

GLOSSARY

Administrative violence

Administrative violence “draws attention to the ways in which systems that organize our lives in seemingly ordinary ways – determining what ID we carry, what government records exist about us, how roads or schools or garbage pick-up are organized – produce and distribute life chances based on violent forms of categorization. [...] [E]xperts invent and deploy categories that manage and sort people, substances, buildings, curricula, human capacities etc.”¹⁹⁹ Often these categorizations are presented as normal and neutral, and mask how they uphold colonial, racist, ableist etc. frameworks. The state presents these ways of organizing life as neutral and ordinary, helping them entrench harm into daily life.

Anti-violence supports

Programs, policies, and campaigns aimed at combating and reducing various forms of violence in society, including physical, emotional, and structural violence, and supporting survivors.²⁰⁰

British Columbia (BC)

This report uses “BC” to refer to the Government of British Columbia and the lands that are colonially known as the Province of British Columbia.

Carceral

Carceral is the approach and process that relies on the state to control and punish people in the name of safety. This includes maintaining prisons and police, and extends to the idea that we must rely on the government for safety, including for the safety of children and youth. In reality, carceral approaches create more ongoing violence.²⁰¹

Coercive control

Coercive control is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation, and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten a victim. This controlling behaviour is designed to make a person dependent on the person who is harming them by isolating them from support, exploiting them, depriving them of independence, and regulating their everyday behavior.²⁰²

Cultural safety

Cultural safety is a practice for those in positions of power (including frontline staff), to recognize the historical, economic, and social contexts, coupled with structural and interpersonal power imbalances, that shape people’s outcomes and experiences with systems like family policing. For Indigenous peoples, this means naming and recognizing the past and present role of colonialism.²⁰³

Family policing

Often known as child welfare or child protection, the family policing system narrowly focuses on assessing whether to remove a child from their home. Thus, the system focuses on scrutinizing parents or caregivers and families as “risks” to their children.

The family policing system maintains power and control over the lives of families and children—most often Indigenous families and children—through surveillance, regulation, and punishment.

Family policing investigations

Family policing investigations refer to the process that occurs after a family is reported to the government. Families are subject to multi-stage investigation processes where they experience surveillance and monitoring of their behaviors, relationships, and home life. If an investigation confirms the existence of perceived child safety concerns, there are a range of possible protection responses. These range from negotiating a voluntary agreement with the parents to removing the child from the parents’ legal custody through the court.

Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) is “violence that is inflicted upon a person or persons due to their gender identity, gender expression, or perceived gender.”²⁰⁴ It impacts women and all people impacted by gender-based discrimination, including Two-Spirit, non-binary and queer people, and trans people of all genders. It can include sexual violence, assault, rape, stalking, etc.

Ghost fathers

Ghost fathers is a term to describe how the family policing system does not acknowledge or engage with the presence of fathers in the lives of mothers and children, even when they are present to some capacity. Research has demonstrated that family policing workers will often see fathers as irrelevant or a risk to the child and/or mother and then make little effort to engage or contact fathers.²⁰⁵

Government custody

Government custody refers to when a child(ren) is removed from the care of their family by the family policing system and placed with someone else. This can include kinship care arrangements when family policing workers are monitoring and controlling these placements. For example, a grandma may step up to be a kinship carer but may then be required to sever the relationship with her adult child to be allowed to care for her grandchildren.

“Foster care” is part of government custody when children are placed with strangers or in more institutional settings like group homes. Risk is much higher for children in “foster care.” The process of government custody can occur before the formal court process of terminating parental rights and occur under “voluntary arrangements.”

There is movement to move away from the term “in care” as it implies children were not being cared for by their family and instead it is up to the government to provide care. This conflicts with research findings about people’s experiences in government custody.²⁰⁶

Indigenous justice

Indigenous justice refers to the process of each Indigenous Nation restoring and implementing their laws, legal practices, and protocols to oversee how to address conflict and harm for their Nation members, whether they are a survivor or the one who caused harm.²⁰⁷

Informed choice

Informed choice is a process where someone has all the information that they need to weigh the risks and benefits of a decision, that they can have all their

questions answered, and that they are allowed to make the decision for themselves, free from pressure or threat.²⁰⁸

