Setting up for Success:
Programs for Indigenous Youth Aging out of Government Care in British Columbia

by

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Abstract

Indigenous youth aging out of government care face many challenges that other youth their age are not facing. This study addresses the policy problem: Too many Indigenous youth in British Columbia aging out of government care have not received the supports they need, and as a result many are becoming homeless. Some of the supports needed for success can include life skills, employment, housing, desired education attainment, and a supportive community. This study uses cases and interviews to identify programs that would best support these youth. One of the program options is based primarily around supportive, subsidized housing. The other option is a mentorship program that supports youth with life skills, finding housing, employment or educational outcomes, cultural identity, and leadership. These programs are assessed based on their effectiveness, cultural appropriateness, cost, scope, and administrative complexity. The supportive housing program is ranked as preferable based on several criteria.

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Keywords: Indigenous youth; aging out; government care; mentorship program; housing program

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List of Acronyms

BC   British Columbia

DAA   Delegated Aboriginal Child and Family Service Agency Fetal

MCFD   Ministry of Child and Family Development

YA   Youth Agreements

FASD   Fetal Alcohol Symptom Disorder

Executive Summary

Indigenous youth aging out of government care face many challenges that other youth their age are not facing. With drastic over-representation of Indigenous youth in the child protection system, it is clear that some of the strategies to help children and youth have to change. This paper addresses the policy problem: Too many Indigenous youth in BC aging out of government care have not received the supports they need, and as a result, many are becoming homeless. Some of the supports needed for success can include life skills, employment, housing, desired education attainment, and a supportive community. The literature notes that between 25% and 50% of youth who are homeless have been in government care at some point in time.

Despite the literature on this and related topics expressing the need for further supports for youth aging out of care, particularly Indigenous youth, there are few provisions for these youth in BC. The programs that do exist are underfunded and are at maximum capacity or have waitlists. Through a qualitative analysis, six different cases were analysed; five of which are located in Metro Vancouver and the Fraser Valley of BC, and one is located in Toronto, Ontario. Half of the program scans were based on external program evaluations, and the other half were based on interviews. With a total of 18 interviews including program managers, academics and Elders, further interview results were analysed and provided great insights into the challenges and opportunities for Indigenous youth aging out of care.

Two policy options were developed based on the data results. The Indigenous Youth Supported Housing Program provides subsidised housing for Indigenous youth with some supports including a weekly dinner, a limited number of workshops, and some one-on-one mentoring provided by a support worker. Furthermore, an Elder connected to the program will provide cultural teachings and assist the youth with cultural identity. The Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program provides group mentoring workshops for youth twice a week based on Indigenous culture. This program also provides one-on-one mentoring support, opportunities for peer mentoring and leadership development, and ensures that the program is flexible to meet the needs of the youth. The program also has a staff member who assists the youth with finding housing, but, no subsidies are provided.

Criteria and measures were developed to undertake a comparative assessment of the two options. These included effectiveness, cultural appropriateness, cost, scope, and administrative complexity. When evaluated against the criteria, each program revealed different strengths and weaknesses. The Indigenous Youth Supported Housing Program was very successful and was meeting the youth's immediate needs of housing and preventing homelessness in the short term. This, as demonstrated in the literature, is one of the most essential needs of youth aging out of care.

The Indigenous Youth Mentorship program was very successful at incorporating culture into all aspects of the program, which is an essential aspect of each Indigenous youth's development. This program also demonstrated effective long-term results in assisting youth with employment, education, and life skills outcomes.

Due to these findings, and the urgency of the need for housing that many youth face, the Indigenous Youth Supported Housing Program was assessed as the stronger option. I recommend that it be implemented through building up pre-existing programs that support Indigenous youth in the community with a residential component.

Chapter 1.   Introduction

In British Columbia, Indigenous children are vastly over-represented in the child protection system. After the closure of residential schools and the policies that encouraged the movement to adopt Indigenous children into settler families known as the 60's scoop, this over-representation has not changed. It also appears that the strategy of removing Indigenous children from their homes and placing them in government care has not changed (Blackstock, Cross, George, Brown, & Formsma, 2006) despite a renewed effort to keep children, particularly Indigenous children, with their families as long as possible. Many scholars would agree, due to the sustained over-representation, that the current system is not working (Blackstock et al., 2006). Taking children out of their communities is not a socially or culturally acceptable practice for First Nations, Inuit, or Metis people. In traditional Anishinaabe practices and many other Indigenous cultures across North America, if parents were not able to look after their children for a time, the extended family would care for them. During that time the biological parents were still expected to remain a part of the child's life (Weechi it te win Family Service & Fort Frances Governance Team, 2000).

Currently, across North America, an estimated 25% to 50% of homeless youth have been in government care for a period of time (Lindsey, Kurtz, Jarvis, Williams, & Nackerud, 2000). Similarly, about 45% of youth who have aged out of care have experienced homelessness (Rutman, Hubberstey, Feduniw, & Brown, 2007). Indigenous youth face even more challenges than non-Indigenous youth. Roughly 60% of the children in government care are Indigenous (Shaffer, Anderson, & Nelson, 2016a) with 5.4 percent of the overall British Columbia population identifying as Indigenous in 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2015). There are some support programs for youth aging out of care in BC, but many programs focus on youth who are already homeless or at risk of homelessness. Similarly, there are a growing number of programs for Indigenous youth in BC, particularly Metro Vancouver. However, many of these programs are not specific to Indigenous youth

who are aging out of government care. From a study of Indigenous youth aging out of government care, Baskin (2007) found that "The major theme in these stories illustrates that growing up in the care of, or being involved long term with, [Children's Aid Society] – whether that be adoptive homes, foster homes, group homes or moving between biological and foster families – is often a profoundly negative experience" (p. 36). Holistic programs that can address the specific needs of Indigenous youth aging out of government care need to be implemented. These programs need to be supportive as Indigenous youth develop independence and most importantly, are culturally appropriate (Blackstock et al., 2006).

This paper examines the community resources, and social service supports available for Indigenous youth aging out of government care in British Columbia. It is not about changing the foster care system in British Columbia (BC) to a new system, but instead, it is believed that small steps are more feasible than creating a dramatic change that contains a large amount of risk. This paper addresses the policy problem: Too many Indigenous youth in BC aging out of government care have not received the supports they need, and as a result, many are becoming homeless. Some of the supports needed for success can include life skills, employment, housing, desired education attainment, and a supportive community.

This paper is organized into eight chapters. Following the introduction are the background and relevant literature surrounding this issue. Next, the methodology is detailed followed by program scans and interview results in the fourth chapter. The policy options are laid out in the fifth chapter, and the criteria that they are measured against in the sixth. Finally, the policies are analyzed in the seventh chapter, concluding with recommendations in the eighth chapter.

Chapter 2. Background

2.1. The current approach

Indigenous youth in Canada are over-represented in the child protection system at almost 60% of the children and youth in care in BC (Shaffer, Anderson, & Nelson, 2016b). In 2015, 1,024 youth aged out of care (Shaffer et al., 2016b) at 19 years, and most are left with no supports from the Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD). BC provides few options for children and youth in care, and they often end up struggling to overcome poverty or even become homeless. By the time youth are aging out of government care at 19 years, many have not yet acquired the life skills they need to succeed in adulthood.

Indigenous children and youth in care are placed with a Delegated Aboriginal Child and Family Service Agency (DAA) whenever possible and are placed with a family that can help to keep the child connected to their culture. There are 23 DAAs across BC that represent 148 of the 198 First Nations supporting children and youth in BC (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2016b). The 23 DAAs have three different levels of delegation which include, at the lowest level, recruiting and approving foster homes, providing guardianship services, and full child protection authorities; however, there are only nine at the top level (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2016b).

MCFD has a few options for the child or youth placement during their time in care. The most common care program is the Family Care Home Program. In this program, the foster caregiver provides holistic care for the child and works with the child's family, child welfare worker, and any other services providers that are supporting the child (Ministry of Child and Family Development, n.d.a). This program is based on professional volunteer parenting, inclusiveness, teamwork, graduated levels of care, and the child's plan of care. Children and youth that end up in care are most commonly admitted through the Child, Family, and Community Services Act. This can be temporary, when the parent(s) is unable to care for the child, or if a child is in a dangerous situation and is removed from the parent. Through the Infant Act and Adoption Act, children can also be taken into care by the government. The Family Care Home Program can include the Kinship Placement, a

regular placement, group homes, or specialized placement (Ministry of Child and Family Development, n.d.c).

The Kinship placement, also known as the Extended Family Program, is a placement with either extended family members or someone with an established relationship or cultural connection to the child (Ministry of Child and Family Development, n.d.a). MCFD aims, whenever possible, to pursue a kinship placement (Ministry of Child and Family Development, n.d.b). The goals of the kinship care program are to "reunite the child with their parents whenever possible" and "put the child or teen at the centre of all decisions" (Ministry of Child and Family Development, n.d.b).

The regular placement or specialized placements are usually families that the child has not had a previous relationship with. These placements are with family care homes that have been studied and approved for child care placement by a social worker. There are three levels of specialized homes that have received specific training, approval, and have specific expectations in relation to the child's more advanced needs. These families have varying degrees of custody or guardianship over the child or youth, but regardless of the legal status, these families are required to care for the children and give individualized attention to each child in care. Contracts with the home family are made for varying lengths of time for many reasons including severity of the child's needs (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2001).

When youth turn 16 they may be eligible for Youth Agreements (YA) if a placement in the Family Home Care Program is not a suitable option. These are for youth 16 to 18 years old who do not have a parent or adult who is able to take care of them, are not able to return home for safety reasons (Ministry of Child and Family Development, n.d.c), and can include youth who are homeless (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2013). The YA is a legal agreement for the sponsoring agency to support the youth in a way other than foster care. This program is considered by the social worker only if kinship care is not an option. Under this agreement, youth live on their own with supports from MCFD such as financial assistance, child care, addictions treatment, employment, housing support, and educational support (Ministry of Child and Family Development, n.d.c). The social worker will prepare a Plan for Independence for the youth that will set out goals and

commitments to address the "risky behavior" (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2013) that is currently taking place in the youth's life. This program aims to help youth eventually transition to independence at age 19 (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2013).

