



# Where Are We Now and Where Do We Need To Be Going?

A look at the Diversity and AOP Committee  
At the Children's Aid Society of Brant

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Never doubt that a small group of committed  
citizens can change the world. Indeed  
it is the only thing that  
ever has

~ Margaret Mead ~

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## **Executive Summary**

The following report is intended to provide a 'snap-shot' of the work done by the Diversity and Anti-Oppressive Practice (AOP) Committee since it was formed in 2007. The report highlights some of the struggles that the committee has faced in trying to move forward with the implementation of previous recommendations received by staff and community members. Two recommendations are provided based on what this author feels is required in order to continue to move forward: (1) adapt the anti-oppression framework which focuses on organizational change; and (2) designate leadership in the form of quality assurance or training coordinator to see through the implementation of the framework as well as previous recommendations received to the committee. A brief explanation is then provided as to how and why this framework and leadership will enhance service delivery with the overall goal of maintaining child safety.

## **Introduction**

In September 2010 I began my internship at the Children's Aid Society of Brant; a requirement to complete my Master of Social Work degree from the University of Windsor. The focus of my internship was to work on various projects and initiatives from an anti-oppressive perspective with the intention of continuing to enhance the agency's efforts to become a more inclusive organization. This report is based on my internship experience and the feedback and observations that occurred during that period. I have compiled this into a report intended to provide additional feedback to the Diversity and Anti-Oppressive Practice (AOP) Committee as well as the larger agency.

This report is broken down in various sections. First, I will briefly describe AOP and why it's important to be having this discussion within child welfare. I will then provide previous recommendations that have been brought forward to the Diversity and AOP Committee that speaks to how Brant CAS can be a more inclusive and anti-oppressive organization. Following this, I will briefly outline what work has already been done based on these recommendations outlined, along with some of the challenges that the Committee has faced. I will then end the report with my recommendations as well as a brief explanation as to why the recommendations are important and why they should be considered.

It is important for me to acknowledge and recognize the difficulty in completing an internship within my current place of employment. This has presented itself with many challenges for me to have to consider given the uniqueness of the situation. These recommendations coming forward are a result of the work done within my internship; however I recognize that my practice knowledge has influence over the lens I look through. While I tried to separate my role as a student from my role as an employee, these lines quickly became difficult to differentiate. The recommendations included in this report are a result of the work I was assigned as a student. I have tried to remain as objective as possible, but also recognize that the history of the Diversity and AOP Committee is knowledge gained through my practice.

Respectfully,

*Leigh Savage*

## **What is Anti-Oppressive Practice (AOP)?**

It is important to first understand AOP and its importance within child welfare. Understanding this is key as it's the central focus of these recommendations. Dumbrill (2003) states, "anti-oppressive practice is concerned with eradicating social injustice perpetuated by societal structural inequalities, particularly along the lines of race, gender, sexual orientation and identity, ability, age, class, occupation and social service usage" (p.57).

The Child Welfare Anti-Oppressive Roundtable (October 2008) further explains AOP by citing Clifford (1995):

An anti-oppressive perspective looks at the use and abuse of power not only in relation to individual and organizational behaviour, but also in relation to broader social structures such as the health, education, political, economic, media and cultural systems and their routine provision of services and rewards to powerful groups. These factors impinge on people's life stories in unique ways that have to be understood in their socio-historical complexity (p.7).

The Child Welfare Anti-Oppressive Roundtable (October 2008) have provided six (6) principles as to why AOP is important within child welfare (p.7):

- An anti-oppressive perspective requires an understanding of the dynamics of privilege, power, oppression and social location
- An anti-oppressive perspective recognizes how our social identities impact our interactions with both service users and colleagues.
- Knowledge and skills are required in order to recognize, analyze and respond to all forms of oppression.
- Commitment to anti-oppression can transform child welfare structures and processes such as engagement, assessment, service planning, and service delivery.
- Being a change agent and an ally is integral to the role of child protection workers.
- Organizational strategies are required to create an inclusive workplace which can support the delivery of anti-oppressive services.

