

Advancing Continuous Improvements in the Family Justice System in Saskatchewan: The Collective Impact of a Well-being Focus in Family Law

Post-Workshop Summary and Next Steps Report

Workshop Held November 3-4, 2025

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Executive Summary

This report captures the proceedings and key findings from a two-day workshop, documenting areas of shared alignment among a diverse group of stakeholders committed to improving Saskatchewan's family justice system. This report provides background information on the project, highlights how the workshop demonstrated systems change theory in action, presents participants' reflections on the content and processes, and identifies potential next steps. **The report is also intended to serve as a resource beyond the event by highlighting concepts and approaches that may support systems change in Saskatchewan and beyond.**

The report details the project's grounding in a **participatory action research methodology**. This methodology creates opportunities for reflection, dialogue, and co-learning across professional and organizational boundaries, while supporting collective action and continuous improvement. Just as healthy brain functioning depends on the integration of many interconnected parts, meaningful systems change relies on relationships, collaboration, and shared understanding across diverse stakeholders. Through qualitative inquiry and reflective practice, systems can develop the capacity to learn, adapt, and evolve. This is where systems thinking and brain science intersect: **when we understand the conditions that support human learning, health, and healing, we can intentionally create systems that embody those same conditions.**

The value of the report lies in demonstrating both the appetite for change and the breadth of innovative thinking already present within the system. Workshop participants challenged traditional assumptions and proposed approaches that prioritize families lived realities, emphasize healing and harm reduction over adversarial processes, reconsider when different decision-makers and processes are most appropriate, and promote more coordinated, interdisciplinary responses to family conflict.

As a foundation for next steps, this report identifies common priorities that can inform strategic planning, pilot initiatives, policy development, and future collaborative work, with opportunities that can be explored through further consultation, implementation, and evaluation. Some **common themes** that emerged among participants about designing the ideal family justice system include:

- 1. Reframing Language to Support Cultural Change in the Family Justice System**
- 2. Increasing Prevention and Early Intervention Through Education and Cultural Change**
- 3. Improving Outcomes Through Enhanced Triage of Family Justice Matters**
- 4. Improving Outcomes Through Greater Consistency in Family Justice Processes**
- 5. Leveraging Generative AI to Improve Access and Family Justice Service Delivery**
- 6. Supporting Families Through Interdisciplinary Collaboration**

The ideas presented here must be appropriately resourced through coordinated funding, leadership, and commitment across sectors if they are to translate into meaningful and sustainable improvements in Saskatchewan's family justice system.

About CREATE Justice and This Project

CREATE Justice is dedicated to research, evaluation, and action aimed at improving access to justice through greater collaboration and coordination. CREATE Justice provides leadership in person-centred justice project innovation, project development, and system improvement initiatives, including coordination of the Saskatchewan Access to Justice (SK A2J) Network – and the project described in this report.

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CREATE Justice is housed within the College of Law at the University of Saskatchewan.

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For more information about CREATE Justice, visit: law.usask.ca/createjustice.

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Key Terms Used Throughout the Report

Definitions are provided below for reader convenience. Where definitions derive from established theoretical or methodological frameworks, the original sources are cited.

ACEs: Adverse Childhood Experiences are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood but can have long-term negative impacts on health, opportunity, and well-being.¹

Action Research: Combines simultaneous action, research, and reflection through an iterative process to solve real-world problems.²

ADR: Alternative Dispute Resolution.

Causal Layered Analysis: A four-level sensemaking approach to creating new futures. It takes participants through four levels of analysis: (1) the surface understanding of an issue; (2) the causes creating and sustaining the situation; (3) the different perspectives shaping the situation; and (4) the underlying stories that might feed the situation.³

CBA LFFF: Canadian Bar Association's Law for the Futures Fund.

CHASR: Canadian Hub for Applied and Social Research.

Community of Practice: A collection of people who "share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis."⁴

CREATE Justice: Centre for Research, Evaluation, and Action Towards Equal Justice.

Data Party: A time-limited event of several hours where diverse stakeholders come together to collectively analyze data that have been collected.⁵

Empirical Research: Verifiable by observation, experience, or evidence, rather than theory, belief, or logic alone.

FJCoP: Saskatchewan's Family Justice Community of Practice.

Futures Triangle: A mapping tool to help identify the drivers, constraints, and aspirations influencing possible futures. *Push of the present (drivers)* refer to influential actors that make new things happen.

¹ Vincent J Felitti et al, "Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study" (1998) 14:4 American Journal of Preventative Medicine 245, DOI: <10.1016/S0749-3797(98)00017-8> [Felitti].

² Kurt Lewin, "Action Research and Minority Problems" (1946) 2:4 Journal of Social Issues 34 DOI: <10.1111/j.1540-4560.1946.tb02295.x> [Lewin].

³ United Nations Global Pulse, "Causal Layered Analysis: A Toolkit to Create Alternative Futures" (accessed 20 January 2026), online: <foresight.unglobalpulse.net> [https://web.archive.org/web/20260516110021/https://foresight.unglobalpulse.net/blog/tools/causal-layered-analysis/] [UN Global Pulse].

⁴ Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott & William Snyder, *Cultivating Communities of Practice*. (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2002) at 4.

⁵ Patricia Rogers & Corey Newhouse, "Data Party" (accessed 20 January 2026), online: <www.betterevaluation.org> [https://web.archive.org/web/20260414184010/https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/methods/data-party].

Weight of the past (constraints) refer to barriers preventing change in a system. *Pull of the future (aspirations)* refer to creating ideal outcomes to inform how to respond to the present and past forces.⁶

Mental Models: Deeply held internal images of how the world works, and images that limit us to familiar ways of thinking and acting.⁷

PAC: Project Advisory Committee.

Prototyping: The process of creating an early sample, model, or interactive mock-up of a product to test a concept process before building the final version.⁸

Purposive Sampling: The intentional selection of sources of information (such as individuals, cases, or events) based on their relevance to the research question; enables the researchers to gain deep insights into complex phenomena.⁹

Qualitative Research: Gaining an in-depth understanding (meaning) of human behaviour (concepts, opinions, experiences) and the reasons behind it.

Reflective Practice: The ability to reflect on one's knowledge, values, and actions to engage in a process of continuous learning: *self-reflecting, examining one's professional practice, and critically reflecting on assumptions* to gain a deeper understanding and improve future practice.¹⁰

RFJS: Re-imagining the Family Justice System Initiative in Alberta.

SK A2J Network: Saskatchewan Access to Justice Network.

Theory of Change: "...a systems-change concept that reflects the *experimental* nature of bringing about change in a large, complex system."¹¹

TFJS: Transform the Family Justice System, used in this report in relation to the Transform the Family Justice System Collaborative or Transform the Family Justice System Strategy Map in British Columbia.

The Saskatchewan Family Justice Strategy Map Report: CREATE Justice Focus Group Project Report (August 2025) on *Advancing Continuous Improvements in the Family Justice System in Saskatchewan*, including findings, key themes, and next steps.

⁶ Tuomo Kuosa, "How Can We Anticipate Plausible Futures?: The Three Power Vectors of the Futures Triangle Explained" (accessed 14 August 2026) Futures Platform, online (blog): <www.futuresplatform.com>. [<https://web.archive.org/web/20260430035504/https://www.futuresplatform.com/blog/how-can-we-predict-plausible-futures>] [Kuosu].

⁷ See e.g. John Kania, "Unsticking Stuck Mental Models: Adventures in Systemic Change" (30 August 2019) Collective Impact Forum, online: <www.collectiveimpactforum.org> [<https://web.archive.org/web/20260309233556/https://collectiveimpactforum.org/blog/unsticking-stuck-mental-models-adventures-in-systems-change/>] [Kania].

⁸ See e.g. Tamarack Institute, "Tool: Planning Prototypes and Testing" (accessed 14 August 2026), online: <www.tamarackcommunity.ca> [<https://web.archive.org/web/20250803083630/https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/library/tool-planning-prototypes-and-testing/>] [Tamarack Institute].

⁹ Omid Tajik, Jawad Golzar, & Shagofah Noor, "Purposive Sampling" (2024) 2:2 International Journal of Education and Language Studies 1, DOI: <10.22034/ijels.2025.490681.1029>.

¹⁰ See generally Michele Leering, "Conceptualizing Reflective Practice for Legal Professionals" (2014) 23 Journal of Law and Social Policy 83, DOI: <10.60082/0829-3929.1191> [Leering, "Conceptualizing Reflective Practice"].

¹¹ Justice Rodney A. Jerke, "The Story of Re-Imagining the Family Justice System: Study Leave Report" (25 May 2023), online: <www.ciaj-icaj.ca> [<https://web.archive.org/web/20250617162320/https://ciaj-icaj.ca/wp-content/uploads/podcasts/2024/09/final-may-25-2023-justice-jerke-study-leave-report.pdf>] [Justice Jerke] at 32, n 43.

The Workshop: The two-day event hosted by CREATE Justice at the University of Saskatchewan College of Law November 3-4, 2025, titled *Advancing Continuous Improvements in the Family Justice System in Saskatchewan: The Collective Impact of a Well-being Focus in Family Law*.

TRC: Truth and Reconciliation Commission.¹²

¹² National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, "Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada" (accessed 14 August 2026), online: <www.nctr.ca> [<https://web.archive.org/web/20260808211714/https://nctr.ca/about/truth-and-reconciliation-commission-of-canada/>].

Introduction

This report summarizes the proceedings and key findings from the workshop *Advancing Continuous Improvements in the Family Justice System in Saskatchewan: The Collective Impact of a Well-being Focus in Family Law* (the workshop), held at the University of Saskatchewan College of Law on November 3-4, 2025. The event brought together legal professionals to explore opportunities for innovation and systemic change in Saskatchewan's family justice system.¹³ This report outlines the workshop's activities, key themes arising from the workshop, participants' insights, and potential areas for future action.

Day 1 of the workshop featured presentations and discussions on:

- The use of interdisciplinary tools to drive change¹⁴
- The findings, key themes, and proposed next steps from our *Saskatchewan Family Justice Strategy Map Report* (August 2025), which had local stakeholders reflect on a sample strategy map¹⁵
- The process and impacts of Alberta's Re-Imagining the Family Justice System Initiative's (RFJS) experience with strategy mapping¹⁶
- An introduction to the Causal Layered Analysis process¹⁷

To close Day 1, the organizers hosted a **Family Justice Data Party**. At this event, participants had the opportunity to engage with recent Saskatchewan-related family justice system data. Data was compiled from participating organizations and other sources.¹⁸ The objective was to encourage data-informed discussion during Day 2 and promote greater data sharing among family justice organizations.

Day 2 featured an interactive session led by Michelle Jehn and Jessica Spina, facilitators who have been closely involved with the RFJS in Alberta. Day 2 of the workshop included opportunities for:

- Engagement among members of the *Saskatchewan Family Justice Strategy Map Report* Project Advisory Committee (PAC), the Saskatchewan Family Justice Community of Practice (FJCoP), the Saskatchewan Access to Justice (SK A2J) Network, and other community-based organizations
- Small group discussions, roundtable conversations, and other interactive sessions with participants and facilitators

Throughout this report, **concept spotlights** draw attention to key ideas from Days 1 and 2 of the workshop. They highlight concepts and approaches that **may support systems change in Saskatchewan and beyond, extending the report's value as a resource after the event.**

Thanks to funding from the Canadian Bar Association's Law for the Futures Fund (CBA LFFF), participation was offered at no cost to attendees. The workshop was also eligible for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) credit for lawyers.

¹³ See list of organizations affiliated with workshop participants at **Appendix A**. See workshop program at **Appendix B**.

¹⁴ Description below and Session 1 Slides: Interdisciplinary Tools for Change (Dr. Judy Jaunzems-Fernuk) at **Appendix C**.

¹⁵ Description below and Session 2 Slides: Findings from *Saskatchewan Family Justice Strategy Map Report* (Brea Lowenberger, Dr. Judy Jaunzems-Fernuk, & Leah Howie) at **Appendix D**. See the full report: Canadian Hub for Applied and Social Research, *Advancing Continuous Improvements in the Family Justice System: Focus Group Project Report* (August 2025), online: University of Saskatchewan CREATE Justice <<https://law.usask.ca/createjustice/projects/current-projects/advancing-continuous-improvements-in-the-family-justice-system.php>> [*Saskatchewan Family Justice Strategy Map Report*].

¹⁶ Description below and Session 3 Slides: Reimagining the Family Justice System: Strategy Mapping (Diana Lowe, KC & Justice Rod Jerke) at **Appendix E**.

¹⁷ Description below and Session 4/5 Slides: Forecasting Exercise & Causal Layered Analysis (Jessica Spina & Michelle Jehn) at **Appendix F**.

¹⁸ Please see **Appendix H** for the data points available at the Family Justice Data Party.

Background and Workshop Objectives

The systemic challenges facing the family justice system across Canada have not gone unrecognized.¹⁹ In Saskatchewan, these challenges have prompted a number of innovations aimed at addressing local needs and improving family justice processes.²⁰ As these initiatives have been implemented, family justice stakeholders have identified a need for enhanced cross-sector collaboration, data collection, and evaluation to better understand their collective impact and support continuous improvement.²¹

To support and advance continuous improvement in the family justice system, several members of the SK A2J Network²² identified an interest in establishing a working group in June 2024. In response, the SK A2J Network Coordinator **launched a small family justice community of practice** in Saskatchewan (FJCoP) to **support collaboration and identify opportunities for system improvement.**

Concept Spotlight: Community of Practice

- A collection of people who “share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis.”²³

To further advance this work, the Centre for Research, Evaluation, and Action Towards Equal Justice (CREATE Justice) applied and received funding in 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 from the Canadian Bar Association’s Law for the Future Fund (CBA LFFF) for the project ***Advancing Continuous Improvements in***

¹⁹ See generally the following seminal 2013 reports, which called for significant improvements to civil and family justice across Canada: Action Committee on Access to Justice in Civil and Family Matters, “Access to Civil & Family Justice: A Roadmap for Change” (2013) 58 Canadian Forum on Civil Justice, online (pdf): <www.digitalcommons.osgoode.yorku.ca> [https://web.archive.org/web/20240910110321/https://digitalcommons.osgoode.yorku.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1058&context=cfcj]; Canadian Bar Association Access to Justice Committee, “Reaching Equal Justice: An Invitation to Envision and Act” (August 2013), online (pdf): <www.cba.org> [https://web.archive.org/web/20250915181834/https://www.cba.org/CBAMediaLibrary/cba_na/images/Equal%20Justice%20-%20Microsite/PDFs/Equal-Justice-Summary-Report-eng.pdf].

²⁰ See e.g., among others, Saskatchewan Court of King’s Bench, “Family Practice Directive #7: Mandatory Participation in a Judicial Case Conference before a Chambers Hearing is Scheduled” (1 November 2023) FAM-PD #7, online (pdf): <www.sasklawcourts.ca> [https://web.archive.org/web/20240419164942/https://sasklawcourts.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/KB_Family_PD7_JudicialCaseConferences.pdf], which mandates a Judicial Case Conference prior to the scheduling of a hearing and screening officers trained to spot signs of family violence and identify risk factors and warning signs and Government of Saskatchewan, “Family Mediation” (accessed 14 August 2026), online: <www.saskatchewan.ca> [https://web.archive.org/web/20260520040342/https://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/births-deaths-marriages-and-divorces/separation-or-divorce/early-family-dispute-resolution/family-mediation], whereby a family dispute resolution process via mediators, family arbitrators, or parenting coordinators may help families resolve disputes before resorting to court proceedings. See also the many stakeholder discussions about family justice reform that have occurred through gatherings such as the Dean’s Forum on Access to Justice and Dispute Resolution that have supported collaboration over the years. Reports available at University of Saskatchewan College of Law, “Dean’s Forum on Access to Justice and Dispute Resolution” (accessed 14 August 2026), online: <www.law.usask.ca> [https://web.archive.org/web/20260726030626/https://law.usask.ca/research/research-centres-and-initiatives/deans-forum-on-access-to-justice-and-dispute-resolution.php].

²¹ See generally *Saskatchewan Family Justice Strategy Map Report*, *supra* note 15.

²² The SK A2J Network is a provincial collaborative comprising cross-sector justice stakeholders.

²³ See e.g. Wegner et al *supra* note 4 at 4.

the Family Justice System in Saskatchewan (the project). The project explored ways to better support people in Saskatchewan with family justice matters through a two-phase process:

- **Phase 1** (2024-2025) employed an action research methodology to assess the feasibility of developing and using a strategy map to support family justice system transformation with a focus on well-being, with findings documented in the *Saskatchewan Family Justice Strategy Map Report*.
- **Phase 2** (2025-2026), which is the focus of this report, emphasized capacity building by sharing Phase 1 findings and coordinating next steps to advance recommendations from both phases.

The action research steps that were undertaken during **Phase 1** of the project included:

1. Creating a map of existing family justice system processes (3 to 6 months).²⁴
2. Coordinating focus group sessions with family justice sector-related organizations and programs to examine the Transform the Family Justice System (TFJS) Strategy Map (**Figure 1**, below) in relation to their work and services (overlapping with the above-noted step over a 3-to 6-month period). Participants were invited to reflect on the following two strategic questions:
 - a. **Strategic Question 1:** Identify how their organization/program aligns with or has gaps in relation to components of the TFJS Strategy Map.
 - b. **Strategic Question 2:** Identify through evidence any benefits, limitations, and/or gaps associated with the TFJS Strategy Map itself to “make it our own” in Saskatchewan.

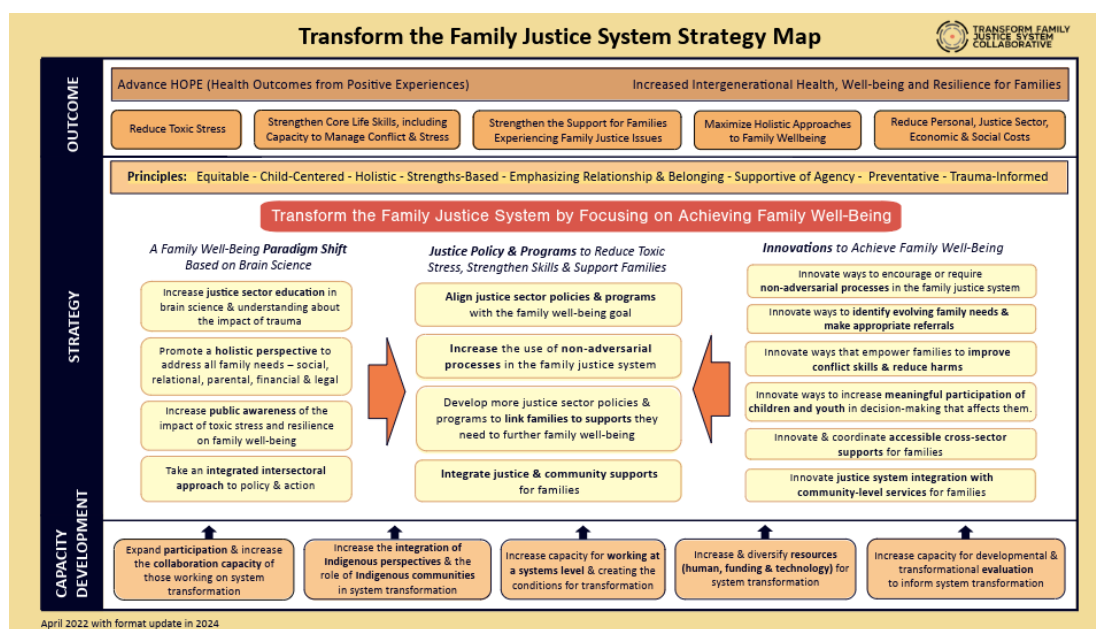


Figure 1: Transform the Family Justice System Strategy Map (TFJS Strategy Map)²⁵

²⁴ Donnelly Morrison & Brenna Triffo, “Before You Separate Read This: A User-Centered Guide to Saskatchewan’s Family Justice System Process” (12 March 2025) Dean’s Access to Justice Forum, online (pdf): <www.law.usask.ca> [<https://web.archive.org/web/20250807000359/https://law.usask.ca/documents/research/deans-forum/2025-topic-2-resource-before-you-separate.pdf>].