Once the youth reach age 19 they are no longer in government care or eligible for a YA. If the youth participated in a youth agreement or had a continuing custody order, they may be eligible for an Agreement with Young Adults (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2016a). These agreements help to cover living expenses for the young adult and any children the young adult has. This is only applicable while the young adult is attending school, vocational programs, life skills program or rehabilitation programs. The agreements help to cover costs for living expenses, child care, tuition, and health care and can last up to 2 years prior to the young adult's 26th birthday (Former Youth in Care, 2016). Though some supports and resources do exist, the young adults are left without the supports they need to navigate an independent life.

2.2. Motivation

Publically available information for holistic Indigenous youth programs is scarce. Some programs and their results do exist in Canada for non-indigenous youth who are aging out of care or are homeless, but there is much less information for Indigenous programs, particularly in BC. Some Indigenous programs do exist in BC, but their funding is not stable, and the programs' offerings do not come close to meeting the demand.

The September 19th, 2016 announcement from the BC government to invest an additional $500 million into specialized subsidized housing offers an opportunity to identify working models. Three of the nine identified types of housing can be applied to the programs developed below including: specialized housing for youth aging out of care, youth transition housing, and housing for Aboriginal people (Mathews, 2016). Similarly, with Grand Chief Ed John's Report on Indigenous Child Welfare in British Columbia, released November 21, 2016, along with the growing public and media pressure to increase the age that youth leave care, there is an opportunity to develop programs that will best suit the needs of the youth.

2.3. Literature Review

2.3.1. Aging out of care

When youth age out of care they face numerous challenges. Youth involved in an extended care program in Ontario expressed their main challenges as loneliness and a general lack of support. Their next most urgent concern was a lack of financial support (Rutman et al., 2007). Other studies found that youth appreciate supports that are in relation to employment and financial literacy. They also found that peer supports are instrumental in providing a social connection affecting the health and education of the youth aging out of care (Rutman & Hubberstey, 2016). Navigating systems and accessing the right services is frustrating for youth and young adults. These challenges are multiplied when the youth in care or recently aged out of care is a parent of a young child (Rutman, Hubberstey, Poole, Hume, & Van Bibber, 2015). Rutman (2002) establishes that social workers often disqualify young mothers because of the belief that children will end up in care if their parents were in care; this only decreases the mother's chances of success.

Fallis (2012) composes a literature review of the best practices for youth transitioning out of care. She details eight pillars of support for youth including: "relationships, housing, education, life skills, identity, youth engagement, emotional healing, and financial support" (p. 13). Substantial research finds that with these supports in place, each of the pillars can have a large impact on helping the youth succeed or at least can minimize negative impacts (Chandler & Lalonde, 2008). Section 2.3.6 offers a detailed discussion of the recommended practices.

2.3.2. Importance of culture

Richardson and Nelson ask, "As we move from interning children in the prisons called Residential Schools to foster homes, are we merely changing the residence of Aboriginal assimilation in Canada? And will child welfare be the last site of forced assimilation while many Canadians aspire to de-colonize and renegotiate the social contract between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal peoples?" (2007, p75) And now, there are more children in government care each year (14,225 under 14 years old in 2011) than

there were in residential schools at their height in 1953 (10,112 children) (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). The TRC placed a call to action in the final report regarding child welfare including but not limited to: culturally appropriate services, placements, environments, and parenting programs for the Indigenous children and youth in care (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

Using non-Indigenous developmental theories will not provide the best outcomes for youth because they do not provide socio-economic contextual factors that are specific to Indigenous youth (Blackstock et al., 2006; Simard & Blight, 2011). Current structures do not account for the different values that Indigenous communities hold, specifically that of the community responsibility for raising a child. Therefore, simply adding "cultural practices" to preexisting programs has little benefit according to Baskin (2007). Similarly, cultural development is vital for many youth in their development of identity and self (Chandler & Lalonde, 2008). Chandler (2008) demonstrates that the higher the degree of preservation of culture in First Nation communities, the lower the suicide rate among youth. In interviews with homeless or previously homeless Indigenous youth, it was found that having Indigenous social workers does not address the need for culturally appropriate services, but the structure of the system and policies needs to be changed to address the specific needs of Indigenous families. The youth did, however, feel more comfortable with accessing services from an Indigenous-specific agency (Baskin, 2007).

Culturally appropriate services need not only address culture-specific challenges such as the effects of colonization and residential schools, but also should incorporate cultural practices such as smudging, language, the medicine wheel, seven sacred teachings, and dancing, among others. It is important to note that even though the number of Indigenous children in foster care is extremely high, they are placed with Indigenous families whenever possible (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p143). The intergenerational trauma that results from the residential schools is having large impacts on the youth and children today. Much of this is resulting in family violence, crime, substance abuse, and more children entering the child welfare system (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

2.3.3. Homelessness

The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (2001) defines homeless youth as those with no permanent address, those who live in unsafe housing, and those who pay too much for rent. Youth who are couch surfing or staying in motels or hotels can also be called the "invisible homeless" (p. 1). Furthermore, United Native Nations Society (2001) defines Aboriginal homelessness as "Those who have suffered from the effects of colonization and whose social, economic, and political conditions have placed them in a disadvantaged position resulting in one of the following situations: 1. Those who are Absolutely Homeless; and 2. Those At Risk of Becoming Homeless." (p. 20). Many homeless youth, regardless of ancestry, have had a history of involvement with government care including foster homes and group homes (Baskin, 2007). This might be a result of the structure of the child welfare system in that it is designed for children but not youth. Youth and young adults are not old enough to access adult systems but are too old for the systems designed for children (Fitzgerald, 1995).

Some of the main reasons that youth end up homeless are believed to include housing affordability, increasing criminalization at disproportionate rates, difficulty accessing financial supports, poor discharge planning from institutions, and aging out of care at a young age (Kidd & Davidson, 2006). Many Indigenous youth that end up homeless move many times while growing up. Some move between different families, some even move across the country, and most do not live with their biological parents growing up (Baskin, 2007). Many participants in Baskin's study, which took place in Toronto, Ontario, were placed in foster or group homes that were toxic environments including aspects of racism and all types of abuse.

2.3.4. Youth development

Youth in care are required to, out of necessity, be prepared for adult responsibilities much earlier than other youth their age. Studies have shown that youth in the general population largely continue to live with their parents until their early to mid-20s (Shaffer et al., 2016a). Parents provide financial support, housing, mentoring, share meals, and can help with community relationships and networking (Shaffer et al., 2016a). Development for youth in their mid-20s is not limited to life-skills such as learning how to cook, keeping

a budget, getting a job, becoming a parent, and renting a home, but also includes identity formation. The challenge of premature identity formation can be compounded for Indigenous youth who have not been in a situation that allows them to connect with their heritage and culture (Burnside & Fuchs, 2013). These youth are then expected to succeed as adults, yet they are often not given a chance to practice being an adult (Burnside & Fuchs, 2013). These challenges are compounded when the youth are dealing with past traumas, have mental health challenges, or have various learning challenges.

When learning challenges are displayed by Indigenous children, they are more likely than non-Indigenous children to be diagnosed with fetal alcohol symptom disorder (FASD) (Oldani, 2009). This is primarily due to the high rates of substance abuse on reserves (Ordolis, 2007). Similarly, FASD is estimated to be ten times more likely with youth in the foster care system (Ordolis, 2007, p. 20). Many foster parents expressed in a study, that information regarding Indigenous culture as well as services specific to Indigenous children was very helpful, or desired when not available, for foster parents of Indigenous children with special needs including FASD (Brown, Moraes, & Mayhew, 2005). Correspondingly, a recent study in Alberta found that early intervention of regular patterns and standards help minimize the symptoms of FASD (Badry, 2009). Additionally, youth with FASD often require more formalized life skills training with regular guidance and additional assistance finding employment with appropriate FASD adaptations that explicitly explains work expectations (Burnside & Fuchs, 2013).

2.3.5. Abstinence vs. harm reduction

Promoting programs that require abstinence from drugs and alcohol versus programs that do not require abstinence is debated among service providers. A study of juvenile offenders who used drugs found that those who chose abstinence for 12 months had better economic outcomes than those in the study who continued to use drugs (Griffin, Ramchand, Edelen, McCaffrey, & Morral, 2011). However, many youth are not able to commit to abstinence and restrictive programs with abstinence requirements, so these programs are often not an option for many youth. Krüsi, Fast, and Small (2010) suggest that a harm reduction approach allows more youth to access critical health and social services. Similarly, the housing first approach, which does not require abstinence has

shown to be successful in reducing substance use and improving housing (Thompson, McManus, Lantry, Windsor, & Flynn, 2006). As youth face many challenges, they are not always able to commit to abstinence to secure housing (Guirguis-Younger, Hwang, & McNeil, 2014).

2.3.6.   Recommended practices

Many of the recommended practices for supporting at-risk youth as they transition to adulthood are specific to programs for homeless youth, but with such a high rate of homeless for youth coming from government care, these practices can be adapted to address similar needs and challenges. Recommended practices should be implemented at all stages of programming, beginning with the organizational design. Features of successful programs working with at-risk youth include building on youths' strengths and empowering them to solve their own problems through self-help and mutual support (Karabanow & Clement, 2004). Though community development is important, programs that give youth opportunities for independence not only prepare them for future success but allow for a deeper change that is initiated by the youth (Kidd, 2003). Flexibility with the programming and interventions that allow the specific needs and challenges of the participants to be addressed is identified as another essential component. Finally, advocating for youth has been found to encourage trusting successful relationships (Karabanow & Clement, 2004).

Programs that aim to develop community within the program and encourage relationships with the greater community have shown to provide a welcoming space for youth that fosters development (Karabanow & Clement, 2004). When youth leave a program, they greatly benefit from support networks and from the community that has been fostered during the program. Similarly, developing community with youth who have not been homeless can offer a change of lifestyle for program participants (Kisely et al., 2008). Mentorship programs have been found to be a very successful and essential component of programs that work with at-risk youth (Kisely et al., 2008).

