



# ***“Nothing about Us, Without Us”***

Métis Child, Youth & Family Services Project: Summary Report

*Visioning Sessions*  
(February & March 2021)



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This report was created to reflect Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) citizen feedback as captured at the February and March 2021, Métis Child, Youth & Family Services Project, *Visioning* engagement sessions. 109 citizen voices are reflected herein. Many people contributed to the success of these sessions and the associated summary report presented herein. The MNO acknowledges:

- All Métis children, youth and families directly or indirectly impacted by child welfare system related processes;
- The diverse, 109 Métis Nation of Ontario Citizens that participated in these sessions;
- Métis Nation of Ontario Senators, Gwen Lindsay and Joseph Poitras who offered insightful and inspiring open / closing prayers at each of the sessions;
- The Project Advisory Group (PAG) members and invited guests for their continued time, effort, feedback and contribution to the Project process and development of knowledge translation materials;
- Raincoast Ventures staff who supported each session with comprehensive notes;
- The Ministry of Community, Children and Social Services (MCCSS) who provides funding and other support for this Project;
- MNO leadership and senior staff who have offered continued guidance and support; and,
- The Project Team.

When planning for or informing system(s) change that impact Métis children, youth, families and communities, it is important to employ an inclusive and Métis specific approach; as eloquently phrased by a citizen at these sessions: ***“nothing about us without us.”***

This report will inform future information and engagement sessions as related to the Project; although, there will be continued opportunities for other citizens (who may have missed the first sessions) to contribute to upcoming phases of this Project.



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**ACRONYMS**

Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario	ANCFSAO
Child & Family Services Act	CFSA
Child, Youth & Family Services Act	CYFSA
Children’s Aid Societies	CAS
Indigenous Child Wellbeing Agencies	ICWA
Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous	MIUI
Métis Nation of Ontario	MNO
Ministry of Children, Community & Social Services	MCCSS
Ontario Association of Children’s Aid Societies	OACAS
Ontario Indigenous Child & Youth Strategy	OICYS
Provisional Council of the Métis Nation of Ontario	PCMNO
Project Advisory Group	PAG



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## **BACKGROUND**

While the MNO, Métis Child, Youth and Family Services Project only recently launched; MNO has actively advocated for system(s) change as related to negative child welfare processes that have historically, and today, impacted Métis communities province wide. Through the Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous (MIUI) Technical Table hosted by the Ministry of Community, Children and Social Services (MCCSS), the MNO’s advocacy in system(s) change in this area dates back to 2014.

### **The Ontario Indigenous Child & Youth Strategy (OICYS)**

Alongside the Ontario Native Women’s Association (ONWA), the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) and Tungasuvvingat Inuit (TI), MNO collaborates with MCCSS at the MIUI Technical Table to co-develop multiple recommendations that have led to the creation of foundational strategies, policy directives, guidelines, legislation and regulatory changes with the objective of improved Métis wellbeing and preventative service provision.

One notable achievement attributed to MNO’s co-development at the MIUI Technical Table is the Ontario Indigenous Child & Youth Strategy (OICYS). The OICYS is one mechanism to promote wholistic, culturally-based and community driven approaches to Métis child and youth service provision. The five pillars are:

- Métis, First Nations, Inuit and Urban Indigenous Control;
- Prevention, Culture and Opportunities;
- Coordinated and Responsive Circle of Care;
- Monitoring, Evaluation and Shared Accountability; and,
- Transformed Relationships and Collaborative Wholistic Action.

### **New Legislation: Child, Youth & Family Services Act (CYFSA)**

Another notable achievement is the shift from the former Child & Family Services Act (CFSA) to the 2017, Child, Youth & Family Services Act (CYFSA). The CYFSA acknowledges Métis rights and Métis communities as distinct Indigenous communities; whereas, the CFSA only acknowledged First Nations and First Nation Bands.

Regulations in the CYFSA provide opportunity for Métis communities to have significantly more control over care and decision making that pertains to Métis children, youth and families in Ontario.

