

OUTCOME BASED SERVICE DELIVERY (OBSD) UPDATE



Happy Holidays
2011



November /
December, 2011

What's Happening with OBSD?

Update by Sandra Maygard

Over the last few weeks and months, I have heard people saying:

- We haven't heard much about OBSD lately, is anything happening?
- What will the impact be on the OBSD initiative, with the changes of a new Premier, Ms. Redford, a new Minister, Mr. Hancock and a new Department of Human Services?

While it is too early to predict all of the changes coming from these events, I have had the privilege and benefit of sitting at tables and talking to the people who are very consciously and purposefully moving OBSD forward.

The work of implementing OBSD has moved forward, in what has felt like lightening speed for some of us:

→ Over **15% of the open child welfare files within the province are being handled within an OBSD framework.**

Dr. Bill Madsen, during his training session in Calgary said: "We will begin to really see a change when the numbers reach between 15-20%". Based upon

this, it is expected that the shifts happening as a result of OBSD, will shortly be more readily seen, felt and understood on a larger scale.

→ The first **Aboriginal OBSD phase-in site** was recently announced in Edmonton and awarded to the Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society and Boyle Street Community Services for their proposed OBSD model **Kahkiyaw Ayisi-yinowak Ka Wahkohtot (Kahkiyaw)** which means "all people, especially traditional peoples, are related".

Kahkiyaw is a project, a business model and vision for the future based upon culture informing the development of the model, collaboration and sharing a common vision. In the executive summary of their proposal it states: "The decision by the Edmonton Child and Family Service Authority (CFSA) Region 6 to shift towards OBSD presents an unprecedented opportunity to improve the lives of Aboriginal children, youth and families. The CFSA has made positive moves in recent years to work collaboratively with community agencies.

Inside this issue:

<i>What's Happening with OBSD?</i> Sandra Maygard	P. 1-3
<i>A Shift in Language: The Use of and Understanding of Commonly Used Words</i> Sandra Maygard	P. 4-5
<i>Upcoming Events</i>	P. 6
<i>Contact Information</i>	P. 6
<i>Holidays of Light</i>	P. 7
<i>Tools</i>	
<i>Readiness Assessment</i>	P. 8
<i>Consolidated Workshop</i>	P. 8
<i>Notes -Dr. Lonne Vignettes</i>	P. 9
<i>Resources</i>	P.10-11

By contracting a lead community agency to deliver a continuum of services that is based on culture, family and community, the OBSD methodology has the potential to take child and family services to the next level. Many are excitedly talking about a paradigm shift. OBSD could fundamentally change the way stakeholders, from the families and the broader community to professionals and government, perceive and approach child and family services in Region 6.” (Executive Summary: Kahkiyaw Ayisiyinowak Ka Wahkohtot: A Model for Region 6 Aboriginal Outcomes Based Service Delivery Submission, Sept 2011)

This initiative is expected to be operational by February 2012 and is generating a lot of excitement in that it is a learning opportunity, for all of us, to experience a very different approach to working with Aboriginal children, families and communities.

With over 66% of the current children in care being Aboriginal and the expectation of huge growth within the Aboriginal communities over the next twenty years, the overall goal within the sector is to avoid the Manitoban experience of having over 95% of the children in care, being Aboriginal.

→ Over the last few months there has been **numerous training sessions and opportunities for people to come together to learn and discuss issues** that are related to OBSD:

1. Dr. Bill Madsen provided an overview of the **Signs of Safety** approach to working in child protection to:

- Almost 100 staff from different agencies in Calgary September 19-20 (hosted by Woods Homes) and
- The Family Centre staff in Edmonton on September 21-22
- The Signs of Safety approach has been adopted and/or is seriously being considered as the practice framework in 7 of the regions.

2. Training on the Family Assessment Form (FAF), a valid and reliable tool was offered in Edmonton, Slave Lake and Red Deer the week of October 23-28. The FAF tool is being used quite extensively by agencies across the province and is gaining momentum as a tool that is able to provide outcome data on families.

There is a [free trial download](#) (to allow people to look at and play with the tool:

<http://familyassessmentform.com>

he tool will be **web-based** in the United States as of the beginning of the New Year. There has been interest expressed by many Alberta agencies in having a Canadian based server. As such, the Children’s Bureau is open to having discussions with potential hosting agencies. If you are interested please contact: "Sarayu (Saru) Ramanan:

sarayuramanan@all4kids.org

Hopefully this will become a reality within the next few months.

