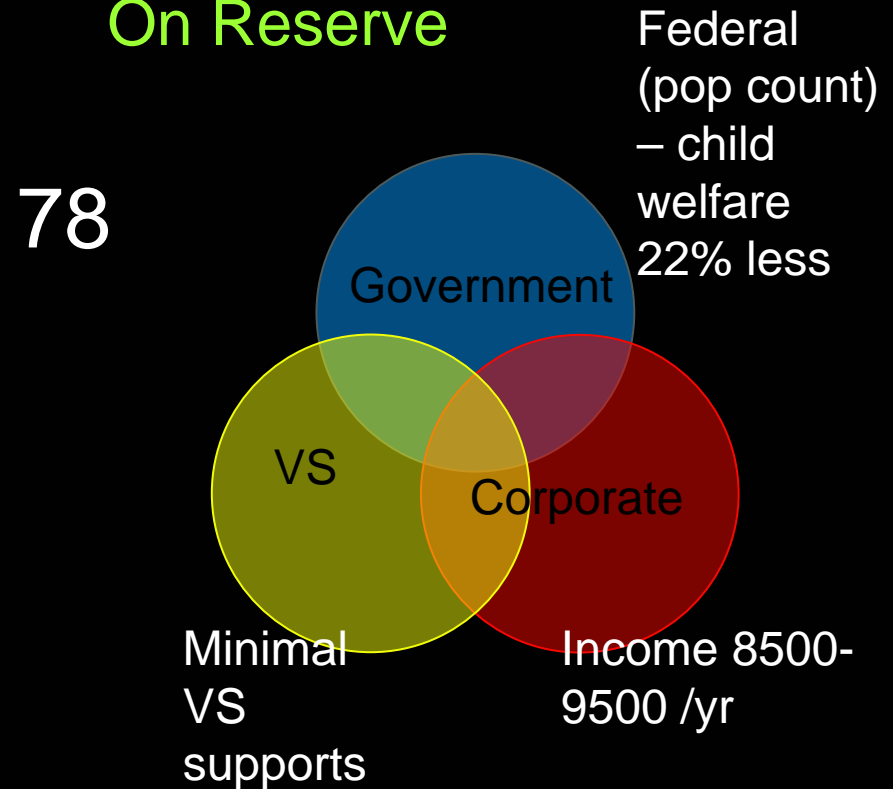
We assumed that First Nations  
parents had the same access to  
supports as non Aboriginal  
parents

