



Adjusting to Life in Canada: Experiences of Racism & Discrimination, and the Child Welfare System

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Presentation Outline

- 1. Presentation Objectives**
- 2. Project Background & Definitions**
- 3. Literature Review**
- 4. Child Welfare Collaboration Model Overview**
- 5. What We Learned**
- 6. Discussion**



Presentation Objectives

1. Provide an overview of the historical experiences of immigrant, refugee, and newcomer families with racism & discrimination in the child welfare system in North America.
1. Provide an overview of a collaborative model between MCHB and Alberta's Children and Family Services, serving families in Edmonton.
1. Discuss the impact of the racism and discrimination immigrant, newcomer, and refugee families in Edmonton face in the child welfare system.



Background

- ❖ Research project “Exploring the role of Cultural Brokers as intermediaries between immigrant and refugee families and child welfare workers” (SSHRC 2018-2025)



Image from Multicultural Health Brokers' Cooperative Collaborative, <https://mchb.org>

3. Literature Review



The Historical Experiences of Families in the Child Welfare System

People of colour, particularly Black, Indigenous, and Latinx people, are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system (Caldwell & Sinha, 2020; Merritt, 2021).

Contributing factors to the disproportionality: lack of cultural competence among child welfare staff, a lack of racial awareness, cultural misunderstanding, & high caseloads (Cénat et al., 2021; Johnson et al., 2009).



Cultural Brokers & Service Providers

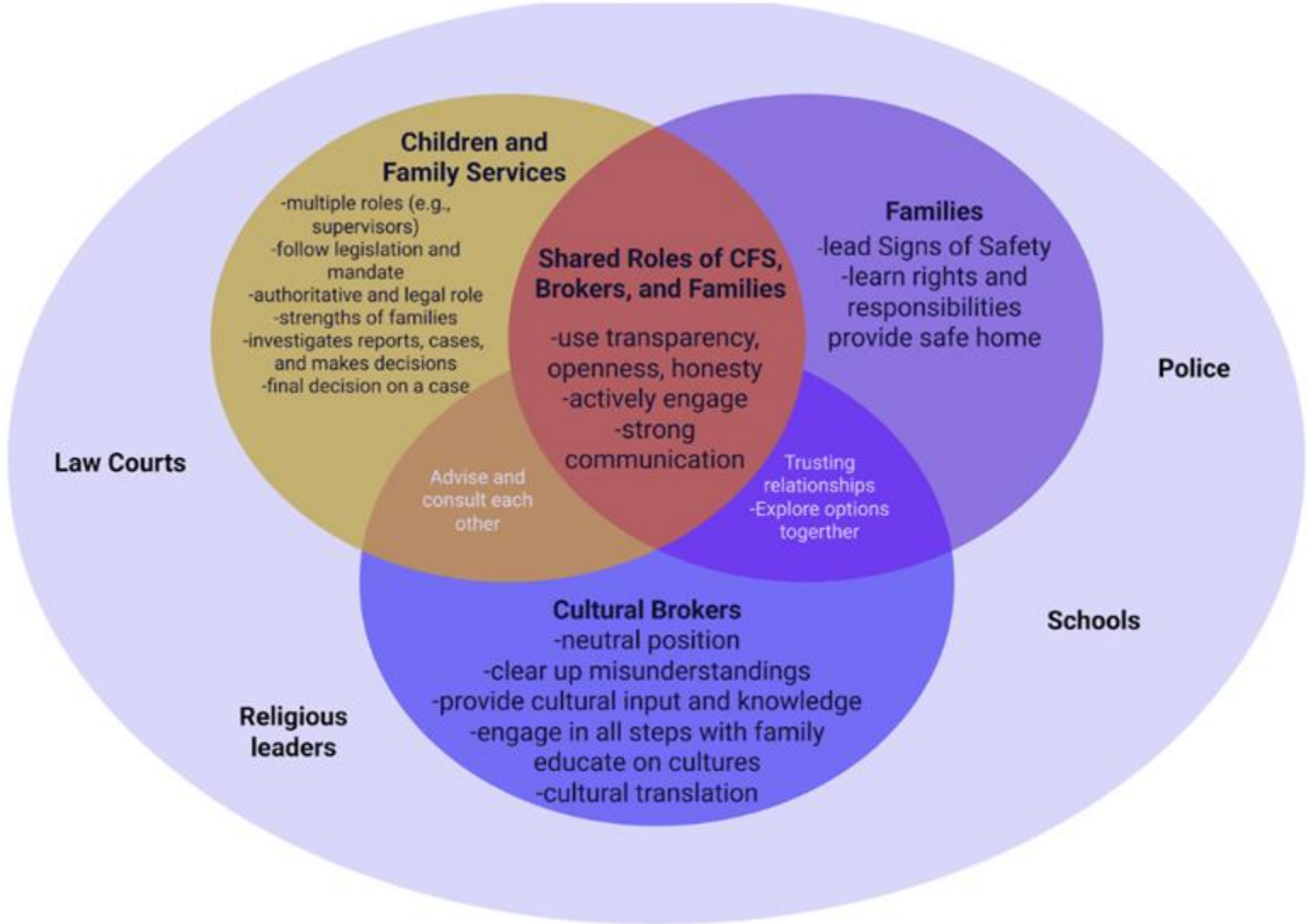
Cultural Brokers mediate this divide as a bridge between service providers and clients by “fostering and facilitating critical intercultural communication with Children and Family Services (CFS) workers and immigrant and refugee families” (Torres et al., 2020).