Mentorships have been suggested by Burnside and Fuchs (2013) to be one of the most effective ways to support Indigenous youth aging out of care with FASD. Similarly,

mentorship can help youth as they transition out of care and provide continuity in a time of transition for youth who are in a vulnerable state (Fallis, 2012). The support that mentors give to youth is beneficial when youth are supported to build meaningful relationships and understand their own experiences and feelings through talking with others (Reid & Dudding, 2006).

Recommended practices for at-risk youth also include program services and intervention offerings. The literature demonstrates that programs should immediately assess for mental and physical health problems with the assumption they exist, instead of waiting for symptoms to present themselves; this includes substance use (Kidd, 2003). This goes hand-in-hand with other interventions; it is essential for programs to focus on early interventions (Kidd, 2003). Furthermore, programs that provide transitional or permanent housing options for youth beyond that of shelters have a much higher self-reported rate of health and lower instances of substance abuse (Kisely et al., 2008). Supportive housing creates opportunities for more in-depth follow-up with youth as well as other programs. Finally, offering support to complete high school and discover strengths and interests that could lead to further education, job training, or employment has proven to be an essential aspect of successful programs (Kisely et al., 2008).

Chapter 3. Methodology

This research project was designed and carried out in the pragmatic paradigm with a strong emphasis on reflexivity in the research, and it took a multi-method qualitative approach. The research includes program scans to analyze programs that exist for non-indigenous youth and the cultural aspects needed in programs for Indigenous youth. Program scans conducted using literature was primarily obtained from publicly available sources such as program websites, program reports, and peer-reviewed journal articles. Program scans included in this method of research include: Eva's Phoenix, which is a holistic program in Ontario for homeless youth; the Aunt Leah's Link, which is a program focusing on youth in care and aging out of care in New Westminster, BC;, and the Broadway Youth Resource Centre Housing support program in Vancouver, BC that provides subsidized supportive housing for homeless youth.

Qualitative interviews were also used to inform the other program scans for programs that exist for Indigenous youth and to gain a deeper understanding of Indigenous-specific challenges. Program scans addressed using this method of research include: 1) Aboriginal youth mentorship and housing program run by Lu'ma Native Housing Society, which is a holistic program in Vancouver for youth aging out of government care and street-involved youth; 2) a local holistic Indigenous youth recovery program that involves a residential aspect, and; 3) Aunties and Uncles youth mentorship program that supports youth in care and is run through Xyolhemeylh in the Fraser Valley. Qualitative interviews were in-depth semi-structured interviews. They were analyzed using a semi-thematic based approach, meaning that themes were observed, but no formal transcription and subsequent written analysis took place. Eighteen interview participants include Indigenous Youth Outreach workers and Program Coordinators (11), Academics and Researchers (4), Elders, and Cultural Teachers (3). The interviews allowed for a more in-depth understanding of the issues, benefits, and challenges of the proposed policy problems. Interviews were conducted face-to-face or over the phone.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were chosen because they provided an opportunity for the participant to explain complicated issues that might be difficult to anticipate, they provided an opportunity to probe the participant for further information,

and they provided an opportunity to ensure clarity between the interviewer and participant[1]. Semi-structured interviews allowed the participants to discuss what they thought was the most important or relevant aspects of the programs and culture according to the question asked. They also allowed for opportunities to discuss unexpected and sensitive answers that might be harder to address in surveys or structured interviews. Finally, they allowed the researcher to adjust questions so that they are more relevant based on the participants' previous answers which lead to new insights (LOW, 2012).

Outreach workers and program coordinators have a strong understanding of what challenges Indigenous youth face, what programs youth enjoy, and what is most beneficial for the youth. For these reasons, they provided great initial insights into this issue. An explicit decision was made not to interview Indigenous youth due to the vulnerability of their situation and the risk of triggering traumatic events during an interview. If the recommended policy is implemented, follow-up interviews with youth should be conducted by outreach workers and program managers who have an ongoing relationship with the youth. This can help to adjust the program and improve quality to meet the needs of the Indigenous youth best.

Literature based program scans of non-Indigenous programs were chosen as an element of this study because they provide both qualitative and statistical evidence for shown results of their programs. No literature based program scans were available for Indigenous specific program that would be appropriate for this study. Peer-reviewed articles and program reports also provide more detailed descriptions of program specifics and essential elements. Evidence from peer-reviewed articles and statistics often shows to be more convincing to politicians and other policy makers.

As a non-indigenous researcher researching programs that are specific to Indigenous youth, many precautions and sensitivities were taken. Most notably, this project was developed and completed with semi-formal consultation with a local Indigenous society with which I am associated: Lower Fraser Valley Aboriginal Society. In addition, once policy options were developed, they were discussed with three Elders, and cultural teachers and their opinions were used as a way to measure the cultural

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[1] Eleven outreach workers, four researchers, and three Elders were interviewed

appropriateness of each policy option, and their perspectives helped shape the final policy options. Nevertheless, there are limits to the degree of understanding that I can have by not being immersed in the culture and not facing the specific challenges that Indigenous people and youth aging out of care face.

3.1. Limitations

This research has limitations. Firstly, I, the researcher, am not an Indigenous person and did not grow up learning about the traditions and culture on the territory where I live, that of the Coast Salish people. An attempt to minimize this, as mentioned above, included discussing and reviewing the policy options with Elders and Cultural teachers. Still, there are inevitably aspects that have been missed. Similarly, with BC having the most diverse population of First Nation cultures in Canada (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2010), the policies recommended below might not address certain cultural aspects of First Nations in other communities in BC.

Secondly, qualitative interviews were completed exclusively with people who currently live on Coast Salish territory, specifically, Metro Vancouver. Though some literature does address other parts of Canada, the policies may need to be tailored to be more appropriate for other areas in BC. Some of the challenges and service gaps that were highlighted by interview participants might have more relevance to Metro Vancouver than other regions in the Province.

Another significant limitation of this study is that no Indigenous youth transitioning out of care were interviewed. Many studies used in the report do interview youth directly; however, this process can be harmful to youth without proper counselling and should only be done when necessary. This is particularly evident with Indigenous youth who face additional challenges of intergenerational trauma. To mitigate this limitation, interviews were conducted with outreach workers and program managers who work directly with the youth and have a good understanding of their challenges, strengths, and what aspects of programs do or do not work.

Chapter 4.   Data Collection

4.1. Program Scans

4.1.1.   Eva's Phoenix

Eva's Phoenix (Eva's) is a youth shelter in Toronto, Ontario that has been operating since June 2000 (Eva's Initiatives, n.d.a) for homeless youth aged 16 to 24, but not exclusively for youth aging out of government care. With nearly half the program participants having experiences with the child welfare system (Eva's Initiatives, n.d.a) there are similar challenges and benefits. This program offers employment training and housing services and aims to have a holistic approach that meets the needs of the homeless youth they serve with the goal to re-integrate them into the community.

The program has been very successful at aiding youth with their transfer to independence. Within nine months of completing the employment program, 59% of the youth were employed or in school, and 68% did not return to the shelter after leaving the residents program (Eva's Initiatives, n.d.a). The detailed intake process ensures that the youth can commit to the program requirements and admits youth who have goals and show enthusiasm to achieve them (Eva's Initiatives, n.d.d). Similarly, the program is based on many of the recommended practices explained in the literature. While trying to help youth develop their strengths in areas such as employment, education, creativity and others, Eva's has very few rules, and youth are encouraged to use personal judgment and creative solutions. Although this is not an abstinence-based program, it does not allow drugs, alcohol, or smoking on the premises (Eva's Initiatives, n.d.b).

In the residential housing program, up to 50 youth are invited to stay for up to one year in the dorm-style residence that includes common areas, community kitchen, and laundry facilities (Eva's Initiatives, n.d.c). Youth are assigned a primary worker who supports them through all aspects of the program including goal setting and assistance with transitions through the various programs (Eva's Initiatives, n.d.f). The program focuses on helping the youth with independence in areas of finances, nutrition, holistic health, housing, and governance. The food and nutrition program does not provide food

for the youth but supplements some food through meal programs and community gardens. It also provides training and supports through community nurses and staff. To support the youth's mental and physical health, the program provides workshops, support groups, recreational activities, opportunities for creative expression, and counselling. There are also opportunities for the youth to develop leadership by being involved in the governance of the program (Eva's Initiatives, n.d.g). Finally, one-to-one support is provided to youth to help them secure housing upon exiting the program (Eva's Initiatives, n.d.a).

The Mentorship Program at Eva's includes four different types. One-to-one peer mentoring is used to orient the youth to living at Eva's Phoenix, talking about any anxieties the program may cause, and preparing to be matched with a volunteer mentor from the community. The five-week group-based leadership training offers opportunities for youth to work on projects such as fundraising and community projects in the creative arts. Youth that have proven leadership in Eva's can become peer-mentors for those entering the program as well as peers who may still be living on the streets. This program offers minimum wage to the youth who are mentoring their peers. Finally, the studio program, for youth with greater employment barriers, offers opportunities to work jointly on creative projects that create a positive community profile (Eva's Initiatives, n.d.e).

The Eva's Phoenix evaluation report (2003) provides the most concrete results, but also has a more formalized employment training program that is optional for the youth. Over 60% of youth in the Housing Program with Eva's had a better housing situation than when they arrived (Zizys, Kosny, Jarosz, & Qunital, 2003, p. 67). Similarly, over 60% of the youth in the housing program believed that Eva's helped them in general, and 100% of the youth in both the housing and employment program said Eva's generally helped them (p. 67). However, of the youth who only took part in the housing program, approximately 10% reported getting and holding a job, and approximately 15% had improved employment outcomes (p. 67). This is compared to over 80% who took part in only the employment program and were able to get and hold a job (p. 67). Finally, approximately 50% of youth in the housing only program were able to find and maintain housing (p. 68). These results clearly show that Eva's did help youth in a positive way through the housing program, especially in the area of housing which, as outlined in the

literature, is one of the greatest areas of needs for youth aging out of care (Rutman et al., 2007).