While the CYFSA is a progressive step in the right direction (and as compared to the former CFSA), it is not perfect. There are limitations in the CYFSA with respect to enforcement and accountability measures. The MNO continues to engage with MCCSS at the MIUI Technical Table to consider alternative Regulations and supporting policy directives that could better reflect the needs of Métis citizens and ensure accountability of key system actors including Children’s Aid Societies (CAS) and Indigenous Child Well Being Agencies (ICWA).



### Ontario’s Child Welfare Redesign Plan

It is in this environment and through these discussions that MNO has contributed to the push for systemic change as related to child welfare.

MCCSS recently announced the Province’s commitment to a shift in focus from protection to preventative services through the announcement of *Ontario’s Child Welfare Redesign Plan*. The plan is grounded in the important work that preceded it; for example, the OICYS.

The long-term vision of Ontario’s Redesign Plan is: “an Ontario where every child and youth has the supports they need to succeed and thrive.” The plan includes five pillars:

- Child, Youth, Family and Community Well-Being;
- Quality of Care;
- Strengthening Youth Supports;
- Improving Stability and Permanency; and,
- System Accountability and Sustainability.

While the MNO welcomes child welfare reform; the Province’s plan is only one step forward. MNO continues to advocate for Métis specific considerations and Métis specific solutions. To better reflect what redesign means for MNO citizens – a Métis specific approach must be employed.

MNO recently launched the Métis Child, Youth & Family Services Project (referred to hereafter as the *Project*), to assist Métis communities across Ontario in self-determining their preferred path forward with respect to child, youth and family wellbeing in their community.

*\*This Project and summary report is specific to MNO Regions 2-9 as Region 1 has started their process and completed various rounds of engagement sessions already.*

### **THE MNO MÉTIS CHILD, YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES PROJECT**

#### Project Description

The Project launched in December 2019 with the main objective of assisting Métis communities in Regions 2-9, determine their preferred path forward with respect to Métis child, youth and family service provision and wellbeing in Ontario.

The Project has two primary goals:

1. In the shorter term: to create greater clarity about the role of MNO in child welfare cases and, where necessary, to establish more formalized relationships with Children’s Aid Societies (CAS) and Indigenous Child Wellbeing Agencies (ICWA) agencies to better serve Métis children, youth and families.



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2. In the longer term: to build system(s) that are conducive to Métis specific child, youth and family needs. System design may differ in each MNO Region; as the regional and community needs may differ.

### *The Project Team*

The Project Team includes the following people:

- Alisha Kaba (MNO, Acting Manager, Métis Child, Youth and Family Services Project);
- Ian Brunskill (project consultant); and,
- Mary Ballantyne (project consultant).

MNO Chief Operating Officer, Joanne Meyer and MNO Associate Director of Healing and Wellness, Shelley Gonneville also offer support and oversight to this project that was presented to and approved by the Provincial Council of the MNO (PCMNO).

### *The Project Advisory Group (PAG)*

The Project Advisory Group (PAG) meets with the Project Team to provide feedback about Project planning, activities and knowledge translation materials. The PAG members applied for this role through the submission of an expression of interest. PAG members include:

- Senator Colleen Brunelle;
- Maryjane Bottenham;
- Amanda Desbiens;
- Liliane Ethier;
- Senator Gwen Lindsay;
- Jordyn Playne (PCMNO, Youth Representative);
- Janna Rose;
- Hank Rowlinson (PCMNO, Chair); and,
- Laura Verdin.

The Project Team has also invited Regional Councilor, Theresa Stenlund to PAG meetings to provide advice as per her expertise and interest in this area. She has contributed feedback alongside the PAG members noted above.