4. Child Welfare Collaborative Model Overview



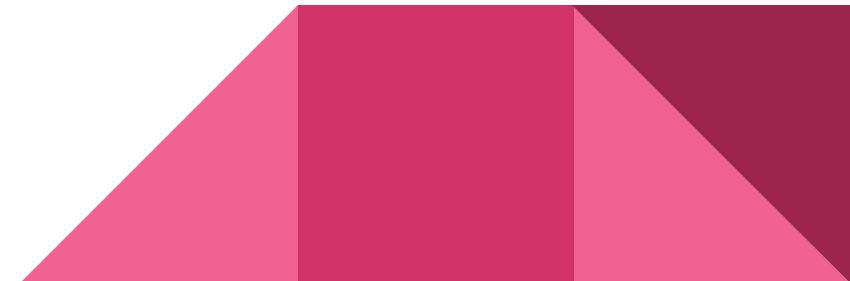
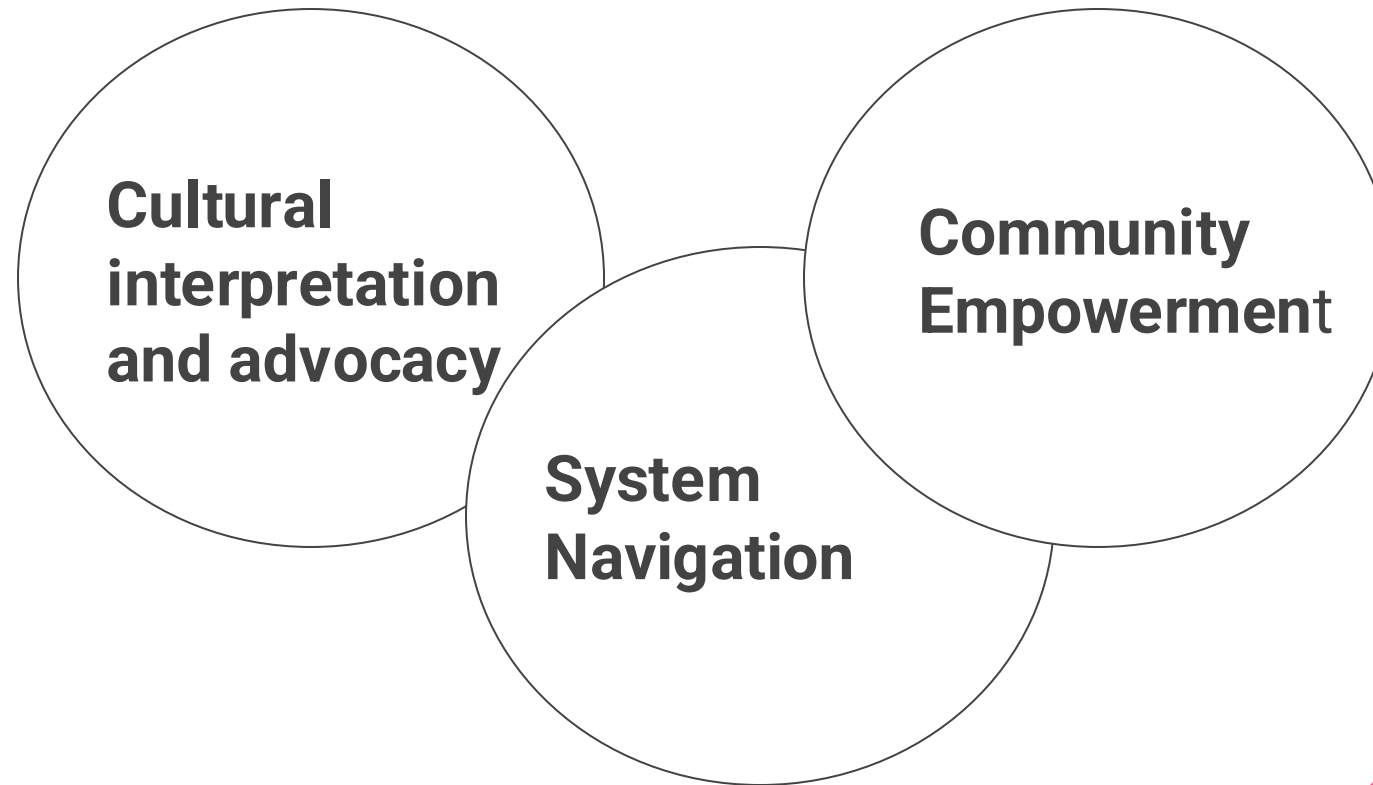
Overview of the Collaborative Model