Many other tools including intake and discharge forms, job descriptions, and checklists are available on Eva's Phoenix toolkit website (Eva's Initiatives, n.d.h)[2]. Similarly, a comprehensive manual of the policies and procedures for operations can also be found on the website (Eva's Initiatives, 2009)[3].

4.1.2. Aunt Leah's Link Program

The Link program at Aunt Leah's in New Westminster, B.C. is designed specifically for youth aging out of government care. It is targeted at youth who were part of the Supportive Link program, which is a housing program for youth in care aged 15-18 years. The program includes in-house supports, pre-employment, and life-skills training, life skills workshops, outreach, and a drop-in centre (Rutman, Hubberstey, & Hume, 2014). The Link program aims to be relationship and outreach based, flexible, as well as holistic. With more than half of the participants being parents and 71% not having completed high school, the participants appreciate the non-judgmental, supportive environment. The staff follow a harm reduction approach and celebrate all developmental milestones (Rutman et al., 2014).

Youth in the program range from age 19-30 years and when asked they all stated they would, or already have, recommend the program to other youth aging out of care; they especially appreciate the committed, caring staff. The youth felt that the program supported them emotionally, in employment readiness, budgeting, with life skills and parenting. 86% of the youth in the program were in stable housing in 2012-2013 (Rutman et al., 2014, p. 31).

The Link program starts with intake and service planning, which involves an assessment of the youth's strengths and goal setting to limit the crisis in their lives. Youth

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[2] http://phoenixtoolkit.evasinitiatives.com/our-program/housing-and-the-independent-living-program/tools/

[3] http://0338142.netsolhost.com/phoenixtoolkit/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Evas-Phoenix-Site-Operational-Manual-2009.pdf

who transition from the Support Link program to the Link program have many meetings with their support team to establish goals and support the transition (Rutman et al., 2014).

The one-to-one support can be accessed through various means including texting and provides support with housing, employment, transportation, food security, emotional support, parenting advice, and referrals to other resources. This is the most popular program for the youth and though advances are often incremental, it allows the youth to progress at a manageable pace. The program also offers a moms and babies support group, weekly life skills workshops, emergency food and money availability, and educational field trips to community resources (Rutman et al., 2014).

There are some challenges to the program though. In a focus group comprised of Link staff, they expressed that they would like the Link program to have its own housing program and not be limited to finding market or subsidized housing for youth all over Metro Vancouver. They also would like to have staff who specialize in mental health, drug, and alcohol counselling. Finally, they were interested in having a kitchen space to offer a lunch program and a small centre in Surrey to support the youth who have been able to find housing there. One of the recommendations from program evaluation is to provide more long-term planning for the youth who are aging out of care and have a balance with crisis intervention. Other recommendations were to assist youth access vocational training, to hire a dedicated housing worker, and to increase partnerships with specialized health and education workers (Rutman et al., 2014).

4.1.3. Aboriginal Youth Mentorship Program

The Aboriginal Youth Mentorship Program (Mentorship Program) at Lu'ma Native Housing located in Vancouver, BC is a 12-18 month program that is rooted in Indigenous culture. The staff and program manager believe that it is important to have a solid foundation of knowing who you are and where you come from before going into the world. The program involves key focus areas such as housing, health, wellness, life skills, education, relationships, identity, skills and training, culture, employment, goal setting, and

justice. These areas are regularly reviewed in case they need to change to adapt to the youth's needs (PC, 2016/11/28)[4].

The program has two full-time staff, as well as a housing worker from the parent organization who work closely with the youth and the peer mentors who have graduated from the program. Many of the workshop facilitators in the program have also built relationships with the youth and have become unofficial mentors. A Program Mentor described the program as a family where they can share about their lives at family dinners. He, as a mentor, takes on the traditional duties of the uncle including role modelling and teaching the youth how to live in a good way. The level of staff dedication to the youth is one of the essential aspects of the successful program, and as a result, they are almost always available to the youth in an emergency. The staff try to foster interdependence in the community similar to what a family would have, relying on one another for support, rather than simply independence.

The program is very flexible and always adapting to the needs of the youth through workshops and one-to-one meetings. The staff regularly discuss with the youth what aspects of the program worked and what aspects did not work. This, according to one of their major funders, is one of the most essential aspects that makes this program successful (PC, 2017/01/12b).

Some of the youth can find space in subsidised housing, but many are placed in market housing across the city. The youth are supported one-to-one by the housing worker to find and maintain their housing, and they are fully supported if problems arise.

Almost all the youth graduate from the program with very few drop-outs, and many of the youth who graduate stay in the program to become peer mentors. Many stories were shared in the interview about the success of the youth, such as getting a promotion at work because of positive attitude changes, applying for university in areas that interest the youth, and becoming peer mentors in the program.

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[4] Unless otherwise noted this, this entire section 4.1.3 Aboriginal Youth Mentorship Program scan is taken from one interview.

Furthermore, the program manager stated that many of the youths' successes are simply being able to attend their program twice a week or attending their counselling appointments every week. Many of the youth are not at a stage where they can begin to think about getting work or attending school. This is especially true when they are not able to afford food that gives them proper nutrition, and they cannot afford bus passes to get around. The program manager expressed that, when in care, if there is any problem the youth are moved to a new school, home, or city and after leaving care youth are expected to keep housing, employment, and stay in programs even when there are problems. Therefore a lot of the Mentorship Program staff time is spent helping the youth learn how to face diversity, and as a result, the successes are not as tangible as many funders would like.

When asked in what areas the program struggles to support the youth, the most significant responses were bus passes and cell phones. With limited funds, the youth are often left choosing whether to buy groceries or pay for bus tickets to get to medical appointments or work. Similarly, if youth are trying to get a job, book appointments, or just need support from a mentor they need access to a phone. The free phone services are often in areas that the program manager tries to discourage the youth from going to because they are higher risk areas. Therefore, cell phones are the only option. The staff also expressed that because there is so much need with so many youth aging out of care, they would love to hire more staff to expand the program (PC, 2016/11/28).

4.1.4. Aunts and Uncles Program

The Aunts and Uncles Program is for Indigenous youth ages eight through 18 who require assistance and support in their lives (PC, 2016/12/29; Xyolhemeylh Child and Family Services, n.d.)[5]. The program was run through Xyolhemeylh Fraser Valley Child and Family Services (Xyolhemeylh) in the Fraser Valley, BC and was based on the medicine wheel teachings (Indigenous teachings based on physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health), but, due to funding and staffing changes, the program no longer exists. The program pairs a volunteer mentor with a youth referred to the program and is

[5] Unless otherwise noted this, this entire section 4.1.34 Aunts and Uncles Program scan is taken from one interview and the program package.

aimed to provide healthy stable long-term relationships for the youth. To qualify for the program, the youth had to be either in care or have only one parent. The mentors went through a rigorous interview and initial training process to ensure they would be a positive influence on the youth. Once the mentor was approved and a youth was matched up, the program coordinator facilitated an initial meeting with the mentor at the youth's home to discuss what the relationship could look like.

Youth and their mentors met up two to four times per month with a minimum of a one-year commitment to provide stability for the youth. Additional activities for the whole group were offered four times per year. The mentors were encouraged to help the youth connect with culture, socially, and to other programs in the community. Mentors received training and workshops relating to child protection and culture throughout the year in addition to check-ins with the program coordinator. To ensure accountability and support, the mentors were required to submit reports bi-monthly briefly describing every outing.

Due to the labour intensity of the program, it required a committed coordinator, mentor, and youth. However, partnering with local programs and organizations increased supports and created more opportunities for the youth.

Many long-term relationships with mentors developed, including a youth who was in grade six at the start of the program and is now graduating (the pair continued after the program closed). Similarly, while continuing a relationship with the youth, one mentor spent a short time mentoring the whole family. Through checking-in with the family, youth, mentor, and at group meetings, many youth demonstrated increased social skills, improvement in academics, developed life skills, did not get involved with drugs and alcohol, and were connected to other support programs. The only relationships that have not been successful were with youth who were forced to join the program against their will (PC, 2016/12/29).

4.1.5. Indigenous Youth Recovery Program

The Indigenous Youth Recovery Program, located in Vancouver, BC,[6] is not specific to youth aging out of care, but approximately half of the participants were/are in care and an even higher percentage spent at least some time in care. The program has a rolling intake process with a total of 5 beds for youth ages 13-18 years old, but is disinclined to take youth who are in school as they are not currently able to support the education with a teacher. The youth live full time in the home for the duration of the program (PC, 2016/12/05)[7].

The program likes to position itself more as a healing lodge than a treatment centre and takes a holistic approach and bases each month of the program on the four stages of the medicine wheel. After each stage is completed, the youth are celebrated and in 2016 a total of 7 youth graduated from the full 4-month program which is a significant increase from previous years. This increase in graduation rates may be connected to some of the program changes made this year that resulted from an external review. Additionally, the program manager conveyed that even when youth do not graduate the program, the staff see a significant improvement in their lives when talking to the youth on the phone at a later date. One youth who graduated the program showed extreme changes and is now attending college studying Aboriginal youth care and is involved in the recovery community.

The program uses a philosophy-based approach to care including harm reduction, being trauma informed, using culture as therapy, being youth-centred, and using two-eyed seeing[8]. The program activities are designed to offer the youth three different components. One-third of the program is cultural based programs such as powwow dancing, smudging, regalia making, sweats, and other activities. One-third is clinical including one-to-one

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[6] The actual program title was changed to ensure confidentiality.

[7] Unless otherwise noted this, this entire section 4.1.5 Indigenous Youth Recovery Program scan is taken from one interview.