²⁵ Transform Family Justice System Collaborative, “Achieving Family Well-Being” (accessed 25 August 2026) TFJS, online: <<https://transformfamilyjusticebc.ca/strategy/>>. Note that this strategy map from British Columbia and Alberta’s map are almost identical.

3. Collating the above research and on-going data collection (working groups, focus groups, literature) into a written report (our key deliverable) (6 months).²⁶
4. Phase 1 knowledge dissemination tasks, such as presentations and a peer-reviewed publication²⁷, completed with student research and writing assistance occurring throughout the year.

Phase 2 has continued to take on an *action research methodology* (**Figure 2**, below) by hosting a workshop and using reflective practices²⁸ among other strategies to move towards completing the following goals:

5. Further analyze and interpret the data collectively. This was primarily attended to through the workshop and was guided by the following objectives and deliverables:
 - a. **Grounding, Gathering, and Looking for Gaps:** Help ground the work and approach of the PAC and FJCoP; and gather other family justice stakeholders interested in current research and best practices on collective impact and systemic change. Phase 2 aimed to expand on Phase 1 to identify, through evidence from the *Saskatchewan Family Justice Strategy Map Report*, any benefits, limitations, and/or gaps associated with the TFJS Strategy Map itself to “make it our own” in Saskatchewan.
 - b. **Educate and Engage:** Share with the PAC, FJCoP, and other key stakeholders collective impact models such as strategy mapping, as a potential tool for advancing continuous improvements of the family justice system in Saskatchewan. Part of the purpose of the Fall 2025 workshop was to begin developing a Saskatchewan version of the TFJS Strategy Map, informed by the results of the *Saskatchewan Family Justice Strategy Map Report* in Phase 1.
6. Develop a plan to address the problem, such as an Adaptive Loop²⁹ for feedback.
7. Move towards implementing the plan, which will require a dedicated coordinator or co-coordinators.

²⁶ *Saskatchewan Family Justice Strategy Map Report*, *supra* note 15.

²⁷ Forthcoming journal articles will be posted on the project website, once published: CREATE Justice, “Advancing Continuous Improvements in the Family Justice System” (accessed 14 August 2026) CREATE Justice, online: <www.law.usask.ca> [<https://web.archive.org/web/20260123233043/https://law.usask.ca/createjustice/projects/current-projects/advancing-continuous-improvements-in-the-family-justice-system.php>].

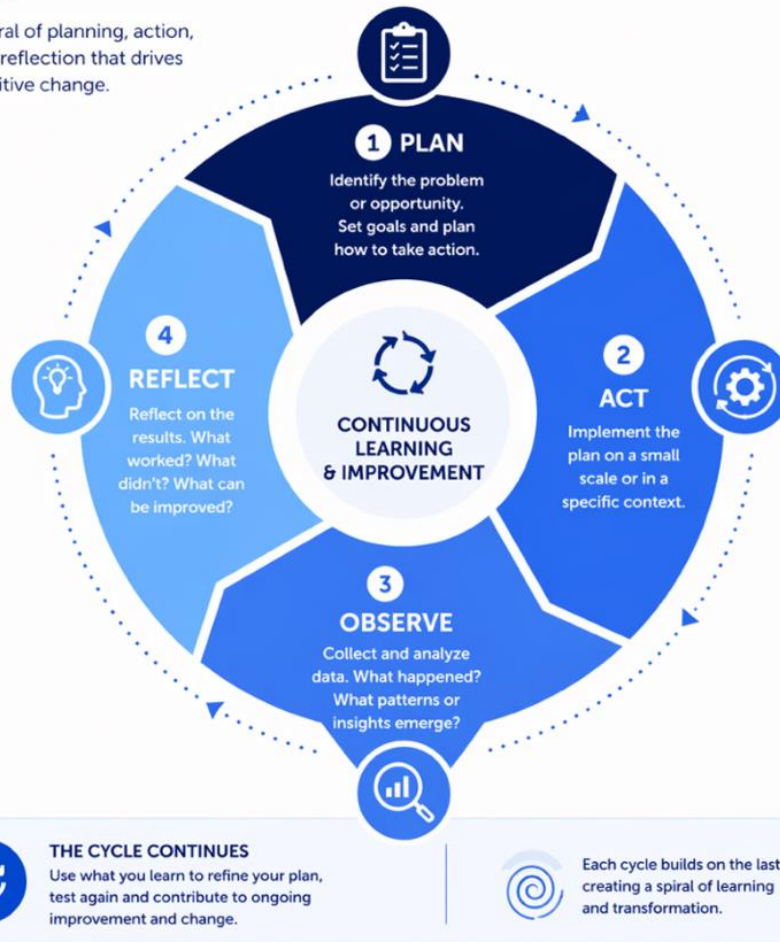
²⁸ See e.g., Leering, “Conceptualizing Reflective Practice”, *supra* note 10.

²⁹ Justice Jerke, *supra* note 11 at 25, n 37: “The adaptive loop (or adaptive cycle) was developed by C.S. Holling and colleagues at the Resilience Alliance. [See Lance H Gunderson & C S Holling, “Resilience and Adaptive Cycles” in Lance H Gunderson & C S Holling, eds, *Panarchy: Understanding Transformations in Human and Natural Systems*, (Washington: Island Press, 2002) 25 [Gunderson] at 34, as cited by Resilience Alliance, “Adaptive Cycle” (accessed 14 August 2026), online: <www.resalliance.org>] [<https://web.archive.org/web/20260804150138/https://www.resalliance.org/adaptive-cycle>]. This was discussed in [Brenda Zimmerman, Frances Westley, & Michael Q Patton], *Getting to Maybe: How the World Is Changed* (Toronto: Random House of Canada, 2007) [Zimmerman et al] at 66-67, and further described in Notes 9 and 10 to chapter 3...”

ACTION RESEARCH CYCLE

KURT LEWIN

A continuous spiral of planning, action, observation and reflection that drives learning and positive change.



Levin, K. (1946). Action research and minority problems. *Journal of Social Issues*, 2(4), 34–46.

Figure 2: Action Research Cycle Informing This Project³⁰

³⁰ Brea Lowenberger, Judy Jaunzems-Fernuk, & Leah Howie, “Collaborative Leadership Primer: Utilizing Interdisciplinary Strategies for Person-Centred Justice System Improvement” (Forthcoming) CREATE Justice, online: <www.law.usask.ca> [<https://web.archive.org/web/20260309152207/https://law.usask.ca/createjustice/index.php>] [Lowenberger, Jaunzems-Fernuk, & Howie]. Figure adapted from Lewin, *supra* note 2 at 34–36. Note: Several visuals in this report (i.e., Figures 2, 3, and 5) are original visual representations created with the support of Generative AI tools (e.g., CoPilot/ChatGPT/DALL·E). These visuals are designed to illustrate concepts, frameworks, and processes referenced in the text. Where applicable, underlying theories and models are cited; images reflect conceptual adaptations rather than reproductions of copyrighted materials.

Workshop Day 1: Understanding the Current Family Justice Landscape

The first day of the workshop centered around three objectives:

1. Introduce **system change approaches**, such as the Theory of Change, Geels Framework, Strategy Mapping, Adaptive Loop Cycle³¹, and interdisciplinary action research. This introduction provided a general overview of systems change approaches and highlighted how the RFJS in Alberta has employed these approaches in their efforts to transform their family justice system.

Concept Spotlight: Theory of Change

- “...a systems-change concept that reflects the *experimental* nature of bringing about change in a large, complex system.”³²

2. Share **insights from the *Saskatchewan Family Justice Strategy Map Report***, led by CREATE Justice in collaboration with the PAC and CHASR.³³
3. Set the stage for the interactive exercises on Day 2, which would apply the systems-change approaches introduced in support of the first objective.

The information shared by presenters, along with the exercises attendees participated in on Day 1 and Day 2, contributed to the overall goal of creating informal spaces for exchanging knowledge and data that may ultimately inform continuous improvements and transformations within the family justice system.

³¹ The text below integrates discussion of how these theories were used in our workshop, with citations and supporting details for the theories and frameworks that informed this work provided throughout. See also Justice Jerke, *supra* note 10, which defines each of these terms: “Theory of Change” at 32, n 43; “Geels Framework” at 37-38; “Strategy Mapping” at 38-41; and “Adaptive Loop” or “Adaptive Cycle” at 25-26, n 37.

³² See Justice Jerke, *supra* note 10 at 32, n 43.

³³ *Saskatchewan Family Justice Strategy Map Report*, *supra* note 15 at Executive Summary.

Session 1: Interdisciplinary Tools for Family Justice System Change

Purpose

To begin the workshop, Dr. Judy Jaunzems-Fernuk presented on “The Unmet Need – An opportunity in using interdisciplinary tools for change” (see presentation slides at **Appendix C**). **The purpose of this session was to anchor the workshop in three areas:**

1. The advantages of using interdisciplinary tools and research methodologies in empirical approaches to *research as action* in the legal field to advance change;
2. Provide a primer on the *Saskatchewan Legal Needs Survey*³⁴ family-related findings³⁵ and subsequent work (2023); and
3. Summarize brain science and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) research to highlight the importance of this work in relation to family justice system design.

The overarching goal of this presentation was to **invite attendees to consider research as reflection in action: a means of understanding systems more deeply before intervening**. By connecting legal needs data, underutilized research methods, and insights from brain science, the presentation demonstrated how evidence-informed approaches can support meaningful, real-world change.



Image 1: Judy Presenting on Interdisciplinary Tools for Family Justice System Change

³⁴ Bryce Stoliker et al, “A Legal Needs Survey in the Province of Saskatchewan: Perspectives of Lawyers and Legal and Non-Legal Service Providers” (31 March 2023) University of Saskatchewan Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science and Justice Studies, online (pdf): <www.law.usask.ca> [<https://web.archive.org/web/20250524165351/https://law.usask.ca/createjustice/projects/legal-needs-survey-report-final-2023-03-31952.pdf>] [Stoliker].

³⁵ Stephanie Varsanyi, “Research Snapshot: 2021-2022 Saskatchewan Legal Needs Survey Findings: Family Law” (2023) CREATE Justice, online (pdf): <www.law.usask.ca> [<https://web.archive.org/web/20250814090000/https://law.usask.ca/createjustice/documents/family-law-research-snapshot.pdf>] [Varsanyi].

Key Takeaways

The key takeaway from this session was **the value in exploring underutilized research methodologies and empirical approaches to provide insight for meaningful justice reform**. In a legal context, underutilized strategies include qualitative research, and, more specifically, action research (practitioner-informed research) and reflective practice. Judy explained these methods hold promising potential to influence justice system reform because the methods center around peoples lived experiences. Data collected through action research and other qualitative methods which highlight reflective practices can provide meaningful insight into the human realities of the current justice system and identify unmet needs that systemic reform may address.

Concept Spotlight: Action Research

- Combines simultaneous action, research, and reflection to solve real-world problems.³⁶

Judy explained CREATE Justice is using an **action research process** to identify opportunities for collaborative action to improve the family justice system in ongoing efforts to understand and meet the needs of people in Saskatchewan. Action research is a collaborative cyclical process of inquiry and reflection aimed at solving real-world problems. It bridges theory and practice by engaging stakeholders in identifying issues, developing solutions, and implementing changes.³⁷ Action research involves an iterative process of identifying issues, planning, taking action, observing results, and reflection for further problem-solving and future action. **Action research steps undertaken in this project included the following:**

1. **Identify the Problem:** Understand issues facing family justice in Saskatchewan (*identified through existing Saskatchewan Legal Needs Survey family-related findings [2023]*).³⁸
2. **Plan:** Develop strategies to address the identified problems collaboratively (*discussion and planning among FJCoP and PAC members*).
3. **Act:** Implement interventions or pilot initiatives (*focus groups conducted during Phase 1*).
4. **Observe:** Collect data and evaluate the results (*Phase 1 completed in collaboration with CHASR*).
5. **Reflect:** Assess effectiveness, refine strategies, and plan next steps (*through this Phase 2 workshop and research*).

Action research is ideal for research and reform in the family justice sector because it innately engages with stakeholders from diverse sectors within the system and is practitioner-led and informed. Through a collaborative and inclusive process, action research promotes ongoing learning and adaptation in a solution-oriented and trauma-informed way.³⁹

³⁶ Lewin, *supra* note 2 at 34-46.

³⁷ Jean McNiff & Jack Whitehead, *All You Need to Know About Action Research*, 2nd ed (London: SAGE, 2011). See generally Michele Leering, "Enhancing the Legal Profession's Capacity for Innovation: The Promise of Reflective Practice and Action Research for Increasing Access to Justice" (2017) 34:1 Windsor Yearbook of Access to Justice 189, DOI: <10.22329/wyaj.v34i1.5012>.

³⁸ Stoliker, *supra* note 34. For a summary of family-related findings of the survey, see Varsanyi, *supra* note 35.

³⁹ See **Appendix C**, specifically, slide 8, for citations and more information on trauma-informed/trauma-responsive research.

Judy closed off her presentation with a brief overview of **brain science and how chronic stress influences responses to threat**. In an adversarial environment that can occur within the current family justice system, it can be difficult for people to engage meaningfully with the process because the system may trigger the brain's survival response. Additionally, when family justice matters are adversarial in nature, children's exposure to ACEs increases.⁴⁰ To mitigate these effects, creating awareness through research, action, and reflection can help to continue to build an understanding of the need for safety to be prioritized in the system and continue to consider ways to support individuals' and families' capacity for resilience.

In sum, Judy's presentation highlighted that action research creates opportunities for reflection, dialogue, and co-regulation across professional and organizational boundaries. Just as healthy brain functioning depends on the integration of many interconnected parts, meaningful systems change relies on relationships, collaboration, and shared understanding across diverse stakeholders. Through qualitative inquiry and reflective practice, systems can develop the capacity to learn, adapt, and evolve. This is where systems thinking and brain science intersect: **when we understand the conditions that support human learning, health, and healing, we can intentionally create systems that embody those same conditions.**

Questions Raised

Q: *"Regarding brain science, how do we problem solve/work through a problem with clients when they are having to go through what may be a traumatic justice process?"*

A: *"Be therapeutic in your practice by being aware of what someone is presenting with. For example, anger and anxiety can be symptoms of trauma and stress and they can manifest in unhealthy or unhelpful behaviors. You can also check in with what they may need. Needs are at the root of all behaviors. Last, pay attention to how you are both coping. Stress is contagious: take a deep breath, ground yourself or your client, offer water, be aware of changing moods and emotions, and provide support for basic survival needs like safety and comfort, which includes considerations around seating, lighting, or other physical components."*

⁴⁰ See Felitti, *supra* note 1.

Session 2: Saskatchewan Family Justice Strategy Map Report Findings

Purpose

Judy was then joined by Brea Lowenberger and Leah Howie to discuss insights gathered from focus groups in Phase 1 of the project and discussed in the *Saskatchewan Family Justice Strategy Map Report*⁴¹, conducted as an initial step in exploring opportunities for continuous improvements within the family justice system. Building on the work that other provinces have completed,⁴² these focus groups were conducted in collaboration with CHASR and the PAC⁴³ to gather information from key stakeholders involved in the family justice field. Focus group participants' insights help inform best practices, effective methods, and key considerations for measuring the collective impact of family justice initiatives in Saskatchewan. **The goal of these focus groups was to better understand how to measure the impacts and outcomes of changes occurring within family justice services, processes, programs, and organizations** – through utilizing a strategy map, or other approaches.

This study gathered insights on family justice system change needs and opportunities from three key groups: **lawyers; legal researchers and educators; and community agency representatives** (i.e., frontline workers who engage with people interacting with the family justice system). CHASR facilitated 90-minute virtual focus groups, **the findings of which were summarized during this session and are captured in the key points below** (with the full report available on the CREATE Justice website).⁴⁴

Key Takeaways

The first set of focus group questions involved reference to the TFJS Strategy Map (**Figure 1**, above). Participants were asked about the **relevance of the sample map components**. A key takeaway from the session was, **there was generally wide agreement across all focus groups that the sample strategy map components were relevant to a Saskatchewan context**. In addition, participants were asked to identify outcomes, strategies, and capacity development areas that could be included in a Saskatchewan map. Participants identified numerous components that could be included in a strategy map. These elements point to multiple groups that may play a role in facilitating outcomes, implementing strategies, or building capacity to promote change.

Participants were asked about **principles** that could be included in a Saskatchewan map to organize or influence outcomes. Some principles were related to **equity and accessibility**, suggesting the importance of hearing from people who have (or have had) lived experience in family justice matters to advance meaningful systems change. Other suggested principles related to **cultural and community grounding**, pointing to collaboration with Indigenous communities and other groups with varying cultural

⁴¹ *Saskatchewan Family Justice Strategy Map Report*, *supra* note 15.

⁴² For example, family justice stakeholders in British Columbia and Alberta have developed strategy maps for the purposes of coordinating efforts to design, track, and measure *transforming* their family justice systems.

⁴³ We also organized a Project Advisory Committee (PAC), comprised of seven members from a wide range of organizations with family justice-related backgrounds. We engaged the committee at two points during the process to guide focus group design, data collection, and interpretation of some results. This collaboration aligned with our action research approach (i.e., a focus of Judy's presentation at **Appendix C**).

⁴⁴ *Saskatchewan Family Justice Strategy Map Report*, *supra* note 15.

backgrounds. Other principles included **early intervention** to support people with family justice matters, safety (broadly speaking), and recognizing the importance of **collaborating** with people from different fields and backgrounds.

Participants were asked **how they thought a strategy map could be used** to help transform the family justice system in Saskatchewan. Some suggested that a strategy map could be **used to set goals**, others spoke about using a strategy map to **develop indicators** to document the effectiveness of strategies. Some participants viewed the map as an **accountability tool** and a way of identifying key players who may be responsible for accomplishing transformation goals. Overall, these responses suggest that a strategy map could help identify which groups to involve and for what purposes. Collaborating with these groups to co-create a map could help facilitate **a shared understanding about goals, data collection and measurement, and responsibilities**.

Participants were asked about **information sources** that could contribute to the development of a strategy map. Some talked about gathering perspective from **Indigenous people in the province**, and some mentioned specific resources to consult for Indigenous perspectives such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Calls to Action. Others conveyed the importance of gathering information from people who have **lived experience** with family justice matters, or "people who have experienced how the systems have treated them firsthand". There was universal agreement that **everyone who has an interest in family justice matters should be consulted**. These responses point to groups of people and bodies of work to consult as the process of system change unfolds. Specifically, participants highlighted the value of gathering information from varied sources (academic and non-academic) and from people with varied backgrounds.

Participants were asked for their opinions about **the role of the legal community in building capacity and promoting change in the process**. In these discussions, participants reflected on possible roles and responsibilities for legal and non-legal professionals. Participants reflected on roles that legal professionals have, including **improving accessibility, forging interdisciplinary collaborations, regulating the legal profession, and sharing information with others**. Participants identified other groups with influential roles, such as the **Government, healthcare professionals, and community-facing positions**. These responses represent early ideas about who might be involved in systems change and in what ways. Future collaborations and more formal data collection with these different groups would help inform what roles and responsibilities make sense for different groups, what is feasible given existing capacities, and what additional resources are needed to build capacity.