# Contrast of Supports

## Canada



## On Reserve





**Primary source of risk  
resulting in removals**

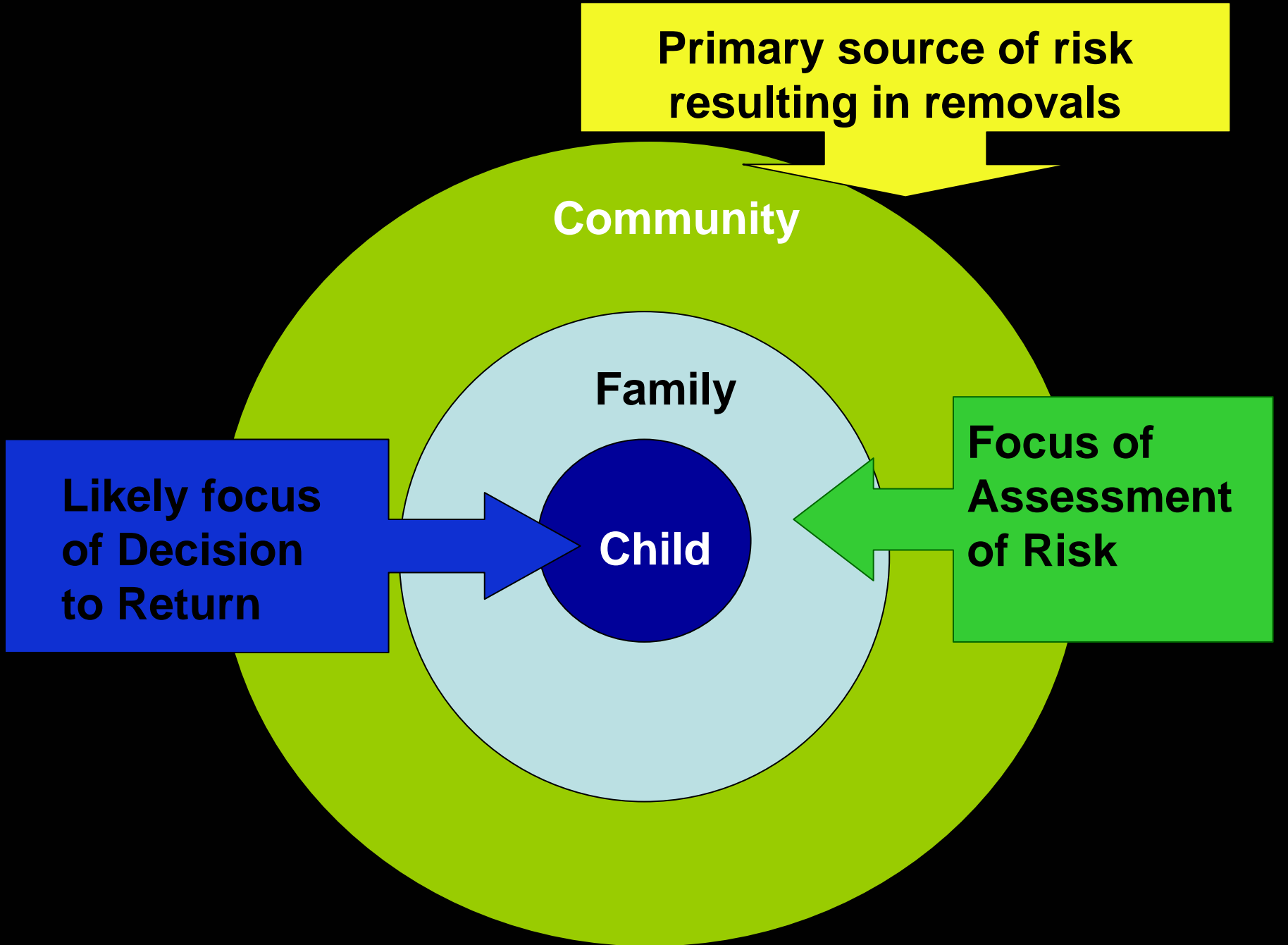
**Community**

**Family**

**Child**

**Likely focus  
of Decision  
to Return**

**Focus of  
Assessment  
of Risk**



# The Way Forward

- Respecting that Indigenous peoples are in the best position to care for Indigenous children (Cornell and Kalt, 2002; Chandler and Lalonde, 2003)
- Equal access to resources (MacDonald and Ladd, 2000; Nadjiwan and Blackstock, 2003)
- Focused and broad based social activism to address structural risk to communities

# What we do to help

Database, research, on line journal

Research: Affirm  
the Voice and Build  
the Story

Education:  
Providing  
the  
knowledge  
for change



Being  
respectful  
but being  
loud

Caring Across  
the Boundaries:  
Building  
Children's Allies

UN NGO Working Group,  
conferences, community  
gatherings, newsletters, NGO  
and academic networks

VS program and Reconciliation projects

# Our Challenges

- Canada's human rights record can blind it and others around the world to its mistreatment of Aboriginal children.
- Engaging Canadians to see the truth of colonization without having them turn away
- Embracing our ignorance – the real answers are at a community level
- Our small size makes it difficult to sustain relationships across disciplines in the way we would like
- We are the only national Aboriginal NGO for children and thus demands often exceed our ability or capacity

# What has worked

- Being small but delivering excellence
- Not being a representative organization
- Taking our organizational direction from communities – who suggest research questions, programs etc.
- Investing in community expertise
- Research design and method and results as a valued tool for community
- Believing in the goodness of people and being a vigilant witness
- The power of contradiction



**Suite 1001 75 Albert Street**

**Ottawa ON K1P 5E7**

**Phone: (613) 230-5885**

**[cblackst@fnfcs.com](mailto:cblackst@fnfcs.com)**

**[www.fnfcs.com](http://www.fnfcs.com)**

*First Nations Child & Family  
Caring Society of Canada*