[8] "Two-Eyed Seeing refers to learning to see from one eye with the strengths of, or the best in, the Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye learning to see with the strengths of, or the best in, the Western (mainstream) knowledges and ways of knowing, but, most importantly, learning to use both these eyes together, for the benefit of all." (Hogue & Bartlett, 2014, p. 26)

meetings with a counsellor, psycho-education, teachings about healthy relationships, and group art-based therapy. The final third revolves around life skills which can include cooking, first aid, volunteering, resume writing, and how to have fun sober. The program manager explained that these program guides are very important because they have evolved out of the experiences in the program.

While in the program, the youth are always with a staff member or pre-approved adult, and though the program overall takes a harm reduction approach, alcohol and drugs are not allowed on the premise. Nonetheless, with so few strict rules, the staff work hard to keep the youth in the program when some aspects are not working for the youth.

One of the largest aspects of the transition plan is finding housing for the youth once they complete the program. If staff can help the youth get an Agreement for Young Adults or a Youth Agreement, there are funds that the youth can use for housing. However, when youth are not able to get support from the ministry, they have a hard time finding housing. One of the added challenges is that when youth are stressed about where they will live once the program is completed, they are not able to fully engage in creating other goals or participate in other program activities. Finding housing for young men is often harder than for young women who have many more supportive options available (PC, 2016/12/05).

4.1.6. Broadway Youth Resource Centre: Youth Supported Housing Program

The Broadway Youth Resource Centre (BYRC) Supported Housing Program provides youth in Vancouver, BC, aged 16-24 with secure safe housing (McCreary Centre Society, 2010, p.29)[9]. BYRC provides guaranteed rent and repairs to housing landlords across East Vancouver and then rents these units out to the youth who are provided with some rental supplements and move-in supplies.

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[9] Unless otherwise noted this, this entire section 4.1.6 Broadway Youth Resource Centre: Youth supported housing program scan is taken from the same source (McCreary Centre Society, 2010, p.29).

Youth are supported by a Transition of Adulthood worker (non-BYRC staff), and BYRC staff who can support the youth with life skills, neighbours or landlord mediation and emergency assistance. The Transition to Adulthood worker or BYRC staff can also refer the youth to BYRC and partner support programs such as education and employment programs.

The BYRC program has some shared homes in for youth who prefer to live with others, which can provide a smooth transition for youth who previously lived in a group home. Some youth prefer the shared home so that they can support one another. They also appreciate that, unlike a group home, the shared home is more relaxed, and the supervision is not constant, allowing youth to live more independently.

Shared accommodations had more rules surrounding household chores, and youth who had taken substances were required to stay in their room. However, neither in the shared accommodation nor in the individual living suites, are youth permitted to start renting from BYRC if they are addicted to an illicit substance. Some challenges have arisen due to this rule such as youth not seeking out help for substance use because they are afraid it will jeopardize their housing. Furthermore, youth are not allowed to share their room with anyone else, and this can be a challenge if a family member or friends want to take advantage of the housing support. Youth suggest that the strict rules surrounding room sharing allow them to blame BYRC when they feel uncomfortable saying no to someone wanting to stay with them.

The program has successfully housed 90% of the youth who were referred to their organization through partner agencies, which was 55 youth from 2007-2010 (McCreary Centre Society, 2010, p.29). Though the length of stay varied, a majority (56%) stayed in their home for two to six months (McCreary Centre Society, 2010, p.29) and 47% of the youth in the program successfully transitioned to independent housing at the time of the survey (McCreary Centre Society, 2010, p.29). One of the major reasons that youth chose to participate in the program initially is that they do not have to interact with the landlord because this is done by a case manager.

4.2. General Interview Results

Participants discussed lots of challenges that Indigenous youth face as they age out of care. One of the most discussed challenges is that they are often dealing with intergenerational trauma that resulted from residential school (PC, 2016/11/15; PC, 2016/11/22; PC, 2016/11/25; PC, 2016/11/29). Indigenous youth are facing many of the challenges that youth face at that age (16-25); yet, youth leaving care do not have the dedicated community, such as parents, to support them through this time (PC, 2016/11/25). Some of these challenges include graduating from high school, opening a bank account, getting a driver's license, getting a job, learning to cook, and navigating complicated support systems (PC, 2016/11/15). This can be particularly challenging if Indigenous youth have limited access to services or are stereotyped due to racism (PC, 2016/11/22). The lack of a support system can put them at risk of becoming involved in crime and falling victim to predators in the sex or drug trade. Furthermore, Indigenous youth can also face culture shock if they are from a traditional community, are subject to systemic racism, and struggling to discover their Indigenous identity (PC, 2016/11/15). Many youth have anxiety about turning 19 years old, and many become homeless with no support system to help them (PC, 2017/01/10b).

Some of the calls to action in the TRC surrounding this issue have created a platform to talk about the issues they face and begin to address their supports (PC, 2016/11/15). The increasing awareness of the challenges that these youth face has led to an increasing number of support services beyond the support that non-Indigenous youth aging out of care receive (PC, 2016/11/25). Likewise, as the young Indigenous community is becoming more prominent in the media, there are more role models for the youth to identify with (PC, 2016/12/05). This can help the youth to understand how to identify as an Indigenous person in modern society and that they should not be ashamed to identify with their culture (PC, 2016/11/29). Finally, many of the youth have a maturity beyond their years that can help them as face challenging situations (PC, 2016/11/25).

Many of the interview participants described successful programs and practices that they are doing to support the Indigenous youth in their community. These include using the arts as a medium to talk about mental health, helping the youth to learn about

culture, listening to stories from Elders, taking the time to talk with and listen to the youth, and helping them to know that abuses are not their fault (PC, 2016/11/25). Some of the other successful practices include helping the youth to learn their language, celebrating their success, and admitting that these challenges that the Indigenous community faces are not an Aboriginal problem, but a Canadian problem (PC, 2016/11/29). Other programs are helping youth to connect with the land, using culture as a form of healing, empowering youth to mentor and support each other, and connecting youth with their home and local culture (PC, 2017/01/10b).

Interview participants discussed Indigenous youth engagement as an essential aspect of successful programs. This process helps to understand the real, not perceived, needs of the youth. This process should be done through a leadership development lens to ensure the empowerment of the youth and provide real valuable input and feedback. Similarly, interview participants expressed that successful programs have cultural aspects led by Indigenous people and Elders (PC, 2016/11/28; PC, 2016/12/05; PC, 2016/12/16; PC, 2017/01/10a; PC, 2017/01/10b; PC, 2017/01/12a; PC, 2017/01/12b).

One of the biggest gaps addressed by participants is the need for Indigenous youth to have housing and longer-term relationship supports (PC, 2016/12/15). With the ending of the formalized relationship with either a foster parent or social worker at age 19, many of the youth do not have someone to turn to for support which they need in many aspects of life (PC, 2016/11/25); (PC, 2016/12/14). Practically, when youth are not able to stay in their current home or are no longer receiving financial support, their most immediate need is housing. Suggestions to address this problem included supportive housing options, mentorship programs, and staying in care longer (PC, 2016/11/15; PC, 2016/11/22; PC, 2016/11/25; PC, 2016/12/05; PC, 2016/12/15).

The transition from youth services to adult services is also a significant gap that was identified by interview participants particularly regarding mental-health-related services (PC, 2016/12/14). Similarly, once youth transition to adult services, they are required to learn and navigate new health and other support systems that are much different than the services they received as a youth. Though some transition supports exist in some regions, they do not exist in all regions across BC (PC, 2016/12/14). This is partly

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due to the poor distribution of funds across BC. A housing and youth program manager noted that Surrey has a similar Indigenous population to Vancouver and yet only receives 4.5% of the public and private grant dollars distributed to organizations in Greater Vancouver for Indigenous programming (PC, 2017/01/10b).

One-to-one mentorship and relationship building were the most talked about tool among interview participants to address the gaps in current support programs. Though the views of formalization of this program were different among participant groups, most expressed the need for a more formalized program that goes beyond the "buddy" system (PC, 2016/11/28). Outreach workers and program managers stated that Indigenous youth need the one-to-one support that most youth who are not in government care receive from their parents or caregivers such as assistance with writing a resume, applying for post-secondary, learning to drive, getting a passport, learning about cultural identity, and making difficult life decisions (PC, 2016/11/28). This can also help Indigenous youth to see that despite challenges their mentor might have faced, they were able to overcome those challenges. This can be an encouragement for the youth. The outreach workers and program managers do not have time in their jobs to provide those individualized supports to each youth, but they do know what a difference it would make for the youth. Still, some participants added that formalized mentorship can be a barrier for Indigenous youth who are not able to keep a schedule or meetings and that a more informal drop-in centre could help address these barriers (PC, 2016/11/28).

Housing programs were the other most talked about tools to assist Indigenous youth aging out of care. As it is one of the biggest identified barriers to youth success, outreach workers are often faced with the ethical dilemma of encouraging youth to stay in school and risk homelessness or to quit school and work more so that they can pay for rent (PC, 2016/11/28). Housing supports can help to keep youth safe and allow them an opportunity to focus on their healing in a traditional way (PC, 2017/01/10b).

Similarly, xʷəyaθənaq (hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓ word describing the persons who teaches language) expressed that because wellness and support programs primarily exist for women, comparable programs need to be developed for men to support them through their trauma and to help stop the cycle of abuse. Both Elders who participated in the

interviews also discussed the importance of holistic wellness programs that either address the four quadrants of the medicine wheel or aspects of the seven sacred teachings (PC, 2016/01/26; PC, 2017/01/20).

4.3. Data Results

The above-cited programs and interview results address successful aspects or recommended practices of programs, as well remaining challenges that are faced by Indigenous youth aging out of care. Most program scans and interviews identified that basing the programs in cultural teachings, having the flexibility to meet the changing needs of the youth, and practicing leadership-based youth engagement are essential aspects of programs. Programs that incorporated these aspects seemed to have greater success.

Though most programs identified the importance of a harm reduction approach, some had more difficulty implementing this strategy while ensuring the safety of the other participants. More successful programs permitted substance use in a safe place where other youth could not be harmed and worked with the youth on harm reduction and goal setting surrounding substance use.

