

A NEW DIRECTION FOR CHILD WELFARE

ACKNOWLEDGING THE PAST AND EMBRACING THE FUTURE



LEADERSHIP IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

- Unique Challenges
- Shrinking Budgets
- Managing Systemic Oppression
- Sector Reputation

**MY FIRST APPREHENSION
27 YEARS AGO**

**REMOVING A CHILD
FROM THEIR HOME
BECAUSE OF ABUSE**

Good Intentions

Negative Outcomes

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How Has This Happened?

- Globalized risk to entire family systems and communities
- Believed that governments and systems can raise children
- Intervened in the lives of families rather than partnering with families and communities for solutions
- Have not examined our biases as they relate to marginalized populations
- Work in silos, lack of system coordination and integration
- Focus on the wrong priority:

System built on protecting children from their families and not helping families protect their own children

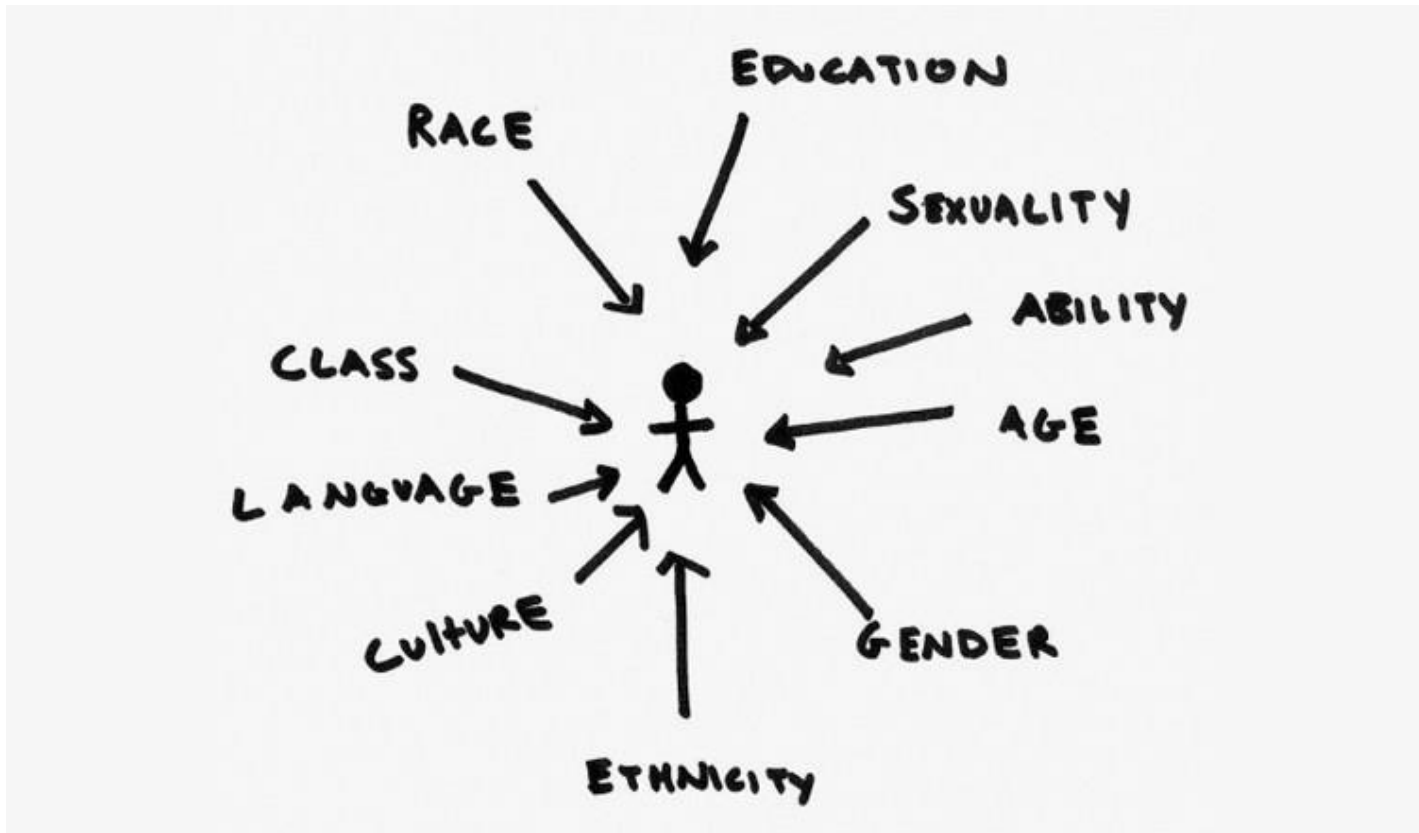
3 Keys to Change

- **FOCUSING LEADERSHIP ON EQUITY**
- **EXAMINING POWERFUL UNEXAMINED TRUTHS**
- **PARTNERING WITH SERVICE USERS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

Traditional Leadership

- “One size fits all” – cookie cutter approach
- It’s always been done this way
- Colour-blind / Identity blind approach
- Assume child welfare system is neutral and that workers are neutral and do not bring biases
- Believe one can “can arrive” at place of knowing. “We are experts”
- Linear thinking that lacks integration

INTERSECTIONALITY



Strategic Equity Informed Leadership

- Recognize inherent oppressive structures
- Acknowledge biases we carry
- Strategize based on equity principles
- Active commitment to equity learning – practice humility
- Takes risks and challenges the status quo
- Agitates and creates change
- Leads by example
- Aware that all things are not equal for all people
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vwx5lvypC5Q&t=1s>

Critical Reflective Leadership

A **reflective** leader examines their knowledge and practice. They also include diverse perspectives within their practice.

A **critical reflective** leader uncovers power relationships and examines how dominance and privilege are created, maintained, and demonstrated in their practice.

A **critical reflexive** leader not only examines power relations and its impact on the staff and service user, but they also examine themselves, their social location, and how these factors contribute to the interaction (Fook, 1999).