### *Project Activities*

The Project activities that have been completed to date are grouped under 5 key areas:

1. Project planning and research;
2. Relationship building;
3. Community engagement;
4. Knowledge translation; and,



## 5. Staff Recruitment.

### Project planning and research

- PAG meetings were held to share ideas, hear feedback about the proposed project plans and activities;
- The Project Team completed environmental scans and legislative reviews to inform Project activities;
- Key informant interviews were conducted;
- Focus group discussions were held with MNO Healing & Wellness branch staff; and,
- Programs / services expansion research was conducted and will be ongoing.

### Relationship building

MNO has hosted information sessions for CAS and ICWA to raise awareness about the MNO, Healing & Wellness branch programs and services and expectations that MNO has with respect to the sharing of confidential client information and CAS / ICWA obligations to refer clients to the MNO for support. The following sessions have been hosted since May 2020:

- Meet and greet;
- Métis 101: MNO history and governance structure;
- Métis Way of Life;
- Healing & Wellness programs and services;
- Healing & Wellness programs and services (mental health and addictions and justice specific); and,
- MNO processes as related to legal notifications shared by CAS (these notices pertain to Métis children in the care of a CAS) and other expectations.

### Community engagement

- December 2019: initial scoping session (at MNO’s annual cultural gathering in Muskoka);
- February – March 2021: Visioning sessions (hosted virtually via zoom); and,
- June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> 2021: Project Summary and Update information sessions (to be hosted virtually via zoom).

### Summary reports and other resources

- Summary report of December 2019 session: *Report from the MNO Child, Youth and Family Services Session (this report is posted on the MNO website);*
- Background resources: videos and written documents about the child welfare system and CYFSA legislation that were shared with citizens that participated in the February and March 2021 engagement sessions. *These resources can be accessed at:*





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<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1JZdwRRQaphdALdTAqDo8nSvYsocUUDtf?usp=sharing>.

- This summary report of February and March 2021 sessions: *Nothing About Us Without Us*.

### Staff recruitment

Research and engagement reveal opportunities to onboard staff at MNO to address identified gaps with respect to Métis child, youth and family wellbeing and service provision.

In February 2021 MNO hired a *Métis Foster Home Recruiter*. The purpose of this role is to address an identified gap: the lack of Métis specific foster homes for Métis children who are apprehended from their homes.

Through this recruiter, the MNO aims to meet the following objectives:

- Create a strategy to implement a Métis foster / alternative care recruitment campaign;
- Raise awareness about the need for Métis specific homes in Ontario; and,
- Synthesize information from a wide range of sources about the process to become a foster / alternative caregiver, including information specific to eligibility requirements, in an effort to encourage more Métis applicants to address the identified gap.

**This province wide campaign will be rolled out during the *National Foster Awareness Month* in in October 2021. MNO will be advertising the session dates in the coming weeks.**

Foster care is still a last resort; however, the MNO is aware that Métis children are being apprehended from their homes and that there is a need to ensure Métis homes are available to support cultural continuity and connectedness where possible.

*\*It should be noted that, currently, MNO is a conduit to recruiting foster homes; **licensing and eligibility requirements are still subject to oversight by CAS and ICWA**. As it is CAS and ICWA that are authorized to license and / or qualify potential Métis caregivers; the MNO recruiter will be working with these agencies to raise awareness and disseminate accessible and important information relevant to Métis citizens who are interested in fostering.*

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: VISIONING SESSIONS (February – March 2021)**

#### Purpose

The MNO Métis Child, Youth & Family Services Project Team hosted virtual engagement sessions for citizens in Regions 2-9 in February and March 2021. The purpose of these sessions was for citizens to inform the creation of a Vision of wellbeing for Métis children, youth, families and communities across Ontario.

