

## Video: Let the Rivers Flow Community Program Perspectives Panel Question and Answer Session

Date of Video: November 3, 2023

Speakers: Amber Holmes (moderator), Lori Huston (panelist), Tammy Loon (panelist), Roxanne Fobister (panelist), Yan Chen (panelist), Lisa Sloan (panelist), Shyanne Polson (panelist), Patty Douglas (panelist), Kathryn Underwood (IECSS Project Director), Audience members.

Length of video: 1:31:31

Amber Holmes: Thank you so much, Patty and to everyone else. I was listening on my drive up- I was listening to the stories of the folks that were here yesterday, and I keep hearing this thing about labels and how labels are good, labels are bad, labels- but it's a colonial construct, right? To require a label and for some that label has been life saving, it's changed the course of their life because they were able to get services. For others that label is hard to come by or you get mislabelled and then that has an effect. One of the individuals yesterday spoke to not having a label and how that was very hard because they didn't know what they were experiencing. I think they said they lived 43 years and didn't realize that they were in pain for 43 years. Not having answers is tough and for the folks in Grassy Narrows, the fact that doctors refuse to use a label is a continuation of colonial violence. That the refusal to use a label that would actually require governmental entities to do something, to take responsibility. So, we won't use the term mercury poisoning because then we'd have to do something about it. So, there's no easy answer obviously when we require labels to get services and I know some of the recommendations around not requiring that diagnosis to get support, so I don't know if we have any questions? No questions from the audience, no questions here. I will remind everyone we have our jam boards we have one online we have one back here, so at any point-

Audience member: If I may-

Amber Holmes: Oh, yes.

Kathryn Underwood: (inaudible, 1:22:13)

Audience member: I'm just formulating my thoughts. So, I'm just wondering why we need to have that diagnosis and the label in order to get the government to focus on Grassy Narrows because those children haven't been getting services even though they know from the community that it's mercury poisoning. Why is it that they won't label it?

Yan Chen: Can I say something about that? So, that's why I had to ask that question in regards to referrals because I work in a field that I have to get that funding for my children that are in my care. Right, so that's the thing that is really, really disheartening to think that you need them to be labelled in order for them to get that care. Like I said,

the Grassy Narrows issue that they needed that care, they needed that label but yet they refuse. It's just one spectrum to the next like it's baffling but however, for children to actually get that care in line or in the daycares- because like the teacher said, right? Carroll- you know, you'll see all these children when they come to school that's when they notice all that stuff. But right now, I'm with children from 0-3 months to six years and if you don't realize that they need that care there's also that stigma like you mentioned, that parents don't want- that's one of the big barriers is that parents don't want to come forward and say there's something wrong. That's one of my biggest jobs we're -actually approach the parents and say 'you know what? There's nothing wrong but these are the observations I have, like my staff have observed and this is what going to do and how we can help the child.' I don't ever come out and say 'there's something wrong with the kid.' We want to make sure that we help them all holistically, the whole child. So, that's why we offer like the help like um- our Elders come in and we actually have counsellors also but then having the OT, PT, and speech is very important. But in a place like Brandon, it's 15,000 people but we still don't have those people- we have one speech pathologist. We have a child right now who required a special- I had to fight for four months to get a special stroller-this special stroller that's \$4,000 (inaudible 1:25:40-1:25:43)- they wouldn't pay for it so, I actually had to fight with like five agencies for that child's needs to be met. So, the labels they work in some way but then you also don't want these labels. So, for you to be given that funding from the government, you have to put a label to it and that's the worst part about it is you don't want to label the child with anything but you also- but they'll refuse the care unless you give them a label, you know what I mean? So, it goes both ways. I haven't answered anything, but it bothered me anyway.

Amber Holmes: Yes, we have another question?

Audience member: Hi, sorry. I'm going to apologize before I even speak because there's just a lot of thoughts going in my head and my name is (name removed). I come from British Columbia. I work for the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society and there's so many connections with the previous presentation and all sort of three of you of this presentation so- my head is like this. One of the things when Keepers of the Circle was speaking that came to me was in British Columbia, one of the things that we were finding over COVID is that we seemed to- we already had a bit of an outdoors movement um, both in mainstream and um, in First Nations and urban population program- preschool child care programs and as a matter of fact, the province we're going through a process to be able to provide licensed fully outdoor programs so that they don't actually have to have a physical building. Um, and many programs in community ran cultural programs, primarily on the land. There's tonnes of examples I can give you around that so that was really interesting but also one of the reports that we're getting a lot is that there's a huge reduction in what we would typically call challenging behaviour. So, the consultants that go out to see children- because they were coming to see those children they couldn't go in a child care program- they had to see them in an outdoor setting they go to observe them and they wouldn't be observing

challenging behaviour that would normally be there. So, that's part of it. Um, a lot of our 0-5 supports that we provide you don't actually need a diagnosis in British Columbia, it's based on a functional situation so, if the family, if the child care worker believes that child would be more successful and can articulate what's the challenge functionally then you don't have to have an official label or diagnosis of any kind. Our agency is the only Aboriginal child care resource and referral program in the country I believe, so our job is to provide educational support, consultation, research, advocacy- that's sort of the program I manage. But beyond that we also house a number of other things where the coordinating body that's been mandated from the First Nations Leadership Council in British Columbia to administer the federal transfer dollars for Indigenous early learning and services, we work directly with community to directly fund what they think is important in their communities. We also house Jordan's Principle service enhancement coordination hub so we support all resource coordinators in the province so some of what was coming up today for Grassy Narrows and different folks was 'what about a Jordan's Principle application? What about a group application?' like, if you can't find a stroller, if you can't get a speech and language therapist to come funded by the province like, apply to Jordan's Principle and tell them that you need it. If you need cultural support and you need to fund it apply to Jordan's Principle and get more support. I mean, I say that, but BC is actually so far behind with Jordan's Principle. I mean everybody else is like ahead of us so I'm not really- you know I imagine you've tried and thought of that but- um, anyways. There's so many things and so many questions and I feel like not organized but, I really appreciated the Re-Storying um, of- I'm sorry I forgot his name already, but it was a really beautiful story and I really appreciated hearing from all of you and everyone this morning and like yes my point is (inaudible, 1:30:27-1:30:31).

Amber Holmes: To be mindful of the time we do need to wrap it up. I'm going to encourage and we have thoughts um, because I believe this is something that makes it uh, more accessible for us to connect is through jamboards. So, we've got our online Jamboard and our Jamboard at the back here. I'm heading back there myself so I'm sure you and I are going to have a great discussion over there. We're going to break for lunch and we're going to come back at-

Kathryn Underwood: One o'clock.

Amber Holmes: One o'clock, okay see you everybody then.

Patty Douglas: Okay, so see you.

Kathryn Underwood: Bye, Patty.

Patty Douglas: Bye for now.

End: 1:31:31