Intimate partner violence

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a predominant form of GBV and is reflective of what most community experts encountered either as survivors or as supporters to survivors. IPV is the “abuse of power by one partner in a dating, common-law, married, or otherwise intimate relationship. This abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional, financial, social, cultural, or a combination of some or all of these.”²⁰⁹

Mandatory reporting

Mandatory reporting (also known as the duty to report) is the universal legal “duty to report” suspected child abuse/neglect to the Ministry of Children and Family (MCFD). Mandatory and permissive reporting laws often lead to misreporting, which results in over-reporting, due to vague and subjective definitions like neglect, reporter fear, implicit bias, and a “when in doubt, report” culture.²¹⁰

Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD)

The Ministry of Children and Family Development is the government department that is given power through the *Child, Family and Community Services Act (CFCSA)*. This agency employs family policing workers (Ministry workers) to investigate and maintain oversight of children, youth, and families. This government department also funds many family support services within BC.

MCFD also has significant oversight and discretion over delegated Indigenous Child and Family Service Agencies (ICFSA). Delegated ICFSAs retain some independence from MCFD, such as hiring their own employees. Other ICFSAs have total jurisdiction if they are overseen by an Indigenous Nation that has reached a coordination agreement with BC.

Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity is the idea that all brains are diverse in how they work – no two brains or nervous systems are the same.²¹¹

People who are marginalized based on gender

We use the phrase “people who are marginalized based on gender” to refer to all people who face gender discrimination, not only women. This includes Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans people of all genders (not only women), queer, intersex, non-binary, and gender non-conforming people.

Person who caused harm

Person who caused harm is a term used to resist stereotypes, binaries, or minimize the wholeness of a person. Terms such as accused and offender are legal expressions rooted in colonial law.

Racial capitalism

Racial capitalism refers to the process that used racial categories to normalize and naturalize labour roles and access to resources. The most prominent example of this was the Atlantic Slave Trade. Today, racial capitalism operates on a racial division and hierarchy to pit workers and their communities against each other and normalize structural inequalities like lack of resources on reserves, underpaying migrant workers, and blaming migrants for rising housing costs.²¹²

Restorative justice

Restorative justice is a process focused on “restoring or repairing relationships after someone has caused harm or a rupture in the relationship. It emphasizes the importance of individual people and their direct community connections receiving support and working toward healing after harm. This may be described as making a person whole after they have been harmed.”²¹³

Saviourism

Saviourism is the idea that assumes some people need someone to save them and that without intervention and guidance they will not survive. It is predominantly expressed through white saviourism, a colonial idea that assumes Black, Indigenous and racialized people, need white people to save them.²¹⁴ In the context of GBV, it can look like people dictating to survivors what they need to do for their own safety.

Self-determination

Self-determination is both an individual and collective process and goal. It is the ability to make important decisions about one’s life. For Indigenous nations,

it includes the ability to make collective decisions about governance, including nation membership, laws (including child and family well-being), economics, etc. without interference from the state.²¹⁵

State violence

State violence refers to violence that is perpetrated by the government, its systems, or its employees or actors. State violence includes violence by law enforcement, prisons, immigration policies, and economic systems.²¹⁶

Structural violence

Structural violence refers to the physical and psychological harm that result from exploitative and unjust social, political, and economic systems.²¹⁷

Transformative justice

Transformative Justice (TJ) is a “political framework and approach for responding to violence, harm, and abuse. At its most basic, it seeks to respond to violence without creating more violence,” understand the structural conditions that allowed the violence to occur, “and/or engaging in harm reduction to lessen the violence.”²¹⁸

Web of surveillance

Web of surveillance is a framework to understand how the family policing system has created a network of actors who judge and control how families adhere to standards of “child safety” and “protection.” These network of actors are framed as neutral and normal, and mask how colonialism, racism, ableism etc. inform these standards. For example, this can include a practice like co-sleeping with an infant or children of different sexes sharing a bedroom, all of which can lead to a report to the family policing system.

Surveillance and enforcement of these norms happen through mandatory reporting laws that turn people who could be a support for families into the eyes and ears of the state. The surveillance continues in how families are investigated and assessed by family policing workers and how their relationship with their children is controlled and dictated by the workers, including after children are removed from their families.²¹⁹