3. Dr. Bob Lonne, co-author of **Reforming Child Protection** was in Alberta the week of November 14-18 speaking about the issues involved with **Re-Imagining the Child Protection System**. While many of his experiences in Australia are relevant to Alberta, he was clear that the answers to an improved child protection system in Alberta, need to be created within an Albertan context.

- Over 180 agency ministry and CFSA staff attended one-day workshops in either Edmonton or Calgary;
- He was the keynote speaker at the *Learning Our Way* Symposium. His presentation was “live-streamed” to 105 distinct sites. Based upon prior experience, it is estimated that approximately 1000 people may have heard Bob’s messages (Isn’t technology wonderful, amazing and like magic?);
- He also presented to an evening class of students and guests from the Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary - organized by Dr. Bruce Mac Laurin.

Dr. Lonne’s power point presentation, references and the Consolidated notes from the workshops are available on the AASCF website [Management/OBSD Alberta Experience/Forums and Presentations](#)

4. The Learning Our Way Symposium on November 16 was an opportunity for agency and ministry staff to come together:

- To hear greetings and comments from:
 - David Hancock, Minister of Human Services,
 - Steve MacDonald, Deputy Minister,
 - Danica Frazer, President of the AASCF Board, and
 - Nancy Reynolds, CEO of the Alberta Centre for Children, Families and Community

- Research, who was the emcee ;
- To listen to Bob's keynote address - outlining his experiences, words of wisdom and cautions as we move forward;
 - To participate in one of the afternoon breakout sessions which addressed the issues of Practice, Transitional/Organizational Change, Community Capacity Building , Collaborative Practice and Supervision from the theoretical and the practical, using OBSD as the case example.
 - To see the vignettes featuring families and workers, from OBSD sites around the province, addressing their experiences.

The **keynote address and the workshops have been taped** and are available to be viewed on the [Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research](#) website, as are the evaluations for the event:

Videos, **power point presentations, vignettes and references are available on the AASCF website** [Management/OBSD Alberta Experience/Forums and Presentations](#)

→ While there has been an openness to OBSD at the senior manager level within the Ministry, since the implementation of the initiative, this is becoming much more visible. Over the last months some of the shared learning opportunities have included:

- Ministry and agency senior managers met with Dr. Bill Madsen to address **Successful Implementation of New Practice Approaches: Organizational Readiness and Organizational Culture** on September 23rd;
- Ministry senior management (one day) and supervisors in Region 6 (half day) met with Dr. Lonnie during his time in Alberta ;
- The **Learning Our Way** Symposium was well attended by staff from agencies, ministry and CFSA's;
- 16 CFSA /ministry staff participated in the Edmonton/ Calgary workshops facilitated by Dr. Lonnie and
- The **Leadership Conversation and Dinner**, following the Symposium, involved senior ministry staff (Deputy

Minister and Assistance Deputy Ministers); academics including representatives from the University of Calgary; the Office of the Children's Advocate and agencies from around the province working in the areas of child protection, immigration and settlement, homelessness and poverty. One of the highlights of the evening, beyond again hearing Dr. Lonnie speak , was watching the vignette involving Este, a young single mother from Africa who has worked with lead agency and child protection workers under an OBSD model. It is a very good example of why the various components of the Department of Human Services are now working together. The timing for this opportunity of senior management from the Ministry and the agency sector coming together was fortuitous in that it provided another opportunity for the agency sector to meet and have input into the development of the agenda of the new Department of Human Services - as it is being formed and molded.

→ Feedback from the Dr. Lonnie workshops, *Learning Our Way* Symposium and the Leadership dinner will be used to assist the AASCF and Ministry to further the development of an overall provincial strategy to support the implementation of OBSD in Alberta.

→ I have been asked to present to agency staff groups, boards and /or collections of agencies and try to accommodate the needs of the group. If anyone has questions or wishes to access the materials identified in the body of this paper, please feel free to contact me: smaygard@aacsf.com or by phone 780-451-0898

The repeated messages that **"this is the time for the agency sector to become actively involved"** could not be more timely or relevant.

