

# The indigenous child welfare system and transitions to independence: a scoping review

Amanda Ervin <sup>\*</sup> , Hannah Odekina, Anika Dirk , Fatemeh Salehi-Shahrabi, Chloe Luck, Mary Greenshields, Janice M. Victor

Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Lethbridge, Canada

## ARTICLE INFO

### Keywords:

Scoping review  
Indigenous youth  
Indigenous child welfare  
Care leavers  
Transitions to independence  
Aging out

## ABSTRACT

This scoping review examined research on Indigenous youths' experiences as they transition to independence, and out of the child welfare system. Key topics included homelessness, barriers to cultural connections, mistrust of the welfare system, and contact with the criminal justice system as cross-over youths. Themes identified in this scoping review are Cultural Support for Transitions, Housing and Homelessness, Criminal Justice and Incarceration, and Social and Structural Determinants. Recommendations emphasized the extension of government support beyond 18 years of age and maintaining youth connections to family, community and culture. The review highlighted the need for more Indigenous-led research to better represent and address these issues.

## 1. Introduction

The child welfare system has had, and continues to have, a detrimental impact on Indigenous children and youth (Quinn et al., 2022). Many Indigenous children in care experience poverty, abuse, trauma, and separation from their families and cultural heritage, contributing to a cycle of intergenerational trauma within their communities (Quinn et al., 2022). Compared to non-Indigenous children, Indigenous children are excessively removed from their homes due to neglect that is often tied to systemic poverty and historical trauma from colonial policies (Sinha & Trocmé, 2013). Historical injustices, including the residential school systems that operated in Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, removed Indigenous children from their families, resulting in widespread trauma, cultural disconnection, language loss, and systemic abuse (Jacobs, 2006; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), albeit less so in New Zealand (Ka'ai, 2019). This review highlights the critical need for greater attention and action to implement the recommendations put forth by scholars, researchers, and Indigenous communities pertaining to child welfare policy and practice. These recommendations focus on addressing the complex factors contributing to the high rates of Indigenous youth apprehension and the ongoing challenges faced by Indigenous children and families. Scoping reviews are useful for exploring broad topics or specific areas of interest. They evaluate the scope, variety, and characteristics of research findings, helping to identify gaps in

the current literature (Peters et al., 2021; Tricco et al., 2018). This scoping review will assess and synthesize research on Indigenous child welfare, with a particular focus on Indigenous scholarship, knowledge, and the perspectives and experiences of Indigenous youth who have transitioned out of the foster care system.

## 2. Literature review

Indigenous children and youth are disproportionately represented in child welfare/protection systems in Canada, with a higher likelihood of being placed in government care compared to non-Indigenous children (Fallon et al., 2021; Ma et al., 2019; Quinn et al., 2022). In 2019, an estimated 54,139 children were in out-of-home care across Canada, and according to Census data, 52.2 % of children in child welfare identified as Indigenous. Applying this proportion to the total number of children in care suggests that approximately 28,261 Indigenous children were in out-of-home care at that time. This figure indicates that the number of Indigenous children currently separated from their families through the child welfare system exceeds the number of Indigenous children institutionalized at the peak of the residential school system, underscoring the ongoing and systemic nature of colonial child removal practices (Fallon et al., 2021).

Despite clear recommendations and repeated calls for systemic change from multiple sources such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) and the First Nations Child and Family

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [amanda.ervin@alumni.uleth.ca](mailto:amanda.ervin@alumni.uleth.ca) (A. Ervin).

Caring Society (Blackstock et al., 2023), the extent of this over-representation has remained largely unchanged in Canada (Fallon et al., 2021). Indigenous populations in the United States, Australia, and New Zealand also experience similar over-representation and systemic bias against the First Peoples of those lands (Cram et al., 2015; Sinha, 2021), a reflection of the shared history of settler colonialism in all four countries. Across the four countries reviewed, Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand, child welfare systems are primarily state or province-based, with national legislation or frameworks that guide practice and reporting. Some jurisdictions have legislation or agreements that allow Indigenous communities to deliver or even control their child welfare services. Canada's delivery and funding of Indigenous child welfare services is particularly convoluted and depends on the presence of a provincial/territorial tripartite agreement, the legally recognized Indigenous identity of the child (Status or non-Status First Nation, Métis, or Inuit), and the presence of a Delegated First Nation Agency (Sinha & Kozlowski, 2013). For most jurisdictions, services are provincial/territorial, but funding is usually federal. Recent legislation, An Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Children, Youth, and Families (2019) is enabling Indigenous peoples to assume more control over their child welfare services.

In the United States, Indigenous children may be served by both state run and tribal child welfare systems, each operating under distinct legal frameworks such as the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and guided by varying degrees of tribal sovereignty and cultural authority (Bussey & Lucero, 2013). Native American and Alaska Native children are disproportionately represented, comprising about 2.5 % of children in foster care but only 1.1 % of the general child population (US Department of Health, 2021). Australia operates under state-based systems guided by the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children make up 41 % of those in out-of-home care despite representing only 5.9 % of the population under 18 years of age (AIHW, 2022). New Zealand's system is national, administered by Oranga Tamariki, and Māori children are more than twice as likely to be placed in care as non-Māori children (Oranga Tamariki Ministry for Children, 2019).

The transition from government care to independent living typically happens when youth turn 18 years of age, unless they are eligible for additional supports, which vary tremendously. These differences in care structures and supports inform the varied experiences of Indigenous youth aging out of care in each context. Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand all offer some forms of post-18 support, though these are inconsistently applied and often subject to eligibility or jurisdictional differences (Mendes et al., 2019; Mendes et al., 2021). Moreover, Australia and Canada lack any national policy to ensure uniform and consistent levels of support for care leavers (Mendes et al., 2025) and heavy worker case loads often translate into youth not even being aware that additional supports might exist. In Canada, the accessibility and eligibility of transition to adulthood programs changes provincially/territorially and federally with age limits ranging from 19 to 26 years of age. In New Zealand, policy reforms in 2019 enabled support for care leavers up to age 21, with transition services available to age 25 (Oranga Tamariki Ministry for Children, 2019). Australia has implemented extended out-of-home care programs across all eight states and territories, enabling young people to remain in care until the age of 21 (Mendes et al., 2025). These programs aim to facilitate a more gradual and supported transition into adulthood by providing financial assistance, housing support, and caseworker services (Mendes et al., 2025).

In the United States, extended out-of-home care is available through federally funded programs under the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, which allows states to support eligible youth in care up to age 21 (U.S. Government Accountability Office [GAO], 2019). By 2019, 26 states had implemented such programs, offering supervised independent living options, such as transitional housing, private residences, and dorms, alongside case

management and life skills training (GAO, 2019). Some states also utilize program funds to provide additional supports, including mentoring, education vouchers, and housing assistance (GAO, 2019).

While some jurisdictions, such as Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory and Western Australia, have adopted more comprehensive models emphasizing interdependence, others continue to focus on rapid transitions to independence (Mendes et al., 2025). Rapid transitions set youth up to fail because they frequently do not have the essential life skills to be fully self-sufficient. Moreover, youth are often having to work through multiple traumas that can be magnified by the loss of stability and community disconnection (Crotty, 2025). Extended supports are being developed piecemeal across Canadian jurisdictions, but their expansion nationwide is desperately needed (Doucet, 2025). Despite reforms in all countries, critical gaps remain, particularly in housing provision for care leavers exiting government care (Mendes et al., 2025).

Recent comparative analyses of care leavers' transitions underscore the complexity and variability of outcomes across different contexts. In particular, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) 2022 report, *Assisting Care Leavers: Time for Action*, provides a comprehensive examination of the experiences of young people leaving care across 30 OECD countries. The report identifies common challenges faced by care leavers, including elevated risks of homelessness, unemployment, and mental health difficulties. It further highlights the importance of extended care provisions, individualized transition planning, and the establishment of legislative frameworks to ensure consistent and effective support. Incorporating these findings offers a valuable international perspective that contextualizes the pathways and outcomes of care leavers within broader systemic and policy frameworks (OECD, 2022).

