

Navigating the Child Welfare System: A Workshop Series for Journalists

The child welfare system isn't easy to report on. Trust in media is low and best practices in this space are unclear.

Discourse Media has organized a series of free workshops for journalists and media makers who want to better understand and report on this complex system. From **September 7-8 in Victoria**, we'll visit places where child welfare policies are developed, practiced and questioned. We'll listen to youth who've been through government care and social workers who've had to remove children from their families. We'll gather story ideas and explore ways to collaborate.

Space is limited, to RSVP email brielle@discoursemedia.org.

Participants are responsible for their own expenses (i.e. food, accommodation and travel costs). Coffee and tea will be provided daily. The Grand Pacific Hotel is offering our guests a conference rate of \$219.00 (plus taxes), subject to availability (ask for "Discourse Media" group block rate or use the group code: SEP17DISC_001.)

Why should you take part in this workshop series?

We've been asking what people think of the way media covers the child welfare system. They tell us we're missing important perspectives and context, and they're full of ideas for how we might improve reporting:

"Talk to front line workers who know the actual stories."

– Aboriginal Support Worker

"I think if the media was not so intimidating I probably would have gone to them."

– Parent whose son was apprehended

"I think media could do a better job, generally, by covering child welfare as a beat and not only when a report is released or when somebody complains."

– Employee at the Representative for Children and Youth's office

These excerpts are just the tip of the iceberg. We've received more than 60 responses to [this survey](#), and this workshop series is a direct response to what we're hearing from the community.



Workshop Agenda

Thursday, September 7: Deepening our understanding of the child welfare system's impact on Indigenous communities

INTRODUCTIONS (9:00 A.M. - 9:25 A.M.)

Description: We'll introduce ourselves and our goals for the workshop series.

Location: University of Victoria – Human and social development building, 9444 Ring Rd, Victoria.
Room: HSD B347. [Pay parking](#) is available.

MEDIA AND RECONCILIATION (9:30 - 10:45 A.M.)

Description: Marc St. Dennis, Reconciliation and Research Coordinator for the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada, will discuss how Canada's history of colonization is reflected in today's child welfare system. He'll explore how journalists can honour the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action](#) by applying the [Touchstones of Hope principles](#).

Location: University of Victoria – Human and social development building, 9444 Ring Rd, Victoria.
Room: HSD B347. [Pay parking](#) is available.

INDIGENIZING SOCIAL WORKER EDUCATION (11:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.)

Description: Social workers are on the front lines of the child welfare system. This session is an opportunity for journalists to learn how educators are working to shift the way they work – especially with Indigenous communities. Kundoqk, Jacquie Green, UVic's School of Social Work director, will share how they're changing their education system to better reflect Indigenous values and histories.

Location: University of Victoria – Human and social development building, 9444 Ring Rd, Victoria.
Room: HSD B347. [Pay parking](#) is available.

Lunch break (12:00 - 1:30 P.M.)

Participants have time to get lunch and make their way to Surrounded by Cedar (211-1497 Admirals Road) – a 20-minute drive across town.

BUILDING TRUST: INDIGENOUS CHILD WELFARE WORKERS & MEDIA (1:30 - 3:30 P.M.)

Description: We'll hear from social workers and others working on the front lines to serve vulnerable Indigenous families on Vancouver Island. They'll talk about their work, field questions and share stories about their experiences (good/bad) of working with media. This session will explore ways to improve relations between DAAs and media.

Location: Surrounded by Cedar (Delegated Aboriginal Agency) – 211-1497 Admirals Road, enter beside the gallery and go to 2nd floor. Free parking out front.

EXPLORING TRAUMA-INFORMED REPORTING (3:45 - 4:45 P.M.)

Description: Clinical Counsellors Suman Hothi and Sara Lewis from BC Trauma Care will share how we can adopt a trauma-informed lens in our reporting. They'll discuss trauma-informed language, impacts of trauma and share best practices for self-care.

Location: Surrounded by Cedar (Delegated Aboriginal Agency) – 211-1497 Admirals Road, enter beside the gallery and go to 2nd floor. Free parking out front.

DISCOURSE

Workshop Agenda

Friday, September 8: Investigating a complex system

REPORTING BEYOND TRAGEDIES (9:00 - 10:45 A.M.)

Description: Journalists will learn about how the RCY investigates critical deaths and injuries. Key staff will share how this system impacts families and communities. We'll discuss how media can complement the RCY's investigative work and deepen public understanding of this system.

Location: Representative for Children and Youth's Office – Suite 400, 1019 Wharf Street. Pay parking is available on the street.

PANEL: JOURNALISTS SHARE STORIES & LESSONS FROM THE FIELD (11:00 A.M. - 12:30 P.M.)

Description: A panel of journalists with deep experience covering child welfare systems will share stories and discuss reporting ethics.

Location: Representative for Children and Youth's Office – Suite 400, 1019 Wharf Street. Pay parking is available on the street.

Lunch break: provided by RCY (12:30 - 1:15 P.M.)

After lunch, participants will make their way from the RCY's office to the Hotel Grand Pacific (463 Belleville Street), a 10-minute walk.

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON CHILD WELFARE REPORTING (1:30 - 2:50 P.M.)

Description: We'll listen to youth who've been through government care. They'll present their perspectives on child welfare reporting and their experiences with journalists. Together we'll discuss best practices for interviews and talk about building meaningful, reciprocal relationships.

Location: Hotel Grand Pacific – 463 Belleville Street. Underground pay parking is available.

HEROES, VILLAINS & VICTIMS: REFRAMING ADOPTION & FOSTERING NARRATIVES (3:00 - 3:45 P.M.)

Description: Mary Caros, communications manager for the Adoptive Families Association of BC, will present on media representations of adoption and fostering. We'll discuss impacts of this coverage.

Location: Hotel Grand Pacific – 463 Belleville Street. Underground pay parking is available.

Q&A WITH MCFD LEADERSHIP (3:55 - 4:40 P.M.)

Description: Leadership from the Ministry of Children and Family Development will join us for a conversation about how to report in a way that best serves vulnerable children and families. We'll discuss the tension between rights to privacy, dignity and self-expression.

Location: Hotel Grand Pacific – 463 Belleville Street. Underground pay parking is available.

DEBRIEF: WHAT DID WE LEARN? HOW CAN WE COLLABORATE? (4:50 - 5:30 P.M.)

Description: Discourse Media's child welfare reporter, Brielle Morgan, will facilitate a group brainstorm. We'll distill what we've learned and share ideas for moving forward.

Location: Hotel Grand Pacific – 463 Belleville Street. Underground pay parking available.



Workshop Agenda

Can't make it? Participate remotely...

We want to make these workshops available to media makers across the country. Email brielle@discoursemedia.org if you'd like to join any of the workshops via Google Hangouts. We'll also be streaming sessions via Facebook Live and we'll make audio recordings of the sessions available online.

DISCOURSE

Website: www.discoursemedia.org | Phone: 778-903-1982