Participants shared thoughts on their **perceived issues** with the current family justice system. Although identifying issues was not an intended focus, given the recent *Saskatchewan Legal Needs Survey* findings (2023)⁴⁵, participants often raised them in the context of discussing strategies, solutions, and preferred outcomes. Some of the perceived issues that participants raised in turn identified different groups that may have a role in addressing challenges to **address process complexity, cost, limited children's perspectives in the current system, the presence of domestic violence, and limitations with available services**. These insights may help inform potential solutions to target specific weaknesses in the current family justice system.

⁴⁵ Stoliker, *supra* note 34.

Lastly, participants were asked about **challenges and benefits of tracking and measuring change**. Participants identified **three areas** in which there would be challenges and benefits:

1. Data collection and measurement: resource-intensive but would help develop meaningful indicators.
2. Participation in data collection efforts: it is difficult to gather data on those who give up or choose not to participate in the justice system, but collecting this data would build trust with communities.
3. Systemic barriers: systems are disconnected and inefficient, but this could be an opportunity to cultivate collaborative relationships within and outside the legal profession.

These responses suggest that **the different groups expected to play a role in transforming the family justice system need to be involved in data collection** so that strategies can be tracked and outcomes measured.

Overall, the results of this focus group project highlight **the value of co-creating solutions with diverse groups of interested people**, including those with lived experience, and moving beyond the legal sector. The data point to the importance of fostering multi-sector and interdisciplinary collaborations when advancing continuous improvements in Saskatchewan's family justice system. The results of this focus group project provide a starting point for making informed decisions about how to track and measure change in the province.

Please see **Appendix D** for presentation materials (and, again, for a detailed breakdown of the findings, the report is publicly available on the CREATE Justice website).⁴⁶

Questions Raised

Q: "Are there opportunities for lawyers in the profession or in the college to undertake more counselling type training?"

A: "At the law school, a new trauma-informed lawyering seminar is being offered (2024, 2025, 2026). The course, in its third iteration, focuses on healing-centered practices and is supported by multi-cultural and diverse guest speakers. In the profession, look for professional development opportunities that emphasize support for clients in their most vulnerable moments through trauma-responsive training."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Saskatchewan Family Justice Strategy Map Report, *supra* note 15.

⁴⁷ See e.g. Myrna McCallum is championing this work in Canada: Golden Eagle Rising Society, *Trauma-Informed Legal Practice Toolkit* (September 2020), online: <www.goldeneaglerising.org> <https://web.archive.org/web/20260410091859/https://www.goldeneaglerising.org/photos/trauma-informed-legal-practice-toolkit>].

Session 3: Reimagining the Family Justice System Through Strategy Mapping

Purpose

Justice Rod Jerke of the Alberta Court of King's Bench and Diana Lowe, KC, co-convenors of the RFJS in Alberta travelled to share their insights on the **benefits of using strategy maps in effecting systemic change**. Both Justice Jerke and Diana have significantly contributed to the RFJS in Alberta, which utilizes a strategy map almost identical to British Columbia's.

In their presentation, Justice Jerke and Diana focused on **three main goals**:

1. Share an introduction about family justice system transformation underway in Alberta
2. Explain how the systems transformation is founded in brain science and resilience
3. Describe Alberta's RFJS journey, including work that prioritizes a shift in the culture of the family justice system, testing new innovations, and bringing about transformational change in the system

Please see **Appendix E** for their full presentation.⁴⁸

Key Takeaways

Justice Jerke and Diana highlighted their research on how the current family justice system does more harm than good and is in much need of reform. Like Judy's opening presentation, the two discussed how adversarial approaches increase the risk of ACEs, which in turn increases the risks of behavioural, physical, and mental health problems for children, including once they reach adulthood. For this reason, the RFJS initiative is focused on a whole culture/paradigm shift away from focusing on processes and towards a focus on outcomes, such as resilience and family well-being. When identifying the paradigm shift required in the family justice system, a **Causal Layered Analysis**⁴⁹ was applied.

Concept Spotlight: Causal Layered Analysis

- A four-level sensemaking approach to creating new futures. It takes participants through four levels of analysis: the surface understanding of an issue, the causes creating and sustaining the situation, the different perspectives shaping it, and the underlying stories that might feed it.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ See also Justice Jerke, *supra* note 11; Michelle Jehn et al, "Reforming the Family Justice System Initiative: A Case Study in Systemic Design" (2015) Relating Systems Thinking and Design 4 Working Paper, online (pdf): <www.openresearch.ocadu.ca> [https://web.archive.org/web/20241104111740/https://openresearch.ocadu.ca/id/eprint/2034/1/Jehn_Reforming_2015.pdf].

⁴⁹ "This is a process developed by Sohail Inayatullah, S. as a theory and methodology for longer lasting change (2013). Causal Layered Analysis: Sohail Inayatullah at TEDxNoosa. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImWDMFPfifI>" as cited by Justice Jerke, *supra* note 11 at 32, n 44.

⁵⁰ UN Global Pulse, *supra* note 3.

Building the strategy map in Alberta involved **examining three interconnected levels of change**: the **landscape** (cultures, values, and identities), the **regime** (existing systems and structures), and the **niche innovations** emerging to drive transformation within the field. A key takeaway from the session was that **strategy mapping is as an ideal approach to use in co-creating system change** for the following reasons:

1. It articulates a common agenda for co-alignment;
2. It visually represents the strategies in a complex system;
3. It provides a framework for shared measurement to inform strategy;
4. It leads to more coordination and idea generation;
5. It keeps track of reinforcing activities; and
6. It encourages accountability.

Justice Jerke and Diana then spent some time **walking participants through the details of Alberta’s RFJS Strategy Map**, including how strategies and sub-strategies are created and evaluated, and how information pertinent to individual objectives are tracked and stored.

After providing an overview of the foundations of the strategy map, Justice Jerke and Diana discussed the changes currently happening in Alberta. Since 2020, RFJS members have been working in the community of Grande Prairie to explore new pathways in family matters through a community-wide initiative in the city and surrounding communities. They highlighted a new pilot, effective as of October 2024, which requires family matters to take the following steps prior to appearing before the Court of King’s Bench:

1. Identify the social, relationship, parenting, financial, and health challenges the family is experiencing;
2. Obtain appropriate supports, including building necessary skills, to help families address their social, relationship, parenting, financial and health issues; and
3. Work to reach agreements about family matters, including legal issues.⁵¹

Lastly, Diana spoke about the new Centre for Transformation, a hub based out of the University of Calgary, supported by a significant grant from the Law Foundation of Alberta, which aims to transform family justice in Alberta by shifting the culture to one that recognizes that most of what families are dealing with are actually not legal issues, but rather, are about their social, relational, parenting, financial, and health needs. By providing access to the right supports and skill-building to address these needs, Diana indicated there would be less reliance on potentially harmful legal adversarial processes, and there could be supports in place to reduce the impact of trauma.⁵² The Centre will provide the infrastructure to scale initiatives, a platform for engagement and collective action, support for community capacity building, aid in developing and piloting innovative practices, and an ability to attract future philanthropic investment.

⁵¹ Alberta Court of King’s Bench, “Grande Prairie Pilot Project: Family Law Pre-Court System Engagement” (4 October 2024), online (pdf): <www.albertacourts.ca> [https://web.archive.org/web/20250806222256/https://albertacourts.ca/docs/default-source/qb/npp/npp-2024-10-04-grande-prairie-pilot-project.pdf?sfvrsn=3c10982_8#].

⁵² Jacqueline So, “Diana Lowe appointed University of Calgary’s first-ever Centre for Transformation director”, Canadian Lawyer (8 April 2025), online: <www.canadianlawyermag.com> [<https://web.archive.org/web/20250722224103/https://www.canadianlawyermag.com/news/general/diana-lowе-appointed-university-of-calgarys-first-ever-centre-for-transformation-director/392072>].

Questions Raised

Q: “What supports are available to people moving through Alberta’s family justice system? How are these supports resourced?”

A: “It depends. Judges don’t make decisions that are more in line with social work practice. Alberta’s Family Resource Network serves as an initial referral source and can tailor suggestions to the needs of the clients. This network assesses clients on twelve areas of well-being among other needs (such as housing, health, food safety, family violence, etc.) and helps in the creation of a care team who can support the family in addressing basic needs as they move through the system.”

Q: “What are the next steps with clients in Alberta who are high conflict and refuse to engage with the process?”

A: “Lawyers can always talk to other lawyers, who can talk to their clients and work towards de-escalation by providing them with accurate knowledge about the system’s limits and scope. The more people understand the process, the better the outcome will be. There is still immense value in having families participate in the process even if it does not end in resolution. The hardest cases are often those that have remained in the system for a long time, highlighting the importance of early intervention.”

Q: “Has there been collaboration with Family Focused Protocol in Alberta?”

A: “The pilot project in Grande Prairie is a good example of the type of collaboration taking place, in addition to the general RFJS initiative. The Ministry is focused on the legal processes, and family court counsellors are working towards making additional requirements in the court process... Ultimately, it is evolving with time, but there has been collaboration on every front thus far.”

Session 4: Forecasting Future Change and Preparing for Causal Layered Analysis

Purpose

Facilitators Michelle Jehn and Jessica Spina, who supported the development of the RFJS Strategy Map, then **introduced participants to the Causal Layered Analysis process, which would be applied during the second day of the workshop.** In preparation for Day 2 activities, Michelle and Jessica began by inviting participants to think about the ideal future family justice system, and to reflect on the past and present factors that are contributing to the current state of the system. Please see **Appendix F** for their presentation.



Image 2: Michelle and Jessica Introducing Causal Layered Analysis and Futures Triangle Exercise

Concept Spotlight: Futures Triangle

- A mapping tool to help identify the drivers, constraints, and aspirations influencing possible futures. ***Push of the present (drivers)*** refer to influential actors that make new things happen. ***Weight of the past (constraints)*** refer to barriers preventing change in a system. ***Pull of the future (aspirations)*** refer to creating ideal outcomes to inform how to respond to the present and past forces.⁵³

Key Takeaways

Michelle and Jessica highlighted the **importance of strategic foresight in planning and enacting systemic change**. They explained how working through this type of thinking supports a person's ability to enhance their agency and, thus, their ability to influence the future. A key takeaway of the session was that **without planning, there is only the ability to react, which stagnates systemic change**. Michelle and Jessica underscored the importance of thinking even just 5 or 10 years into the future to create links between anticipated or desired changes, which informs the actions that need to happen in the present.

They encouraged attendees to use their knowledge of the current family justice system to identify emerging issues, opportunities, and risks. These factors were then mapped using the **Futures Triangle method** in **Figure 3**, below:

⁵³ Kuosa, *supra* note 6; Suzanne Whitby, "Futures Triangle" (accessed 13 May 2026) Session Lab, online: <www.sessionlab.com> [<https://web.archive.org/web/20260508082915/https://www.sessionlab.com/methods/futures-triangle>] [Whitby].

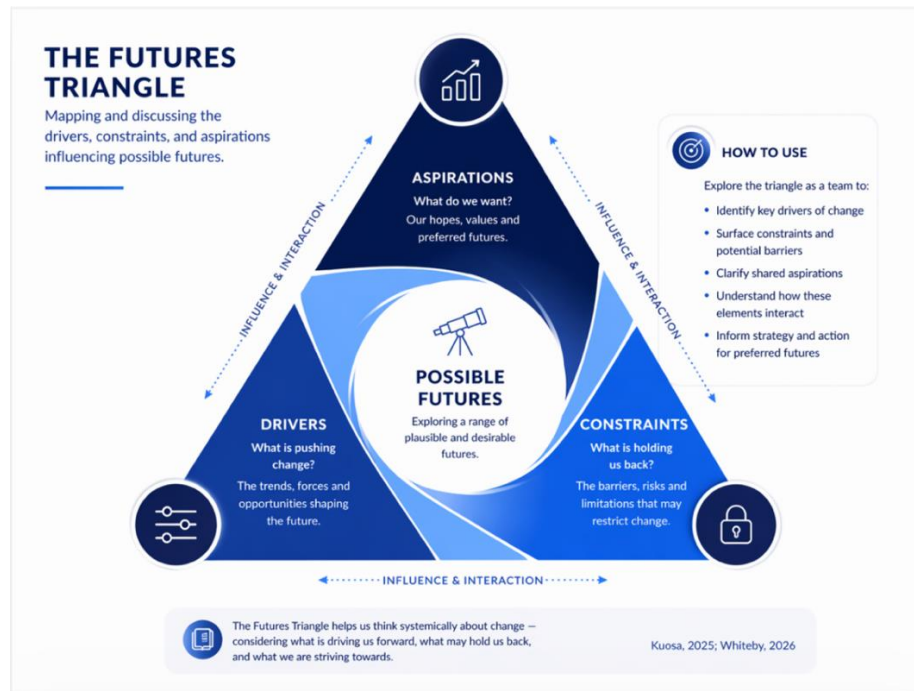


Figure 3: Future Triangles Exercise Explained⁵⁴

The purpose of this method is to understand the dynamic forces shaping the future of the family justice system and what might be coming. Attendees were put into groups and asked to **reflect on the drivers/pushes, constraints/weights, and aspirations/pulls** that are contributing to the current and desired family justice system in an interactive exercise:

1. **DRIVERS** – Pushes of the Present
 - a. What trends and technologies are shaping the future right now?
 - b. What things are pushing change forward?
 - c. What already known new policies, procedures, laws, budgets, decisions, and technologies will start to push change forward in the near future?
2. **CONSTRAINTS** – Weights of the Past
 - a. Who benefits from the status quo or loses if anything changes?
 - b. What are the barriers to change?
 - c. What is holding people back from changing?
 - d. What are the deep structures that resist change?
3. **ASPIRATIONS** – Pulls of the Future
 - a. What strengths exist to help support and navigate the pushes and pulls?
 - b. What are the weaknesses?
 - c. What is the ideal outcome?
 - d. What first steps can we take now to make it real?

⁵⁴ Lowenberger, Jaunzems-Fernuk, & Howie, *supra* note 30 at 15. Figure adapted from: Kuosa, *supra* note 6; and Whitby, *supra* note 53.

Attendees were given material to imagine their own Futures Triangles individually based on their experiences before sharing those insights with the rest of the group.

Exercise 1: Futures Triangle

Purpose

Leveraging participants' varied backgrounds, Michelle and Jessica then led an exercise in which attendees applied their knowledge of the current family justice system to identify collective pushes/drivers and weights/constraints influencing the potential for change (with the pull of the future/aspirations to be explored on Day 2). The group's collective ideas were written on flipcharts and discussed together. Please see **Appendix G** for the Futures Triangles completed by the participants.

Following this interactive exercise, Michelle and Jessica took some time to discuss what each group identified as the push, pulls, and weights impacting the family justice system in their discussions. **Groups identified a number of drivers/pushes and constraints/weights that are shaping the family justice system:**

1. DRIVERS – Pushes of the Present:

- Economic factors, such as the cost of living, the cost of litigation, and unemployment rates
- Social attitudes, such as the search for instant gratification
- Trends in society, such as an influx of immigration
- Barriers of current systems and resources, such as a lack of trauma informed supports, education, and other mental health systems

2. CONSTRAINTS – Weights of the Past:

- Systemic factors, such as the cost of litigation, the availability of a lawyer, and the general understanding of how adversarial litigation can be
- Societal attitudes, such as entrenched gender roles and preconceived notions of the nuclear family
- A general lack of investing in resources to address legal problems from a broader perspective

Key Takeaways

Participants noted that some factors are interchangeable between pushes and weights or might be something in between. Michelle and Jessica welcomed these observations, noting that **the purpose of this exercise is simply to start thinking about the factors that influence the systems in need of change.** Michelle and Jessica also outlined the objectives for the following day and how the information and presentations shared during Day 1 of the workshop would inform the work planned for Day 2.

Day 1 Closing Activity: Family Justice Data Party

Purpose

At the end of Day 1, attendees were invited to attend an informal data-sharing session where they had the opportunity to learn and reflect on recent Saskatchewan-related family justice system data. This come-and-go event featured data points submitted by attendees or gathered from various organizations that play a role in the family justice system.

The gathering **fostered the sharing and analysis of data in a welcoming setting**, complete with a “We Love Data” cake, refreshments, and good company from across the family justice system. CREATE Justice student research assistants Laura Chartier and Michael Bergen welcomed and encouraged participants to share their reflections on the data they acquired throughout the day and at this closing event. For a summary of the data points made available, please see **Appendix H**.

Key Takeaways

Building camaraderie and connection through events like the Family Justice Data Party can help lay a foundation for the strong, lasting **relationships necessary to support meaningful systems change**. The data shared at this event and throughout Day 1 also **provided a foundation for informed discussions on Day 2**.



Image 3: Family Justice Data Party Set Up and Event Informing Day 2 Workshop Discussions

Workshop Day 2: Exploring Future Family Justice Systems

Day 2 of the workshop centered around two objectives:

1. Working through exercises and discussions focused on **co-creating an understanding of the change sought** in the family justice system.
2. **Moving towards next steps** by engaging with processes such as Causal Layered Analysis (CLA), Geels Framework, Adaptive Loops, and others.

Session 5: Recap on Causal Layered Analysis Process

Michelle and Jessica began Day 2 by orienting participants to the day's activities. Participants were reminded that the current family justice system was designed and implemented by others in the past and continues to be implemented today, including by some of those participating in the workshop. Some of the underpinnings of this system are still structured in a way that reflects a previous time. However, **as the previous day's data insights and discussions recognized rather than newly revealed, the needs of families have changed over time, and some aspects of the current system have not kept pace with those evolving needs.** Michelle and Jessica encouraged attendees to spend some time thinking about the future they imagine for the family justice system.

Michelle and Jessica also took a moment to highlight the impact of culture on influencing meaningful and lasting change within a system. Ultimately, strategies and well-intentioned plans may fail without ongoing reflection and shifts in culture. **Enacting meaningful change requires individual and collective reflection, a deep understanding of the culture of the system, and acknowledging the kind of culture shift sought.** Michelle and Jessica encouraged participants to embrace the complexity of the family justice system. They shared that, based on their experience, as participants collectively examine the system's interdependencies, opportunities for coordinated and sustainable solutions become increasingly apparent.

Exercise 2: The Iceberg

Purpose

After a thoughtful and engaging introduction, Michelle and Jessica explained the first exercise of the day: the Iceberg. **The Iceberg represents the vast amount of lived experience and knowledge that exists below the surface of any unit or system.** Attendees were invited to reflect on their understanding and experience of the family justice system. Michelle and Jessica identified these contributions on a visual representation of the Iceberg (**Image 4**, below), which depicted four layers:

1. **Litany** → Surface level needs and issues.
 - a. What do you notice about access to the justice system?
 - b. What works well?
 - c. What does not work well?
2. **Systemic Structure/Social Causes** → Just below the surface.
 - a. What are some systems or structures in place that are contributing to the way access to the justice system (or the system itself) is currently operating?
 - b. Consider political, economic, and historical factors.
3. **Worldview** → Less visible but not yet the root of the iceberg.
 - a. Based on the above structures, what world views are being held on to regarding the justice system?
 - b. What does access to justice look like?
4. **Metaphor/Myth** → The root of the iceberg.
 - a. How would you describe access to the justice system (or the justice system) through a myth or metaphor?

Participants reported this was a compelling exercise that **surfaced many nuanced factors** influencing the family justice system. In completing this exercise, participants engaged in meaningful **collective reflection** focused on the current family justice system, which populated the iceberg, shown below.