Different programs and interview participants had different approaches to supportive housing regarding demographic make-up of the housing and level of support for the youth. Results varied regarding demographic make-up so that no conclusions can be made in this regard, yet a majority of the program scans chosen used primarily youth-only housing as opposed to all-age housing. Likewise, different levels of support for the youth provided a range of results in program effectiveness, but there seemed to be more success if the support workers were able to determine support levels, provide incentives, and require commitment from youth at their discretion.

Chapter 5.   Policy Options

Based on the findings collected up to this point, two policy options have been developed to support Indigenous youth aging out of care and to help them succeed. The options address the social services provided to youth, but they do not directly address financial provisions or educational and career attainment. The options have been based primarily on programs in the program scans section, but have been augmented by aspects from the literature review and the general interview results.

5.1. Indigenous Youth Supported Housing Program

The Indigenous Youth Supported Housing program (Housing program) policy option is based on the housing aspect of the Eva's Phoenix program, Aunt Leah's Link program, Broadway Youth Resource Centre's Supported Housing Program, and interview results. This option is important because it removes barriers for youth who are not able to find a home on their own or are not yet ready to live completely unsupported.

As per the Eva's Phoenix program and interview results, this program will allow Indigenous youth aging out of government care aged 16-24 to live in a supportive environment for up to two years after leaving care. It will allow Indigenous youth under a Youth Agreement to stay from ages 16-21; however, youth entering at age 22 will only be able to stay for up to two years in accordance with program scan and interview results[10]. This program will offer dorm or apartment style living with an additional common kitchen and gathering rooms for weekly group gatherings or large houses with five or more bedrooms. The program will be harm-reduction based and will allow youth to develop goals with support workers that can be adjusted as needed. Youth will not be able to attend community events while intoxicated so that they do not harm the experience of the other youth in the program.

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[10] If additional beds are available they can be offered to Indigenous youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who were not in care at a subsidized price.

With one staff for approximately every 12 youth, the youth have varying levels of support and optional programs. Additionally, with an Elder connected to the program to provide cultural teachings and mentorship, as recommended in interviews with Elders and cultural teachers, the youth can build stable relationships and learn in a traditional way. Staff will act primarily as a support to the youth providing optional workshops, a weekly dinner, and one-to-one mentoring when the youth require it. The supports can include assistance with volunteering, finances, life skills, identity, goal setting related to finding employment or working on education, and looking for long term housing based on the needs of the youth. Support workers could also refer youth to other local support services for employment, education, traditional parenting classes or other types of services. Programs and supports will be based on Indigenous cultural teachings primarily based on the local culture as stressed by Elders and cultural teachers. To ensure the program is addressing the specific needs of the youth through real engagement, staff will be given discretion over major program aspects as recommended by the Indigenous Youth Recovery Program Manager.

The overall goal of the program, as emphasized by the literature and interview participants, is to help support youth in developing the skills they will need to live independently once departing the program. This will include helping the youth connect to other community resources and decreasing supports for the youth over their term of stay so that they are living completely independently (but still with subsidized housing) once they depart the program. This will also include creating ongoing relationships so that once the youth leave the program, they are comfortable contacting the staff when they need further supports, such as a conflict resolution with a landlord.

5.2. Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program

The Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program (Mentorship Program) is primarily based on the interview results collected from the program manager and one mentor at the Aboriginal Youth Mentorship program. It is a 12-18 month program for Indigenous youth aging out of government care ranging from 16-24 years old. The program will be offered to all youth aging out of care, but would be optional as recommended by the Aunts and Uncles program manager. The program will be rooted in the local cultural teachings and

will wrap around the youth addressing key areas including: housing, health, life skills, finances, education, relationships, traditional parenting, using anger in a good way, skills and training, as well as other areas depending on the specific needs of the youth. The program will be youth lead through engagement that allows for real influence over the program. This allows them to learn about and grow in areas that are important to them and what their real needs are.

As with the Mentorship program, this program will consist of two workshop nights a week, one-to-one mentorship, monthly field trips, and meetings with the staff mentors. This will allow the youth to be well supported and able to thrive in the program. The program should be built around fostering interdependence in the community similar to what a family would have; rather than simply independence. It will also take a harm reduction approach that allows the youth to set their goals, and readjust them if necessary.

The program will have two full-time staff, supporting Elders, and one half-time staff for up to 20 youth who focus on the key areas and specifically supporting youth with finding, securing, and maintaining housing. Many of the support services and workshops can be offered through partner organizations such as health and nutrition services, grief and loss programs, employment services, subsidized housing, and others. Similarly, culture workshops can be provided by partnering with Elders and cultural teachers.

As with the existing Mentorship program, youth will be offered a $25 grocery store gift card every month if they participate in every workshop for that month.

The program should aim to develop a family-like feel through family dinners and role modelling. Family dinners can also offer nutritious food to youth who have food security issues. Once youth graduate from the program, they will be invited to continue participating as peer mentors supporting discussions and demonstrating leadership to the youth who are in the program.

Chapter 6.   Criteria and Measures

To assess the policies developed above and determine which policy should be used, they will be measured against specified criteria. These criteria were determined based on their relevancy to the policies and anticipated importance to policy makers; they were also restricted based on importance in order to limit the number. The criteria chosen include effectiveness, cultural appropriateness, cost, scope, and administrative complexity. All criteria are ranked on a scale of high, medium, and low to compare between options easily.

The effectiveness of the program is an essential criterion for assessing the policies. This will measure how the policy assists youth aging out of government care to become successful within society. Due to the large variance of potential results, and in an attempt not to place value judgments on different types of success, this criterion will measure improvement generally for the youth in their current state. Youth enter support programs at diverse stages and therefore success looks different for each. Some youth can have success by maintaining housing and graduating high school while others who already have stable housing and a high school education could be deemed successful by finding employment or attending post-secondary education. This was measured using both qualitative data and quantitative data, and where available data comes from program scans. An effective program with a high score will allow the Indigenous youth involved to be in a more equitable position compared with youth who were not in government care.

As it is the basis for this study, measuring cultural appropriateness is an essential portion of the analysis of each policy option. This will be measured based not only on the amount of cultural understandings/teachings and activities that can be incorporated into the policy, but also based on the cultural appropriateness of the foundation of the policy options. This criterion is based on interview results and reviewed with Elders and cultural teachers and will include their opinions of the overall policies as well as the components of the policies.

The cost of each option is measured using dollar estimates. The lower the cost of each program, the better. Each program is designed to reach all of the Indigenous youth

aging out of government care; currently estimated at nearly 600 youth each year[11] (Shaffer et al., 2016a). A high score for this criterion will have a low cost. The number of youth involved in the program will be addressed in the scope measurement discussed below.

The scope of each option will be addressed to determine if the options can reach all Indigenous youth aging out of care in BC, or if there will be barriers toward entry for some youth. The more youth that can be reached with a program, the higher the score. The number of barriers that some youth might face, along with the magnitude of each barrier, will give an indication of the number of youth able to participate in each program.

The administrative complexity criteria will assess the degree of the complexity to administer each option, where less complexity is a higher score. This will be measured based on how each program will be implemented.

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[11] Approximately 60% of the youth in care identify as Indigenous; however, in 2015 only 43% of the youth aging out of care identified as Indigenous. For the purposes of this analysis 60% was used to create a more conservative estimate.

Chapter 7. Assessment of Programs

The criteria will be applied to both policy options to determine which option would be the better to implement. This has been done for the Indigenous Youth Supported Housing Program and the Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program. A brief summary of the following explanations can be found at the end of chapter 7 in Table 1.

7.1. Indigenous Youth Supported Housing Program

7.1.1. Effectiveness

As stressed in most interviews and much of the literature, success for each youth looks different. Some youth may be able to further their education, obtain employment, or gain stable housing, which is what many programs strive for. However, whereas some youth may have great success and improve by attending counselling or therapy regularly, others may have success in breaking an addiction. Some youth may make great strides by simply staying in a program for its duration, and others may move onto post-secondary education. Many of these difference are a result of the starting point of the youth. These varying levels of success result from a variety of reasons outside the scope of this paper, but the variety of results creates a challenge for comparing different programs.

One of the most obvious benefits of this program is that the estimated 45% of youth aging out of care who experience homelessness (Rutman et al., 2007), would have an affordable place to live. All youth would receive not only a place to live, but a home that meets acceptable living standards, and has supports for the youth when required. Interview participants suggested that youth who do not qualify for an agreement with young adults would benefit greatly from housing programs because, particularly in Metro Vancouver, they cannot afford to pay rent on their low incomes, or while gaining further education (PC, 2016/12/15).

The Broadway Youth Resource Centre Supportive Housing Program, found in a survey of youth that 78% will be ready to live independently when leaving the program (McCreary Centre Society, 2010, p.29) and 89% reported feeling safe in their living

situation (McCreary Centre Society, 2010, p.29). This is an important result as many youth may be able to find housing elsewhere, but the housing could be unsafe or provide health risks to the youth with a limited budget.

The Indigenous Youth Recovery Program saw an increase in graduates from approximately 3-4 youth per year to 7 in 2016 after revising the program to provide one-third cultural, one-third clinical, and one-third life skills (PC, 2016/12/05). Though the increased results are a correlation and not necessarily causation, the results are consistent with findings in the literature that having a strong balance of culture is essential to the success of Indigenous youth (Chandler & Lalonde, 2008; PC, 2016/11/29).

Finally, as mentioned above in the Eva's Phoenix program scan, of the youth who took part in the housing program, 50% were able to find and maintain housing (Zizys et al., 2003, p. 68) and 60% felt that, in general, Eva's Phoenix helped them (Zizys et al., 2003, p. 67). Importantly, the youth who took part solely in the housing program had much lower success with employment outcomes with only 15% reporting improvement in this area (Zizys et al., 2003, p. 67).

This program shows strong results for helping youth to immediately obtain stable housing, assisting youth with living independently, and opportunities to connect youth with other support services. Though this program does not have as strong results in areas such as education and employment compared to the mentorship program, the result is still a high score.