The Clinical Counselling in Child Welfare Committee (2010) notes that while these principles are attractive, the application can be difficult. After consulting with educators and theorists on how to "be" the anti-oppressive practitioner within child welfare, the committee provided twelve (12) recommendations (p.22-25):

1. We must listen to and value client knowledge.
2. We must be committed to transparency.
3. We must become comfortable with the discomfort of this work.

4. We must be self-reflective.
5. We must critically examine how we know what we know.
6. We must protect the child, but also the family.
7. We must “see double”
8. We must avoid blaming clients for problems with political causes.
9. We must address power imbalances in the worker-client relationship.
10. We must choose social justice.
11. We must live anti-oppressively
12. We must respect our clients.

### **Why is This Discussion Important?**

As a field, child welfare is often scrutinized and criticized for reinforcing the dominant societal values (white, upper class, heterosexual, male, able-bodied, Christian) on the most marginalized groups. Little consideration or thought is given to the reality of how these structural and societal injustices impact the most vulnerable families. The unintended consequence is that without this consideration, the field continues to impress upon the values and beliefs of the dominant class. Considerable research is available within the field that explores the demographic nature of who is involved in child protection services. Predominantly, those receiving services are the most marginalized and vulnerable groups; single mothers, Indigenous, lower income and racialized children and families (to name a few). Dumbrill (2003) has made significant contributions to the field of child protection by exploring the experiences of families accessing child protection services. His work outlines how families have often experienced a ‘power over’ approach, as opposed to a ‘power with’. Advocates in the field push towards a ‘power with’ approach to practice, while acknowledging that there needs to be space (i.e. policies and procedures) within the organization to enable practices to be more anti-oppressive.

Transformation has challenged the philosophy of child welfare practice. Prior to the current delivery model, child protection services were working under the umbrella of the Ontario Risk Assessment Model (ORAM); a deficit based model that did not explore alternatives for children or families. It was a heavy-handed approach that did not provide workers with the opportunity or space to consider the “strength and diversity of Ontario’s community-based children” (Child Welfare Secretariat, July 2005, p. 15). The unintended consequence of shifting from a deficit based to a strength based model is that staff have required additional support to challenge their existing views and perspectives that ORAM encouraged; such as the demonization of clients (“clients are bad”, “they don’t love their children”, “it’s all their fault”, “they don’t know any better”, etc) and the paternalism embedded in practice and philosophy (the clinician is the “expert”, they know how to “fix” the clients problem and how they should be raising their children). Without the proper support to challenge these paternalistic and

authoritarian notions that ORAM taught the child welfare field, Transformation cannot be successfully implemented as it is (or was) intended.

In October 2007 the Children's Aid Society (CAS) of Brant began its journey to become a more inclusive organization by examining their practices and policies with the families and children accessing child protection services. The Diversity and AOP Committee was created in response to a growing need to examine and "address the systems of power that are inherent in the child welfare system" (CAS Brant, summer 2008, p.2). The creation of the Diversity and AOP Committee helps to support the philosophical shift of Transformation to a more strength-based inclusive model of performing child welfare services. However, in order for this to be successful, a strong understanding of diversity and AOP needed to be discussed and explored at the organizational level. The committee recognized that this would be difficult given the philosophical shift that Transformation brought child welfare and having to challenge the views and perspectives of those involved in child protection services, however the committee has, and continues to remain dedicated to fighting social injustice.

## Previous Recommendations

Throughout the past three years, several recommendations have come forward to the Diversity and AOP Committee on how Brant CAS can become a more visible and inclusive organization. Recommendations were received from staff, community members and stakeholders.

### Diversity Survey

In April 2008 the Diversity and AOP Committee distributed a survey to all staff in an attempt to ascertain the needs of the agency. Only 18% of the agency responded. Of the respondents, staff indicated that they would like to see more training, increased agency support and communication as well as an organizational response to diversity issues.