Citizens were asked to consider the challenges their communities face as they interact with the current child welfare system. In addition, they were asked about the types of supports that



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could prevent negative outcomes for Métis children, youth and families as related to child welfare. They were asked to engage with the questions with the aim of informing a new or reimagined system, to meet their unique needs. The following questions were used to guide the discussion:

- *What is important to you when raising children?*
  - *Please describe the supports and services that are needed to meet your family needs.*
  - *What would you want for you, your children and / or family if you run into problems?*
- *If for some reason, a child in your community cannot be cared for by their parent or current caregiver, who would you want to care for them?*
- *We have heard that being connected to Métis culture is important to children and youth. Please talk about what this means for you, your children, family and community.*
- *What lessons from your knowledge and / or experience of child welfare should inform the vision?*

### **Format of the sessions**

17 separate, 1.5 hour sessions were hosted virtually, via zoom videoconferencing, for each of the Regions (2-9). MNO Senators joined these sessions to offer opening and closing prayers. The sessions were chaired by the Métis Child, Youth & Family Services Project Team.

Each session was formatted in the following way:

- Opening prayer;
- Métis Child, Youth & Family Services Project, Overview;
- Objective of the session: *Visioning*;
- Breakout sessions; and,
- Group discussion.

### **Participation**

In total, 109 citizens participated in these sessions. The Project Team received great feedback from citizens who were enthusiastic about this topic and expressed interest in being included in future sessions.

### **METHODOLOGY: “WHAT WE HEARD”**

Raincoast Ventures attended the sessions and provided the Project Team with detailed notes that were then used to create this report.

The Project Team reviewed these notes and the feedback received from the PAG to draft this report the Vision and supporting principles, to best reflect the ideas of citizens who participated in the engagement sessions. The process included the following:

- Categorizing: 80+ pages of notes detailing 769 distinct comments made at the 17 sessions were reviewed and categorized;



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- Synthesizing: key themes were identified and the comments were grouped into a 27 page summary;
- Summarizing: this was an iterative process – the themes that related to the development of a Vision were further summarized and compiled into a 3 page thematic summary; (themes that related to implementation or system(s) design have been recorded for the next phase of the project); and,
- Finalizing a citizen informed Vision.

The key themes that were identified and informed the development of the Vision and supporting principles follow.

### **KEY THEMES**

#### *Cultural Connectedness*

Participants discussed the importance of Métis cultural connectedness, diversity within Métis culture and the loss of culture as attributed to colonialism and intergenerational trauma. They discussed Métis culture as a way of life and emphasized the importance of family to Métis identity. They spoke about the connection and access to land (for land-based activities) and language preservation or revitalization. They also advocated for connection and access to Senators and / or knowledge holders and the need for more consistent (and all-age encompassing) cultural activities / events.

Participants emphasized the importance of raising awareness about Métis history and culture for those outside of Métis communities as well; more specifically; among the child welfare and school systems.

#### *Decision-Making Authority*

Participants expressed the importance of Métis families, the MNO and / or Métis communities having decision making authority about the care and placement of Métis children (like First Nations currently have now); to ensure that children remain in their family or community where possible. They discussed the importance of having a say in case planning decisions, dispute resolution and customary care arrangements. They also discussed the need to create region and / or community specific solutions as necessary.

#### *Continuum of Care for Métis Children and Youth*

The priorities that were discussed reflect the need for a continuum of care or a wrap around approach with respect to service provision to ensure a stable, safe and loving environment for Métis children and youth. For example, participants emphasized the need for the following:

- Individualized approaches to case planning for children and youth;
- Supports for family and / or kin so that children remain at home where possible;



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- Where non-Métis foster homes are used, trauma-informed and culturally relevant training should be mandatory;
- Connection to family should be maintained: children should always have access to Métis communities and cultural supports (with transportation and other accessibility barriers addressed);
- Supports should be available for youth aging out of care (housing, employment, education, life and reintegration supports); and,
- Family reunification should be the ultimate goal (ensure the family accesses the right tools to achieve this).

### Services and Supports for Families

In addition to some of the supports and services already discussed above, participants noted other family specific supports / services. For example:

- Supports to meet basic needs: financial security, food, housing, clothing and transportation. Participants noted MNO’s COVID supports and discussed how helpful these have been;
- Day / child care and recreation: having access to affordable, high quality day / child care and affordable sporting and other recreational opportunities;
- Education and parenting support for parents;
- Specialized and targeted services and treatment centres for mental health and addictions specific needs and services for those with learning or physical disabilities;
- Supports for 2SLGBTQ+ children and youth; and,
- Timely and easy access to these supports and services.