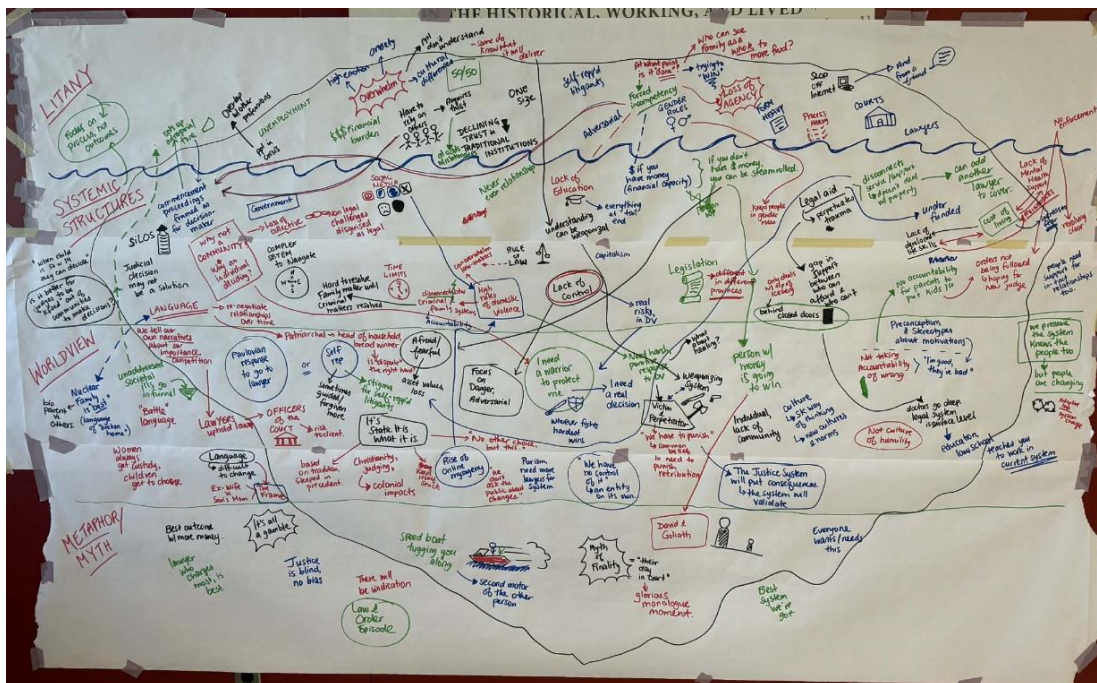


Image 4: The Completed Iceberg Exercise

Key Takeaways

Some notable observations and comments were as follows:

1. At the Litany Level (*surface level needs and issues*):

- Navigating the system can be, without professional assistance, riddled with misinformation and “slop”.
- The system can be process heavy and unpredictable.
- Navigation within the system requires a level of interdependency, which can be confusing. The system imposes a level of incompetency on people, for example, the system requires a level of financial literacy that not everyone has. Proceedings in court are framed by a judicial decision-maker, which, in some cases, emphasizes an adversarial nature.
- The system is founded on and, despite improvements, holds on to historical gender roles.
- There are a lack of mental health supports for those navigating the system.

2. At the Systemic Structures/Social Causes Level (*just below the surface*):

- Saskatchewan has the highest rates of domestic violence in Canada.
- There is a disconnect between services and support offered because of how underfunded legal aid in Saskatchewan is.
 - For example, where someone previously qualified for legal aid but then begins working a minimum wage job, they no longer qualify and must be referred to Pro Bono Law Saskatchewan.
- Attribution bias from one party towards another (and vice versa) influences perceptions of accountability as it relates to orders that are not followed due to the lack of enforceability.
- The formal justice system relies on judges, who are removed from the conflict, as the best qualified to make decisions.
- These observations identify symptoms of a system focused on process rather than outcomes, suggesting that the primary focus is process, as there is no universal agreement on what the desired outcomes should be.

3. At the Worldview Level (*less visible but not yet the root of the iceberg*):

- People may show up to the system with fear of a lack of control over the final outcome, which, once a court process is engaged, is often highly dependent on an individual decision-maker.
- People need someone to make a hard call for them where there are real risks to consider (such as domestic violence).
- There may be equally unfair and generous preconceptions about self-represented litigants that may influence a final decision.
- False narratives prevail:
 - Misconceptions about what the law says about the potential outcomes
 - The importance of the lawyer (may be based on ego rather than need)
 - Harsher penalty narratives and retributive response to cases where there is domestic violence that is influenced by a cultural worldview of perpetrators and victims

4. At the Metaphor/Myth Level (*the root of the iceberg*):

- Myth of finality in a decision.
- People are seeking their “day in court”.

Overall, the Iceberg Exercise helped attendees articulate, and more significantly, illuminate the **culture that binds the current family justice system together**. Building on these collective insights, Michelle and Jessica moved participants into **considering how individuals contribute to this culture** through Mental Models, described next.

Exercise 3: Exploring Mental Models

Purpose

Upon completing the Iceberg Exercise, Michelle and Jessica led participants through the Mental Models process. Mental Models help to sift through vast amounts of information by using what individuals already know, though it is a somewhat subconscious process. Despite their limitations, Mental Models can provide an informative representation of reality.

Concept Spotlight: **Mental Models**

- Deeply held internal images of how the world works, and images that limit us to familiar ways of thinking and acting.⁵⁵

Informed by the insights from the Iceberg Exercise, Michelle and Jessica helped attendees identify the Mental Models present in the Iceberg by splitting these insights into two categories: **old** ways and **new** ways of thinking.

Key Takeaways

In the **old ways of thinking model**, participants identified from insights gained during the Iceberg Exercise, what they would like to “leave behind” in a new family justice system (see **Image 5**, below).

⁵⁵ See e.g. Kania, *supra* note 7.

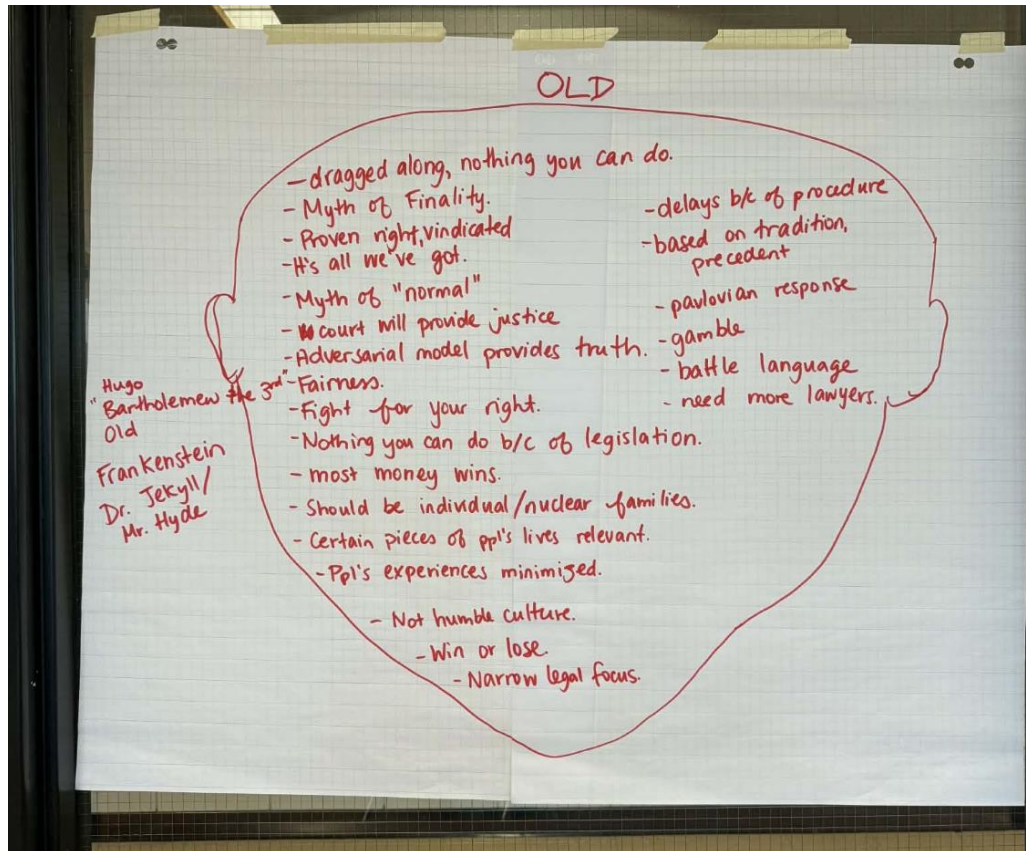


Image 5: Completed "Old" Ways of Thinking Mental Model

They identified **the myths of finality**, **the perception of lacking control**, and **the narrative that the system simply needs more lawyers** as a few of the mental models that negatively impact a person's ability to thrive in the current family justice system. Some attendees also discussed the myth of "normal" and how the **expectation of a nuclear family** negatively affects how decision-makers may interact with individual cases.

In the **new ways of thinking model** (see **Image 6**, below), attendees identified the ideals and values they want to keep in a "new" family justice system:

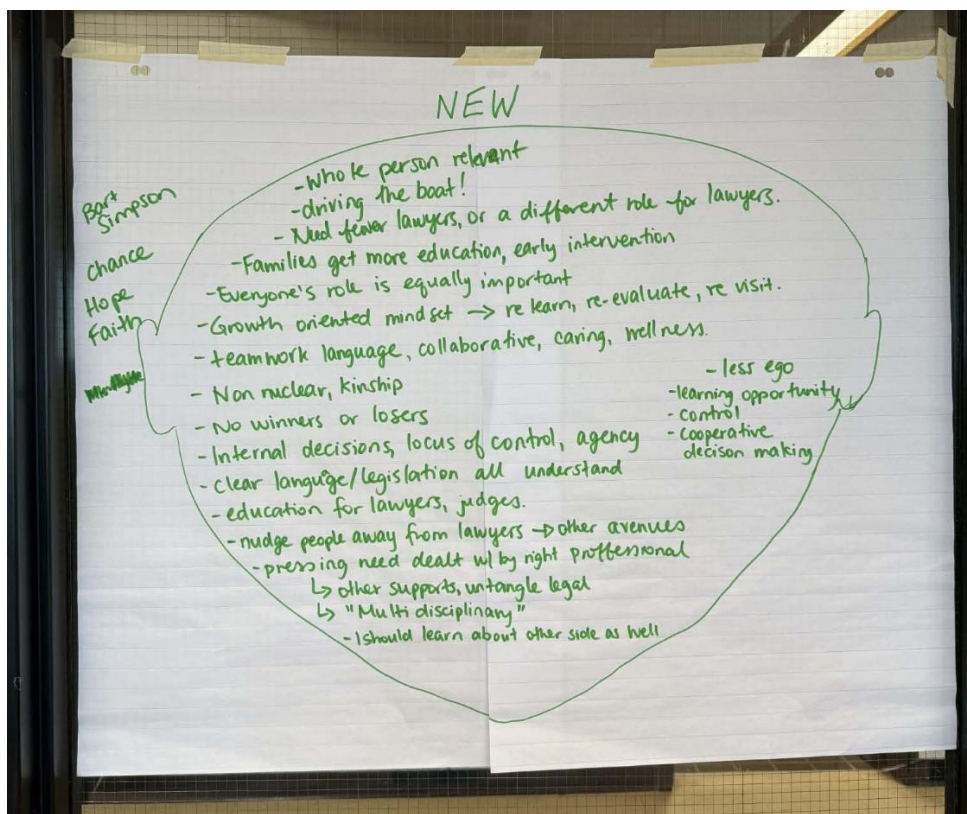


Image 6: Completed “New” Ways of Thinking Mental Model

Many spoke about how viewing the client as a whole person rather than focusing solely on their legal issue would lead to **more meaningful incorporation of various disciplines into the system**, such as counselling or financial advisory services. Some identified the **value of early intervention and education** as an important factor for the families; others mentioned the need for **education and training beyond law** for those who work in the justice system. Overall, the new Mental Model identifies ideals and values that could help families thrive within a reimagined family justice system.

Morning Reflections and Key Takeaways

With the Iceberg and Mental Model Exercises complete, attendees had a chance to pause mid-day to share their thoughts and reflections with each other. A common theme was **different perspectives offer invaluable insights** into how the family justice system operates and how it could evolve to better meet the needs of families. Bringing together individuals with diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and skill sets creates a more comprehensive and resilient approach to addressing gaps and unmet needs within the current family justice system. Additionally, **it is often more effective to develop ideas as a community**, as one person may introduce an idea that others can build upon through their own professions, backgrounds, and lived experiences. Participants recognized the value in sharing insights among colleagues and other professionals who work within family justice.

Some participants shared **fears and anxieties surrounding the implications of the issues identified** during the Causal Layered Analysis Exercises. Michelle and Jessica took this opportunity to normalize these feelings of overwhelm and unease, especially after participants had spent significant time identifying the challenges within the current system and recognizing the complexity of some of the underlying challenges and mindsets. While it is important to acknowledge and validate these feelings, they also serve as an **indication of the need for meaningful change and transformation** within the system.

Exercise 4: Prototyping Future Family Justice Systems

Purpose

Up until this point, participants worked hard to identify the current state of the family justice system, the root causes of any issues, and the mental models that continue to influence the current state. They also identified the mental models of the ideal future system. Against this backdrop, Michelle and Jessica separated participants into small groups to imagine and develop prototypes of the “ideal” family justice system.

Concept Spotlight: Prototyping

- The process of creating an early sample, model, or interactive mock-up of a product to test a concept process before building the final version.⁵⁶



Image 7: Michelle and Jessica Providing Instructions for Prototyping the Future Exercise

⁵⁶ Tamarack Institute, *supra* note 8.

Prototyping enables designers and stakeholders to visualize, test, and refine ideas to understand user needs, functionality, and potential issues, with iterations – often starting with low-fidelity designs and progressing to high-fidelity prototypes that closely resemble the final product. For this exercise, Michelle and Jessica **asked participants to use a template to develop a first iteration prototype of how the family justice system could ideally operate in the future.** This could be a prototype of the whole system, a small program that would operate within a system, or anything in between. Participants used the following template to guide small group discussion on prototyping of desired futures:

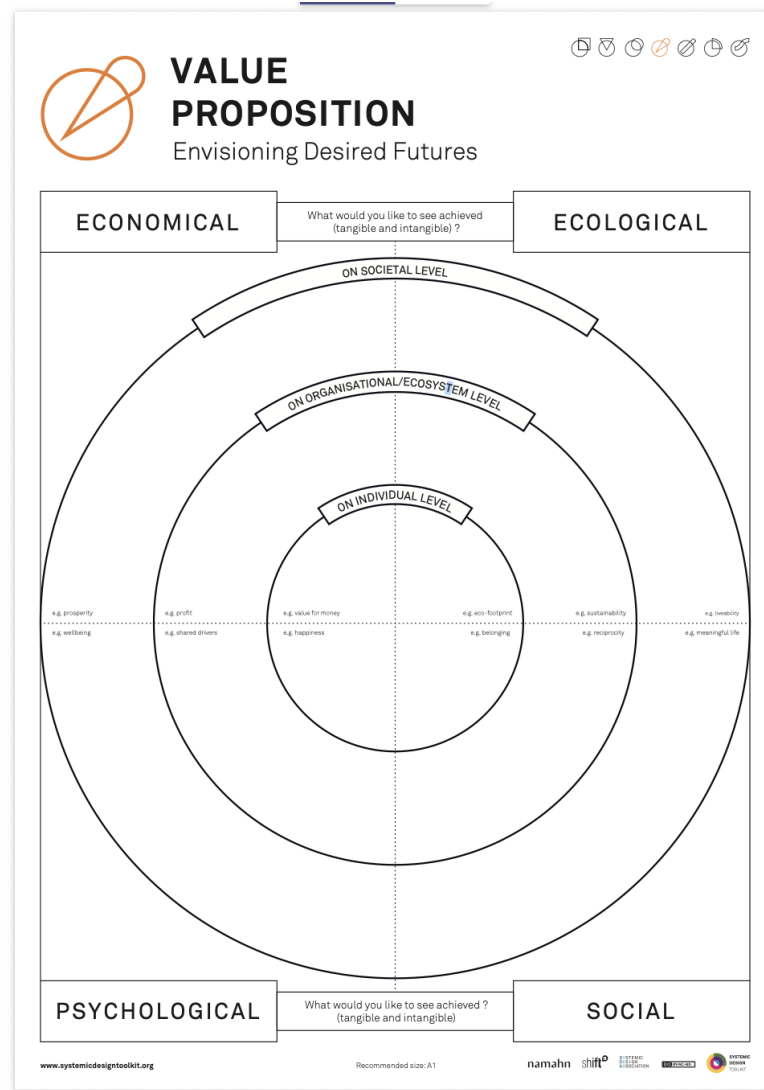


Figure 4: Prototyping Desired Futures Small Group Template

(Template reproduced from *Systemic Design Toolkit: Value Proposition—Envisioning Desired Futures*, developed by Van Ael et al. Available through the Systemic Design Toolkit and licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.)⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Peter Jones et al, "Systemic Design Toolkit" in *Proceedings of Relating Systems Thinking and Design 7* (2018), online: <<https://rsdsymposium.org/systemic-design-toolkit-rsd6/>> (accessed 25 August 2026).

Once completed, small groups presented their prototypes to the larger group. During the presentations, participants were invited to discuss and evaluate the prototypes, identifying which showed the greatest promise for transforming the system and which might help improve the current system. Participants also had the opportunity to identify which prototypes showed the greatest potential and to prioritize strategies for further development and implementation.

Participants were then further divided into three groups to prototype their ideal future state based on all the ideas and information shared up until this point. Each group's result from this exercise can be found in **Appendix I** of this report.



Image 8: Participants Sharing Results from the Prototyping the Future Exercise

Key Takeaways

The following themes emerged among the three groups regarding the ideal family justice system:

1) Reframing Language to Support Cultural Change in the Family Justice System

Participants highlighted the impact of language use in current family justice system matters. For example, one participant specifically noted the negative impact of using the phrase “my kids” over “our kids” in proceedings. This then sparked a broader conversation about reframing the language used within the family justice system. Another participant noted that the language of early *dispute* resolution does not reflect the direction reform is taking. Importantly, taking the word “dispute” out of the procedural title

altogether and simply calling it “early resolution” would better represent the evolving nature of systemic changes. Participants suggested that reframing language at all touchpoints of the system may positively affect how people move through it. For example, the “post-separation” stage can be reframed positively by acknowledging it as an opportunity to “move forward with dignity, well-being, and a sense of resilience”.

2) Increasing Prevention and Early Intervention Through Education and Cultural Change

All groups emphasized the importance of prevention through education and a broader societal shift toward valuing early intervention. On the topic of education, multiple ideas were raised amongst the groups. One group talked about implementing mandatory education programs for children whose parents are getting divorced. This program would focus on normalizing an evolving home environment and any related emotions. Another group focused on early education about rights and responsibilities for young adults, a demographic that may be beginning to form their own romantic relationships. The group discussed how conversations about healthy relationships, ideally beginning in childhood, can create a foundational understanding of what healthy relationships look like and how conflict can be addressed within them. This group also discussed the idea of a mandatory course prior to obtaining a marriage licence that covers topics such as values, emotional intelligence, and healthy relationships; and more opportunities for parental education generally.