### Position Paper

In 2008 the Diversity and AOP Committee created and disseminated their Position Paper. The purpose of the Position Paper was to recommend changes that would enhance the culture of Brant CAS as an inclusive, anti-oppressive agency where workers and families are treated "in a manner that respects cultural, religious, and regional differences" (Service Delivery Model, p.6). Six recommendations were made:

Enhance the agency's ***cultural competency*** through:

- Providing training
- Liaison with Immigrant and Settlement Services
- Establishing collaborative relationship with cultural groups within the community

- Recruit foster parents through this collaborative relationship with community groups
- Agency environment reflects a more diverse environment through toys, pictures, books, and resources.
- LGBTQ resources available for children and families

Enhance the agency's **communication** through:

- Distribution of AOP newsletter
- Enhancing visual cues of the agency through inclusive posters, books etc..
- Review policy and procedures
- Review accessibility of community sites
- Review the current agency logo and assess whether it is representative of families serviced

Enhance the agency's ability to **share power** through:

- Ensure all staff are provided with Andrew Turnell's "Signs of Safety"
- Advisory committee including clients and service providers to assess how the society can share power with marginalized groups.
- Regular enforcement of the complaint procedures

Enhance the agency's **interpretation of Kinship Services** through:

- Review of financial availability for kinship families
- Need for consistent agency standards regarding the acceptance or recommendation of kinship homes

Enhance the agency's **sharing of information** through:

- Review of under-utilized and misused programs throughout the agency.
- Shared accountability needs to take place between upper management, service managers and front line staff

Provide new **orientation for new staff members** by:

- Provide orientation training to help deliver important information regarding Brant CAS
- Establish a committee to assist in the development of an orientation training
- Ensure every new staff and foster parent is provided with Andrew Turnell's "Signs of Safety".
- Transfer of learning through Clinical Supervision
- Develop a Peer Mentorship Program

### **MSW Student**

From September 2008 - December 2008, Bharti Sethi, a Laurier University MSW student, completed her research practicum at Brant CAS. The focus of her research was to

explore the perception of CAS among the Brantford community, in particular with immigrant families. Following her practicum, her research was disseminated to the Diversity and AOP committee so that the recommendations could be taken forward. She provided six recommendations based on immigrant and service user perspective while offering her own synthesis of the work that is required.

***Initiate the formation of a CAS Advisory Committee:*** to develop and implement strategies to serve immigrant population.

- To assist with recruiting more volunteers and foster parents from diverse communities.
- Create specific tools and resources to assist staff work with immigrant families. For example, increasing familiarity of different languages of the ethnic groups that CAS encounters; accessibility to translators; accessibility to a list of key informants from different communities; understanding immigration status and its impact on service users.
- Setting up Best Practices for different cultures
- Collaborating with the Advisory Committee to assess safety risk, engage families in culturally relevant services.
- Develop flyers to inform immigrant population about the CAS preventative services, child-care etc. Have flyers in different languages.

***Collaborate with other service providers:***

- Meet with Immigrant Settlement Services (ISS) of YMCA to learn about the various outreach programs and services that are offered to immigrants. ISS arranges bus tours to show new immigrants services in Brantford. Look into a possible tour of CAS childcare providers.
- Improve the perception of CAS by participating in and organizing multicultural events – community pot lucks, picnics
- Do presentations – Women welcoming diversity, Host Program, Peace and Diversity Circle, Women’s Multicultural Group.
- It may be effective to contact CAS from Kitchener or Hamilton that may have had more experience with immigrant population. They may already have developed policies, programs, and resources that could be adapted to serve the immigrant population in Brantford.
- Collaborate with employers that employ a large percentage of immigrants e.g.: Germiphene, Apotex, Pharmachem, Johnson Wax.

***Build staff capacity in regards to cultural competence:*** to help staff go beyond cultural awareness and feel confident in their ability to provide services that is culturally competent.

- Develop a data base that tracks the client’s language and country of origin so culture specific resources can be developed to assist clients that are more

likely to either use CAS services or are experiencing challenges that requires CAS interventions.

- Keep staff updated on latest immigration laws and policies. Perhaps connect with an immigration lawyer or meet with current lawyers that CAS uses to strategize agency wide training on immigration issues. Also, it is integral that staff can access services of a lawyer for clarification in case of doubt about the immigration status of their client and take concrete steps that do not further jeopardize the safety of that client.
- Inform staff about the Pilot Portal project
- Have a resource area within the agency that all staff has freely access – in regards to immigration issues.
- Create or improve (if already in place) an on-line resource area specifically dealing with immigration issues: should be separate, visible, and easy to access. For example name and contact information of the Host coordinator, the ISS staff who is familiar with different ethnic groups, key informants, dates of multicultural community events, immigration laws. This information must be regularly updated.