Care leavers are extremely vulnerable to homelessness and all the risks associated with it: exploitation, maladaptive substance use, violence, poverty, criminalization, and mental and physical health problems (Collins, 2017; Fowler et al., 2017; Gypen et al., 2017; Kaiser, 2018). Transitions out of care are additionally deleterious for Indigenous youth who experience significant colonial trauma, cultural disconnection, and few culturally appropriate services (Haight et al., 2018). Indigenous youth transitioning out of care have expressed a need for safe, affordable housing connected to family, community and traditional cultural practices (Brown et al., 2007), yet many child welfare systems have proven inadequate at integrating cultural considerations both in care and within transition procedures (Mendes et al., 2016). Importantly, the nature of the services, supports, and outcomes for Indigenous youth transitioning to independence can differ significantly depending on whether they received care through an Indigenous or state-run system (Bussey & Lucero, 2013).

A comprehensive and coordinated support system is critical in facilitating successful transitions from care (OECD, 2022). To be effective, support systems should adopt holistic approaches that integrate financial assistance, stable housing, educational opportunities, and emotional and social support tailored to the individual needs of care leavers. Moreover, the OECD report on care leavers calls for improved data collection and monitoring mechanisms to better understand care leavers' trajectories and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions. Importantly, it underscores the value of involving young people in transition planning processes to enhance engagement and ensure that services align with their aspirations and circumstances. These recommendations highlight the necessity of multi-sectoral collaboration and policy coherence to promote positive long-term outcomes for care leavers (OECD, 2022).

### 3. Objectives and research questions

A growing number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars are producing research aimed at restoring Indigenous models of childcare and reforming child welfare systems. Gathering and synthesizing this volume of research and knowledge can support systemic change, which

is why an extensive scoping review of English-language research on Indigenous child welfare was performed to document the current state of research on Indigenous child welfare in Canada, the United States, New Zealand, and Australia (1990 to 2022). The objective of this project was to highlight the knowledge and child welfare solutions proposed by Indigenous scholars and communities to provide optimal care for Indigenous children while avoiding further harm by preserving their connections to culture and family. It is difficult to define Indigenous knowledge because the basis for the definition depends upon *whose* knowledge is being referenced; however, Indigenous knowledge can generally be understood as the accumulated experience and wisdom shared from generation to generation that is situated within a worldview that recognizes constant flux and renewal, natural cycles, interrelatedness, all things being animate, and place (Little Bear, 2012). It is relational and holistic, emphasizing care for all members of the community. Indigenous knowledge has been marginalized in Western systems, but this is starting to change. This scoping review is second in a series that systematically documented subtopics of Indigenous child welfare research to identify Indigenous authorship, methodology and paradigm, in addition to outcomes and recommendations (Ervin et al., 2025).

The present review continues this project by reporting the results on the subtopic of transitions out of government care. The “transition to independence” describes the period of time whereby youth must shift from government care to independent living, assuming they are capable of such, and the social outcomes of leaving the system either early or after “aging out” at 18 years of age. This review narrows the focus of the larger inquiry described in more detail by \* et al. (2025) with a more targeted set of research questions:

1. What research has been undertaken to investigate the “aging out process,” that is, the transition from child welfare placement to independence among Indigenous young adults?
  - a. What sub-topics are addressed, by whom, and to what extent?
  - b. How has Indigenous knowledge and research contributed to this topic?
2. What does this research say about youths’ experiences of transitioning out of government care?
  - a. What challenges and barriers do youth face during transition, and what policies and practices guide and affect this process?
  - b. What conditions, factors, and supports facilitate youths’ transitions?
  - c. What recommendations or best practices have been identified?
3. What post-transition outcomes have been identified among Indigenous adults who were in the child welfare system?
  - a. What recommendations have been made to improve these outcomes?

#### 4. Methods

This scoping review adhered to the methodological framework and protocols outlined by the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) and the PRISMA extension for scoping reviews checklist (Peters et al., 2021; Tricco et al., 2018).

##### 4.1. Search Protocol

The search strategy was designed around population and context. Population search terms included broad identifiers for Indigenous identities across Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand, such as Aboriginal, Alaska\* Indian\*, Alaska\* Native\*, Aleut\*, American Indian\*, Eskimo\*, First Nation\*, Indigenous, Inuit, Métis, Māori, Native American\*, Native\*, and Pacific Islander. After testing various terms related to child welfare, the search terms were refined to three main phrases: “foster care family,” “foster home\*,” and “child\* welfare.” Although “child protection” was initially trialed, it yielded no additional results, and terms related to adoption resulted in an excess of irrelevant

sources. The same situation occurred with “kinship care.” These terms were selected to provide a broad overview of Indigenous child welfare, with the intention of categorizing the data into subtopics later in the process.

The search was conducted in collaboration with a librarian (\*) and applied across several databases, including Academic Search Complete, Canadian Business, Gender Studies, Global Health, JSTOR, PSYCInfo, Social Services Abstracts, SOCIndex, Sociological Abstracts, ProQuest Dissertations, and Web of Science. Searches were restricted to English-language sources published between 1990 and 2022. Data extraction and organization were managed using *Distiller SR* software.

##### 4.1.1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria encompassed peer-reviewed and grey literature, such as empirical studies, theoretical articles, theses, dissertations, and research reports, originating from Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand. Studies needed to explicitly address Indigenous populations as part of their research objectives or questions, rather than reporting Indigenous outcomes incidentally within a broader sample. Excluded materials included books, edited volume chapters, editorials, specific incident reviews, and brief summaries of published studies. While books and edited volumes might have offered valuable insights, their inclusion risked duplicating existing data and significantly broadening the review’s scope thus decreasing its feasibility. Legal documents, including case law and legal arguments, were also excluded.

##### 4.2. Screening, data Extraction, and analysis

A team of five research assistants, supervised by the primary investigator, was involved in screening and data extraction. The initial screening of titles and abstracts eliminated duplicates and clearly irrelevant items, followed by full-text review to confirm inclusion. Data extraction focused on recording details such as Indigenous authorship, integration of Indigenous knowledge, research objectives, targeted subpopulations, methodologies, findings, and recommendations. The screening and extraction questions are summarized in Table 1. Through iterative labeling and thematic categorization, 10 subtopics were identified, with “transition to independence” emerging as one distinct focus. Screening and data extraction questions can be seen in Table 2. Similar to the approach used to identify subtopics, a thematic analysis was conducted through the constant comparison of keywords, study objectives, findings, and recommendations. This process guided the development of the subsequent analysis and discussion and creation of four thematic labels. This labeling process involved multiple rounds of review by at least two team members to ensure consistency and reliability. A more detailed description is available in Ervin et al. (2025).

This review documented contributions of Indigenous knowledge where applicable, including levels of involvement ranging from consultation to integration in research design. Indigenous authorship was identified based on self-declaration within the source, supplemented by internet searches when declarations were absent. However, this approach has limitations: lack of self-declaration or external verification does not negate Indigenous identity, and self-identification alone does not guarantee the inclusion of traditional Indigenous knowledge, as some Indigenous researchers operate within Western paradigms. Despite these challenges, this approach provided a general estimate of Indigenous contributions to research over time (See Fig. 2).