7.1.2.   Cultural appropriateness

Regular community meals were emphasized by an Elder as a paramount aspect not only culturally, but, also to assist youth with food security as well as connectedness among the residents (PC, 2016/12/21). This program not only allows for scheduled gatherings, but also opportunities for youth to gather together over meals in a more casual way as a result of living in a similar location.

Furthermore, a cultural teacher expressed that it is of utmost importance to have program leaders that understand residential school and the intergenerational impacts of

culture and trauma (PC, 2016/12/21). Because this program is structured to have one staff member available to youth, those who may be dealing with trauma have an opportunity to access supports for those needs.

The cultural supports identified in this program are important. However, they are not as prominent as with the mentorship program; therefore, cultural appropriateness will receive a medium score for the housing option.

7.1.3. Cost

The Housing program has an estimated annual cost of $28.7 million or approximately $23,979 per youth if the program is full with 1,200 youth (Shaffer et al., 2016b). A detailed breakdown of this budget can be found in Appendix C.

The budget includes the purchase of 200 homes across BC with six or more rooms averaged over 25 years, along with the BC property tax average of 0.00192% (Government of British Columbia, 2014) and a repair allowance of 3% (Scarrow, 2012) of the average housing cost. This is an estimation based on the average price of BC homes with six or more bedrooms[12] (Paragon Residential, January 20, 2017) that totals $277 million. Other apartments, townhouses, or dorm style homes may be available, but six-bedroom homes were chosen to avoid bias in the mixture of housing type choices. Furthermore, the purchase cost of houses was spread evenly over 25 years to avoid an unnecessarily complicated analysis that accounts for resale value, present value, interest rates, and other factors beyond the scope of this project. It is anticipated, due to the simplicity of this calculation, that the annual cost of housing used in the budget is a high estimate.

This budget also includes a rental income from youth living in the homes based on $325 welfare shelter payments. The amount of rental income is impossible to determine because some youth on Youth Agreements, Agreements with Young Adults, or working could be able to pay much more than $325. Welfare shelter allowance is still a cost to the

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[12] Based on a 6+ bedroom 2+ bathroom detached house under 2 million in BC. Availability may differ across the province and apartment style buildings might be available in some areas.

government, yet, as some youth will be able to start working due to the supports in the program, their rental payments will not be a cost to the government.

Staffing costs have been included at $25 per hour (PayScale, 2016a) for one support worker for every 12 youth; employee costs such as employment insurance and benefits have been budgeted at 25% of the wages. Elder honorariums at $75 per week (PC, 2016/12/29), and program costs at $50 per youth per month have been included to support the youth while living in the housing and provide funds for workshops and group dinners. The budget also includes a total of eight regional manager positions at $75,000 annually (PayScale, 2016c). Additionally, the budget includes an allocation of 15% of the total cost of project expenses, which includes utilities, and 10% of the total cost for administrative expenses.

The average cost of this program is low compared to the $222,000 per youth cost of doing nothing (Shaffer et al., 2016b). However, the estimated required upfront cost of $277 million results in a medium score for the cost of the housing program.

7.1.4. Scope

While the Indigenous Youth Supported Housing program is designed to have few barriers toward entry, inevitably some barriers will arise. The largest barrier to the program for some youth is moving, possibly, to a new city. With each program hosting approximately only six youth each, the programs can be spread out all over BC. But, if youth are living in a rural community, there might not be a program in that community. As per the Appendix A, both the Kootenays and Northeast regions are estimated to have fewer Indigenous youth aging out of care and therefore could only offer three or four programs per region. Because these regions are quite large, youth living in small cities might be required to move to other areas in the city or nearby cities that they are less familiar with.

Another aspect of the programming that could be a barrier to some youth is the policy regarding illegal drug use on site. Though the program takes a harm reduction approach, youth who are regular illegal drug users or who deal drugs report having a more difficult time accessing services (Barker, Kerr, Nguyen, Wood, & DeBeck, 2015). This can

be mitigated by allowing youth who are regular drug users to have private housing options when available.

Finally, because government funds the program, many youth may be reluctant to participate due to a mistrust of adults or a mistrust of the system (Barker et al., 2015; Blackstock et al., 2006; PC, 2016/11/29).

The barriers to accessing this program are similar to those in the mentorship program; therefore, this program will receive a medium score.

7.1.5. Administrative complexity

This program can be implemented by building on existing programs, for example, partnering with existing urban Aboriginal Support Service Agencies such as Lower Fraser Valley Aboriginal Society, increasing the capacity and adding an Indigenous program to Aunt Leah's Link program, and adding an Indigenous residential component to the youth hub in Langley (PC, 2016/12/15). These partnerships will reduce the level of administrative complexity required (PC, 2016/12/16). On the other hand, adding a residential component that includes purchasing or building housing will require more oversight than current programs. Similarly, this program is more complicated,and could require more oversight during program implementation, and will take longer to implement than the mentorship program. As a result, this program receives a medium score for this criterion.

7.2. Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program

The Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program described above in section 5.2 is assessed based on the specified criteria. Where information required for the analysis is not available for the Indigenous Youth Program, this analysis will draw on information from the Aunts and Uncles Program scan described in section **Error! Reference source not found.**4.

7.2.1.   Effectiveness

The outcomes reported by the Aboriginal Youth Mentorship Program demonstrate strides among the youth, but data regarding quantities is not available. Some youth have seen success by reduced levels of drug and alcohol use and by attending regular counselling lessons. One youth received a promotion at work after applying knowledge gained in a workshop about having a positive outlook. One youth discovered a passion for journalism and gained the confidence to pursue post-secondary education in that field (PC, 2016/11/28). All interview participants who knew of this program highly recommended it and commended the successes and design of the program (PC, 2016/11/28; PC, 2016/12/16; PC, 2017/01/10b; PC, 2017/01/12a; PC, 2017/01/12b).

Very few youth drop out of the Aboriginal Youth Mentorship Program, and many of the graduates continue in the program to become peer mentors (PC, 2016/11/28). The ability for the peer-mentors to share their experience through the program has positive effects on youth currently in the program. This result is also consistent with peer-mentoring in other programs (Zizys et al., 2003).

Youth-led initiatives foster learning about aspects of culture, life skills, and leadership. This approach allows youth to set their own goals and identify what they need for success instead of attending a prescribed program that might not fit the needs of each youth (Eagle Bear, January 2, 2017). Similarly, youth engagement allows youth to develop leadership skills and can give youth the autonomy to identify program barriers or areas of need that they may not have previously identified (PC, 2017/01/12b). Furthermore, youth are given an opportunity to learn about and develop pride in their cultural identity that they were often not able to do while in government care (Trocmé, Knoke, & Blackstock, 2004).

Similar successes were noted in the Aunts and Uncles Program. One youth in the program expressed that, despite peer pressure from friends, they chose not to use drugs or drink alcohol. In another partnership, the guardian was a male, and he was unsure how to assist the girl in many aspects, so the mentor was able to take the youth shopping, discuss relationships, and assist with other women-specific issues. Similarly, many youth showed signs of academic, social, and relational improvement (PC, 2016/12/29)

Additionally, a similar mentorship style program for at-risk Indigenous youth, located in Manitoba called Northern Lights, had a 66% success rate with youth either returning to school, graduating, or finding employment (McCluskey, Noller, Lamoureux, & McCluskey, 2004).

The strides youth can make in education and employment are more prominent in the mentorship program than in the housing program. However, as noted these strides are more difficult for youth who do not have stable housing. Because the program is not able to provide the stable housing that youth need, the program receives a medium score.

7.2.2. Cultural appropriateness

Interview participants expressed that having youth living in homes dispersed across a city is more culturally appropriate because it allows them to interact with elders, youth, and families (PC, 2016/11/28; PC, 2016/12/21). However, finding housing is challenging enough in some areas in BC, let alone housing for Indigenous youth.

Though this program can allow for some teaching of the language, with meetings only two times a week and other essential program elements, language lessons could not be very regular. Similarly, community meals are incorporated into the program as it is an essential aspect of culture (PC, 2016/12/21).

An Elder expressed that Indigenous youth need more mentors throughout their life than non-Indigenous youth need (PC, 2016/01/26). Mentorship is a traditional form of learning for Indigenous people, and, Indigenous youth learn more successfully through mentorship-style teaching, relationships, and communication (Government of Alberta, 2007; Klinck, Cardinal, Gibson, Bisanz, & da Costa, 2005). Therefore, mentorship programs are very important to the youth's success. Having an Elder participating in the program will strongly benefit the youth and will provide them with someone to connect to that is not a staff of the program. They conveyed that they appreciated how the program was designed to wrap around the student and meet all of their needs such as culture, identity, and life skills (PC, 2016/01/26).

An Elder appreciated that the youth could take part in workshops that teach both cooking healthy on a budget, learning to meal plan, but also include aspects of how to cook traditional foods and some traditional cooking methods. The Elder expressed the importance of learning and following the local protocols and teachings such as the seven sacred teachings when in the Kwantlen territory. They also expressed the importance of allowing the youth to learn about their own cultural teachings that they might not have had a chance to learn while in care such as a rites of passage ceremony (PC, 2016/01/26).

This program provides many opportunities for cultural teachings and workshops, and its design is based on culture. Therefore, this program receives a high score in the cultural appropriateness criteria.

7.2.3.   Cost

The Mentorship program has an estimated annual cost of $19.7 million. This, based primarily on similar program budgets with Lower Fraser Valley Aboriginal Society, is approximate $21,931 per youth. A detailed breakdown of this budget can be found in Appendix B. This budget is based on an estimated 600 indigenous youth aging out of care in BC each year (Shaffer et al., 2016b), and based on an 18 month program (900 youth in the program at any given time). There are an estimated 60 programs with 15 youth each; this average will allow for smaller communities that may have only 5-10 youth in each program. Workshop costs within the budget include food costs, program material costs, and facilitator or Elder fees for a total of $3.9 million. Additional annual participant costs totalling $500 per youth allow program staff to support youth to pay university application fees, have one-to-one mentorship meetings over coffee, buy bus tickets for interviews, pay for work uniforms, or other areas that might be a barrier to the youth's development in the program.

