

Image description for “Challenging MCFD’s culture of risk and surveillance” visual policy primer

An illustrated, hand-lettered graphic explaining MCFD’s culture of risk and surveillance, the harms it causes, and the need for change. The graphic is predominantly teal, grey, and pink. The logos of West Coast LEAF and the Federation of Community Social Services of BC appear at the bottom, along with the name of the artist, Michelle Buchholz, and the logo for her company, Cassyex Consulting.

At the centre of the graphic is a large drawing of a cupped palm holding multicoloured words that represent the project values: Equality, Justice, Accountability, Decolonization, Wholism, Trauma-Informed, Family-Centred, Relationship-Centred, Cultural Safety, Harm Reduction, and Self-Determination.

The following text and illustrations surround the drawing of the hand:

Text: “In the family policing system, workers assess families for ‘risk’ using their clinical judgement and tools like checklists and questionnaires.”

Illustration: A police hat and a checklist where the text next to the checkboxes is represented as scribbles.

Text: “The risk assessment process often views family struggles as individual failings, not as reflections of systemic injustices like racism and poverty. The system unjustly blames families and regards them as deficient.” Illustration: An adult with chin-length black hair, and two children or youths, one with short black hair and one with chin-length black hair. All three have sad or concerned expressions on their faces. The adult and one child have light brown skin, and the other child has peach-coloured skin.

Text: “The current approach to risk does not address how colonization, racism, ableism, classism, and misogyny are built into the culture and practices of the government. Judgements about risk in the family policing system are

often based on harmful, discriminatory assumptions. Stigma may lead a child welfare worker to incorrectly assume that a child is in danger just because a parent uses substances.” Illustration: Three pieces of paper. The top page has a checklist on it and text that reads, “Families may not even know they are being assessed. They feel pressured to go along with it.” The bottom page says “Fear” in large, bold, all-caps letters.

Text: “Families often fear (for good reason) that they will be punished or ignored if they offer alternative understandings about their strengths and struggles. The risk assessment process lacks transparency.” Illustration: A megaphone blasting out sound.

Text: “The outcome: The family policing system is tearing families apart and profoundly harming kids and parents.” Illustration: Outlines in silhouette of an adult and two children who are separated and reaching for each other.

Text: “The solution: Work with Indigenous Nations, communities and impacted families to develop and affirm new ways of understanding and promoting safety. Hold government accountable to address the structural problems that put families at risk! Create processes and systems that support families to stay together and honour each family’s strengths and needs.” The words “The solution” are arranged in the shape of a rainbow-like arc, and each key point about the solution is in the shape of a bubble.

Text: “Take action. Have your organization sign our open letter to the Premier and Select Standing Committee on Children, Youth and Families. Send a letter to your MLA.” The words “Take action” are on a waving pink banner.