### Access to Information and Navigating Systems

Participants also discussed the need for improved access to information and systems navigation, for example:

- To navigate child welfare and education systems and associated supports (they discussed the need for rights and other advocates); and,
- Better access to MNO supports and services through improved communication (where MNO programs and services were accessed, they were highly revered).

*\*The full thematic summary that informed this report is attached for reference: Appendix A: Thematic Summary.*

### **SUMMARY**

Overall, the elements that participants throughout Regions 2-9 considered important to include in a *Vision* were similar. Emphasis was placed in the following areas:



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- Family, community and cultural connectedness;
- Raising awareness about Métis culture (for Métis and non-Métis communities);
- Respecting diversity of cultural practice and expression;
- Autonomy over decision making related to the care / placement of Métis children;
- Age inclusive and consistent cultural activities / programming (and improved access to space and land to do so);
- Equitable access to supports / services to meet basic needs as well as targeted supports / services (for example 2SLGBTQ+ specific supports, supports for mental health and addictions services);
- Employing a rights based approach to service provision;
- Child welfare system specific supports: for those aging out of care, to prevent recidivism (intersections with justice system);
- Increasing opportunities for customary care and cultural continuity: programs and supports for informal kin caregivers; and,
- MNO specific: improved communication processes, advocacy to raise awareness / increase uptake of MNO programs / supports and funding considerations for Council and other supports.

The Project Team developed the vision as informed by what was heard at each of the sessions as summarized above.

### **THE VISION AND SUPPORTING PRINCIPLES**

Citizens were asked to inform the creation of a Vision of wellbeing for Métis children, youth, families and communities across Ontario, while considering the challenges their communities faced as they interact with the current child welfare system. Participants were asked to engage with questions with the aim of informing a new, or reimagined system, to meet their unique needs.

*\*Please note, in keeping true to “what we heard” at the sessions, the Vision and Supporting Principles are specifically derived from (109) citizen voices that attended the February and March 2021 visioning sessions. As there is diversity within the Métis Nation of Ontario, citizens may have similar or differing views to those expressed by the 109 citizens that attended the last sessions. Ongoing sessions offer opportunity for other citizens to voice their needs and build processes that are conducive to their community needs.*

#### **Vision**

Métis children and youth across Ontario will grow up in a stable, safe and loving environment where their voices are heard and they are connected to their unique history, values, culture, languages, traditions and expressions of religious belief. Métis communities will exercise their



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inherent rights to make decisions about the care and placement of their children and Region and community-specific goals will guide solutions.

### Supporting Principles

The vision is supported by the following principles:

- **Métis communities have the right and responsibility to care for their children as they have done historically.** A Region and / or community specific approach is employed to ensure a tailored approach to decision making.
- **Métis families have inherent rights and responsibilities to care for their children. Métis families have decision-making power about the care / placement of their children including the ability to engage in traditional parenting practices.** Métis children and youth remain, where possible, with their immediate or extended family (including non-biological “aunties and uncles”) with adequate supports provided for them to do so.
- **Métis are a distinct people with a distinct culture and Métis culture is expressed differently across Ontario.** Traditional and spiritual connectivity play a vital role in the understanding of Métis people and culture. For some, it has been expressed that incorporating their First Nations heritage into their lives is also important. Variation among Métis individuals, families, communities and regions is honoured.
- **There is pride in Métis culture. Stigma, shame, loss of culture and identity that has resulted from colonization are addressed.** Cultural continuity is essential for children and youth even when their family / community are unable to care for them.
- **Métis families have equitable access to financial and other supports.** Their basic needs are met (including food, housing, clothing, transportation, and technology); they maintain Métis family connectedness and access supports and services necessary to build capacity to care for and nurture their children and youth.
- **Métis families can consistently access internal programming and services through the MNO and local councils.** As needed, there is collaboration with other organizations and agencies to wrap culturally relevant services around children, youth, and families.
- **Intergenerational trauma caused by the current child welfare system is addressed.** Those working within the system fully understand the impact of trauma on Métis children, youth, families, and communities, including the impacts of non-Métis and non-Indigenous foster / alternative care arrangements. Trauma informed approaches are utilized.