***Improve visibility and perception of CAS in the ethnic and broader community:***

- Distribute these flyers where immigrants frequently visit – ethnic grocery stores, mosque, ESL classes
- Use media to advertise the preventative and community services that CAS provides
- Management can partner with other organizations that are working towards improving services to immigrant clients to organize a community event.
- Use inexpensive items such as toys, flags, posters representing different countries in the child care centers to make it more user friendly
- Participate in various community events
- Have representation in community sub-committees: Poverty, Domestic Violence, Immigration Settlement Training Employment and Partnership (ISTEP), BRAVE, VICAR, Peace and Diversity Circle etc.
- Initiate community “fun” events to create a community orientated and positive perception of CAS
- Collaborate with Advisory Committee to initiate programs and events that celebrate diversity and encourage the participation of immigrant youth and families.

***Creating an Anti-Oppressive Climate within the agency:***

- Reviewing current policies and procedures to promote a safe climate
- Collaborating with Diversity Committee to create a venue where agency staff can safely engage in dialogue regarding power issues, complaint procedure, experiences with other staff and managers, debriefing etc..

- Clarify procedures regarding staff development and practicum policies
- Provide training or literature on cultural competence

***Create a Database:***

- Track number of immigrant families that come to the agencies attention
- Track country of origin, immigration status, number of years in Canada, language – this will assist the agency to implement culturally appropriate services
- Such data will also be valuable to apply for funding dollars

## **What Has Been Done?**

Since the Position Paper (2008) has been distributed, there has been some work done on implementing recommendations; but this is certainly minimal. The following is a brief description of some the work that has been done thus far:

***Training:***

In 2008, a two-day training was offered for all staff and volunteers on AOP. This training was completed by Dr. Gary Dumbrill and Dr. June Yee. Following the training, staff identified a strong interest in having ongoing training offered and expressed a strong desire to continue to have resources and support available for them as they start to dissect and understand the structural imbalances that are imbedded in the practice they do within their community.

***Mentorship program for new staff:***

In 2009, Brant CAS implemented the new mentorship program for all new front line staff. The mentorship program was created to provide newer staff members with an opportunity to be matched with a more experienced staff member where they could discuss challenging issues and cases from a practice perspective while also assisting that new employee with navigating the child welfare system.

***Reference manual:***

A reference manual has been created throughout the duration of my placement. This manual has been created to provide each team and manager with concrete tools and exercises that could be used during clinical or group supervision. These tools can be used to challenge our beliefs and values and are intended to get people talking about diversity and to provide support as they try to understand how to balance the automatic authority that child welfare workers have with anti-oppressive practice. This manual is not intended nor should it be considered as a venue in which people will “arrive” at becoming an anti-oppressive practitioner, but to rather support each team by giving them a place to start to have discussions of power and domination.

## **A Committee in Need of Help**

Since the Diversity and AOP Committee submitted the Position Paper (2008), there has been difficulty in the implementation phase of the recommendations outlined in the previous section. Part of the struggle is that since the committee began, members have articulated three consistent concerns: (1) a lack of knowledge and skill in understanding and addressing oppression; (2) many members have said that they don't feel competent enough to take on a leadership role within the committee because they don't feel as though they have the skills and knowledge to carry forward the next steps; and (3) several members have said that even if they had the skills, knowledge and leadership skills, they simply don't have the time to take on another task above their daily obligations. This has resulted in the committee being stunted as members did not feel competent enough in the concepts of oppression and domination, or they did not have the time to take a leadership role. Therefore, the committee lost membership and the work stopped.

However, in Spring 2010 the Diversity and AOP Committee was revitalized and began to see a noticeable shift. New members were coming to the table, and effective leadership enabled the committee to establish focus and purpose by outlining the Terms of Reference. This document will help to guide the work done by the committee while providing a sense of accountability to all stakeholders.