#### 5. Results

This review assessed 3919 journal articles, thesis and dissertations, grey literature, and systematic reviews. Of these, 545 were included in the final count (see Fig. 1) and each placed into one of 10 subtopic labels. Following a confirmatory screening for fit within the transitions to independence subtopic, 23 items met the inclusion criteria for Transitions to Independence and were included in the present review. Thirteen

**Table 1**  
Summary of results.

Author(s)	Year	Country	Indigenous Authorship	Indigenous Contribution	Methodology	Subtopic(s)
Alberton, A, et al.	2020	Canada		I	Quant	HH, Culture
Barker, B, et al.	2014	Canada	Yes		Quant	CJI, SSD
Barker, B	2019	Canada		I	Mixed	CJI
Baskin, C.	2019	Canada	Yes	G	IM	HH, SSD
Bennett, M. L.	2016	Canada	Yes	I	Qual	Culture
Bromwich, R. J.	2019	Canada			Quant	CJI
Brooks, J.	2022	Canada	Yes		Qual/IM	Culture
Brown, J, et al.	2007	Canada	Yes		Quant	HH, SSD
Doucet, M., & Trocmé	2020	Canada			Qual/Eval	Culture
Fraser, S, et al.	2012	Canada		G	Qual/Eval	Culture, SSD
Friesen, B, et al	2014	United States	Yes	I	Mixed	Culture
Gauthier, M.	2010	Canada	Yes		Qual	CJI
Ludeke, R.	2022	United States		G	Mixed/IM	Culture
Matthews, B	2022	Australia		I	Quant	CJI, SSD
Mendes, P, et al.	2016	Australia			Qual	Culture
Mendes, P, et al.	2019	Australia			Quant	Culture
Mendes, P, et al.	2021	Australia	Yes	G	Qual/Eval	HH, Culture
Merhar, A.	2017	Canada		I	Qual/IM	CJI, SSD
Morton, D, et al.	2021	Canada	Yes	I	Qual	HH, SSD
Navia, D, et al.	2018	Canada	Yes	G	Qual	SSD
Quinn, A	2022	Canada	Yes		Qual	Culture
Ruttan, L, et al.	2008	Canada	Yes	G	Mixed	HH, SSD
Shaikh, A & Rawal, H	2019	Canada			Qual	HH, CJI

Note: Blanks under Indigenous Authorship represent either ‘No’ or ‘Not Indicated’.

I = Non-authored individual contributions; G = Non-authored group contributions.

Quant = Quantitative; Qual = Qualitative; Eval = Evaluation paper; Mixed = Mixed methods.

HH= Homelessness and Housing; CJI= Criminal Justice and Incarceration; SSD= Social and Structural Determinants; Culture = Cultural Support, Culturally Appropriate Services & Transition Needs.

**Table 2**  
Screening and data extraction questions.

Screening: Level 1 – TopicLevel 2 – Source type	Does the source focus directly on Indigenous/ Aboriginal populations? (Yes, no)Is this a peer- reviewed source? (Yes, no)What type of document is this source? (Empirical study, theoretical or position paper, grey literature, thesis or dissertation, book or book chapter, news media, other)Country of research (Canada, United States, Australia, New Zealand) What topic-related codes or keywords can you assign to this source?
Data Extraction: Level 3 – Objectives & Methods	What is the stated purpose or objective of this source?What is the research question being investigated in this study? (Empirical sources only)What methodological paradigm(s) is being used in the source? (Empirical sources only)
Indigenous contributions	Was Indigenous Knowledge included to inform this study? From which Indigenous group did the knowledge come from?In what way(s) did Indigenous Knowledge inform the study?How many of the author(s) identify as Indigenous? (All, some, none, not indicated)Does the article acknowledge non-authored contributions from Indigenous individuals or entities (eg. groups, non- profit organizations, tribal councils) ?
Population	What population is represented in this source? (Children/youth receiving services, child welfare “alumni,” biological family, caregivers, social & caseworkers, other)
Theory & Outcomes	What were the main theories or theoretical framework(s) used? List up to 3 What were the results/outcomes? What were the recommendations, if any?
Topic Codes	Review the labels assigned to this source. Identify the most relevant label for this source. Any additional comments on any aspect of screening or data extraction?

of these were peer reviewed, with the remainder consisting of grey literature. As shown in Table 1, 17 sources were based in Canada, two in the United States, and four in Australia. Zero sources came from New Zealand. Twenty-two of the 23 articles were empirical in nature, whereas one was theoretical.

### 5.1. Indigenous scholarship

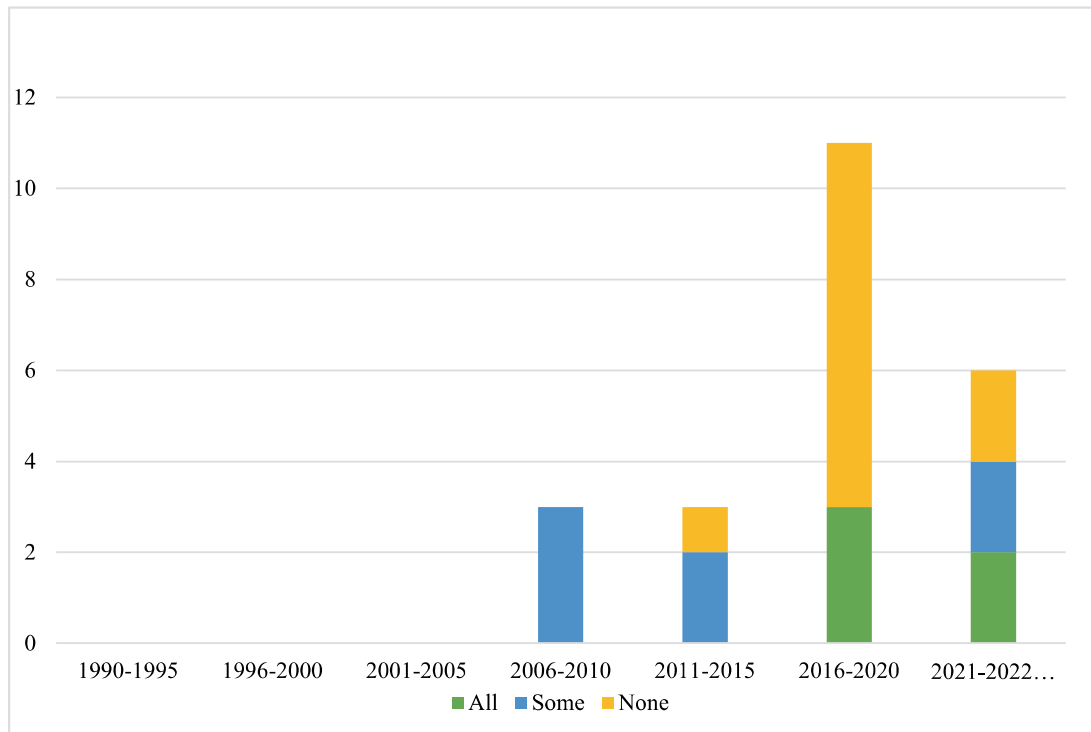
Thirteen articles included Indigenous contributions, via authored, non-authored individual contributions, and non-authored group contributions; but the use of Indigenous methodologies, specifically, was limited to four articles (Baskin, 2019; Brooks, 2020; Ludeke, 2022; Merhar, 2017). Non-authored Indigenous contributions were assessed through the review of article acknowledgements and content. Twelve of the sources included Indigenous authors, five of which were solely authored. Fig. 2 identifies Indigenous authorship over the four time periods in which sources were found. None were older than 2008 but each time period contained at least two sources with joint or sole Indigenous authorship, a result that is more inclusive than the subtopics of psychosocial conditions and outcomes (\* et al., in review) and [Anonymized topic] (Ervin et al., 2025). Notably, seven articles credited Indigenous contributions in some manner without indications of Indigenous authorship.

### 5.2. Subtopics under transitions to independence

The topics of the 23 articles were thematically categorized into four subtopics: Cultural Support for Transition; Homelessness and Housing; Criminal Justice and Incarceration; and Social and Structural Determinants. Reviewing the research questions, conclusions, recommendations, and results revealed that youth who transition out of care are likely to experience factors within all four sub-topics. Several articles fit into more than one subtopic.

#### 5.2.1. Cultural support for transition

Nine sources were categorized under the theme of Cultural Support for Transition (Bennett, 2016; Brooks, 2022; Doucet & Trocmé, 2020;

*Indigenous authorship over time*

None = Indicates no Indigenous authorship identified  
 Some = Indicates some Indigenous authorship identified  
 All = Indicates all authors were identified as Indigenous

**Fig. 2.** Indigenous authorship over time. None = Indicates no Indigenous authorship identified Some = Indicates some Indigenous authorship identified All = Indicates all authors were identified as Indigenous.