3) Improving Outcomes Through Enhanced Triage of Family Justice Matters

All groups agreed that triaging family justice matters is key to resolving issues quickly and with lesser impact on the family dynamic, specifically the children. One group discussed the value of triaging needs from the outset, potentially through an intake process. However, the groups acknowledged that triaging cases is not a one-size-fits-all approach, as every family brings its own unique experiences and challenges. Another group also discussed the importance of drawing on expert assessment and guidance on various issues such as parental alienation, family violence, and financial abuse to ensure families receive appropriate support and that decisions are made with all relevant information available. This group also noted the importance of understanding and working with parties at their stage of emotional and psychological well-being, focusing specifically on what capacity each party enters the system with and how the family justice system can work with them to increase this capacity. One group formatted their ideal future system through three triage routes: judicial (dubbed “judicare”), financial, and emotional. These elements were present in the other groups’ work as well, revealing a clear trend toward prioritizing triage within the system.

4) Improving Outcomes Through Greater Consistency in Family Justice Processes

One group highlighted that the current family justice system does not have enough judges on the family docket to have a one-judge model where a judge is assigned to a family for a set amount of time. Participants then discussed that a one-judge model could encourage a more holistic approach and better buy-in from all parties because of the consistency and accountability of the same judge being assigned in follow-up matters. One participant noted that jurisdictions which employ the one-judge model are recognized as the gold-star standard as it relates to the court process. Another alternative to a one-judge model is to assign a parental coordinator and/or social worker to provide families with a level of consistency and to provide the courts with information regarding the parties’ history, interactions, and progress prior to proceedings.

5) Leveraging Generative AI to Improve Access and Family Justice Service Delivery

Two groups met to discuss the benefits of using Generative AI as a tool for data collection, as a translation service, and to provide intakes 24/7. Some participants noted that the popular tool ‘Our Family Wizard’ already utilizes AI in various ways, such as suggesting edits to ensure neutral language in message exchanges between parents.

6) Supporting Families Through Interdisciplinary Collaboration

Participants discussed the role that emotions play in the current family justice system; specifically, how high-conflict individuals often need assistance with emotional support. Right now, when people have conflict, they may default to their lawyer. However, the groups recognized the value of collaborating with other professionals (such as doctors and social workers) to help diffuse the tensions that can arise because of the preconceived notions of the current justice system. One group specifically discussed how legal roles should be limited, and other services specializing in emotional well-being and financial advice should play a larger role in the family justice system. One group noted that judges should only become involved once the issues evolve into matters of enforcement, and parties should be granted a limited right of appeal. However, this group also acknowledged that, in cases of family violence, some individuals may attempt to manipulate processes or professional supports. As a result, participants noted that the system would still require an authoritative decision-maker or arbitrator in certain circumstances.

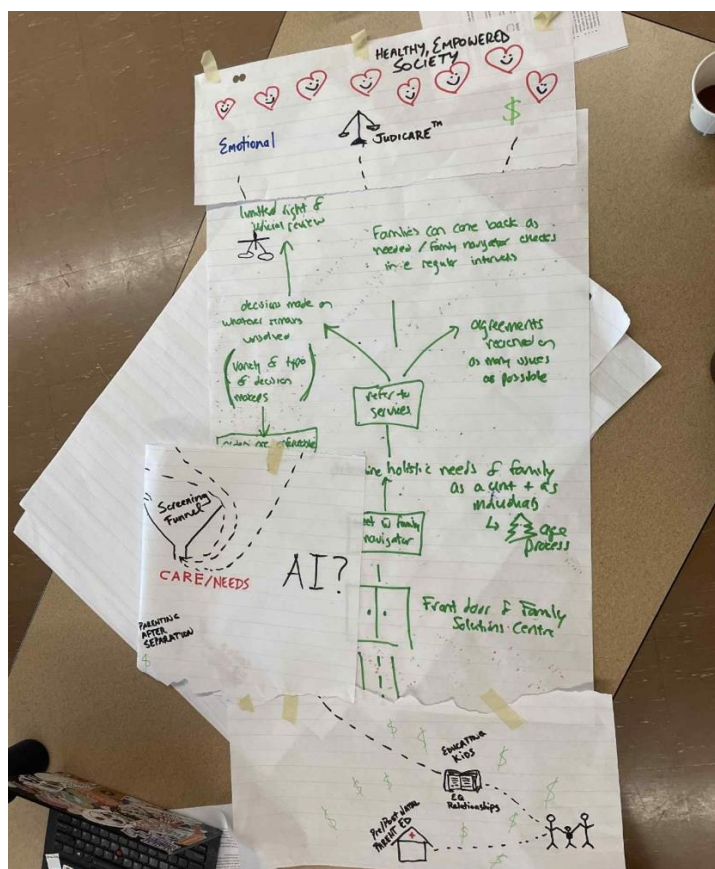


Image 9: Future Prototype Synthesized from Two Groups

Following the prototyping exercise, **the groups reconvened to combine their ideas into a more unified version of their envisioned future for family justice in Saskatchewan.** Participants discussed the concept of integration, specifically what it means and how to do it successfully. The primary focus was on **the best interests of the children**, including how best to support parents, so they can effectively support their children. Participants also further challenged each other to consider what the family justice system could look like, sharing a range of ideas (e.g., one of many examples included exhausting all options through triage before going to court).

From this discussion, participants came up with some ideas for next steps:

1. **Collaboration** among related professionals is essential, though co-location is not a necessary condition for this to happen. However, co-location has the benefit of streamlining the decisions individuals must make, which in turn helps minimize the perceived complexity of the system.
2. It would be beneficial to have individuals entering the family justice system complete a **conflict personality assessment** as an initial step or as part of an intake process to help them understand themselves and each other better.
3. **Meeting people where they are at** was suggested, not only in crisis centers but as an integration into the community. There is a lot of value in making resources available to people in community spaces in an ongoing, proactive way (e.g., using public libraries to hold workshops).

Overall, participants agreed that **envisioning a future “ideal” structure of the family justice system is important to inspire tangible and realistic solutions** that can push systemic change forward. Viewing this process as a circular concept with **the child at the center** of it all helps to focus on what is important in family matters and it grounds the intention and purpose of making changes in the future.

Exercise 5: Prioritization (Adaptive Loop/Dotmocracy) and Next Steps

Purpose

The workshop concluded with an Adaptive Loop Exercise focused on reflecting on and prioritizing next steps. **Figure 5**, below describes the Adaptive Loop used during the workshop:



Figure 5: Adaptive Cycle Illustrating How Systems Move Through Exploration, Development, Maturity, and Release⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Lowenberger, Jaunzems-Fernuk, & Howie, *supra* note 26 at 34. Figure adapted from: CS Holling, "The Resilience of Terrestrial Ecosystems: Local Surprise and Global Change" in WC Clark & RE Munn, eds, *Sustainable Development of the*



Image 10: Participants Voting on the Completed Adaptive Loop Using Dotmocracy

Workshop facilitators mapped the key takeaways from the Prototyping Exercise onto the Adaptive Loop. Participants then placed **blue dots** to indicate where they saw themselves along the loop (i.e., how ready they felt for change), while the **remaining dot colours** represented topics they were interested in advancing (see Image 11, below).

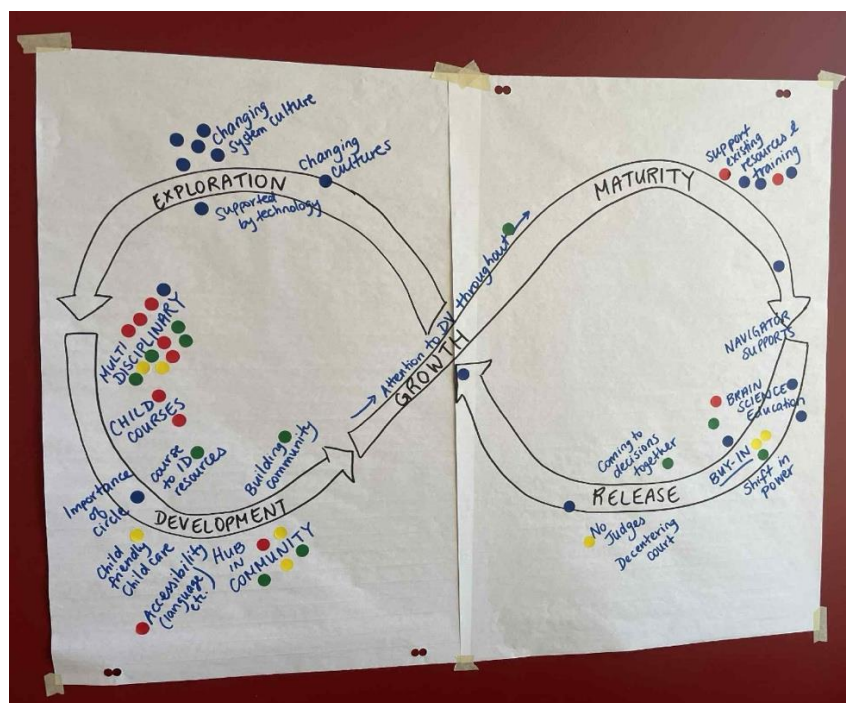


Image 11: Completed Adaptive Loop Following Dotmocracy Voting

Biosphere (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) 292; Zimmerman et al, *supra* note 29; and Gunderson, *supra* note 29. For a copy of the exact image used at the workshop, see Justice Jerke, *supra* note 11 at 26.

Key Takeaways

An interesting observation was that most participants positioned their *blue dot* under the “EXPLORATION” or “RELEASE” phases of the Adaptive Loop, **indicating an interest in creating something new or moving toward systemic transformation**. In contrast, relatively few participants aligned themselves with the “MATURITY” phase, representing the existing system.

The *remaining dot colours*, which represented topics participants were interested in advancing, showed a **strong preference for multidisciplinary solutions**, followed by the development of a **community-based multiservice hub**.

Closing Remarks

To wrap up the day, workshop co-organizers Brea, Judy, and Leah thanked the facilitators and attendees for their expertise and participation in the workshop exercises of the previous two days. They indicated the data collected and insights gained throughout the workshop will be useful in informing some next steps for collaboration and change in Saskatchewan’s family justice system. CREATE Justice and the co-organizers are eager to continue this work with those interested in contributing, with a focus on advancing data- and research-informed system change.

A point raised by some participants that resonated with the co-organizers was that the family justice system could serve as an anchor for families during times of crisis, with its central purpose being to promote healing while minimizing harm. In this vision, the system would provide stability, support, and pathways toward healthier outcomes for families.



Image 12: Brea Delivering Closing Remarks and Acknowledgments

Participant Feedback and Reflections

Attendees were invited to provide feedback on three key aspects of the workshop: (A) content; (B) tools and processes; and (C) future directions and next steps. A copy of the feedback form is available at **Appendix J**, and participants' responses are included below.

A) Reflections on Workshop Content

Participants were invited to provide feedback on the content of the workshop by using the “**Two Stars and a Wish Method**”, sharing two aspects of the workshop they found valuable and one suggestion for future consideration.

The following topics were identified as “**stars**”, meaning participants found them particularly interesting and useful:

1. Collaboration amongst complimentary disciplines and the benefits of working together:

- The potential to develop an alternative, multidisciplinary, solutions-based family services model, such as a hub
- The impact of meeting together like this to strategize alternatives for the future justice system
- Triaging problems through a hub-like framework
- The opportunity to connect in a casual environment and share data amongst groups that have an overlap of clients and services
- Recognizing how many of the desired transformations are not related to law and a legal framework, but rather about identifying other needs and providing support for them
- How to encourage community partners to come to the table and accept referrals to meet family needs/how they can find sources of funding

2. Early intervention:

- Starting with education, even at the elementary level
- Educational courses prior to marriage

3. Topics of interest and useful tools:

- Visioning tools (such as push/pull/weight, old/young) to help diagnose where the systems weakest points are
- Understanding ACEs and how aspects of the current system aggravate the presence and development of ACEs in parents and children
- Understanding decision-making and brain science to build a system that works with people rather than against them
- Matriarchy-led and Indigenous kinship model systems
- Creative solutions that don't revolve around court involvement
- Generally coming out of this workshop with tangible steps towards transforming the justice system and a roadmap for how to tackle large-scale transformation

The following “wishes” emerged from participant feedback, representing participants’ suggestions for future workshops and future work more broadly:

1. Wishes regarding the workshop:

- More family justice stakeholders present, such as more judges, law makers, social workers, etc.
- More opportunity to have informal gatherings like this to continue this work
- Addressing how to balance the practical resistance/friction of making big changes

2. Wishes regarding the current family justice system in general:

- Movement towards legislating the family law out of the courts or to limit the laws application to legal concepts such as property division or complex income calculations
- For professionals in the family justice system to not be bound by their own assumptions that the system is bigger than them and cannot be changed
- Buy-in from other stakeholders
- Movement towards legislative changes
- That any ego, status quo, and a capitalistic focus be removed as a barrier to making meaningful change
- Less resistance from older generations in the legal profession
- Less focus on litigation/procedural elements and more focus on outcomes and family wellness
- Increase safeguards against parties who may use and abuse the litigious court system to punish other parties

Overall, participants commented on the structure of the workshop, noting appreciation for the exercises that exposed them to alternative ways of thinking. One attendee stated that the speakers were excellent and made everyone feel like making change was not a daunting task but, rather, a genuine possibility.

B) Reflections on Workshop Tools and Processes

Participants were also invited to reflect on the **tools and processes they found most interesting and useful** during the workshop. In particular, they were asked to identify tools and processes that could be applied within their organizations and could contribute to future collective efforts to advance systemic change. Responses are transcribed below:

1. Interesting and/or useful tools identified by participants:

- Some participants reported the systems thinking exercises pulled them out of their comfort zone and inspired setting aside some things they held as truths
- General appreciation was expressed by participants for the opportunity to share updates on their work and activities. Others similarly noted the benefits of networking casually in a setting like this to share information and learn about each other’s services and clientele
- Push/Pull/Weight [Futures] Triangle, Iceberg Exercise, and the Old/New activity were eye-opening

- The concept of working as a team to create change was beneficial, specifically the “yes, and ...” principle
- 2. Tools and processes participants reported they will take back and utilize within their organization:**
- The integrative thinking approach
 - Visual mapping
 - Old/New models of thinking
 - Remaining cognizant of the push/pull/weights affecting systemic change
 - Awareness of the cultural impacts on the current family justice system, as identified in the Iceberg Exercise
- 3. Tools and processes engaged with during the workshop that participants indicated will be helpful moving forward as a collective:**
- Integrative thinking models
 - Roadmaps towards change
 - Visual elements like the Iceberg because they have a lingering effect
 - Technology for the purpose of connecting interdisciplinary roles and increasing the efficiency of different processes
 - Including interdisciplinary professions like social workers, psychologists, and other mental health professionals to see how their presence would influence the discussion
 - Mesh the Iceberg Exercise with change management theory to support those who are experiencing change fatigue in the family justice system

Overall, attendees reported appreciating the visual and interactive tools, which some indicated encouraged them to reflect on their own thoughts and biases towards the system as it exists today.

C) Reflections on Future Directions

Attendees were invited to propose next steps for advancing continuous improvement and transformation within the family justice system. The following suggestions emerged from their responses:

- Report back to A2J groups and the community involved in the family justice system
- Continue exploring options and alternatives, such as various licences for different roles in the system
- Collaborate with the Law Society of Saskatchewan to create a public competence pathway
- Report back to CBA with updates
- Continue to create space for these conversations and informal ways to share information and data with each other
- Set up a working group to establish priorities and start implementing changes, such as a community hub
- Stay in contact with Brea, Leah, and Judy to inquire about ways to help in advancing improvements

- Take what was discussed at the workshop back to respective organizations and see how these principles can act outside of the workshop
- Explore different training options, such as basics in understanding the psychology of conflict and how to meet people's non-legal needs in a legal process
- Continue learning about the advancements in Alberta and British Columbia's and use this data to inform what might be successful in Saskatchewan
- Continue learning about other jurisdictions who have either successfully or unsuccessfully integrated the concepts discussed
- Find more ways to engage with the community

Lastly, attendees were asked to indicate how they would like to be involved in future work in improving the family justice system. Almost all attendees expressed an **interest in remaining engaged with the conversations** started at the workshop. Some identified **education as an interest**, specifically the creation of educational materials that could be provided through the Law Society of Saskatchewan or the CBA. Others also expressed a desire to continue **finding innovative ways to collaborate** with other stakeholders in the family justice system. One attendee spoke specifically about pursuing collaboration through the lens of promoting change to bring more happiness to families.

Conclusion

The workshop on *Advancing Continuous Improvements in the Family Justice System in Saskatchewan: The Collective Impact of a Well-Being Focus in Family Law* brought together a diverse group of participants and generated meaningful discussion, collaboration, and opportunities for action. By bringing together a diverse group of participants and organizations from across the family justice system to share their insights and participate in thought-provoking exercises to inform possibilities for change, the conversation about family justice reform in Saskatchewan has evolved, and actionable pathways for change were identified. The workshop presented concepts such as the use of interdisciplinary tools for change, Causal Layered Analysis, and strategy maps to encourage attendees to think creatively and strategically about how a wellness-focused family justice system can continue to take shape in Saskatchewan.

Participant reflections on the content, tools, processes, and next steps were invited to assess the workshop's impact and participants' interest in and capacity to engage collectively in advancing continuous improvement within the family justice system. Participants indicated that the exercises, designed to encourage new ways of thinking about the family justice system, were well received and contributed to a sense of optimism regarding future system change. Most participants identified an interest in contributing to future work on this project.

Overall, the workshop successfully brought together stakeholders from across the family justice system and generated valuable data to inform future improvements. Developing a Saskatchewan strategy map is an iterative process, making it important to create opportunities for collaboration and reflection to ensure that ongoing meaningful solutions are thoughtfully developed rather than rushed. Advancing systemic change at this level will require dedicated coordination and sustained funding, both of which can be informed in part by the data and solutions generated through this workshop.

Following the workshop, CREATE Justice continued to explore opportunities to advance the ideas and priorities identified by participants. During Winter 2026, students selected for the **Justice Innovation Seminar**, taught by Brea, collaborated with stakeholders to advance next steps for incorporating workshop findings into an **implementation guide grounded in a collective impact approach**. Participants also expressed interest in continuing dialogue and collaboration beyond that gathering. **The nature, scope, and coordination of any future activities remain to be determined.** Related resources and reports will be posted on the Dean's Forum on Access to Justice and Dispute Resolution website (law.usask.ca/deansforum).⁵⁹

⁵⁹ See Chou, Frank, Sarah Hodson, Amell Jomha, & Molly Waldman, *Follow-Up Report & Summary Notes: The 14th Annual Dean's Forum on Access to Justice and Dispute Resolution* (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan College of Law, 2026), online: University of Saskatchewan <<https://law.usask.ca/deansforum>>.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Organizations Affiliated with Workshop Participants

Individuals affiliated with the following organizations attended the workshop. Participants attended in their individual professional capacities and were not acting as official representatives of their organizations. The views reflected in this report do not necessarily represent the positions of the organizations listed below.