What is the shortest word in the English language that contains the letters a, b, c, d, e, f? Answer: Feedback

Don't forget that feedback is one of the essential elements of good communication.

Author Unknown

A Shift in Language: The Use of and Understanding of Commonly Used Words by Sandra Maygard

One of the major areas being identified as creating difficulty within the OBSD working sites and between OBSD and non OBSD practitioners is the shift in the language and how commonly used words are needing to be interpreted and understood.



It is the change in language, thinking, and approaches that are identifying those who are working from an OBSD framework and those who are caught in the past “way of doing business”. This is an issue that was often identified in the Dr. Lonne workshops and at the *Learning Our Way* Symposium.

There is a shift happening in the language, which is reflected in the approaches being used. The magnitude of the issue became clear to me a few weeks ago, while talking to a CFSA manager, who said “the agencies who have not adopted an OBSD approach are falling behind and may not be able to catch up”. The example given was an agency, who had been requested to work

with a family experiencing domestic violence, asked that the CFSA provide a person to accompany the agency worker to the home. The manager said that within an OBSD approach the agency would have sat down with them, discussed the issue and together come up with a plan to address how to work with the family. The language and approach is more collaborative. While the difference is subtle – it is significant.

Years ago, I worked in the area of HIV. The different approaches of how people and agencies worked with people who were HIV positive were easily identifiable by the language they used and the approaches they incorporated. The shift in the language, from “dying of AIDS” to “living with HIV”, impacted not only the level of comfort working with people who were infected with HIV but also the kinds of programming developed within the sector. Policies and practices shifted from using universal precautions when someone was thought to be HIV positive to applying the principles with every client. As information became available, it was incorporated into the thinking and shifted practice.

The same kind of massive shift in language and practice is happening within our sector, under OBSD. The meaning of commonly used words such as: “collaboration”, “family involvement”, “shared decision making”, “risk”, “permanence” etc. are used by everyone within the sector. However, there is not a common meaning and/or interpretation

being used. The words mean different things to different people.

Those working within the phase -in sites are learning that what was meant historically when they used these words is not reflective of what they mean now. For example: “collaboration” meant working together but often at the direction of the person who held the power and authority. Now it means working as equal partners, often with different agendas, needing to find common ground, understanding and a shared vision of what needs to be accomplished and how to proceed.

I have just recently learned that “permanence” means many different things - “legal status”, “stability”, etc. and is a mine-field that creates all kinds of misunderstandings.

Unlike in the days of the evolution of the language evolving around AIDS/HIV, we have not created new words but are using the same words, resulting in, understandably, much confusion. I do not know if a new set of words will be developed, but there is now a much greater onus on individuals and agencies to learn and understand the subtleties of the differences in meaning and interpretation of commonly used terms.

A common understanding of words used in everyday work, requires the time and effort to understand not only the meaning of the word but

simple example is that of an agency with multiple programs started to look at their processes and found that they did not have a common understanding of the word “intake”. There were four different interpretations as to when intake happened and how to record it. This example may be simplistic, but is reflective of the shifts in language throughout the sector and is beginning to be identified as a real issue within the OBSD phase-in sites.



sites” be replaced with “pathfinder sites” as it is here that the path is being forged and the language developed.

Language and how language is used is reflective of:

- How issues are perceived in the community;
- Different approaches to issues;
- Organizational cultures;
- Roles and positions;
- Our personal history - including our values, assumptions and biases, to list a few.

At a meeting the other day, it was suggested that the term “phase-in

Without looking at the meanings and understanding of commonly used words, (which in this sector is full of jargon and catch phrases - that we all use thinking the other understands what we mean), there is room for much misunderstanding, confusion and having to back-pedal when it becomes clear there was not an agreement of what was being said.

Under OBSD there are major shifts in practice including:

- A sharing of power and authority between the CFSA, agency and family;
- Family engagement that is more inclusive with plans that are created and implemented by the family;
- A focus on the long-term well-being of the family after the need for intervention is over, by working to build stronger support networks within the community and
- The coming to common understanding of the words and language being used.

Language is important and a new language is difficult to create. We need to find ways to share new understandings of the definition of words being used to describe what is happening under the OBSD framework.

“The word ‘good’ has many meanings.