## **NEXT STEPS**

### **The Design Phase**

One of the reasons that this project was launched was to address child welfare system inefficiencies as related to impacts and outcomes for Métis communities in Ontario; as such, this phase of the Project aims to assist communities with system(s) design in reference to existing system issues; but also, provides opportunities for citizens to consider system(s) design with a prevention focused lens.

The Project team is currently in the planning stage of the design phase of the Project. The objective of the design phase is to assist communities with answering the following question: *how will each Region achieve this Vision?*

*\*The Vision is shared on pg. 12.*

The Project Team is using these report findings to inform their work on system(s) design.

They will be hosting community engagement sessions with drafted examples of how to achieve this Vision, including options and opportunities and best practices. The ideas that will be proposed will be used as examples of what could be implemented. Citizens will be encouraged to share their own ideas and / or provide feedback about how they envision these and / or other options working in their communities.

**Please stay tuned for further Project activities and engagement!**

For questions, comments or if interested in being notified for future engagement sessions please contact: [alishak@metisnation.org](mailto:alishak@metisnation.org).



**APPENDIX A: THEMATIC SUMMARY**

<b>THEMES AND SUB-THEMES</b>	<b>COMMENTS FROM COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS (FEBRUARY – MARCH 2021)</b>
<b>MÉTIS CULTURE</b>	
<i><b>Importance of Métis culture</b></i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Having pride in being Métis, and a sense of belonging in the Métis community is critical for the well being of children, youth, and families.</li> </ul>
<i><b>Loss of culture in families &amp; search to understand Métis culture</b></i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Many individuals did not grow up as Métis and are now seeking connections to the culture.</li> <li>•Many Métis children, youth and adults are not connected to their Métis culture and community, and many want to change this.</li> <li>•Need for intergenerational knowledge: connection / access to knowledge holders and / or Senators in the community to learn more about culture (and be involved in cultural activities).</li> </ul>
<i><b>Métis culture is a distinct culture</b></i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Cultural aspects of the Métis are immersive and are in every part of their life.</li> <li>•Culture can be invisible, yet absorbed by children through their family traditions.</li> <li>•Culture is a set of values and beliefs that live inside you.</li> <li>•It is important to understand that Métis are distinct, with our own culture, language, and economic governance.</li> <li>•Knowledge of traditional ways (e.g. plants that are helpful, community values) can be passed along from parents/community to children.</li> <li>•Some specified that identifying Métis culture as separate from First Nations culture is important.</li> </ul>
<i><b>Diversity within the Métis culture</b></i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•As Métis people become more urban, their needs must be considered.</li> <li>•Cultural values vary among families and communities.</li> <li>•Some specified that it is important to</li> </ul>