Purpose of Critical Reflective and Reflexive Practice

It is the method of applying critical equity frameworks to child welfare practice.

It interrogates the dominant ideas that inform our assumptions and stereotypes within child welfare decision-making as well as policies and procedures.

It acknowledges that both systems and individuals produce harmful outcomes when interacting with marginalized identities and mitigates this harmful impact (Mattson, 2014).

POWERFUL UNEXAMINED TRUTHS

- People on government assistance are unmotivated to work
- Immigrants come here to collect social assistance
- People on government assistance have it easy, they work the system
- Once on assistance, they always will be
- People on assistance are lazy
- Homelessness is a choice
- Help is available they choose not to access it
- Some kids belong in group homes
- Children are at risk in their communities
- Some children are better off in care
- Physical discipline is a cultural thing
- We have to help children in care achieve independence
- Some kids are not adoptable

Why are they “Powerful”

- They drive beliefs
- They drive decisions
- They drive intervention strategies
- They can drive policy

GENUINELY PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES

- CONSIDERING FAMILIES AS THE EXPERT
- LISTENING TO THEIR VOICES
- GIVING CHOICES
- ALLOWING FAMILIES TO DEVELOP SOLUTIONS
- ALWAYS LISTENING TO THE VOICE OF CHILDREN
- BUILDING FAMILY NETWORKS RATHER THAN SEPARATING FAMILIES

WHAT DID WE DO

- Humility: Acknowledge the past, look forward to the future
- Clear Vision: We will stop protecting children from their families and help families protect their own children
- Developed numerous new partnerships with community partners
- Comprehensive New Service Framework that is rooted in equity and safety planning
- Created new leadership positions in Equity and Service Implementation Lead
- Invested in Leadership, Emotional Intelligence training for all leaders
- Developed clear client service standards
- Comprehensive use of data, with clear indicators of success, transparent with our data

What Have We Achieved

- 30 % reduction of children in care in 2 years
- Established a Black advisory committee of community partners
- Significant increase in staff satisfaction
- 20% increase in all Ministry compliance audits
- Financial sustainable and balanced budget for 2018/19

**IT'S ALL GOOD... BUT
WE HAVE A LONG WAY
TO GO!!**