Fraser, et al., 2012; Friesen, et al., 2014; Ludeke, 2022; Mendes, et al., 2016; Mendes, et al., 2019; Quinn, 2022). Two were placed here as a secondary subtopic (Alberton, et al., 2020; Mendes, et al., 2021). Articles here describe culturally appropriate services, support plans, and a need for cultural awareness, post-care supports, and cultural identity for the broader purpose of investigating the cultural competence and support systems in place for Indigenous youth transitioning out of care. Collectively, they could be summarized as responding to three questions: What are the known issues related to cultural competence in transitioning out of government care; what supports, or lack thereof, exist for Indigenous care leavers, and; how do the cultural competence and perceptions of managers and staff of child welfare services influence the transition experiences and community reintegration for Indigenous youth?

According to Doucet (2020), youth in care faced barriers that included feelings of isolation, difficulties with trust, and residual anger from their time in care. These barriers complicated their transition to adulthood and reconnection to family, culture, and community. Studies here highlighted various strategies to support youth, including ways to mitigate the negative effects of racism, preserve cultural identity, and offer case management and family support (Bennett, 2016; Doucet, 2020; Friesen et al., 2014; Mendes et al., 2019; Mendes et al., 2021). Youth in care described needing consistency in service delivery, opportunities for skill and knowledge development, access to resources, and highlighted an emphasized need for learning about and participating in their cultural activities (Brooks, 2020; Mendes et al., 2019; Quinn, 2022). Having access to culturally competent support staff while still in care played a significant role in understanding youths' cultural backgrounds, addressing their needs, and providing committed support

to resolve their challenges (Friesen et al., 2014). Although the need for addressing the specific cultural needs of Indigenous care leavers has been well established, there is a surprising lack of detailed research on how needs and outcomes differed from youths' non-Indigenous peers (Mendes et al., 2019).

Despite at times seeing growth and positive outcomes in youths' behaviors and experiences within care, managers frequently expressed concerns about the sustainability of these improvements once the youths transitioned out of care (Fraser et al., 2012; Friesen et al., 2014). It was observed that positive changes in a controlled environment of care did not necessarily predict smooth and successful reintegration into life with families and communities, and researchers emphasized that transitions out of care were deemed effective when the youths could maintain some of the positive behaviors observed in residence after returning to their communities (Fraser et al., 2012; Quinn, 2022). Importantly, the most prominent recommendations were to include a cultural support worker as part of the care team (Mendes et al., 2016). Pairing Indigenous care leavers with mentors during the transition period from ages 15 to 17 provided an additional layer of support, whether or not the mentors were from Indigenous communities (Mendes et al., 2016). Several limitations to leaving care and the post-care systems were noted, particularly, barriers and challenges with obtaining identity documents, proving eligibility for services, and insufficient cultural and familial connections that often hindered the effectiveness of transition plans and support for youth leaving care (Brooks, 2020; Ludeke, 2022; Mendes et al., 2016).

### 5.2.2. Homelessness and housing

Seven articles were placed into the subtopic of Homelessness and

PRISMA chart

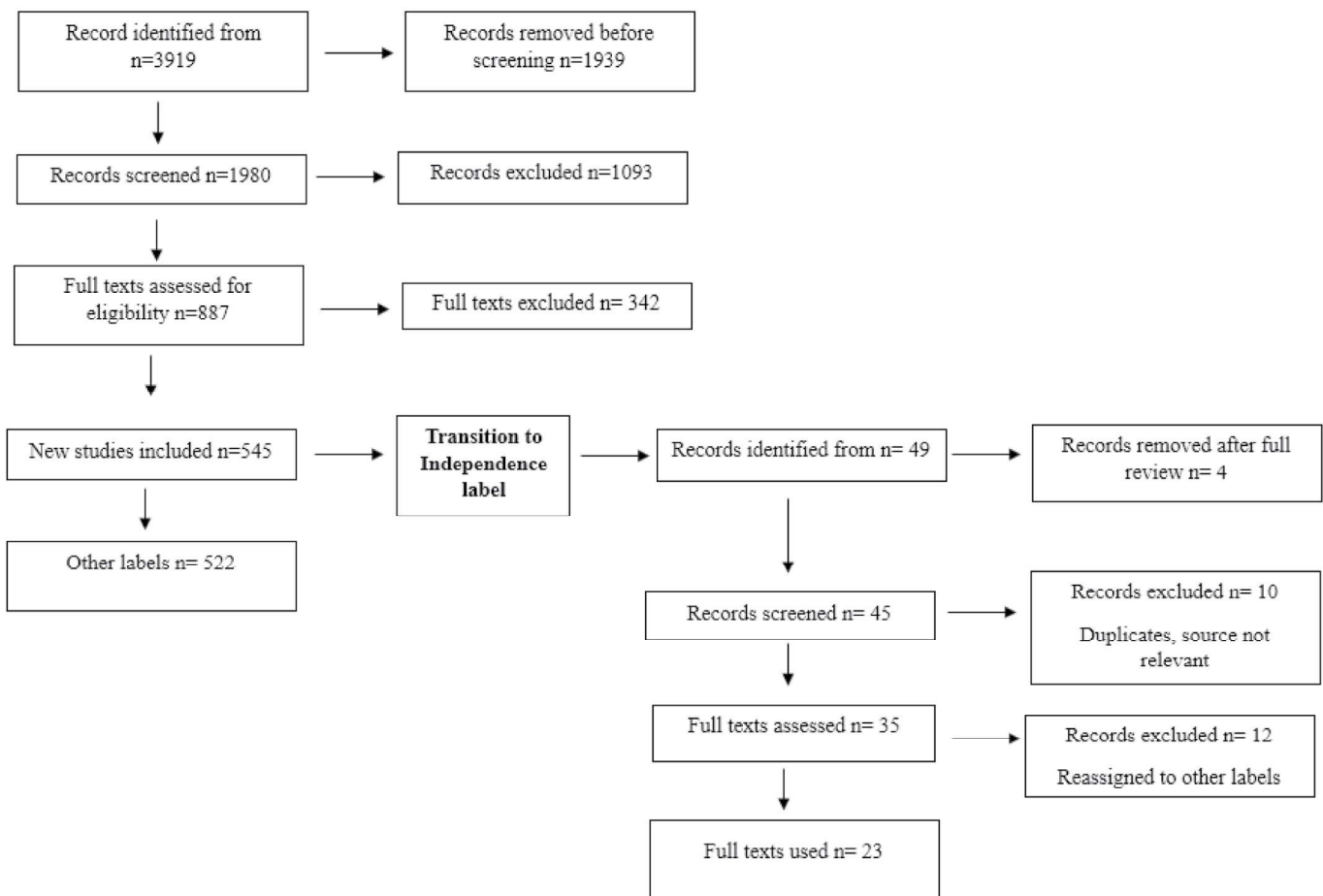


Fig. 1. PRISMA chart.

Housing (Alberston et al., 2020; Baskin, 2019; Brown et al., 2007; Mendes et al., 2021; Morton et al., 2021; Ruttan et al., 2008; Shaikh & Rawal, 2019). This subtopic explored the housing-related needs, experiences, and outcomes of Indigenous youth transitioning out of government care, with a focus on homelessness, including both visible and hidden forms, limited housing options, food insecurity, and temporary living arrangements. The articles analyzed effective policies and programs across various jurisdictions, documenting housing supports, good practices, and the interconnections between family separation and homelessness, often linked to government control. The findings aim to answer two key questions: What are the housing-related needs, experiences, and outcomes of Indigenous youth leaving government care? And how do existing policies and programs, including those addressing homelessness, support their transition to adulthood?

The transition for youth from care is burdened with challenges, with a disproportionate number leaving care at various times, often through self-exiting care by running away; some exit directly into homelessness or may endure ongoing housing instability (Mendes et al., 2021). One of the critical needs identified for Indigenous youth transitioning out of care is a strong connection to their culture and community (Alberston et al., 2020; Brown et al., 2007; Mendes et al., 2021; Shaikh & Rawal, 2019). Youth leaving care often experienced disconnection from their family, culture, and community, which contributed to significant challenges in securing stable, affordable housing (Alberston et al., 2020; Brown et al., 2007; Mendes et al., 2021; Shaikh & Rawal, 2019). Indigenous youth facing these disconnections were at greater risk for

both physical and mental health issues, indicating the need for more comprehensive support systems that address these vulnerabilities (Baskin, 2019; Ruttan et al., 2008; Mendes et al., 2021; Shaikh & Rawal, 2019). Stable housing and consistent support networks are essential to mitigate these risks and promote better health outcomes (Mendes et al., 2021). Effective transition plans should include education, employment, housing, and cultural connections, and extending care beyond 18; however, due to insufficient resources and confusing referral pathways, current transition planning is seen as inadequate (Brown et al., 2007; Mendes et al., 2021; Morton et al., 2021).