- Canadian Bar Association Saskatchewan Chapter
- Centre for Transformation, University of Calgary
- Collaborative Law Practitioners, Saskatchewan
- College of Law Family Law, Trauma-Informed, and Dispute Resolution Educators
- College of Law Well-being Office
- Court of King's Bench of Alberta
- Court of King's Bench of Saskatchewan Family Division
- Court of King's Bench of Saskatchewan Registrar Office
- CREATE Justice, University of Saskatchewan
- CREATE Justice Student Research Team
- Elizabeth Fry Association of Saskatchewan
- Family Law Limited License Practitioners, Saskatchewan
- Family Law Private Practitioners, Saskatchewan
- Law Reform Commission of Saskatchewan
- Legal Aid Saskatchewan
- Ministry of Justice Dispute Resolution Office, Government of Saskatchewan
- Ministry of Justice Family Justice Services Division, Government of Saskatchewan
- Public Legal Education Association of Saskatchewan
- Re-Imagining the Family Justice System Initiative of Alberta

Appendix B – Workshop Program

Workshop Day 1

Advancing Continuous Improvements in Saskatchewan's Family Justice System

Afternoon of Monday, November 3, 2025

College of Law Room 74

Proposed Objectives:

1. *Introduction to system change approaches, in general (theory of transformation, Geels Framework, strategy map, adaptive loop, and interdisciplinary action research methods) and specifically: what is happening in Alberta.*
2. *Sharing insights from Phase 1 of the Family Justice Study (led by CREATE Justice, in collaboration with project advisory committee of Ministry of Justice, Law Society of Saskatchewan, Legal Aid, Private Family Bar, etc.).*
3. *Setting the stage for Day 2 of Workshop.*

1:00	Brief Introduction – <i>Brea Lowenberger</i>
1:10	The Unmet Need – An opportunity in using interdisciplinary tools for change (primer on SK Legal Needs Assessment family-related findings, underutilized research methodology/empirical approaches to research and action in legal field, brain science, etc.) – <i>Dr. Judy Jaunzems Fernuk</i>
1:30	Presentation on Phase 1 of the SK Family Justice Study findings – <i>Brea, Judy, & Leah Howie</i>
2:00	Questions and reflections
2:15	Refreshments
2:30	The Opportunity – Reimagining the Family Justice System Strategy Map (RFJS Map) – insights on using strategy mapping as a tool for family justice system transformation – <i>Diana Lowe, KC & Justice Rod Jerke</i>
3:30	Forecasting activity and framing the Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) process (for Day 2) – <i>Michelle Jehn & Jessica Spina</i>
4:00	Reflections, questions, and closing remarks – <i>Brea, Judy, & Leah</i>
4:15	Feedback form
4:30	Social: “Family Justice Data Party” (Lounge outside Room 74)
5:30	End of Day 1

Workshop Day 2

Advancing Continuous Improvements in Saskatchewan's Family Justice System

Tuesday, November 4, 2025
College of Education Room 1005

Proposed Objectives:

1. *Co-Creating an understanding of the change we are seeking.*
2. *Moving towards next steps based on the change we are seeking, and processes such as the CLA, Geels Framework, Adaptive Loop and strategy engagement approach.*

8:30	Refreshments
9:00	Welcoming remarks – <i>Judy & College of Law Cultural Advisor</i>
9:15	Causal Layered Analysis Process, with facilitators – <i>Michelle & Jessica</i>
Time TBD	Refreshments
12:00	Lunch
12:45	Prototyping: The future state (assigned small groups) – <i>Michelle & Jessica</i>
Time TBD	Refreshments
2:45	Reporting back (adaptive loop and dotmocracy) and next steps – <i>Michelle & Jessica</i>
3:45	Feedback form and closing remarks – <i>Brea, Judy, & Leah</i>
4:00	The End

Appendix C – Session 1 Presentation Slides: Interdisciplinary Tools for Change (Dr. Judy Jaunzems-Fernuk)

**“Nurturing A Greater Capacity
for Individual, Collective, and
Critical Reflection.”**
(M.Leering, 2017)

***The Value of Collaborative
Reflection in Research, Action, and
Change!***

Dr. Judy Jaunzems-Fernuk PhD, M.Ed., B.Ed.; MTC, RTC



- Qualitative Studies
- Action Research
- Reflective Practice

Research That Studies Real-world Problems **And** Leads Directly To Change & Impact

Goal: Discuss underutilized research methodologies and empirical approaches to research and action in the legal field

**Research & Reflective Practice
As An Approach to System Change**

1. What is Research?

2. Empirical Approaches:
Research and Action?

3. Qualitative, Human-Centered, Action Oriented, Research?

4. Reflective Practice?

The focus on words—in qualitative data rather than on numbers—is the most important feature of qualitative analysis.
(Miles & Huberman, 2015).

The Unmet Need is An Opportunity in Using Interdisciplinary Tools for Change

Research Snapshot
2021-2022 Saskatchewan Legal Needs Survey Findings: Family Law

Community Agencies:
67 participants
Lawyers:
272 participants

USask College of Law, CREATE Justice, and the Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science and Justice Studies (CFBJSJ) gathered Saskatchewan-specific data on the legal needs experienced by individuals living within the province.

Findings: Family law is one of the greatest areas of need, according to the community organizations and lawyers. Both groups identified **many barriers related to meeting the legal needs of those requiring family law services** and suggested actions to address the ongoing need for family law services.

Stolker, Jewell, Heavin, & Lowenberg. “A Legal Needs Survey in the Province of Saskatchewan: Perspectives of Lawyers and Legal and Non-Legal Service Providers” (2023) at xli, 70-71, and 72; vi-vii and 42

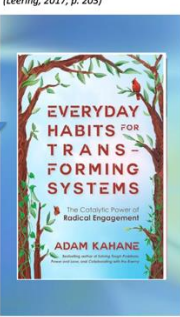
**Reflective Practice:
It’s Good For Us**

Problems

Problem-Solvers

Problem-Pathways to Solutions

Collective Reflection:
“when difficulties within a particular project are seen as opportunities to learn.”
(Leering, 2017, p. 203)



Convene a team from across the whole system.

Observe what is happening.

Construct stories about what could happen.

Discover what can and must be done.

Act to transform the system.

**An Action Research Approach
Finding Meaningful Solutions
Reflect, Rework, Reflect**

Identify a problem to be studied.

Collect data on the problem.

Organize, analyze, and interpret the data.

Develop a plan to address the problem.

Implement the plan.

Evaluate the results of the actions taken.

Adelman, C. (1993). Kurt Lewin and the origins of action research. *Educational action research*, 1(1), 7-24.

1. **Human potential:** we grow through and toward connection (trauma research).
2. **People can feel isolated** in systems designed to support or protect them.
3. **On both a personal and cultural level, we can mitigate suffering** by reducing silos and working together (collectively impact) - reinforcing the agenda of everyone in the system.
4. **Research helps us to work towards a deeper understanding** of people, organizational and system needs from within.
5. **Inherently Perpetuates change.**

What is Action Research?

Action Research is a collaborative cyclical process of inquiry and reflection **aimed at solving real-world problems**. It bridges theory and practice by engaging stakeholders in identifying issues, developing solutions, and implementing changes (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011).

It's an inside Job.

1. **Collaborative:** Involves stakeholders from diverse sectors (legal, community, families) (Kemmis et al., 2014).
2. **Reflective:** Promotes ongoing learning and adapts to evolving needs (Carr & Kemmis, 2003).
3. **Solution-Oriented:** Leads to practical interventions that can drive policy changes (Reason & Bradbury, 2008).
4. **Trauma-Informed:** Ensures that the needs and experiences of vulnerable populations are central (Perry & Jackson, 2018; van der Kolk, 2014).
5. **Inclusive:** Considers different learning styles and perspectives (Stringer, 2014).

Why Use Action Research in Family Justice?

Our Action Research Cycle

Cyclical process of identifying issues, planning, action, observation, and reflection:



Kurt Lewin's Action Research Model:

A problem-solving approach that involves collaboration between researchers and practitioners or stakeholders to identify, analyze, and address **real-world issues**.

Identify the Problem:

Understand issues facing family justice in SK (LNA).

Plan:

Develop strategies to address the identified problem collaboratively (Collegial Discussion - CoP, PAC).

Act:

Implement interventions or pilot initiatives (FGs). *Trouble-shoot!*

Observe:

Collect data and evaluate the results (CHASR).

Reflect:

Assess the effectiveness, refine strategies, and plan the next steps (Workshops/Research/Today!).

Guided by Principles of Action Research: 2025

Advancing Continuous Improvements in the Family Justice System

Focus Group Project Report

August 2025



PAR: Participatory Action-Research



A collaborative, cyclical process, the project actively engaged stakeholders in shaping the research design, data collection, and interpretation. **This participatory orientation was intended to ensure that findings would be both relevant to and usable by those working within the family justice system.**

A purposive sampling strategy:

Ensured participation from individuals with direct, relevant experience; the recruitment pools for each of the three focus groups were small and targeted.

A general inductive analysis:

Organized responses into categories based on research objectives (to inform the development of a strategy map), while remaining open to the emergence of unanticipated themes.

Brain Science –

The Brain Is Shaped by Experience: Adversarial Systems Cause Harm to Families (ACEs, CDC).

Chronic stress alters neural networks responsible for attention, memory, impulse control, and empathy: People may seem irrational, angry, numb, or resistant — but these are *adaptive* responses to threat.

People (clients or lawyers) can't meaningfully participate in legal processes when their brains are in survival mode.

Relationships are everything: Research, Action, Reflection = Safety in the System . . . **Resilience can be built!**

Where to from here



From ACEs to A.R.C.s

Appendix D – Session 2 Presentation Slides: Findings from Saskatchewan Family Justice Strategy Map Report (Brea Lowenberger, Dr. Judy Jaunzems-Fernuk, & Leah Howie)

1

ADVANCING FAMILY JUSTICE SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS, TOGETHER
Insights from Focus Groups with People who are Involved in the System

CREATE Justice
Centre for Research, Evaluation, and Action Towards Equal Justice

CHASR
Canadian Hub for Applied and Social Research

2

BC's Transform the Family Justice System (TFJS) Strategy Map

OUTCOME: Advance HOPE (Health Outcomes Of Positive Experiences), Increased Intergenerational Health, Well-being and Resilience for Families

STRATEGY: A Family Well-being Paradigm Shift Based on Brain Science, Justice Policy & Programs to Reduce Toxic Stress, Strengthen Skills & Support Families, Innovations to Achieve Family Well-being

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT: Expand participation & increase the collaborative capacity of those working on family justice system transformation, Increase the integration of Indigenous perspectives & the role of Indigenous communities in family justice transformation, Increase capacity for working at a systems level & creating the conditions for transformation, Increase & diversify the resources (human, funding & technology) for transforming the family justice system, Increase capacity for developmental & transformational evaluation to inform family justice system transformation

April 2022

3

Strategy Map Components

Example Outcome
"Increase the overall understanding of how the family justice system works." (researcher/educator)

Example Strategy
"I find it hard sometimes to disseminate legal advice at an appropriate level to my client...In my opinion, AI is the best solution to that, and a lot of the other technologies that are out there." (lawyer)

Example Capacity Development Area
"You can't just increase the role of Indigenous communities. You have to increase the capacity of that Indigenous community to have a role." (researcher/educator)

4

Guiding Principles

Accessibility: "I know people who don't have resources...don't even have access to a smartphone or a computer." (community agency representative)

Simplification (of the family justice system): "Couldn't hurt to have the word simplification in there as well, or streamlining." (community agency representative)

User-focused: "Meeting folks where they're at." (community agency representative)

Indigenous specific principles: "I'd like to see something that reflects Indigenous knowledge here." (researcher/educator)

Early Intervention and prevention: "I think if you can get any assistance, any support, early." (community agency representative)

5

Responsibility for System Change

The Legal Community	Government	Healthcare	Third-Party	'Everyone'
"There could be many people that would be helpful to support families, I think the system has a responsibility then to collate those [supports] to make it easy for people to access." (lawyer)	"The government...in terms of starting some kind of a program where there could be more people that could get trained as counselors." (lawyer)	"Building relationships with the people that are giving the mental health supports." (lawyer)	"[In terms of] strengthening core life skills...I don't know if that's the role of the court...so maybe it's programming outside of that." (community agency representative)	"I think everyone has a role to play...whether it's participating in education or delivering education or doing advocacy." (researcher/educator)

6

Strategy Map Uses

Setting Goals	Developing Indicators	Accountability	Making Informed Decisions
"It's about what results you're driving towards as a collective and what impact that's having." (researcher/educator)	"Measuring the number of things that go to court...[and] people who...would've just given up." (lawyer)	"Parsing it out by who's going to accomplish what and when." (researcher/educator)	"[It's] something to look back on to inform decisions." (community agency representative)

Information Sources to Consult

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Indigenous & Cultural Frameworks



"What could we learn from **other cultures** that maybe have some other processes?" (lawyer)

People With Lived Experience



"**People who have experienced** how the systems have treated them firsthand should be front and center." (researcher/educator)

Academic & Grey Literature



"[There is] **research on [intimate partner violence] survivors' experiences** with the legal system." (researcher/educator)

Everyone with Interest in Family Justice Matters



"If you can get [information] from a broad spectrum of **different communities**." (community agency representatives)

Perceived Issues

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Accessibility Barriers: "Everyone, every family, is different and unique, so we're going to need **different strategies for each person**." (community agency representative)



Process, Time, and Financial Cost: "Most people's matters, they're just trying to work out child support and a parenting schedule, so does this need to go through **the same process as more complex things?**" (community agency representative)



Systemic Issues: "Be more **open to children**, and to **provide more supports** for them, so that they can safely talk about their experiences." (researcher/educator)



Issued Related to Cases Involving Domestic Violence: "Some abusers are...great at **manipulating out of being identified**...maybe have an adjudicated component, or a wraparound services component [for non-adversarial processes]." (lawyer)



Third-Party Limitations: "Unless you're on social assistance and can get an actual lawyer or get an appointment with Pro Bono...**[access to legal advice is] limited**...so more legal advice, more legal help." (community agency representative)

9

Tracking and Measuring Change

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Example Challenges



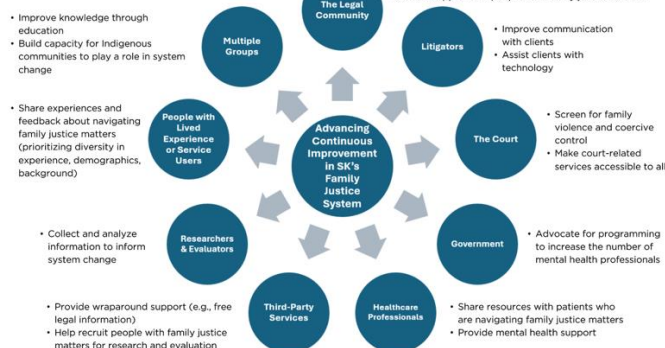
- **Data collection and measurement:** Resource intensive data collection
- **Participation in data collection:** Difficulty tracking those who give up or do not enter the family justice system
- **Systemic:** Inefficiencies due to disconnected systems

Example Helping Factors



- **Data collection and measurement:** Development of meaningful indicators
- **Participation in data collection:** Trust building with communities
- **Systemic:** Collaboration within the legal profession, and outside of it

10



11

QUESTIONS AND REFLECTIONS?

Appendix E – Session 3 Presentation Slides: Reimagining the Family Justice System: Strategy Mapping (Diana Lowe, KC & Justice Rod Jerke)

1	2
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Alberta family wellness initiative



<https://www.albertafamilywellness.org/>

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Moving from an adversarial approach to one that supports family resilience and well-being.

ACEs = ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

The three types of ACEs include:

ABUSE	NEGLECT	HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION	
Physical	Physical	Mental Illness	Parental Divorce
Emotional	Emotional	Mother treated violently	Substance Abuse
Sexual		Domestic Violence	

Possible Risk Outcomes:

BEHAVIOR				
Lack of physical activity	Smoking	Alcoholism	Drug use	Missed work
PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH				
Severe obesity	Diabetes	Depression	Suicide attempts	STDs
Heart disease	Cancer	Stroke	COPD	Broken bones

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Principle 3: Reducing sources of stress protects from the harmful buildup of toxic stress, which depletes the energy the brain needs for healthy development throughout one's life.

Principle 1: Supporting responsive relationships is a critical factor in building resilience across the lifespan.

Principle 2: Strengthening core life skills shifts the balance point, or fulcrum, of the scale.

POSITIVE OUTCOME

MORE RESILIENT vs **LESS RESILIENT**

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Support Responsive Relationships

Reduce Sources of Stress

Strengthen Core Life Skills

Children's Healthy Development & Educational Achievement

Adults' Responsive Coping & Economic Stability

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How have we interpreted the paradigm shift required in the family justice system?

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Causal Layered Analysis



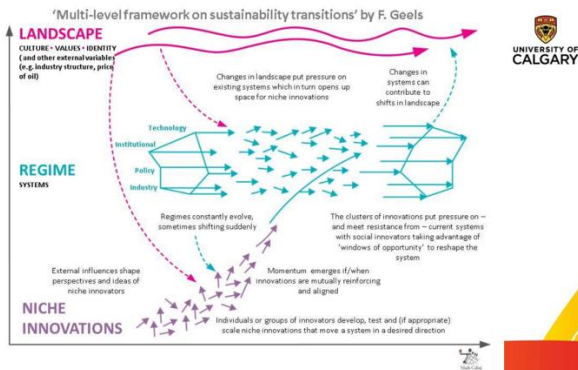
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Much of what we've said explains "why" we're undertaking the transformational change. The next question is "how" are we doing this?

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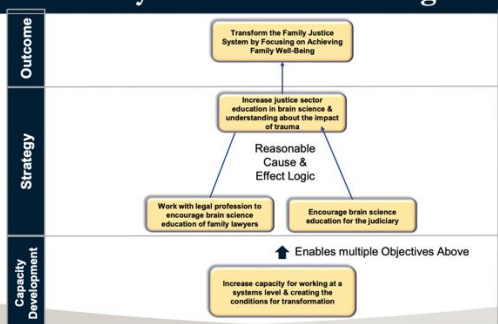


Why Strategy Mapping?

1. Articulates a common agenda for co-alignment
2. Visually represents strategy in a complex system
3. Provides a framework for shared measurement to inform strategy
4. Leads to more coordination and idea generation
5. Keeps track of mutually reinforcing activities
6. Encourages accountability

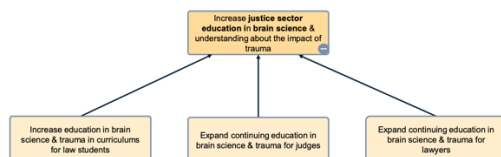
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A Story of Intentional Change



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Zooming In To More Detailed Objectives



Each of these would likely have different people involved, different measures, and different actions.

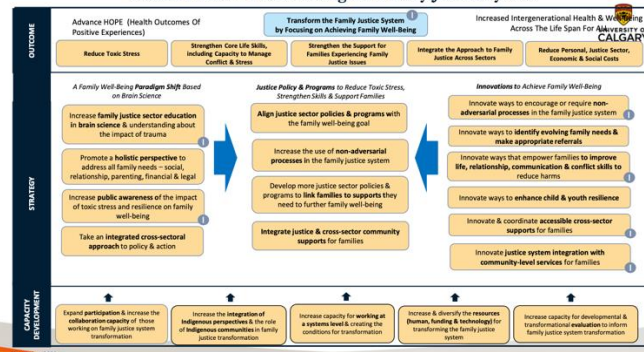
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Supported By A Scorecard As Another Way To Visualize The Data

Transform the Family Justice System						
Strategy Objectives						
Name	Current Value	Change	Target Value	Most Recent Period	Comments/Actions	
Increase justice sector education in brain science & understanding about the impact of trauma	8.1%	3	9.0%	2019		
% of Lawyers Brain Story Certified	91	2	100	Q3 2020		
# of judges completing brain science and trauma related continuing education curriculum	61	1	60	2020		
# of Continuing legal education programs emphasizing brain science	3	3	100	Q4 2020		
Increase education in brain science & trauma in curricula for law students	50	2	100	Q4 2020		
# of law school programs which include brain science and trauma as a required part of the curriculum						
# of law school programs which include brain science and trauma as an optional part of the curriculum						

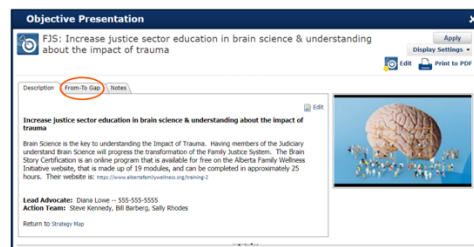
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Grande Prairie - Transforming the Family Justice System



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Details Are Stored For Each Objective



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What Changes are actually happening?