Additionally, the Diversity and AOP Committee is now starting to engage in more conversations about social justice and advocacy. A standing item on the agenda is to engage in a reflective discussion regarding any social justice issue; not necessarily pertaining to child welfare. This is an important agenda item for the Committee as they recognize the importance in being able to deconstruct social issues while examining their own judgments and values.

The Committee continues to be dedicated in moving forward, however this goes without saying that stumbling blocks and challenges remain. The Committee continues to experience the three issues identified above as a major stumbling block in moving forward: a lack of knowledge, lack of leadership skills required in this area, and a lack of time in carrying forward the objectives. While members are interested in remaining involved with the committee, there is a clear lack of long-term strong leadership being identified by the committee - meaning having skills and knowledge in oppression and domination, and most importantly, having the time to commit are all factors as to why the Committee struggles with securing leadership and therefore moving forward.

## **Where Do We Need To Be Going?**

Throughout the duration of my internship, I've had the opportunity to hear from staff, managers and the Diversity Committee as to what they feel they need in order to enhance their practice from an AO perspective. I have provided two recommendations based on these observations and feedback.

### ***Recommendation #1: Adapt a Framework for Organizational Change***

In August 2010, the Ontario Child Welfare Anti-Oppression Roundtable (AOR) developed an Anti-Oppression Framework for Child Welfare in Ontario (2010). The framework was presented and endorsed by all Directors at the December 2010 Regional Directors Meeting. The framework focuses on a shift in organizational culture with the intent to provide more inclusive services to families involved in child protection services. It provides an illustration of the steps required for an agency to provide services in an anti-oppressive manner, while ensuring child safety. The framework provides a combination of organizational change processes (steps 1-4) along with an evaluation model (steps 5-8), which indicates what supports are necessary for the measurement and evaluation of current practices with a consistent evaluation of the impact on service users (p.19-26).

1. Identify the intended outcome(s)
2. Identify potential key challenges (factors that reinforce the status quo – knowledge and awareness, skills, attitudes, assumptions, institutional factors)
3. Ask questions (questions that challenge the status quo)
4. Identify levers (processes and structures that support organizational change)
5. Revisit outcomes/assess impact on service users
6. Shift institutional challenges into AO opportunities (identifying institutional supports that have power to reject (challenges) or adopt (opportunities) changes that come forward)
7. Identify individual, group and institutional/systemic action steps
8. Identify measures of success

In order to complete this framework, 109 participants from 44 different Children’s Aid Societies, including the Ontario Association of Children’s Aid Societies (OACAS) were consulted on how the field can be more reflective of AO principles (p.15). Participants identified six levers<sup>1</sup> as “instrumental sites of change for anti-oppression work” (H.Wong and J.Yee, August 2010, p.15); communication, learning and development, HR practices, involving service users, supervision and working with the community. In addition to this feedback, five recommendations emerged from the field which has aided in the creation of the AO Framework: (Wong and Yee, August 2010, p.16-17).

1. Anti-oppression in child welfare requires a change of culture reflected in the agency’s work along with a focus on changes in the outcomes of child welfare.
2. Anti-oppression should not be an add-on to the organization, it should be embedded in the values, mission, policies, processes and practices in the organization at all levels.

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<sup>1</sup> Levers are defined as a set of “processes and mechanisms that support institutional change towards anti-oppression outcomes” (H.Wong and J.Yee, p. 15, August 2010).

3. Anti-oppression is both a process and an outcome where progress is measurable as demonstrated change within the organizations work.
4. Agencies need to create a culture of openness and safety when implementing anti-oppression work.
5. More data on who we are serving and what we are doing in child welfare is necessary in order to be able to come up with better solutions.

It is therefore my first recommendation that the Children's Aid Society of Brant adapt this framework within the organization to help the agency move along the continuum.