Two Canadian sources detailed how the historical legacy of residential schools, growing up in poverty, witnessing family violence and substance use, are linked to homelessness for Indigenous youths who transition out of the foster care system (Baskin, 2019; Ruttan et al., 2008). Addressing these factors through policy changes can help prevent the cycle of poverty and homelessness among future generations of Indigenous youth (Baskin, 2019; Ruttan et al., 2008).

### 5.2.3. Criminal justice and incarceration

Six articles discussed the intersection of child welfare and criminal justice among “cross-over youth,” specifically, the over-representation of Indigenous people who are incarcerated, their experiences in the criminal justice system, conviction details, substance use disorder (SUD), and alcohol use disorder (AUD) (Barker et al., 2014; Barker, 2019; Bromwich, 2019; Gauthier, 2010; Matthews, 2022; Merhar, 2017). One article that also discussed homelessness and housing was

placed here as a secondary subtopic (Shaikh & Rawal, 2019). The overall purpose of the articles in this subtopic was to investigate the links between Indigenous youth who have been involved with the child welfare system and subsequent criminal convictions, examining how different placement experiences impact criminal behavior amongst Indigenous care leavers. Specifically, they investigated the factors contributing to increased risks of SUD, street involvement, and incarceration among Indigenous youth who have experienced government care, and how care leavers' personal experiences with homelessness, family separation, and mental health issues influenced their trajectories and interactions with social and justice systems.

Indigenous youth who have been in the child welfare system have a higher chance of engaging in substance use and often have higher experiences with incarceration (Barker et al., 2014; Gauthier, 2010; Merhar, 2017). This is likely due to various factors, such as having a disadvantaged social position and a lack of parental involvement (Barker et al., 2014; Bromwich, 2019; Gauthier, 2010; Merhar, 2017). Indigenous children with multiple encounters with both justice and child welfare systems, were more likely to face adult convictions (Matthews et al., 2022). Experiences with residential schools, in Canada at least, intergenerational trauma, and the child welfare system have had enduring detrimental effects on many Indigenous youths; negative encounters and conflict with the law contributed to their feelings of 'madness,' shame, depression, anger, and isolation (Gauthier, 2010). Moreover, Canadian studies reported that involvement with residential schools, the child welfare system, substance use, poverty, incarceration and/or criminal conviction as a youth, and being witness to familial violence are all factors that often lead to a cycle of continued incarceration (Barker et al., 2014; Barker, 2019; Gauthier, 2010). Worth noting, low or poor educational achievement amongst Indigenous youth who exit the child welfare system has also been linked to challenges with the law (Gauthier, 2010). Indigenous men with histories of child welfare involvement are particularly over-represented in more serious convictions (Matthews et al., 2022; Shaikh & Rawal, 2019).

#### 5.2.4. Social and structural determinants

Sources under this theme addressed the ways in which social and structural determinants of health impact and address the experiences, challenges, and needs of Indigenous youth involved in the child welfare system. Social and structural determinants included poverty, social inequity, historical trauma, and oppressive conditions. Eight articles investigated the links between these determinants, cultural needs, and youth crime convictions to more deeply consider the conditions of and solutions to youth homelessness. Just one article focused specifically on social and structural determinants (Navia et al., 2018), but eight others were placed here because they addressed social and structural determinants as a secondary subtopic (Barker et al., 2014; Baskin, 2019; Brown et al., 2007; Fraser et al., 2012; Matthews et al., 2022; Merhar, 2017; Morton et al., 2021; Ruttan et al., 2008). There was significant overlap across subtopics: poverty, social inequities, historical trauma, oppressive conditions, and systemic and intersectional inequities.

Navia et al. (2018) investigated the forms of resistance youth employed in confronting ongoing colonialism in their lives – refusal, resurgence, and renewal – and subsequent implications. Youth recognized the systemic state oppression that disconnected them from their kin with several expressing disinterest in policy and law. They desired to work on healing their relationships with family and community, in spite of ongoing injustices. Other articles within this subtopic aimed to investigate the experiences, challenges, and needs of Indigenous youth transitioning out of care, and how factors such as cultural competence, a lack of housing options, substance use, and street involvement impacted these transitions (Barker et al., 2014; Baskin, 2019; Brown et al., 2007; Fraser et al., 2012; Matthews et al., 2022; Merhar, 2017; Morton et al., 2021; Ruttan et al., 2008). As stated, there is much overlap across all the sources found for this review and as such, results for this subtopic mirror findings that have already been stated.

## 6. Discussion and recommendations

This scoping review synthesized existing research to answer three broad questions. First, what research has been done regarding the transition out of child welfare into independent living among Indigenous young adults? What subtopics are addressed in this research and how has Indigenous scholarship contributed? Second, what are the barriers experienced by youth aging out and the policies and practices affecting this process? By extension, what conditions, factors, supports, and other best practices have been identified to facilitate successful transitions? Third, what post-transition outcomes have been identified among Indigenous adults who were in the child welfare system and what recommendations have been made to improve these outcomes?

The literature reviewed reveals that the aging-out process for Indigenous youth is shaped by structural inequities, intergenerational trauma, and systemic underfunding of culturally appropriate services. Key subtopics include cultural disconnection, housing and homelessness, justice system involvement, and the social determinants of health (Alberton et al., 2020; Mendes et al., 2021; Morton et al., 2021). Notably, the only sources that connected residential schools and child welfare were Canadian. Of the 23 studies reviewed, only four employed Indigenous-based research methods, highlighting a significant gap in approaches that center Indigenous knowledge systems and perspectives. Youth described transitioning out of care as abrupt and isolating, often without consistent access to housing, education, or culturally appropriate support (Brown et al., 2007; Mendes et al., 2021). Barriers include high staff turnover, lack of community-driven programming, and limited funding for post-care services (Friesen et al., 2014). However, supports that foster cultural identity, mentorship, and extended care into adulthood were found to enhance outcomes (Brooks, 2012; Mendes et al., 2016). Recommendations across the literature include co-developing policies with Indigenous communities, integrating traditional knowledge and ceremony into services, investing in transitional housing, and addressing the root causes of systemic inequity through anti-racist and trauma-informed approaches (Baskin, 2019; Merhar, 2017; Quinn, 2022). Post-transition outcomes remain concerning, with persistent overrepresentation in homelessness and incarceration, as well as ongoing challenges in health and education (Alberton et al., 2020; Barker et al., 2019). Overall, the literature strongly supports calls for holistic, culturally safe, and community-led responses that prioritize Indigenous self-determination and youth voice.

The objective of this scoping review was to synthesize the extant research pertaining to Indigenous youth as they transition out of the child welfare system. They may leave government care at different ages, often self-exiting, due to inadequate services in remote areas, language and communication challenges, a lack of cultural sensitivity and a lack of funding for in-care and post-care services (Mendes et al., 2021). There is a lack of specific data on the predominance of Australian Indigenous youth leaving the care sector, highlighting gaps in understanding the needs of these care leavers (Mendes et al., 2019; Mendes et al., 2021). This gap has been noted in other countries as well.

Indigenous youth routinely experienced disconnection from family, culture, and community, leading to higher risks for physical and mental health issues (Alberton et al., 2020; Brown et al., 2007; Mendes et al., 2021; Shaikh & Rawal, 2019). Transition plans should prioritize opportunities for cultural connection, education and training, employment options, and housing support. Current transition planning is hindered by insufficient resources, large caseloads, and high rates of staff turnover. Acknowledging that Indigenous youth experience higher rates of involvement in child welfare and subsequent issues like homelessness and substance abuse, researchers have strongly recommended to extend care beyond age 18 to facilitate smoother transitions (Barker, 2019; Mendes et al., 2021). Emphasizing community and cultural engagement is crucial for creating self-determination frameworks.