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<b><i>Diversity within the Métis culture</i></b>	<p>recognize the First Nation heritage of Métis people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•There is no “pan-Métis” culture; some specified that Pan-Indigenous, one-size-fits-all solutions can be just as harmful as non-Indigenous placements or services</li> </ul>
<b><i>Métis culture is a Way of Life (including the importance of family, the connection to land, respect and the Importance of language)</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Family is central to Métis identity; connection to family and extended family, including non-biological “aunties and uncles”.</li> <li>•It starts with adults passionately learning and modelling the Métis lifestyle to pass down to children and grandchildren.</li> <li>•Connection to Land is Important for Métis.</li> <li>•Some specified that hunting, fishing and trapping are vital components of Métis culture.</li> <li>•An important part of Métis culture is respect for all things: people, animals and environment.</li> <li>•Recognize the importance of language; the language has been lost over generations, and it is important to revitalize it as a cultural tie.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Opportunities to engage in Métis community cultural events/activities</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Children and youth really enjoy participating in culturally relevant activities (e.g. jigging, dance, sewing and beading, music, fiddling, cooking and sharing traditional foods, harvesting, seed sharing, growing traditionally valued plants, etc.).</li> <li>•Events help develop pride in Métis culture.</li> <li>•Support, contact and connections with family and friends occurs through community events.</li> <li>•There needs to be opportunities to connect to culture and community.</li> <li>•Virtually all want opportunities to engage in cultural awareness and culturally relevant activities.</li> <li>•Providing access to summer and winter camps and to cultural learning supplies (crafts, kits, books etc.) for adults and children.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Access to space and land</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•More community areas owned and controlled by the Métis community for the Métis community.</li> <li>•Natural spaces for the Métis to practice</li> </ul>



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<b><i>Access to space and land</i></b>	<p>hunting, harvesting and food preparation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•There needs to be a place where people can gather and take part in traditional practices and traditions.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Who/How is cultural teaching provided?</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Culture is taught through family, friends, community, councils, and cultural advisors.</li> <li>•Many specified suggestions for how teaching culture could be enhanced and made available across Ontario.</li> <li>•Many specified the need for cultural program to be offered more consistently across the province.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Other community organizations need to understand and reflect Métis culture</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Educate others in the broader community on what it means to be Métis, break down barriers and create a greater understanding of Métis culture and history. This is particularly important in the school system and in the CASs.</li> <li>•Encourage Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to learn more about Metis culture.</li> </ul>
<b>SERVICES AND SUPPORTS FOR FAMILIES</b>	
<b><i>Meeting basic needs</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Children, youth, and families must have their basic needs met as a top priority. This includes financial security, food, shelter, clothing and transportation.</li> <li>•In the current context, adequate technology should also be considered a basic need.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Day care/child care/recreation</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Having high quality and affordable day care and child care is important for children and parents.</li> <li>•Recreational opportunities for children and youth are important to give them a sense of purpose and provide a support to parents.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Support and education for parents</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Parents and caregivers need supports from family and community (mentorship, support from extended families, parenting programs) to assist them with caring for their children and youth.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Specialized services for children/youth/adults and families</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Specialized treatment services and centres (including mental health and addiction services, services for those learning and physical difficulties) are needed for children,</li> </ul>



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<b><i>Specialized services for children/youth/adults and families</i></b>	youth, adults and families. •These services and treatment centres need to be culturally appropriate and stigma free.
<b><i>Supports for 2SLGBTQ+ children and youth</i></b>	•There needs to be more services and information sources that are designed for and support the 2SLGBTQ community. •When teaching our culture, it is essential to emphasize that Two-Spirit people have historically held a place of respect and honour within our communities.
<b><i>Services need to be timely and easy to access</i></b>	•Services need to be easy to access, available on a timely basis and provided across Ontario. •Some specified concern about differential access to services based on citizenship status. •Some specified that Pan-Indigenous, one-size-fits-all solutions can be just as harmful as non-Indigenous placements.
<b>CONTINUUM OF CARE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH</b>	
<b><i>Stable, safe, loving environment</i></b>	•Children and youth deserve to grow up in a stable, safe and loving environment.
<b><i>Voice of the child/youth / individualized approach</i></b>	•During case planning, the wishes of a child or youth must be considered, and a child must feel secure to speak out when their needs are not being met. •Every child and family need an individualized approach and to tell their own story. •Youth should be more fully engaged both in individual case planning and in the design of the system.
<b><i>Support to immediate family so children can stay at home</i></b>	•If at all possible, children and youth should remain with their immediate family. •Supports should be brought in to enable this if they are needed and receiving these supports from family is usually best.
<b><i>Priorities when placing children in care</i></b>	•If a child does need to go into care, they should go to a place where the needs of the child can best be met. •If at all possible, children should go to extended family. •If placing a child with extended family is not possible, children should ideally be kept within