***Recommendation #2: Designate Leadership***

My second recommendation is to designate leadership. This position could be (1) a training coordinator or (2) quality assurance. Assigning this role will help to provide the space for Brant CAS to continue to be seen as a leader in the field with a 'go-to' person visible at the AOR and with other surrounding agencies. The Diversity Tool Kit completed by the Child Welfare Secretariat (February 2008) states that:

The gold standard of diversity organizational change requires that the values of equity, inclusion and cultural competence be entrenched in every aspect of the organization's operations: its strategic goals, policies, decision-making processes, governance structure, staffing plans, program planning, service delivery, evaluation, and outreach to communities (p.19)

They continue to offer ten (10) steps in which a child protection organization can do in order to become a cultural competent "gold standard of diversity" (ibid) organization. At the time of this report, Brant CAS has accomplished the first three steps: (1) form a committee, (2) boldly state your organizations commitment to diversity and (3) conduct an organizational self-assessment (Child Welfare Secretariat, February 2008, pg.22). The Diversity Tool Kit (February 2008) continues to provide additional recommendations, but highlights the importance in assigning leadership with effective knowledge, skills and resources to see through the recommendations based on the organizational self-assessment in step four (4). The report suggests that for an organization who is dedicated in achieving culturally competent services, that they "use a diversity professional or other expertise to guide the planning and development of the strategy, and to serve as the catalyst for ensuring diversity issues permeate the organization in an integrated and strategic manner" (p.23). This report from the Child Welfare Secretariat (February 2008) helps to support the identified needs of the Diversity and AOP Committee as they've been articulating a need for leadership to carry forward the next steps.

**Training Coordinator:**

As already identified, the number one stumbling block of the Diversity and AOP Committee is the lack of knowledge and skill coupled with a lack of time to commit to additional work. A training coordinator could be responsible for (but not limited to):

implementing the recommendations made by the Diversity and AOP Committee as well as the work done by Bharti Sethi; collaborating with community service partners (e.g. immigration services); creating training modules and facilitate training for staff, managers, upper management, foster parents, community members, volunteers; reviewing policies and procedures so that they are more inclusive and developing an agency policy on diversity; chair and lead the Diversity and AOP Committee (which would then become an advisory committee), and seeing through the implementation of the anti-oppression framework.