Of the 23 articles included in the review, zero came from New Zealand and only four articles used Indigenous-based methods which

highlights a gap in literature. There are significant gaps in existing research on Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth transitioning out of care, particularly in the context of homelessness and systemic barriers. The data collection practices represented do not appear to adequately represent Indigenous perspectives, cultural contexts, or the diversity of youth experiences, leaving critical aspects such as resilience, harm reduction, and the long-term impact of care unaddressed, particularly from an Indigenous perspective. Furthermore, the non-randomized and convenience samples in this review, coupled with cross-sectional designs and self-reported measures, may limit the generalizability of findings and obscure nuanced insights into systemic inequities. This signifies the need for more balance in research methodologies. Literature that uses an Indigenous-based research paradigms to discuss the experiences of youth could provide greater insight into the challenges and lived experiences. Moreover, the inclusion of marginalized subgroups, such as LGBTQ2S+ individuals was limited to one article (Baskin, 2029). No articles addressed youth with disabilities. Due to the many overlapping themes and results within the literature reviewed, it is important to recognize the interplay each topic has with each other. Kinship care remains an overlooked area in care transition research, and future studies should aim to include and examine the unique experiences of youth leaving kinship care, particularly in Indigenous contexts where it aligns with cultural traditions and community strength (Barker et al., 2014; Mendes et al., 2016; Mendes et al., 2021; Shaikh & Rawal, 2019).

### 6.1. Recommendations for policy and practice

This scoping review has established several recommendations that can be aligned with the sub-categories as described. While there is overlap between each subtopic, there are specific recommendations for each category. General recommendations are aimed at improving policies, programs, and support services for Indigenous youth, including engaging Indigenous communities in creating transition plans, incorporating traditional lifestyles and ceremonies into youth programming, and promoting flexible support systems for youth transitioning out of care (Merhar, 2017). Policy should be comprehensive, recognizing the need for anti-racist policies and to reduce the long-lasting impacts of colonization (Baskin, 2019). Developing transitional housing models based on community priorities and providing equitable access to resources such as education and mental health services are also critical (Barker, 2019). There is a general consensus on the obligation to integrate Indigenous methodologies into research, recognizing the significance of cultural identity and spirituality, and supporting Indigenous communities' self-determination and self-government (Baskin, 2019; Mendes et al., 2019; Quinn, 2022). Lastly, there is a call to establish a community of practice to enhance support for Indigenous youth, recognize traditional lifestyles as valid life aspirations, and incorporate Elders and ceremonial practices into youth programming (Brooks, 2022).

#### 6.1.1. Cultural support for transition

According to Fraser et al. (2012), a culturally safe and competent transition program must aim to meet the cultural, social, and linguistic needs of communities, families, and youth. Mendes et al. (2016) recommended having a cultural support worker on the care team and further suggested matching Indigenous care leavers with mentors throughout the transition process. To address the mental health and well-being of Indigenous youth in culturally appropriate ways, "the needs of the young person should be reviewed across all domains: mind, body, and spirit" (Friesen et al., 2014, p. 201), which may be difficult since current child protection systems prioritize physical safety with interventions that often have unintended consequences that deepen emotional and mental harms. Universally, care leavers are a vulnerable group, and policy that focuses on care leaving should be informed by care leavers themselves (Mendes et al., 2019). According to Brooks (2012), there is a need to build on the resiliency of youth as concept that

can nurture strength and provide support through relational approaches that collaborate closely with Indigenous youth and their communities. Elders and Indigenous culture are necessary for learning traditional ways of living, which is a genuine life goal, and education for Indigenous youth needs to support this choice. Furthermore, ceremony is a fundamental part of identity and a community of practice is necessary to support the needs of Indigenous youth as they age out of care and transition to independence (Brooks, 2012).

#### 6.1.2. Homelessness and housing

Governments need to provide ongoing supports beyond 18 years of age, specifically in areas such as education, employment, and housing (Mendes et al., 2019). Baskin (2019) identified a strong link between Indigenous children growing up in poverty and subsequent involvement in child welfare, with their co-occurrence easily leading to homelessness. Alberton et al. (2020) described that Indigenous youth who can obtain a university education seem to be less likely to face homelessness, further supporting the need for educational supports for youth who transition out of care (Brown et al., 2007; Mendes et al., 2021; Morton et al., 2021). According to Brown et al (2007), Indigenous youth have expressed a need for affordable housing that provides a sense of safety, enables them to connect with their families and communities, gives them a sense of control over their living environment, and provides the necessary social support (Brown, et al., 2007). Youth have also expressed a desire for increased government funding to address the underlying causes of homelessness and to support their educational goals (Brown, et al., 2007). More awareness and comprehension of the effects of colonialism and the residential school system on Indigenous generations are required, especially among social workers and other helping professionals (Alberton et al., 2020). It is evident that Indigenous peoples face homelessness at a disproportionate rate, and one of the key variables influencing this overrepresentation is having been a ward of the state as a young person (Alberton et al., 2020).

#### 6.1.3. Criminal justice and incarceration

Involvement with residential schools, out of home care, and being witness to family violence are all tied to future issues with incarceration and SUDs. The criminal justice system should partner with the youths' communities and families to prevent crime by addressing its underlying causes and responding to the needs of youth (Bromwich, 2019). Further, it has been recommended that collaborative solutions involving multiple systems could remedy the problem of the over-incarceration of cross-over youth (Bromwich, 2019). Future research should involve Indigenous youth, particularly when they are first in conflict with the criminal justice system (Gauthier, 2010). Providing youth an opportunity to have their voices heard, especially regarding their personal experiences and self-identified needs, could guide them towards a future path that does not involve incarceration (Gauthier, 2010). Within traditional Indigenous cultures, community support is critical for the development of healthy individuals and families; and governments need to invest more into prevention by changing funding structures and allocating more resources and financial assistance to communities whose youth are involved in the criminal justice system (Gauthier, 2010).

#### 6.1.4. Social and structural determinants

Intergenerational trauma, lifelong poverty, and social marginalization all have detrimental impacts on the success of youths' transition to independence (Baskin, 2019; Barker et al., 2014; Morton et al., 2021). Indigenous youths' experiences with child welfare and other systems are profoundly affected by structural inequities and systemic injustices (Matthews et al., 2022). Research has demonstrated the need for access to "culturally grounded interventions to overcome the traumatic histories and current oppressive conditions" that affect Indigenous youth (Friesen et al., 2014, p. 201). Studies emphasize the need to address social and structural determinants of health, including poverty, social inequities, and systemic oppression (Brown et al., 2007; Mendes et al.,

2021). Effective transition from care includes providing housing supports and addressing homelessness among care leavers. Programs supporting Indigenous youth in gaining employment or pursuing education are also crucial for their transition to adulthood (Morton et al., 2021).

## 6.2. Recommendations for future research

Future research should adopt culturally informed and community-based approaches that prioritize youths' perspectives and agency, intersectionality, and systemic accountability for governments. This includes critically examining how policies, practices, and institutional structures contribute to the marginalization of Indigenous youth, both during and after their involvement in the child welfare system. Systemic accountability involves not only assessing the outcomes of care, but also holding governments responsible for addressing structural inequities, investing in culturally appropriate supports, engaging meaningfully with Indigenous communities, and implementing long-term policy changes that reflect the principles of self-determination, reconciliation, and social justice. More research that focuses on the transition needs of LGBT2S+ and individuals living with disabilities should be explored. There is a need for more research by Indigenous scholars, particularly using Indigenous methodologies. Overall, there is a lack of research that draws upon Indigenous knowledge and is focused on the lived experiences of Indigenous youth as they transition to independence. This gap is especially pertinent for Australia, New Zealand and the United States.