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<b><i>Priorities when placing children in care</i></b>	<p>the community - either with people who know them or in a Métis foster home.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•If a non-Metis foster home is required, the foster parents must uphold Métis culture and ensure children are able to participate in Métis cultural activities and have access to other cultural supports.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Adequate financial and other supports for caregivers</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Financial support for caregivers is critical but ensure funding goes to the children who are in care.</li> <li>•Family caregivers need equivalent financial and other support to what other caregivers receive.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Métis specific supports for children in care</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Métis children in care must have access to Métis communities and Métis cultural supports.</li> <li>•Trauma-informed and other culturally relevant training for non-Indigenous foster caregivers should be mandatory.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Supports for youth aging out of care</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Youth ageing out of care lack consistency; they need the same people around them as a support system, even if it is not family.</li> <li>•When children are released from the child welfare system, provide wrap-around services (e.g., employment, housing, life skills education) to prepare them to live independently.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Maintain child's connection to family</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Enable access by ensuring transportation is provided to families, and that time limits are not unnecessarily restrictive.</li> <li>•Métis children must remain connected to their families including siblings (e.g., visits, phone calls and video chats).</li> <li>•A rights-based approach maintaining ties between children and their families should be applied.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Plan with, and support, family to return children home</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Ensure the child’s family is given the tools and are supported to have the child return home to them.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Reduce stigma and shame</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Seeking help should be destigmatized; families who ask for help should feel supported, not punished, or judged.</li> <li>•The child welfare system should not instill</li> </ul>



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<b><i>Reduce stigma and shame</i></b>	fear and cause more trauma in families and children.
<b><i>Acknowledge intergenerational trauma</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Many Métis people grew up ashamed of being Indigenous.</li> <li>•Social workers should adopt a trauma-informed approach, with an awareness of how colonialism has affected multiple generations.</li> </ul>
<b>ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND NAVIGATING SYSTEMS</b>	
<b><i>Assistance to access information and navigate systems</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•People need information to know about available services and how to access them.</li> <li>•Sometimes they need information or assistance from an advocate to ensure their rights are upheld. This is particularly important when families are dealing with the school system and the child welfare system.</li> </ul>
<b><i>MNO and its services</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Some specified suggestions for how MNO could improve access to information, including changes to the website.</li> </ul>
<b>DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY</b>	
<b><i>Métis decision-making authority and control of Métis children &amp; youth</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Solutions for families are stronger and more child focused when community is involved, and culture is acknowledged.</li> <li>•The Métis community should have a say in case planning and decisions (including apprehension), in dispute resolution, in the placement of a child and should be able to provide customary care.</li> <li>•It should be compulsory that the CAS inform MNO if a Métis child comes into care.</li> <li>•Even if we do not become involved in providing child protection, the Métis Nation of Ontario should have the final word on the care of Métis children and youth</li> <li>•TBD: the role of MNO and / or Métis communities.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Regional variation</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Each Region will need to guide the solutions for their unique communities.</li> <li>•It is important to understand standard operating procedures and best practices for child welfare and that effective approaches will vary for different regions.</li> </ul>



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<b><i>Structural considerations</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Through the course of the CYFS project, the following will need to be considered: the relationship to self government vis a vis the role of Regions and communities vis a vis the role of MNO.</li></ul>
<b>OTHER CONSIDERATIONS</b>	
<b><i>Reach out to and learn from other jurisdictions</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Work going forward should pull from the various jurisdictions and agencies that already exist, learning from their mistakes and building upon their successes.</li></ul>
<b><i>Data on number of Métis children, youth and families potentially requiring service</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•A better understanding of the data and statistics about the number of Métis children and families currently being served in the child welfare system and prevention related programs is needed before designing a new system(s).</li></ul>