The budget allows for 1.5 mentors per program at a $25 per hour (PayScale, 2016a), one full-time program coordinator at $29 per hour (PayScale, 2016b), and one regional manager at $75,000 annually (PayScale, 2016c) for every five programs with an additional 50% allowance for other employee-related costs such as taxes and benefits. The budget also allows for 15% project costs and 10% administrative costs for each

program. This budget does not allow for any government administration costs aside from the salaries of the regional managers as this cost is accounted for in the Administrative Complexity criteria below.

Furthermore, as some locations may require renovations, an initial capital cost of $6 million allows for an average $150,000 renovation per program site. Program sites may vary upon availability to include public or private facilities, and rental or lease fees are to be included in the 15% project costs budget. The per youth cost of this program is very low compared to the estimated cost of doing nothing at $222,000 per youth (Shaffer et al., 2016b) and results in a high score.

7.2.4. Scope

The Mentorship Program may have some barriers for youth to participate in the program despite an attempt to be a low-barrier program. Similarly to the Housing Program, the Mentorship Program takes a harm reduction approach. Interview participants who discussed the Aboriginal Youth Mentorship Program mentioned that if youth are high, they will not be able to participate in the program that day (PC, 2016/11/28). This policy may deter youth from continuing with or even starting the program.

The program manager from the Indigenous Youth Recovery Program expressed in an interview that youth might have difficulty attending regular meetings and keeping a schedule (2016/12/05). This could also be a barrier to entry for some youth.

Again, similar to the Housing program, location of the program may be a barrier to entry for some youth. Those who live in smaller communities may not have the program available in their community. As per estimations in Appendix A, only one program could run in each of the Kootenays and Northeast regions. In addition, if youth have other employment or education commitments that conflict with the program, they will not be able to participate in the mentorship program. These two barriers could be minimised by offering the Aunts and Uncles program described in the program scan section above for more rural areas.

This program receives a medium score for the scope criteria because the barriers to entry are similar to those in the housing program.

7.2.5. Administrative complexity

This program can be implemented by building on existing programs such as increasing the capacity of the current Aboriginal Youth Mentorship Program, existing programs in DAAs, and partnering with existing urban Aboriginal Support Service Agencies such as Lower Fraser Valley Aboriginal Society. This will allow for a minimal increase in up-front administrative requirements and less administrative requirements ongoing. Due to the simplicity of this program, it could be provided by many existing organizations within six months or less (PC, 2016/12/29). It is essential to ensure that programs are provided by Indigenous-run organizations to ensure cultural safety (PC, 2017/01/10b). As a result, the mentorship program receives a high score for the administrative complexity criterion.

7.2.6. Summary of Policy Analysis

Table 1   Summary of Policy Analysis

Criteria/measure	Indigenous Youth Supported Housing Program	Score	Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program	Score
Effectiveness/ success of youth	- Improvements in housing - Prevention of homelessness - Reduction in drug and alcohol use - Helped youth overall - Graduates increased after culture increased	High	- Improvements in employment - Reduction in drug and alcohol use - Increased education level - Most youth graduate - Youth become peer mentors	Medium
Cultural content/ Elders opinions	- Weekly community dinners - Opportunity for trauma support	Medium	- Live in intergenerational community - Bi-weekly community dinners - Structured mentorship	High

			-Culture teachings in workshops	
Cost of program	- $28.7 million annually - $23,979 per youth annually -Includes one-time cost of $277 million	Medium	- $19.7 million annually -$21,931 per youth annually - One time cost of $6 million	High
Scope/ Barriers to Entry	- Moving could be required - Difficult to participate if drug use is an issue - Youth may not want to be involved with institutions anymore	Medium	- Moving could be required - Difficult to participate if drug use is an issue - May have difficulty keeping a schedule	Medium
Administrative Complexity/ Ease of Implementation	- Increase funding and capacity to existing Indigenous organisations - More oversight will be required	Medium	- Increase funding and capacity to existing Indigenous organisations - Quick implementation	High

Chapter 8.   Conclusion and Recommendation

The preceding analysis provides a higher overall assessment of the Indigenous youth housing program than for the alternative mentorship program. The former program provides for the pressing housing needs of the Indigenous youth aging out of care. However, opportunities for increased cultural identity that, as identified in the literature are connected with youth's long-term development (Fallis, 2012), are more prevalent with the mentorship programs. If the criteria are weighted more heavily to favour these outcomes, the ranking of the two program types could be reversed.

As shown in the analysis, the Indigenous youth mentorship program provides more holistic, culturally appropriate supports to the youth. If youth are not able to find adequate housing on their limited budgets, they will have a more difficult time accessing the supports that the mentorship programs (Kisely et al., 2008).

When asked to choose between the two options, one Elder expressed that this option is important because youth can access mentors in other places, but housing is much harder for Indigenous youth to access. They further asserted that youth need stable housing to succeed, and many youth are at risk of homelessness once leaving care. Moreover, the Elder appreciated the opportunities for the youth to be referred to the programs (PC, 2016/01/26). However, in an interview, another Elder suggested that a mixture of the programs would be the best option because not all youth have the same needs; some youth need the support that the housing program would provide and others are ready to live independently at age 19 (PC, 2017/01/20). Though this could create challenges regarding program availability, the suggestion illustrates the diversity of youth's needs and the need for holistic supports.

As outlined above, any program must be based on cultural teachings and protocols and incorporate traditional cultural teachings, Elders teachings, and assistance for youth in gaining their Indigenous identity. Similarly, the program must be very flexible to the needs of the youth and incorporate leadership-based engagement of the youth to best identify the true, not presumed, needs of the youth in the program.

Regardless of the policy implemented, the lack of affordable housing for youth is a priority area for further policy development, particularly related to public funding and income supports for youth aging out of care (PC, 2017/01/11). Even with the support of a housing worker, finding affordable accommodations is extremely challenging, particularly when subsidized housing has very long wait lists (PC, 2016/12/15). Not all of the challenges that youth face when aging out of care should or can be addressed by the social services sector. Similarly, as mentioned by a program manager in the Fraser Valley, the distribution of funds across different organizations that serve the Indigenous population is far from equitable (PC, 2017/01/10b). This is an additional area to consider for further policy analysis.

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Appendix A.

Estimated geographic distribution of Indigenous youth aging out of care in BC

Approximate Number of Indigenous Youth per Region in BC					
	All youth	Estimated percent of Indigenous youth	Estimated number of Indigenous Youth	Estimated Indigenous youth aging out of care (based on 600)	Number of 18 month programs at 15 youth per program	Number of 2 year programs at 6 youth per program
Kootenays	190	48.4%	92.0	12.5	1.2	4.2
Okanagan	515	52.4%	269.9	36.6	3.7	12.2
Thompson Cariboo Shuswap	691	60.3%	416.7	56.6	5.7	18.9
East Fraser	741	55.7%	412.7	56.0	5.6	18.7
North Fraser	409	37.2%	152.1	20.7	2.1	6.9
South Fraser	981	53.0%	519.9	70.6	7.1	23.5
Vancouver/Richmond	751	66.2%	497.2	67.5	6.8	22.5
Coast/North Shore	295	71.5%	210.9	28.6	2.9	9.5
South Vancouver Island	774	57.1%	442.0	60.0	6.0	20.0
North Vancouver Island	928	67.6%	627.3	85.2	8.5	28.4
Northwest	293	93.2%	273.1	37.1	3.7	12.4
North Central	541	80.8%	437.1	59.4	5.9	19.8
Northeast	107	63.6%	68.1	9.2	0.9	3.1
Total	7216	62.1%	4,418.9	600.0	60.0	200.0

(Ministry of Children and Family Development, March 2016)

Appendix B.

Budget Summary of Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program

Estimated Cost of Indigenous Youth Mentorship Program in BC			
Number of Indigenous Youth aging out of care in BC			900.00
Number of Programs (15 youth per program to account for smaller communities)			60.00
	1.5 staff ($25) and program manager ($29)	129,675.00	
	Times 40 programs	7,780,500.00	
	Other staff costs	1,945,125.00	
Total Staff costs		**9,725,625.00**	**9,725,625.00**
Workshop costs			
	Food	1,778,400.00	
	Program Materials	1,872,000.00	
	Facilitator/Elder	312,000.00	
Total workshop costs		**3,962,400.00**	**3,962,400.00**
Participant Costs			450,000.00
Subtotal			**14,138,025.00**
Project costs at 15%			3,000,000.00
Administrative costs at 10%			2,000,000.00
DAA Regional Managers (5 programs/manager)			600,000.00
Total Program Cost			**19,738,025.00**

Appendix C.

Budget Summary of Indigenous Youth Supported Housing Program

Estimated Cost of Indigenous Youth Supported Housing Program in BC			
Number of Indigenous Youth aging out of care in BC			1,200.00
Number of Programs (6 youth per program)			200.00
	1/2 staff ($25) for every 6 youth	24,375.00	
	Times 200 programs	4,875,000.00	
	Other staff costs	1,218,750.00	
Total Staff costs		**6,093,750.00**	**6,093,750.00**
Program and Participant Costs			
	30 per youth per month	720,000.00	
	Elder/Facilitator Fees	780,000.00	
Total Program and Participant Costs		**1,500,000.00**	**1,500,000.00**
Housing Costs			
	Housing Cost divided over 25 years	50,365.08	
	Property Tax allowance	2,417.52	
	Repair allowance	37,773.81	
	Average cost per house	90,556.41	
	Times 200 homes	18,111,282.77	
	Less youth rent	4,680,000.00	
Total Housing Costs		**13,431,282.77**	**13,431,282.77**
Subtotal			**21,025,032.77**
Project costs at 15%			4,200,000.00
Administrative costs at 10%			2,800,000.00
DAA Regional Managers (20 programs/manager)			750,000.00
Total Program Cost			**28,775,032.77**