## 7. Limitations

While this review provides comprehensive findings, several limitations were identified. One key constraint involved the large volume of search results, which limited the ability to thoroughly explore reference lists from identified sources and necessitated the exclusion of books and book chapters from the analysis. As a result, a portion of relevant literature, particularly that grounded in Indigenous perspectives, was not captured. This gap is especially important given that Indigenous scholarship often faces systemic barriers in the peer review process, stemming from epistemic bias and the dominance of Western knowledge systems (Williams & Shipley, 2023). A follow-up review focused specifically on books and edited collections would therefore be a valuable contribution. The labeling of topics within the overarching review involved some risk of subjectivity among research assistants. To mitigate this, each source was reviewed by at least two research assistants, with clear criteria established to guide labeling and minimize bias. Articles underwent multiple assessments during data extraction to ensure consistency, and disagreements were resolved through team discussions to reach a consensus. Reviewer fatigue was another concern due to the extensive scope of the review; to address this, research assistants collaborated closely and took regular breaks. Lastly, overlap between subtopics occasionally made it challenging to assign articles to distinct categories under specific headings.

## 8. Conclusion

Across this scoping review, there is an emphasis on the need for culturally appropriate and community driven solutions in the Indigenous child welfare system. This includes supporting transitions that are actively facilitated by cultural planning, community connection, early intervention, and extending the age for supports. Incorporating Indigenous voices in policymaking, addressing parental substance use, and developing culturally safe and competent programs are also crucial. There is a call for a community of practice to streamline support for Indigenous youth, recognition of traditional lifestyles as legitimate life goals, and the inclusion of Elders and ceremony in youth programming. The conclusions highlight the importance of Indigenous culture and community in fostering resilience and positive outcomes for Aboriginal youth. The impact of residential schools in Canada and colonialism all

across jurisdictions is profound, with an equivalent need for significant systemic change to address the root causes of social issues like homelessness and criminalization. Additionally, justice systems must partner with families and communities to prevent youth crime by addressing underlying causes.

Research underscores the vital role of cultural knowledge and community connections for Indigenous youth, particularly those with backgrounds impacted by residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, and past involvement in child welfare. Maintaining cultural ties and community connections are crucial for positive transitions, resilience, and well-being. Interventions must be community-driven and culturally grounded, recognizing the unique strengths and needs of Indigenous communities. Ongoing research and policy development should focus on the lived experiences of Indigenous youth, promoting self-determination and self-government. Addressing these challenges requires systemic changes to both recognize and overcome ongoing impacts of colonization.

All work was completed at the University of Lethbridge in Lethbridge, Alberta.

Primary Investigator, Janice Victor, conceptualized the main project. All authors contributed to this study's design and procedural development. Material preparation, data collection and analysis were performed by Amanda Ervin, Anika J Dirk, Hannah Odekina, Fatemeh Sahlehi Shahrabi, Chloe Luck, Mary Greenshields, and Janice M. Victor. The manuscript was drafted, revised, and edited by Amanda Ervin, Anika J. Dirk, and Janice Victor.

## 9. Declarations

This work was supported by a University of Lethbridge Community of Research Excellence Development Opportunities (CREDO) grant and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Insight Development grant [Grant number: 430-2021-01104].

## Ethics Statement

This scoping review does not require ethical approval. Data consisted of published articles in peer-reviewed journals, theses and dissertations, and gray literature research reports.

## Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

## Data availability

No data was used for the research described in the article.

## References

- Alberston, A. M., Angell, G. B., Gorey, K. M., & Grenier, S. (2020). Homelessness among Indigenous peoples in Canada: The impacts of child welfare involvement and educational achievement. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 111, Article 104846. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.104846>
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2022). *Child protection Australia 2020–21*. AIHW. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2020-21>.
- Barker, B. (2019). *Young people who use drugs and the child welfare system: Evidence to improve outcomes*. University of British Columbia. Doctoral dissertation.
- Barker, B., Kerr, T., Alfred, G. T., Fortin, M., Nguyen, P., Wood, E., & DeBeck, K. (2014). High prevalence of exposure to the child welfare system among street-involved youth in a Canadian setting: Implications for policy and practice. *BMC Public Health*, 14(1), 197. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-14-197>
- Baskin, C. (2019). Aboriginal youth talk about structural determinants as the causes of homelessness. *First Peoples Child & Family Review*, 14(1), 94–108. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1071289ar>