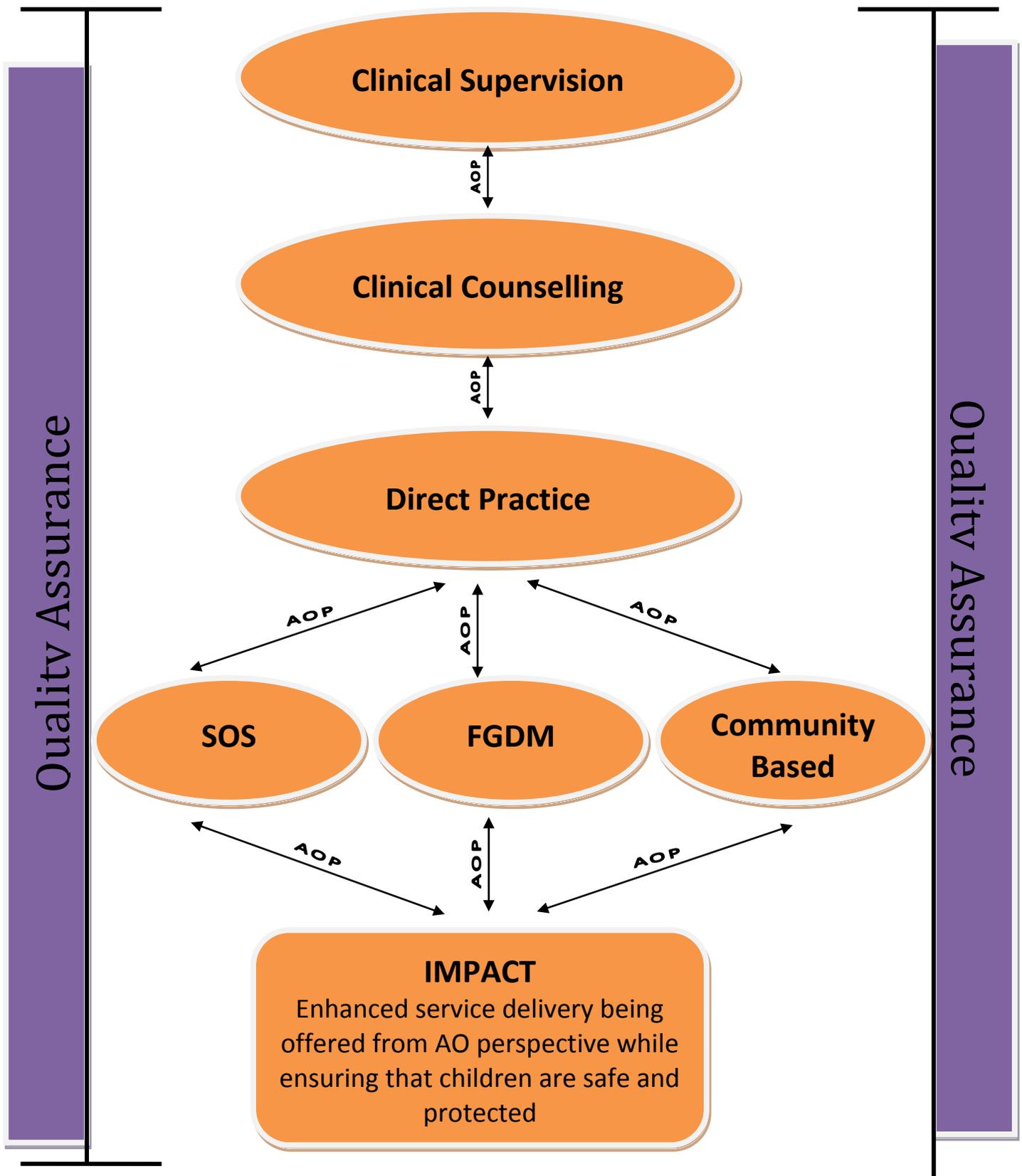
### **Quality Assurance (QA):**

While assigning leadership is important to help move the organization forward, it is also equally important to have accountability developed. Assigning a QA role that is responsible for both quantitative and qualitative data will provide the space for the agency to determine whether they are making gains in services being offered from a more anti-oppressive perspective. A QA role could help to assess what the experiences are of staff, community partners, crown wards, families, volunteers, and foster parents (to name a few). Historically, quality assurance has been guided by more quantitative data (numbers, percentages), however I am suggesting a shift in this philosophy to move towards hearing directly from the voices that have received service (qualitative data). In addition to this, an integral role of QA could help to assess and measure whether the identified outcomes are in fact being achieved when implementing the proposed framework for organizational change (as identified in step 1). This role could help to measure the quality of service being provided while also allowing the space to evaluate current practices that are in place. This evaluation of service and practices provides the opportunity for the organization to reassess and alter services in a way that is more anti-oppressive while taking into consideration the feedback derived from stakeholders.

### **How Could Leadership Help the Organizational Structure?**

To help explain how this leadership (as defined in the previous section) will help the organization move towards a more inclusive environment, I have developed a model (figure 1) to show the relationship of how AOP could be weaved into the practices (or could also be considered as levers) of the organization while having QA being the forum of accountability and measurement. It should be strongly noted that the model below should be considered alongside the proposed framework for organizational change and the recommended steps.

Figure 1\*:



\*The arrows connecting the different layers of the model demonstrate how working from an AO framework needs to be weaved into practice starting from the top. It is intended to demonstrate that in order to accomplish the desired impact, AOP needs to be integrated into current practices (levers) so that it can support each layer. In other words, integrating AOP is what holds the model together in order to achieve the desired result.

As suggested in figure 1, in order to weave AOP throughout the organization, it needs to start with clinical supervision - *at all levels, and not just at the hands of middle management*. Clinical supervision, which is a forum intended to help support staff through a mutual dialogue with their manager, can help to develop and enhance their understanding of the AO principles when working from anti-oppressive philosophy. “For Transformation initiatives to be effective, supervision should include such concepts as ‘critical thinking’, theory, and best practices service delivery to children and their families. It needs to confirm that child protection services can be delivered in culturally appropriate ways to diverse and marginalized communities while still protecting children” (Clinical Supervision Manual, p.6).

