

## Customary Care vs. Mainstream

Customary Care	Mainstream Child Protection System
<p>Customary care has at its core the belief that it takes a community to raise a child. Accordingly, members of a child's immediate and extended family and the community as a whole participate in decision making related to the child's well being.</p>	<p>Mainstream child welfare places the responsibility for child rearing solely with a child's biological parents. When parents fail to provide a minimum acceptable level of care for their children, their responsibilities are taken over by trained professionals and decision making that is directed by legal statutes and standards.</p>
<p>Customary care allows First Nations to maintain full involvement in protecting and caring for children. Standards of child rearing and parenting are established at the community level and may vary from one First Nation community to another.</p>	<p>Mainstream child welfare is driven by provincial legislation which has evolved from standardized mainstream philosophies, beliefs and practices related to parenting and child rearing.</p>
<p>Customary care recognizes that parents may require more than one to two years of help in order to resume their parenting responsibilities. Even when such changes cannot be made, customary care recognizes that parents, children and community have a need to maintain contact throughout their lives.</p>	<p>Mainstream child welfare sets out specific time frames within which parents must change in order for them to be reunited with their children. At most, parents have 12 to 24 months in which to make marked and permanent changes in their lives. If these changes are not made, then parents will lose their rights to parent their children.</p>
<p>Customary care recognizes that a child's biological parents have a continuing role in the rearing of their children regardless of where the children reside and the length of time that parents and children have lived apart.</p>	<p>Mainstream child welfare results in termination of parental rights after children have been in care for prescribed periods of time which vary depending on a child's age.</p>
<p>Customary care promotes and reinforces community based decision making which involves the child, his or her family, extended family members and concerned community members.</p>	<p>Mainstream child welfare is dependent upon agency and Family Court decisions, often with minimal consultation with the parties involved.</p>
<p>Affirms the inalienable right of First Nation children to grow up within their own culture, and provides opportunities for children to keep their Native identity</p>	<p>Limited ability to understand Native culture and to enable children to maintain their Native identity and connection with their families and First Nation communities.</p>

Source: Brubacher, Maurice with the people of Tikinagan. Coming Home, the Story of Tikinagan Child & Family Services. Barney Printing 2006

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