For example,

*if a man were to shoot his grandmother at a range of five hundred yards,
I should call him a good shot,
but not necessarily a good man.”*

G. K. Chesterton

Upcoming Events

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS: Accepting Submissions for the 5th edition of the AASCF Journal

Deadline December 15, 2011

Upcoming Opportunities to learn more about OBSD will include:

- The 4th annual *Strengthening Today, Building Tomorrow* Conference is January 26 -27, 2012 at the Fantasy-land Hotel in Edmonton.

The Conference is designed to provide cutting edge educational value while strengthening member agencies and promoting attitudes, practices and conditions that contribute to quality services for vulnerable children and families in Alberta.

The brochure and registration information is on the AASCF website: www.aascf.com
- Strengthening Our Networks – Boards Meeting Boards Dinner Meeting - this is the 2nd annual opportunity for board members to connect with other boards - January 25, 2012, the evening prior to the beginning of the conference
- I, along with someone from the Ministry, will be presenting at the **Alberta College of Social Workers Annual Conference, March 22 - 24, 2012** the Shaw Conference Centre in Edmonton on the topic: ***Lessons We Are Learning from OBSD Implementation***
- Bill Bell CEO** of the **Casey Foundation** will be in Edmonton and Calgary presenting workshops following the **Prairie Child Welfare Conference** which will be held on [May 28-30](#)

The Casey Foundation <http://www.casey.org>

Provides expertise and support to state, local and tribal child welfare agencies, assisting those efforts that better the lives of children in foster care.; builds public and political will to improve the child welfare system and ultimately prevent the need for foster care and provides high-quality foster care, kinship care and transition services for children and families while developing innovative practices that can be inherited by public agencies.

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It is no surprise that cultures in the northern hemisphere celebrate holidays involving the lighting of candles and have festivals involving light this time of year.

We are all noticing the days getting shorter and avidly await the day (only a few weeks away) when the days will again begin to get longer.

To all who have or will be celebrating the 2011 holidays and festivals involving lights:

Happy Holidays!!



Diwali - October 26- 30, 2011.

A Hindu light festival, meaning array of lights symbolizes the triumph of light over darkness .

Loi Krathong—November 8-10, 2011

Celebrated on the full moon of the 12th lunar month in the Thai calendar. After lighting candles and making a wish, the Krathongs (lotus-shaped receptacle) are placed on the water and left to drift away. People offer thanks to the Goddess of water and it is believed that the Krathongs carry away bad luck.

Hanukkah - December 20-28, 2011.

The Jewish Festival of Light is an eight-day holiday commemorating the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem at the time of the Maccabean Revolt (2nd century BCE).

Christmas—December 25 or January 6 (by the Eastern churches).

A Christian holiday, commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ. It closes the Advent season, starting the fourth Sunday before December 25, and initiates the season of Christmastide, lasting twelve days.

Kwansaa—December 26 to January 1

In the United States, is a celebration honoring African-American heritage and culture. It features lighting a candle holder with seven candles and culminates in a feast and gift giving.

New Year's Eve in Brazil - December 31st.

People go to the beach at midnight, light candles in the sand and ask Lemanja, the African goddess of waters, to give them good luck.

***Holiday information accessed from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org>*

Tools to Assist with Implementation of OBSD

Readiness Assessment Tool

The Readiness Assessment Tool identifies issues that need to be addressed by agencies and CFSA's as they think about and/or prepare to implement OBSD. The areas needing to be addressed include:

- Understanding OBSD
- Planning
- Capacity
- Human Resources Capacity
- Financial Capacity
- Information Technology (IT) Capacity
- Legal Capacity
- Change Process
- Change Management
- Collaboration
- Differences of Opinion
- Resolution Process
- Training and Orientation
- Focus on Outcomes
- Logistical Considerations and Resources
- Communication
- Common Use of Language
- Information Sharing
- Role Clarity
- Supervision and Shared Supervision
- Staff Retention
- Practice Principles
- Practice Approach
- Aboriginal/Other Cultural Competence
- Family Involvement and a Single Service Plan
- Evaluation
- Quality Assurance
- Standards of Practice

The Readiness tool is available on the AASCF website or by contacting Sandra Maygard at : smaygard@aascf.com

Consolidated Notes:

Re-Imaging Child Welfare: Issues, Outcomes and Reform Workshops

Dr. Bob Lonne - Edmonton /Calgary
November 14/18, 2011

Chinese quote – *“A journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step”*

180 people attended the workshops: personnel from 46 agencies; government - 16 people from the Alberta Ministry/CFSA's and 1 from the Northwest Territories; CEO's /ED's, senior management, supervisors and front line staff with a range of experience and knowledge of Outcomes Based Service Delivery (OBSD)

The intent was to raise issues, share knowledge and ideas and provide input into further development of a broad based strategy to support the implementation of OBSD in Alberta

The discussions focused upon the following areas:

- What's Working Well
- Better Understanding of OBSD
- Systemic Change
- Aboriginal Issues
- Ethical Practice
- Collaboration
- Community Engagement
- Use of Language
- Staffing Issues
- Measuring Outcomes and Evaluation and
- Fears/Concerns

The comments are a consolidation of the discussions from the tables and reflect the major points raised by the participants (who had been assigned seating to enable cross discussion between agencies and ministry

Small internal and external changes; discussions at multiple levels and in many forums are some of the means to the end to create a system that will provide better outcomes for children and families. The full paper is available by contacting smaygard@aascf.com

Tools to Assist with Implementation of OBSD

Vignettes

Produced for the *Learning Our Way Symposium*, featuring the work being accomplished in the OBSD phase-in sites. These vignettes may be shared and/or used for training purposes:

- **OBSD Site Principal: Sandra Stoddard** from Region 6 - Meet Sandra Stoddard, Principal of Abbott Elementary and R.J. Scott School in Edmonton. Dr. Stoddard provides a unique perspective on how to implement the next level of delivery in the new world of OBSD.
- **OBSD Team: Lisa and Keir** (Jade and Terry's Team) from Region 6 - Meet Lisa and Keir, a casework and family intervention generalist who worked with OBSD in unique ways to create positive results for a number of Edmonton families. They are also the team that worked alongside Jade and Terry, two people recovering from an addiction to drugs, who took control of their lives and regained custody of their children.
- **OBSD Clients: Jade and Terry** from Region 6 - Jade and Terry suffered from addiction for over ten years. As a result they have both been in and out of the prison system while attempting to parent two children. Hear how they made a positive decision and took positive action for themselves and their children with the assistance of Alberta Human Services and regained custody of their children and control of their lives
- **OBSD Team and Client:** Jim, Mihaela and Anthony from Region 6 - Meet Jim and Mihaela, an OBSD team from Edmonton, and their client Anthony. Through OBSD, they helped Anthony and his wife Sierra gain employment, improve their parenting skills, take control of their anger and regain custody of their two young children. Listen to their story and how the introduction of OBSD made a difference.
- **OBSD Client: Jennifer** from Region 7 - Meet Jennifer. She's a single mother of a little boy in Northern Alberta. She began using prescription drugs when she was 14. After years of alcohol and drug abuse, Jennifer found her way out with the help of Alberta Human Services. She's now clean and sober and creating a new, healthy life for her and her son. Watch her story.
- **OBSD Client: Esta** from Region 3 - Meet Esta. She moved to Alberta from the Sudan when she was 13 years old. Having never been to school, speaking no English and not understanding the Canadian culture, she soon ran into difficulties and ran away from home when she was 16. She soon became pregnant with twins and found herself with more responsibility than she able to undertake. Hear her story and how Alberta Human Services helped Esta grow from a teenager into a responsible mother and woman.
- **OBSD Team: Prissy and Brenda** (Esta's Team) from Region 3 - Meet Prissy and Brenda, an OBSD Team in Calgary. They met Esta after she had given birth to twin boys at the age of 16. Sadly, one boy died shortly after birth and one survived with severe health issues. Unable to care for her baby, and herself, Prissy and Brenda developed a plan with Esta that would give her the tools to look after herself, gain independence, get back to school, and gain employment.
- **OBSD Team: Kim and Geraldine**, Region 4 - Meet Kim and Geraldine. Kim is a caseworker and Geraldine a service provider in Drumheller. Their first experience with OBSD involved the apprehension and subsequent adoption of a 12 year-old girl. Hear how they worked out responsibilities and processes using OBSD and the success they encountered.

Resources - from Dr. Lonne's keynote address: Learning Our Way Symposium

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