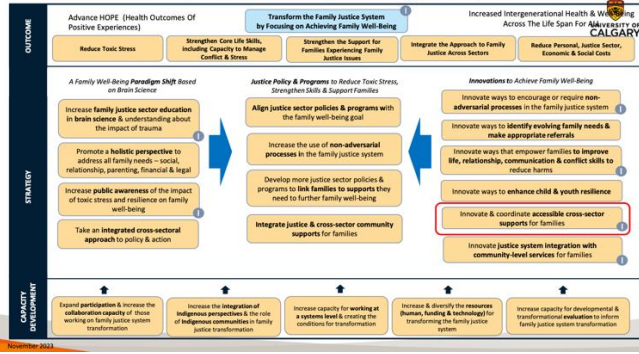


Since 2020, the RFJS has been working in the community of Grande Prairie – exploring new pathways in family matters through a community-wide initiative in the city and surrounding communities

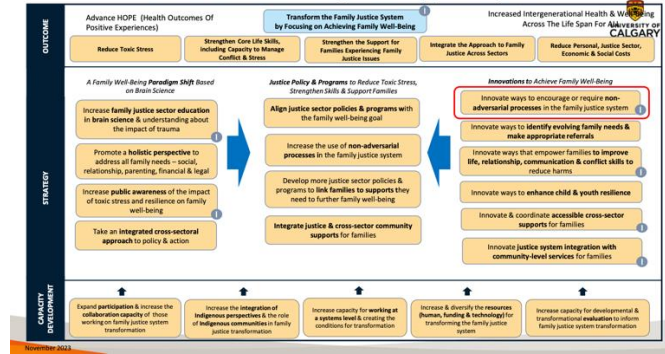
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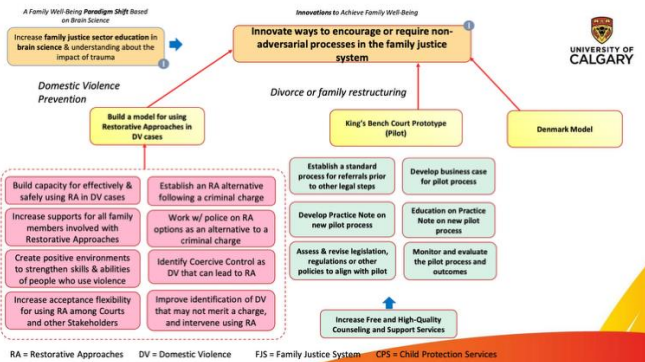
Grande Prairie - Reforming the Family Justice System



Grande Prairie - Reforming the Family Justice System



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26

The Court of King's Bench of Alberta has launched a new Pilot in Grande Prairie



- The Notice to the Profession & Public is available at: https://albertacourts.ca/docs/default-source/qb/npp-2024-10-04-grande-prairie-pilot-project.pdf?sfvrsn=3c10982_7
- The Commentary is available at: https://www.familyeducationsociety.org/files/ugd/03e805_8b2acd176e444bae8a0b6f999e87415.pdf

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Additional Resources, Podcasts, etc. on RFJS

29

Thoughts?

We welcome your comments, questions and opportunities!

Diana Lowe, KC
Email: diana.lowe@ucalgary.ca
Cell: 780-908-1473

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Thank you!



Appendix F – Session 4/5 Presentation Slides: Forecasting Exercise and Causal Layered Analysis (Jessica Spina & Michelle Jehn)

1 Exploring the Saskatchewan Family Justice System Michelle Jehn & Jessica Spina, Facilitators Saskatoon, Saskatchewan November 3-4, 2025	2 Session Overview
3 Understanding the future and foresight as an asset, a resource and narrative to be employed 2015 1864 REASONS FOR ADMISSION WEST VIRGINIA HOSPITAL FOR THE INSANE WESTVOND OCTOBER 22, 1864 TO DECEMBER 12, 1869 Grief Constitutional Autism Lycanthropic Tendency The War Sun stroke 1956 More Doctors Smoke Cigarettes THAN ANY OTHER OCCUPATION! 2015	4 Futures Triangle Explained Pull of the future - Desired/preferred vision, image of the future - Personal and collective Push of the present - towards the future Pressures, cultural changes, emerging trends Weight of the past - history and social structure - social hierarchies and order, maintenance and control 4 STRATHCONA COUNTY
5 Systems Thinking - Its essence is seeing inter-relationships rather than linear cause-and-effect chains, and in seeing processes of change rather than snapshots (Senge) - We live in webs of interdependence (Senge)	6 Future of the Family Justice System
7	8

Culture Eats Strategy for Breakfast



A Word on Complexity

*Out of intense complexities,
intense simplicities emerge.*

- Sir Winston Churchill

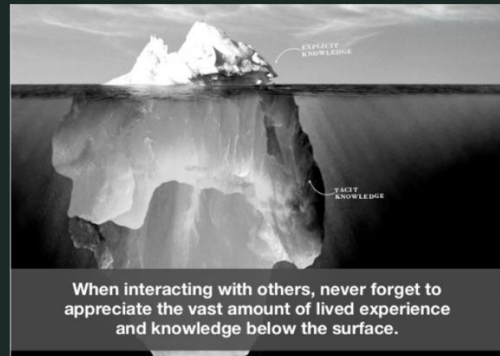
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Rules of Engagement



- Acknowledge the past, embrace the future.
- Challenge ideas, not individuals.
- Everyone has wisdom to share. Jump fences.
- Embrace the notion of "Yes, AND..."
- All will have opportunities to speak AND listen.
- Avoid the "usual suspects."

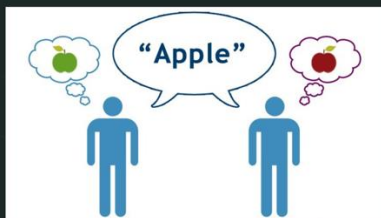
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When interacting with others, never forget to appreciate the vast amount of lived experience and knowledge below the surface.

11

Mental Models



12

Prototyping The Future State

- Pull of the future
- Desired/preferred vision, image of the future
- Personal and collective



13

Final Reflections

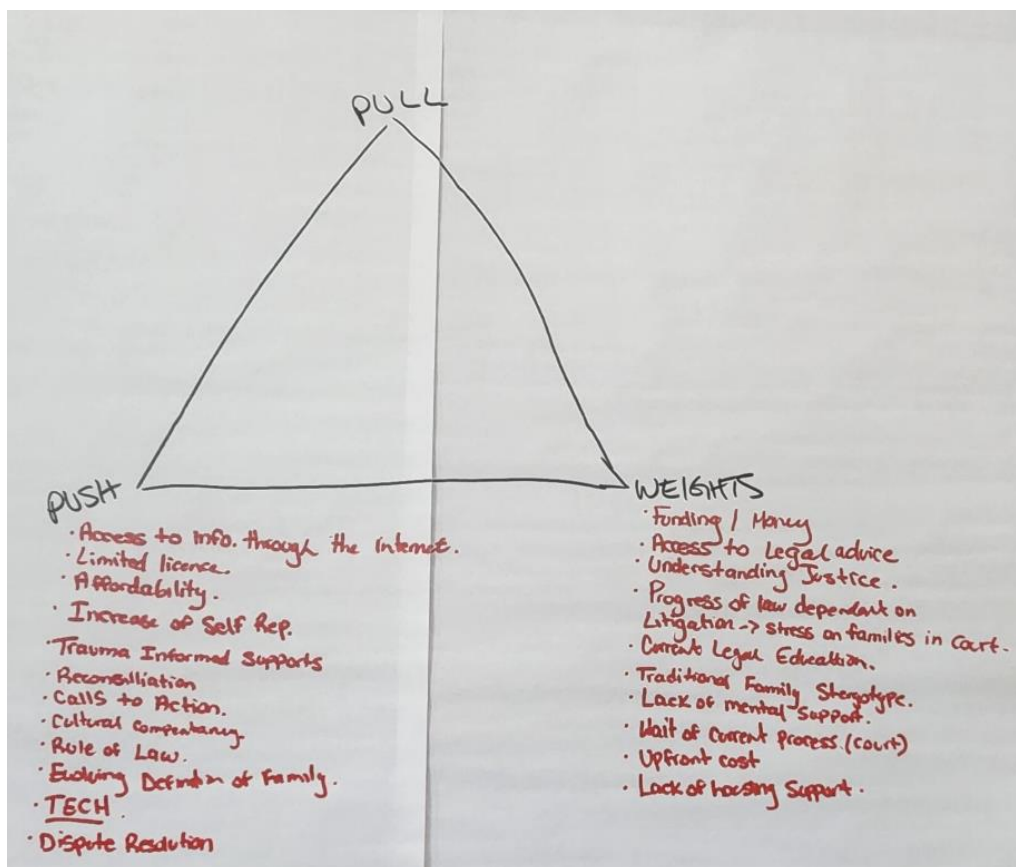
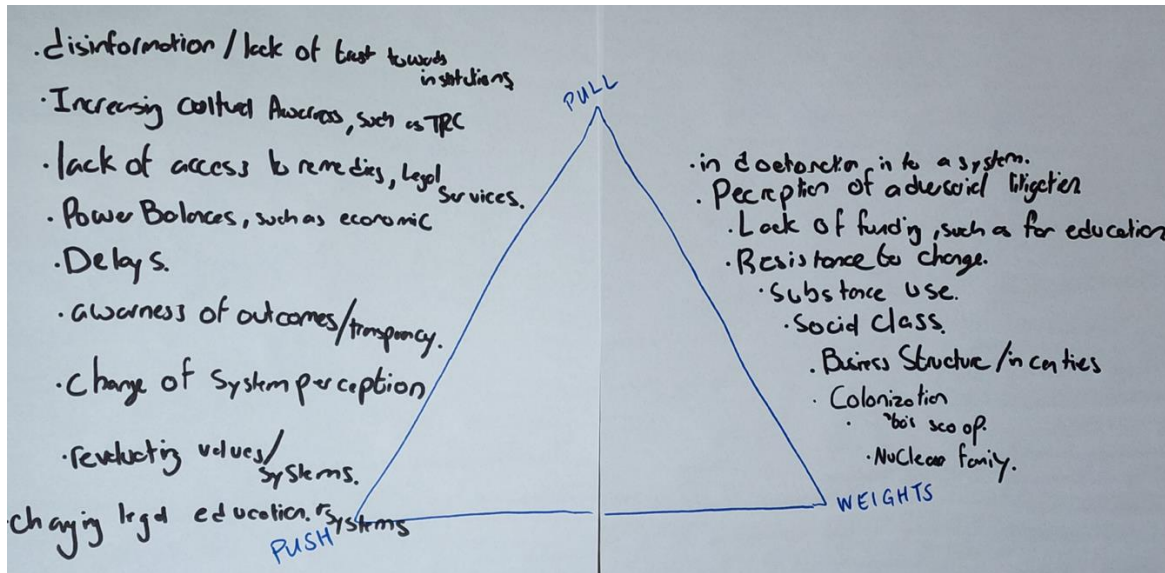


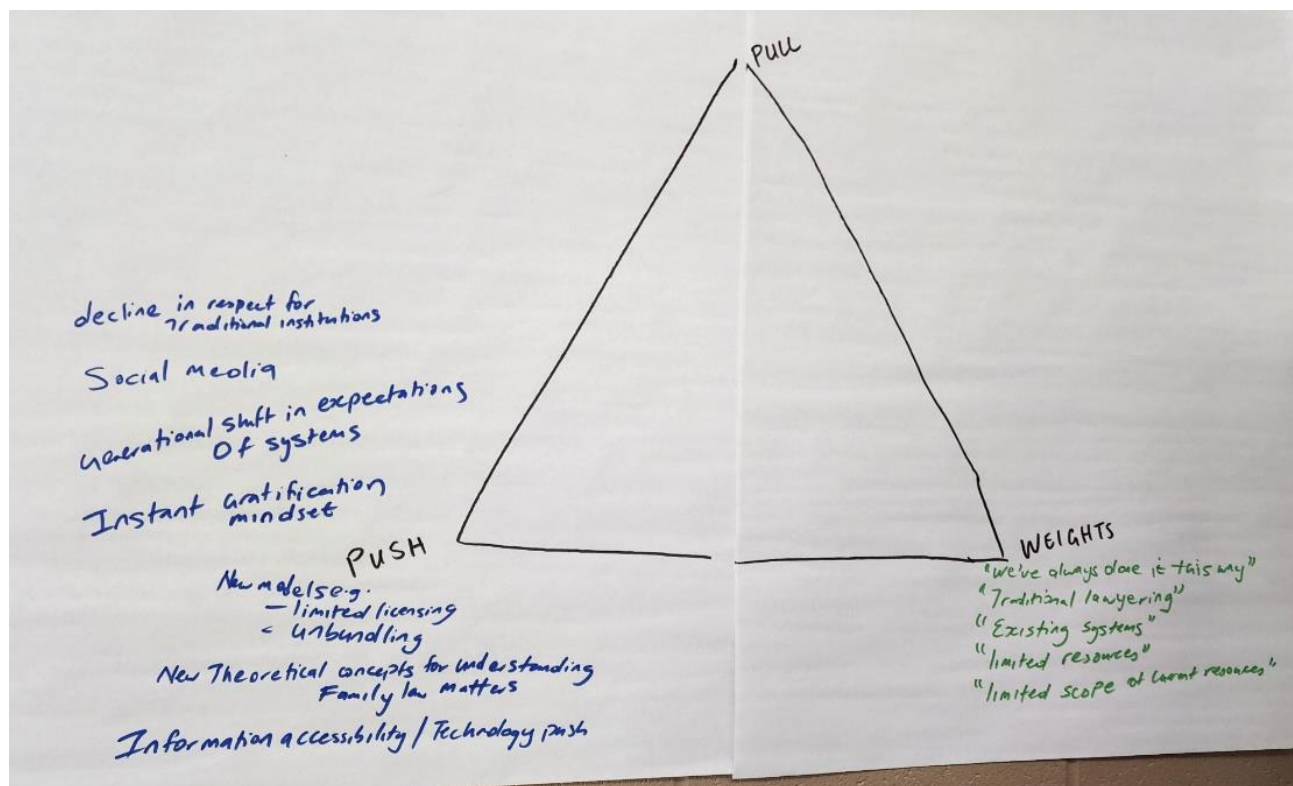
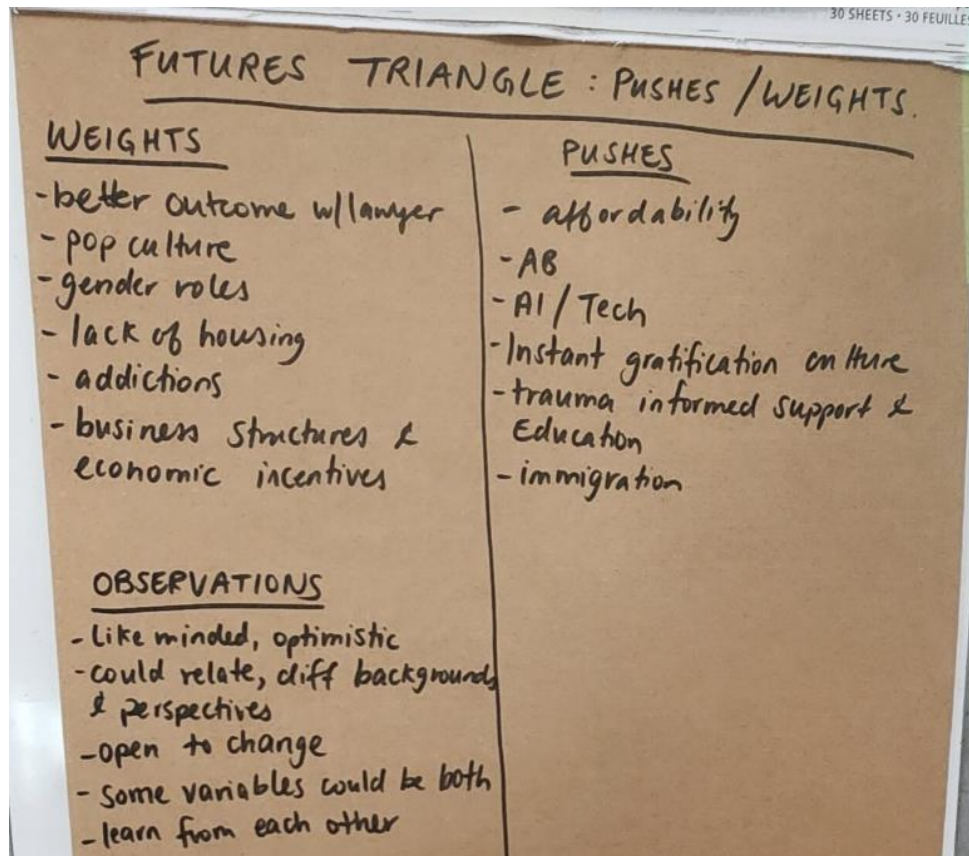
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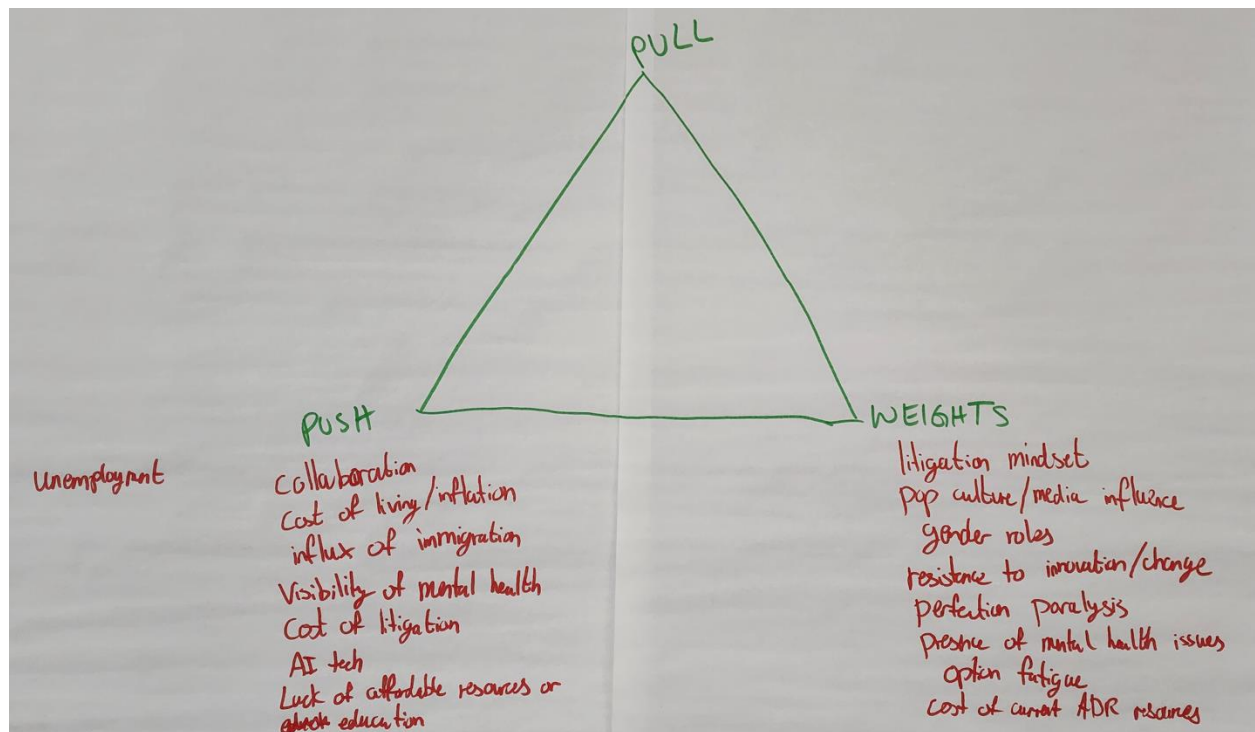
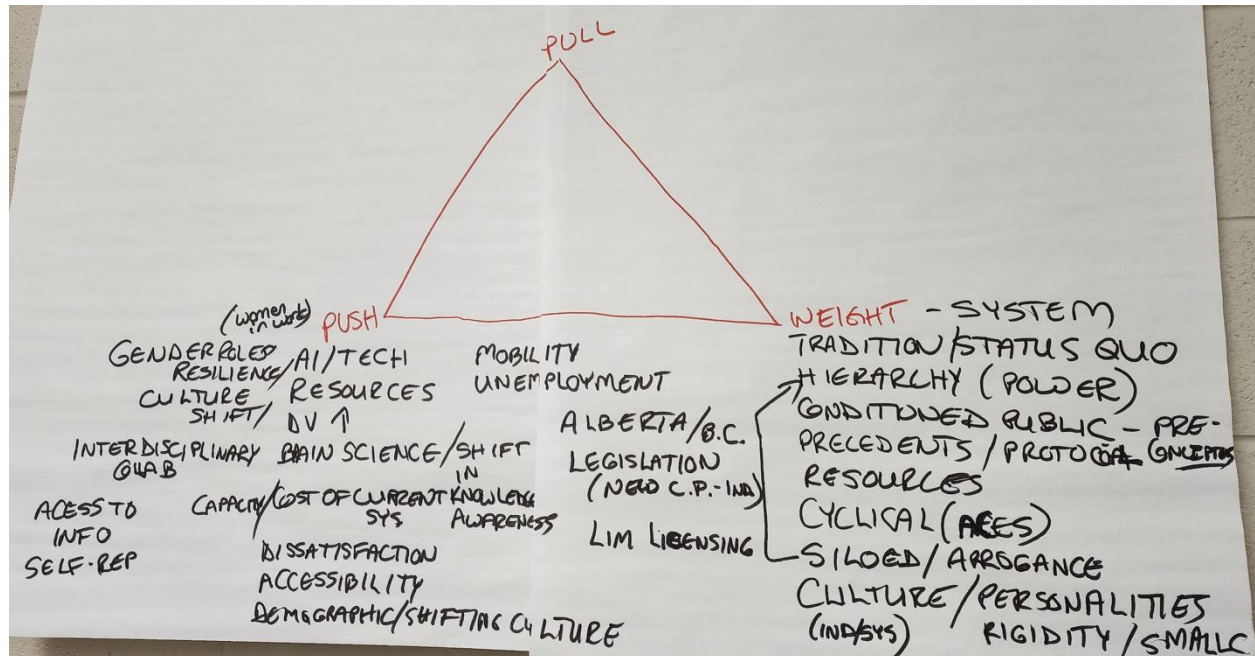
Thank you