By performing clinical supervision through an anti-oppressive lens, it will help to enhance the workers ability to establish a relationship with their client. AOP has a strong role in exploring the worker-client relationship based on the inherent power imbalances. Clinical counseling done from an anti-oppressive perspective helps to nurture the worker/client relationship in an attempt to move away from the historical, paternalistic and risk focused relationship. The Clinical Counselling manual produced by the Clinical Counselling in Child Welfare Committee (2010) eloquently speaks of the importance of this relationship while not ignoring the importance that AOP has on clinical counseling:

Clinical counseling is not inherently anti-oppressive; however, it can be applied oppressively if we are not mindful of what it means to be anti-oppressive. The issue, therefore, is not whether child welfare practitioners are or should utilize clinical counseling in their work, but rather how they can do so purposefully in ways that support client empowerment and the pursuit of social justice, and also guard against the ways it might serve to reinforce or even enhance clients’ oppressions (Clinical Counselling in Child Welfare Committee, p.22).

The above quote speaks directly to the importance of working from or understanding what it means to be working from an anti-oppressive perspective when engaging in clinical counselling. Making the shift from a risk to a therapeutic relationship can be difficult. The Clinical Counselling in Child Welfare Committee (2010) argues, “over the last few decades a new generation of child welfare staff have had their practice shaped by the structured and standardized approach of the Ontario Risk Assessment Model along with the child protection standards that have been compliance-based. Indeed, it would seem that a transformation will need to occur within the collective and individual approach of the frontline staff for a clinical counselling role to take hold” (p.6).

Designating leadership will help to challenge the generation of workers where their practice had been guided by ORAM so that they can become “mindful of what it means to be anti-oppressive” (ibid,p.22). Additionally, by offering clinical supervision from an AO framework, it will help to challenge workers perception and attitudes of the families and children that they work with so that services can be provided from an anti-

oppressive perspective. It provides the space to engage in meaningful and critical conversations about the current structures and how those structures continue to oppress our most vulnerable and marginalized families.

Having clinical supervision being offered from an AO perspective will help to enhance the practitioners' ability to engage in a meaningful relationship with their client while having a deeper understanding of the impact of societal structural inequalities. In turn, it is hoped that this enhanced understanding of their authority and ability to establish a relationship with their client, will have a positive effect on the direct practice being provided – whether that be in the form of Family Group Decision Making (FGDM), Signs of Safety (SOS) or a Community Based philosophy. Each model is deeply rooted in AO principles, and each model is focused on the needs of the family/child. By offering direct service from an AO perspective it will hopefully enhance the delivery of the current practice models with the overall goal of maintaining child safety.

I do not want to negate the fact that striving to work from an AO perspective involves more than what was detailed in figure 1. As mentioned in previous sections, it involves establishing relationship with community members, reviewing policies and procedures, and offering education (to simply name a few). It involves looking at the AO Framework critically. The model identified is simply one tool to show how the organization can strive towards their ultimate goal: keeping children safe while providing services from an anti-oppressive perspective

### **How Does QA Fit into the Framework?**

As mentioned in previous sections, I am recommending a stronger focus on obtaining qualitative data. Within the suggested framework in Figure 1, QA is seen on the peripheral. The role of QA therefore is to ensure that the process has accountability and measurement. So how is this done? As already mentioned, in order to obtain true qualitative data, the organization needs to hear directly from the stakeholders (clients, foster parents, volunteers, staff, crown wards, community partners). Quality assurance will provide the space to determine what the reaction is of those receiving service and how service delivery can be enhanced.

Additionally, the anti-oppression framework is outcome based with space to measure success in the agency's identified action steps. QA will help to determine whether the agency is meeting the intended outcome and whether current practices are being implemented the way that they are intended.

For an agency to undergo this type of measurement and evaluation requires support. I recommend assistance be offered to help gather, interpret and disseminate the findings. This assistance can come in the form of collaborating with Universities as a project for MSW or PhD students to assist with.

## **Conclusion**

It is my intention that this report will be reviewed and considered for the possibility in searching for a creative resolution to a complex proposal. I recognize that this is a difficult financial time within child welfare, however I can only hope that the organization will recognize the need, and see the value of dedicating leadership to help enhance Brant CAS' inclusivity. Although the Diversity and AOP Committee has had a difficult time, they will continue to persevere and advocate for the voices less heard.

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