- Bennett, M. L. (2016). *Digital storytelling with first Nations emerging adults in extensions of care and transitioning from care in Manitoba*. Doctoral dissertation. University of Manitoba.
- Blackstock, C., Libesman, T., King, J., Mathews, B., & Hermeston, W. (2023). Decolonizing first peoples child welfare. In C. Cunneen, A. Deckert, A. Porter, J. Tauri, & R. Webb (Eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook on Decolonizing Justice* (pp. 313–323). Taylor & Francis, 10.4324/9781003176619-33.
- Bromwich, R. J. (2019). Cross-over youth and 'youth criminal justice act' evidence law: Discourse analysis and reasons for law reform. *Manitoba Law Journal*, 42(4), 265–290.
- Brooks, J. (2022). *Iy nonet: Bridging the Gap "for the good of" indigenous youth aging out of care* (Publication No. 29069578). Royal Roads University. Master's thesis ProQuest Dissertations & Theses.
- Brown, J., Knol, D., Prevost-Derbecqer, S., & Andrushko, K. (2007). Housing for Aboriginal youth in the inner city of Winnipeg. *First Peoples Child & Family Review*, 3(2), 56–64. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1069464ar>
- Bussey, M., & Lucero, N. M. (2013). Re-examining child welfare's response to ICWA: Collaborating with community-based agencies to reduce disparities for American Indian/Alaska native children. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 35, 394–401. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2012.12.021>
- Collins, J. L. (2016). Integrative review: Delivery of healthcare services to adolescents and young adults during and after foster care. *Journal of Pediatric Nursing*, 31(6), 653–666.
- Cram, F., Gulliver, P., Ota, R., & Wilson, M. (2015). Understanding overrepresentation of Indigenous children in child welfare data: An application of the drake risk and bias models. *Child Maltreatment*, 20(3), 170–182. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077559515580392>
- Crotty, L. (2025, February 25). *Moving out: The experience of transitioning out of the Manitoba child welfare system* [Conference presentation]. International Conference on the Prevention of Youth Homelessness, Toronto, ON, Canada. <https://preventhomelessness.ca/2025conference/>.
- Doucet, M. M. (2020). *Relationships matter: Examining the pathways to long-term supportive relationships for youth 'aging out' of care* (Publication No. 28383802). McGill University. Doctoral dissertation, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses.
- Doucet, M. (2025, February 25). *Navigating transitions: The voices and experiences of youth aging out of care and facing homelessness in Canada* [Conference presentation]. International Conference on the Prevention of Youth Homelessness, Toronto, ON, Canada. <https://preventhomelessness.ca/2025conference/>.
- Doucet M., & Trocmé, N. (2020) Relationships matter: examining the pathways to long-term supportive relationships for youth "aging out" of care. *Escholarship.mcgill.ca*. <https://escholarship.mcgill.ca/ocern/theses/kh04dv04h>.
- Ervin, A., Dirk, A., Odekina, H., Shahrabi, F., Luck, C., Greenshields, M., & Victor, J. (2025). Care providers of indigenous children and youth in the child welfare system: A scoping review. *Child & Family Social Work*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cfs.13314>
- Fallon, B., Lefebvre, R., Trocmé, N., Richard, K., Hélie, S., Montgomery, M., Bennett, M., et al. (2021). Denouncing the continued overrepresentation of first Nations children in Canadian child welfare: Findings from the first nations/canadian incidence study of reported child abuse and neglect-2019. *Assembly of First Nations*. <https://cwrp.ca/sites/default/files/publications/FNCIS-2019%20-%20Denouncing%20the%20Continued%20Overrepresentation%20of%20First%20Nations%20Children%20in%20Canadian%20Child%20Welfare%20-%20Final.pdf>.
- Fallon, B., Lefebvre, R., Filippelli, J., Joh-Carnella, N., Trocmé, N., Carradine, J., & Fluke, J. (2021). Major findings from the Ontario incidence study of reported child abuse and neglect 2018. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 111, Article 104778. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2020.104778>
- Fowler, P. J., Marcal, K. E., Zhang, J., Day, O., & Landsverk, J. (2017). Homelessness and aging out of foster care: A national comparison of child welfare-involved adolescents. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 77, 27–33.
- Fraser, S. L., Vachon, M., Arauz, M. J., Rousseau, C., & Kirmayer, L. J. (2012). Inuit youth transitioning out of residential care: Obstacles to re-integration and challenges to wellness. *First Peoples Child & Family Review*, 7(1), 52–75. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1068865ar>
- Friesen, B. J., Cross, T. L., Jivanjee, P., Thirstrup, A., Bandurraga, A., Gowen, L. K., & Rountree, J. (2014). Meeting the transition needs of urban American Indian/Alaska Native youth through culturally based services. *The Journal of Behavioral Health Services & Research*, 42(2), 191–205. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11414-014-9447-2>
- Gauthier, M. (2011). *The impact of the residential school, child welfare system and intergenerational trauma upon the incarceration of Aboriginals* (Publication No. 1019500199). Master's thesis. Queen's University.
- Gypen, L., Vanderfaillie, J., De Maeyer, S., Belenger, L., & Van Hoen, F. (2017). Outcomes of children who grew up in foster care: Systematic review. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 76, 74–83.
- Haight, W., Waubanasum, C., Glesener, D., & Marsalis, S. (2018). A scoping study of Indigenous child welfare: The long emergency and preparations for the next seven generations. *Children & Youth Services Review*, 93, 397–410. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2018.08.016>
- Jacobs, M. D. (2006). *Indian boarding schools in comparative perspective: The removal of Indigenous children in the United States and Australia, 1880-1940*. Faculty publications, Department of History.
- Kaiser, E. G. (2018). *Foster youth transition to adulthood: Effects of housing stability and social support on mental health*. Doctoral dissertation. Belmont University.
- Ka'ai, T. (2019). Aotearoa/ New Zealand. In S. J. Minton (Ed.), *Residential schools and Indigenous peoples* (pp. 48–65). Routledge.
- Little Bear, L. (2012). Traditional knowledge and humanities: A perspective by a Blackfoot. *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 39, 518–527. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6253.2012.01742.x>
- Ludeke, R. D. (2022). *Educational and employment pathways of BIPOC youth with foster care experience: A mixed methods study*. New York University. Publication No. 28866464 [Doctoral dissertation].
- Ma, J., Fallon, B., & Richard, K. (2019). The overrepresentation of first Nations children and families involved with child welfare: Findings from the Ontario incidence study of reported child abuse and neglect 2013. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 90, 52–65.
- Mathews, B., McVie, S., Thompson, C., & Stewart, A. (2022). From childhood system contact to adult criminal conviction: Investigating intersectoral inequalities using Queensland administrative data. *Journal of International and Life-Course Criminology*, 8, 440–480. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40865-022-00204-z>
- Mendes, P., & McCurdy, S. (2019). Policy and practice supports for young people transitioning from out-of-home care: An analysis of six recent inquiries in Australia. *Journal of Social Work*, 20(5), 599–619. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468017319852702>
- Mendes, P., Saunders, B., & Baidawi, S. (2016). Indigenous young people transitioning from out-of-home care (OOHC) in Victoria, Australia: The perspectives of workers in Indigenous-specific and non-Indigenous non-government services. *International Indigenous Policy Journal*, 7(3). <https://doi.org/10.18584/iipj.2016.7.3.2>
- Mendes, P., Standfield, R., Saunders, B., McCurdy, S., Walsh, J., & Turnbull, L. (2021). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Indigenous) young people leaving out-of-home care in Australia: A national scoping study. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 121, Article 105848. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.105848>
- Mendes, P., Roche, S., Kristo, L., O'Donnell, M., Moore, T., Malvaso, C., Venables, J., & McDowall, J. (2025). The introduction of extended Out-of-Home care (OOHC) until 21 Years in Australia: A mapping of policy, legislation and programs in each jurisdiction. *The Australian Journal of Social Issues*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajs4.389>
- Merhar, A. (2017). *Moving home: The art and embodiment of transience among youth emerging from Canada's child welfare system*. Master's thesis. York University <https://yorkspace.library.yorku.ca/items/9ba769bf-1112-43a0-b495-37b55c4b32f/full>.
- Morton, D., Mager, Z., Champagne, M., Wabiski, N., & Ogichidaa, M. (2021). "In honour of the village we have today": Co-creating a housing solutions lab for Indigenous youth aging out of care in Winnipeg. *Plan Canada, Spring*, 38–41. [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e659b4a385ea60871dff034/t/6099b891171f387148fd65c4/1620687020166/PlanCanada\\_Spring2021\\_Zo%C3%ABMager.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e659b4a385ea60871dff034/t/6099b891171f387148fd65c4/1620687020166/PlanCanada_Spring2021_Zo%C3%ABMager.pdf).
- Navia, D., Henderson, R. I., & First Charger, L. (2018). Uncovering colonial legacies: Voices of Indigenous youth on child welfare (dis)placements. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 49(2), 146–164. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aeq.12245>
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2022). *Assisting care leavers: Time for action*. OECD Publishing. doi: 10.1787/1939a9ec-en.
- Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children. (2019, May 27). *New transitions service*. <https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/about-us/news/new-transitions-service/>.
- Peters, M. D. J., Godfrey, C., McInerney, P., Munn, Z., Tricco, A. C., & Khalil, H. (2021). Scoping reviews. In E. Aromataris, & Z. Munn (Eds.), *JBI manual for evidence synthesis* (2020 ed., pp. 406–451). The Joanna Briggs Institute, 10.46658/JBIMES-20-12.
- Quinn, A. L. (2022). Experiences and well-being among Indigenous former youth in care within Canada. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 123, Article 105395. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2021.105395>
- Quinn, A., Fallon, B., Joh-Carnella, N., & Saint-Girons, M. (2022). The overrepresentation of first Nations children in the Ontario child welfare system: A call for systemic change. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 139, Article 106558. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2022.106558>
- Ruttan, L., LaBoucane-Benson, P., & Munro, B. (2008). "A story I never heard before": Aboriginal young women, homelessness, and restoring connections. *International Journal of Indigenous Health*, 4(1), 1–18. [https://journalindigenousewellbeing.co.nz/media/2018/10/3\\_Ruttan.pdf](https://journalindigenousewellbeing.co.nz/media/2018/10/3_Ruttan.pdf).
- Shaikh, A., & Rawal, H. (2019). Interconnections among homelessness, family separation, and mental health: Implications for multi-sectoral social services. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 45(4), 543–557. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01488376.2018.1481174>
- Sinha, V., & Kozłowski, A. (2013). The structure of Aboriginal child welfare in Canada. *The International Indigenous Policy Journal*, 4(2), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.18584/iipj.2013.4.2.2>
- Sinha, V., Ellenbogen, S., & Trocmé, N. (2013). Substantiating neglect of first Nations and non-Aboriginal children. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 35(12), 2080–2090. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2013.10.007>
- Sinha, V., Caldwell, J., Paul, L., & Fumaneri, P. R. (2021). A review of literature on the involvement of children from Indigenous communities in Anglo child welfare systems: 1973–2018. *The International Indigenous Policy Journal*, 12(1), 1–43. <https://doi.org/10.18584/iipj.2021.12.1.10818>
- Tricco, A. C., Lillie, E., Zarin, W., O'Brien, K. K., Colquhoun, H., Levac, D., Moher, D., Peters, M. D., Horsley, T., & Weeks, L. (2018). PRISMA extension for scoping reviews (PRISMA-ScR): Checklist and explanation. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 169(7), 467–473. <https://doi.org/10.7326/M18-0850>
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to action*. <https://nctr.ca/records/reports/#trc-reports>.
- U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2019). *Foster care: States with approval to extend care provide independent living options for youth up to age 21* (GAO-19-411). U.S. Government Accountability Office. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/699587.pdf>.
- Williams, D. H., & Shipley, G. P. (2023). Indigenous research methodologies: Challenges and opportunities for broader recognition and acceptance. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 11, 467–500. <https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2023.115030>