Appendix G – Participant Futures Triangles







Appendix H – Family Justice Data Party Insights

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Access to Legal Services - Dispute Resolution - Systemic Justice

**UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN**

Ministry of Justice and Attorney General of SK: Less Adversarial and Litigious Approach in Family Law

Since the introduction of Mandatory Family Dispute Resolution strategies in 2022, there has been a **20-25% reduction** in the number of contested family law applications in Saskatchewan.

There was also a **substantial increase in the numbers of individuals relying on the Family law Information Centre**, an organization who family law self-help kits, videos, information, and service referrals to assist those who cannot afford to hire a lawyer or choose to represent themselves in Family Court.



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Ministry of Justice and Attorney General of SK

FAMILY PROGRAM STATISTICS FOR DATA PARTY

CHILD SUPPORT SERVICE STATISTICS

Fiscal Year	Recalculation Decisions	Calculation Decisions
2025-2026 (April 1 – Sep 30 2025)	87	97
2024-2025	119	144
2023-2024	137	3 (Sep 15/23 - Mar 31/24)
2022-2023	124	
2021-2022	77	
2020-2021	75	
2019-2020	109	
2018-2019	32	
	760	244
Total Decisions = 1,004		

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Saskatchewan Families, Households and Marital Status: 2021 Census of Canada

Table 4:
Distribution of population 15 and over by marital status for Saskatchewan and Canada

	Saskatchewan		Canada	
	Count	%	Count	%
Total population aged 15 years and over	909,390	100.0%	30,979,190	100.0%
Married or living with a common-law partner	526,835	57.9%	17,626,005	56.9%
Married (and not separated)	440,040	48.4%	13,725,630	44.3%
Living common-law	86,795	9.5%	3,900,375	12.6%
Not married and not living with a common-law partner	382,560	42.1%	13,353,185	43.1%
Single (never legally married)	258,905	28.5%	9,025,870	29.1%
Separated	20,685	2.3%	741,135	2.4%
Divorced	50,635	5.6%	1,921,880	6.2%
Widowed	52,330	5.8%	1,664,295	5.4%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Canada



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Ministry of Justice and Attorney General of SK

EARLY FAMILY RESOLUTION STATISTICS

Certificates Received by the Early Family Resolution Office by year:

Dates:	Amounts:
2020-21	21
2021-22	96
2022-23	282
2023-24	419
2024-25	702
2025-26*	393
TOTAL	1913

*Partial year statistic

77% (1,480 certificates) have been issued for participation in family mediation.

22% (430 certificates) have been issued for Calculation Services

1% (3 certificates) have been issued for other services: Parenting Coordination/Collaborative Law.

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FAMILY LAW INFORMATION CENTER STATISTICS

2024-2025 FLIC STATISTICS	NUMBER
Calls to the FLIC	4,568
Emails sent from FLIC providing information and resources	12,296
Total self-help kits provided (regular mail & email)	3,684
Most frequently distributed kits include: Divorce, Agreement, ISO, Pleadings, Chambers motions, and Pre-trial.	
People attending in-person walk-in family law information sessions	847
External page-views to sask.ca/divorce/separation-represent-yourself	14,932
Active users of sask.ca/divorce/separation-represent-yourself	7,712



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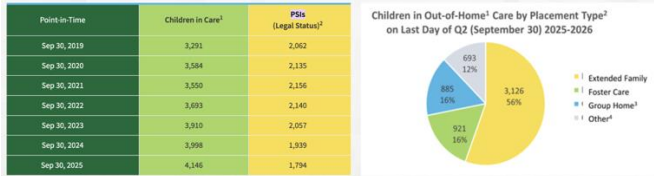
**UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN**

Ministry of Justice and Attorney General of SK

FAMILY LAW SCREENING OFFICER STATISTICS

Fiscal Year (Saskatoon & Regina)	JCC's Held	Intake Assessments	Citizens Assisted with Family Law Issues (counter, phone calls and emails)
2025-2026 (April 1 - Sep 30 2025)	531	53	1,567
2024-2025	1064	111	2,437
2023-2024	1182	149	2,021
Aug 1 2022 – Mar 31 2023		15	422
Nov 1 2022 - Mar 31 2023	352		
	3,129	328	6,447

Child Welfare Statistics: Saskatchewan



The Intersection of Child Protection and Family Law Systems in Cases of Domestic Violence

Saskatchewan has one of the highest rates of children in care in Canada.

Of the children in care, more than 80% are Indigenous.

As of 2019, Saskatchewan has the highest rate of police-reported family and intimate partner violence of all provinces.



Introduction: Domestic Violence and Access to Justice within the Family Law and Intersecting Legal System

While estimates vary, a substantial number of those seeking legal advice or engaging in family law dispute resolution processes have experienced, or are experiencing, domestic violence.

It is well-established that violence often escalates post-separation, and separation is the most dangerous time for women and children.



211 Saskatchewan 2023 Annual Report



Parent Central connects families, and those who support them, to supports and programs across the province



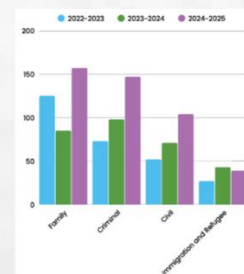
PLEA Annual Report 2024

The Public Legal Education Association of Saskatchewan (PLEA) had **1,833** Individual Requests for Legal Information.



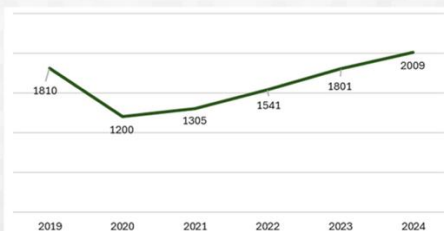
CLASSIC Annual Report 2024-2025

In 2024-2025, most individuals sought free summary legal advice in the area of **Family law**.



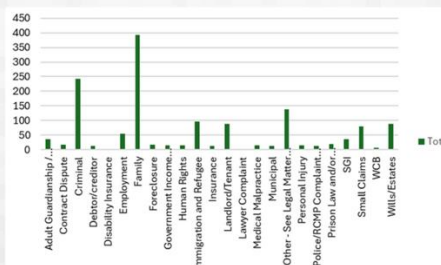
Pro Bono Law Annual Report 2024

In 2024, **2,009** clients attended appointments through the Free Legal Clinic Program.



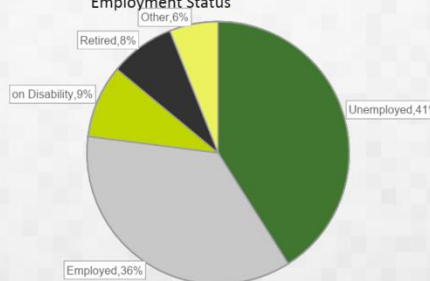
Pro Bono Annual Report 2024

Most clients sought assistance for **Family law** matters

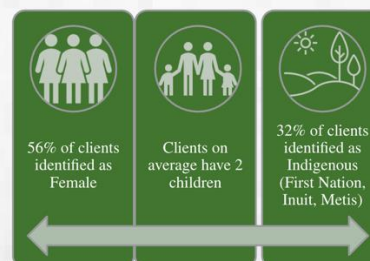


Pro Bono Law Annual Report 2024

Breakdown of Pro Bono Law Client
Employment Status



Pro Bono Annual Report 2024



Stats Canada



Stats Canada

45% of teens reported experiencing some form of dating violence.

45% of Canadians will experience at least one serious civil or family justice problem in any 3-year period.

58% of family law cases in Canada involved at least one self-represented litigant in 2019-2020.



Saskatchewan Families, Households and Marital Status: 2021 Census of Canada

Table 1:
Distribution of households by household type for Saskatchewan and Canada

Household type	Saskatchewan		Canada	
	Count	%	Count	%
Total private households	449,580	100.0%	14,978,940	100.0%
Couples with children at home	113,990	25.4%	3,789,795	25.3%
Couples without children at home	122,800	27.3%	3,837,395	25.6%
One-parent family	38,725	8.6%	1,305,500	8.7%
One person	130,105	28.9%	4,396,010	29.3%
Multiple-family	25,040	5.6%	986,395	6.6%
Other*	18,915	4.2%	663,830	4.4%

* Two-or-more person non-census family households
Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Canada



Law Society of Saskatchewan: Directory

Family law practice: 226 members

Location	Seniority
Family law (Regina): 66	0-5 years: 66
Family law (Saskatoon): 89	6-10 years: 42
Family law (Prince Albert): 13	11-20 years: 46
Family law (Rest of province): 58	20+ years: 72

Family + Collaborative law: 50 members
Family + Legal Coaching: 52 members
Family + Limited Scope Retainers: 77 members
Family + Mediation: 63 members
Family + Negotiation: 108 members
Family + Virtual Appointments: 107 members
Family + Alternate fee payment/arrangements: 39 members
Family + Fixed or flat rate fees: 71 members



YWCA Annual Report 2024/2025

Crisis Shelter:

WE SERVED

471

WOMEN &
CHILDREN



4801

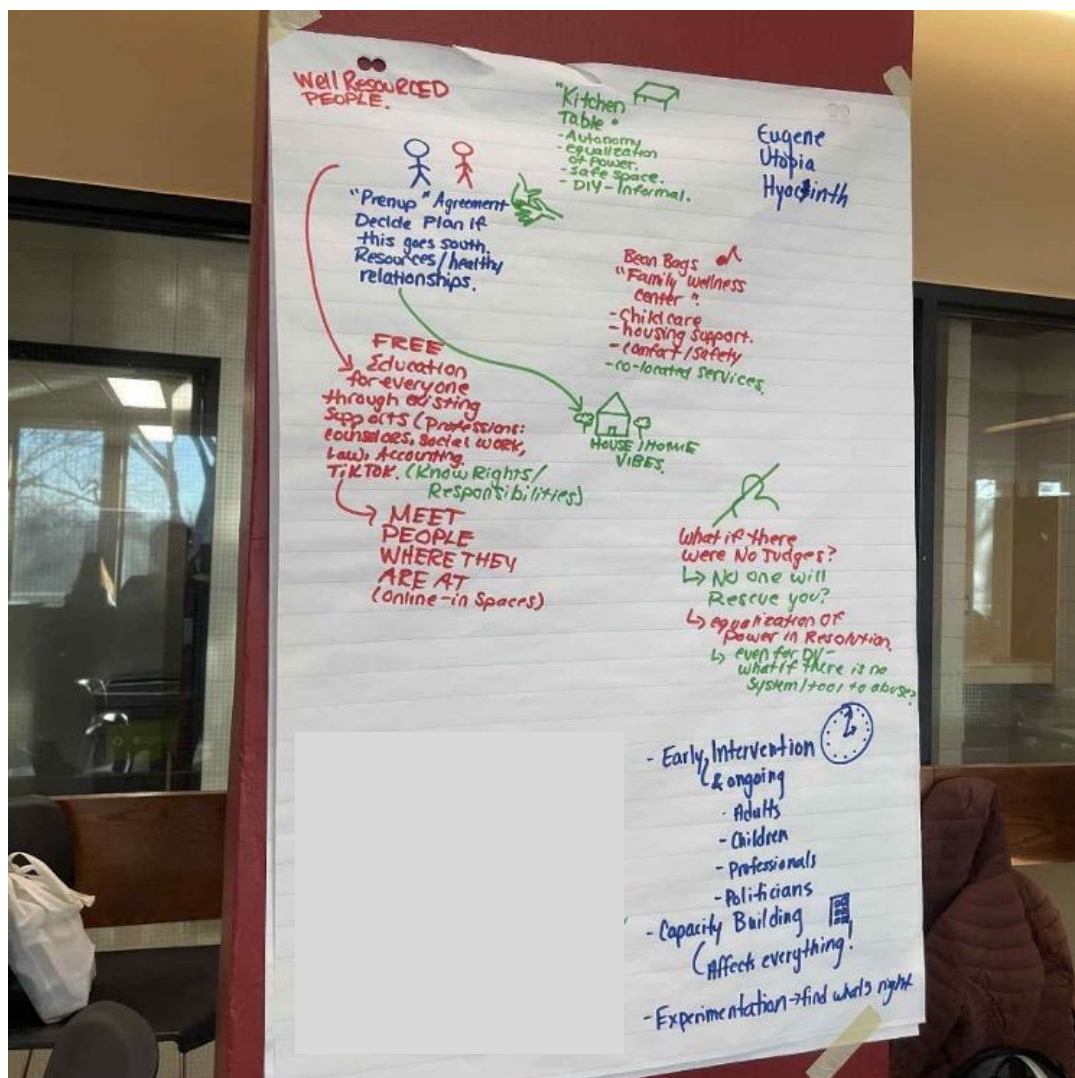
WOMEN & CHILDREN TURNED
AWAY DUE TO LACK OF SPACE

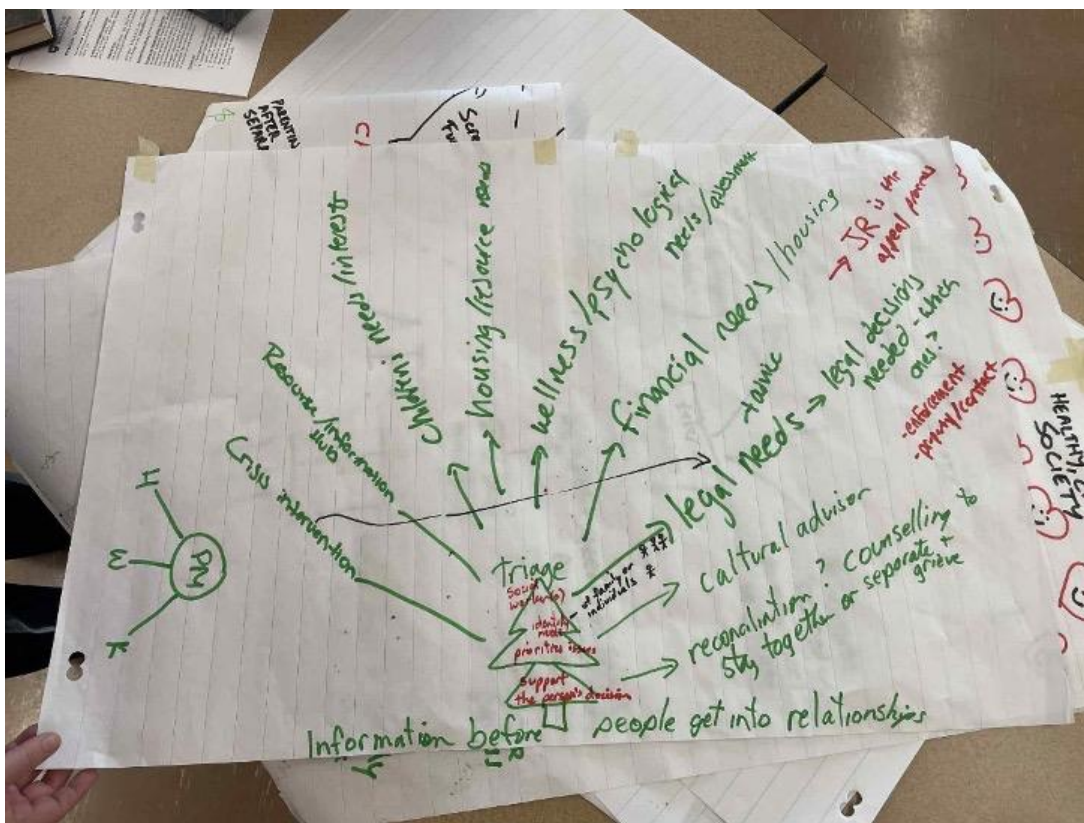
Child Development Centre:

OPERATING AT CAPACITY, **62** SPACES
ARE ALWAYS FILLED WITH MORE THAN
500 FAMILIES ON THE WAITLIST.



Appendix I – Prototyping the Future: Group Outputs





Appendix J – Participant Reflection Form

Workshop Reflections Form

Name (optional): _____

A) Reflections on content...

 2 Stars... Topics/concepts you see promise in, are excited about, would like to explore more...	 1 Wish... Barriers, outcomes you think are unlikely, any impossibilities, anything you think should be "parked"...
★ _____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
★ _____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

B) Reflections on tools/processes...

1. What did you find most interesting and/or useful during the two days?

2. Are any of the tools/processes or something you learned helpful to take back to your organization?

3. How might the tools/processes we engaged with during the workshop be helpful moving forward collectively?

C) Reflections on moving forward on "Advancing Continuous Improvements in Family Justice" ...

1. My proposed next steps are...

2. I'd like to be involved in next steps in the following ways...