What We Learned Preliminary Results



Cultural Brokers: Addressing families' experiences of discrimination and racism within the child welfare system



How do Cultural Brokers support families who face discrimination?

Cultural Interpretation and Advocacy

“This is some of the cultural norms and that when there’s husband in the home, there’s father in law in the home, they take the lead [...]. [- ...That does not mean this women has been

“Women are bringing money, men are not...men become very defensive...” [Community Dialogue]

Brokers advocate for families’ cultural practices to be understood in child welfare decisions.

“To take time to understand cultural considerations and not jump into conclusions.” [CB/LB-241]

Brokers address changes in family dynamics caused by cultural shifts by facilitating discussions about evolving gender roles and family dynamics.

How do Cultural Brokers support families who face discrimination?

Systemic navigation

Brokers are experts in providing culturally appropriate services.

Brokers bridge gaps in understanding systemic differences between home countries and Canada

“we help them [family]. to understand a little bit of the cultural areas that can be [...]. different from what they are familiar with” [CB/LB-263].

“because back home, if you call the police, the police come and the police would just be like [- -]. but here, if the police came, and then you have children and they are going to call the children services” [CB/LB-203]

How do Cultural Brokers support families who face discrimination?

**Community
Empowerment**

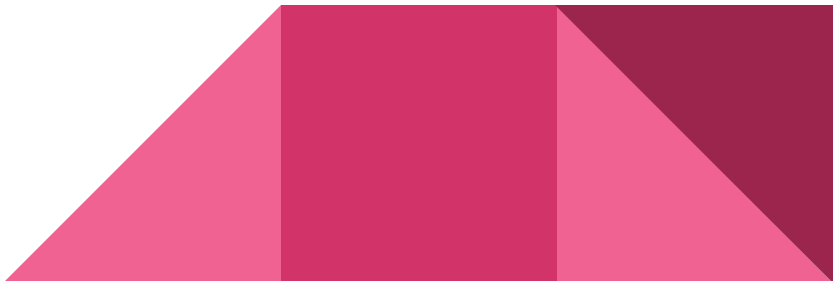
**Brokers create
supportive spaces for
families (e.g.
intercultural exchange
programs)**

You have this mentality that these people will just racialize me...” [Focus Group]

“there might be more reporting because of the colour of skin, or their ethnic background, I mean all of those things” [CS-303].

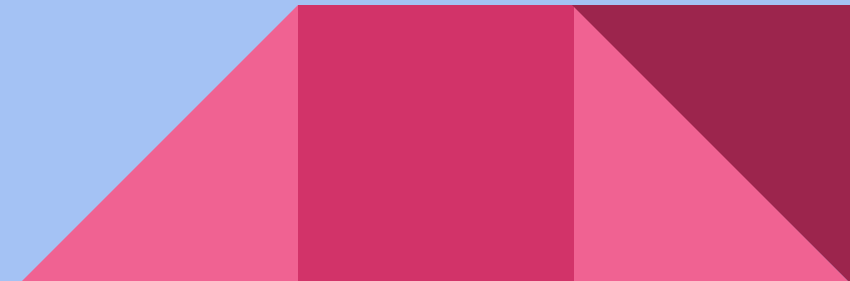
Discussion

Impact of racism and discrimination on cultural brokers' work with families involved in the child welfare system.

- ❖ Families are not always heard in dealing with the child welfare system owing to racism and discrimination.
 - ❖ Cultural brokers help mitigate the impact of racism and discrimination while also experiencing it themselves.
 - ❖ Through community empowerment, cultural brokers foster trust and belonging, connecting families to resources, and supporting intercultural exchanges to promote inclusivity and stronger communities.
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Thank you!

If you have any questions, please hold them until the end of the workshop, or email storres@laurentian.ca at your own convenience.



References

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