



**Joining Together for the Well-being of  
Métis Children, Families and Communities:  
Community Dialogue on the Métis Service Delivery Framework**

Focus Group #7 – Kootenays, Region 4

Ktunaxa-Kinbasket Child & Family Services Training Room, 1007 Baker St., Cranbrook

Thursday, October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2011

**Key Findings:**

*What is your vision for healthy Métis children and youth, families, communities and service agencies?*

- Children and Youth:

Participants envisioned that children and youth would feel loved, safe, have a sense of belonging, know that people care about them, are respected and take pride in their Métis heritage. Children need to be given opportunities to participate in Métis focused cultural activities and learn the seven sacred teachings. Participation in these activities would demonstrate that there is a community behind them, supporting them and encouraging them in their endeavors.

- Families:

The theme of “connections” was discussed at length by the groups. Families need to understand that they are connected to the larger Métis community. They need to see the value in love, trust, laughter and healing. Families need be able to draw on the elders to provide a sense of unity.

- Communities:

The group did not discuss about a vision for communities specifically. However as is demonstrated in the two above mentioned categories, the theme of “connection” between all parties involved is significant and would naturally be extended to into communities.



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- Service agencies:

Service agencies need to be supportive, helpful, respectful and kind. They should have an understanding of Métis culture, provide support groups for prevention and treatment of addictions and always remember to put the children before politics.

## Leading Practices and Lessons Learned

- Aboriginal Education Support Workers, All schools in district #6 (Rocky Mountain)

Educational support services are available to all students of Aboriginal ancestry who self-identify in the Rocky Mountain School District. Workers engage with the two local bands – Shuswap and Akisqnak, promoting cross-cultural teachings.

Support to students is provided five days per week. Workers teach, share and act as healthy role models for their clientele. They encourage Métis and ancestral pride with the “elders in the classroom” program, the “Circle of Courage,” pow-wows and provide cultural awareness. Support workers also strive to form a team with all outside agencies.

The outcomes provided by Aboriginal support workers are numerous. These include: cross-cultural education, fostering respect for other Aboriginal cultures, goal setting, preparation for graduation and post secondary planning.

This program could be implemented in other schools if staffing and funding were in place to support it. Aboriginal education workers would benefit from more training where they are given the chance to gather together as a group and network.

- Elders Advisory Committee, Ktunaxa Nation Council Society, Mt. Baker Secondary School in Cranbrook

This is a program being held in the Mt. Baker Secondary School which brings together students and community elders. The program is very inclusive reaching all of students in the district, both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal. Guests are welcome to attend, families can be involved and it is supported by the school district and Ktunaxa/Kinbasket Child and Family services. There is Métis representation on the board and a Métis representative on the advisory council.

There are a number of valuable outcomes from this program that include the sharing of knowledge and culture, providing a safe place for the students to go, a chance to be heard and to learn respect for the elders. This helps students connect with their cultural identity. It



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promotes trust between individuals. The committee encourages participants to work on their genealogy, to develop cultural connections and to foster a sense of pride in their heritage.

It would be ideal for similar programs to be implemented in other communities. For it to be successful participants felt that the desire from the school board needs to be expressed, Aboriginal support workers need to be involved and volunteers need to come forward to work with the students. As one group member stated, “You just need to do it!”

- Signs of Safety, Ktunaxa/Kinbasket Child and Family Services (KKCFS), Cranbrook

Signs of Safety is a collaborative way of working with families to teach them to become “experts” in their own family plan. It is a practice that can be employed by all ages, all Aboriginal people, in any community and with any service providers. Use of this system builds on safety, strengths, culture, identity, community and is focused on finding solutions for families.

Valuable outcomes from the implementation of this practice include a lesser number of children coming into care, families being actively involved in the writing their own plans, fewer intakes at the KKCFS office and aids in files being closed more quickly as families are finding supports within their own family and/or community. Training for facilitators is available from KKCFS.

### Indicators for Success

Indicators allow organizations to measure the progress of work or the effectiveness of initiatives. Participants in Cranbrook noted indicators for the *Métis Service Delivery Framework* could include:

Overall growth, including:

- Happy, healthy, successful Métis children;
- Lesser numbers of children going into care;
- Higher numbers of Métis students graduating from high school; and
- More people self-identifying as Métis.



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Several strategies for the *Métis Service Delivery Framework* were articulated by the participants in Cranbrook. The key strategies suggested at the focus group are seen below:

- Good parenting;
- Support from the community;
- Employment of Aboriginal education workers;
- Support of the local schools;
- Culturally relevant school curriculum; and
- Implementation of life skills training.

Discussion shifted from indicators and strategies to key outcomes that can become possible through the implementation of the *Métis Service Delivery Framework*. Participants in the Region envisioned the following for the Métis children, youth and families in their region:

- Functional homes;
- Strong family supports;
- Better opportunities for employment; and
- A sense of cultural pride.

Accountability within the provincial *Métis Service Delivery Framework* was the final topic in this section of the discussion. Participants advised on appropriate roles and responsibilities of the following people, groups and organizations:

- Métis Commission for Children and Families of BC (MCCF):

To continue to build relationships between the MCCF and the individuals they serve, to be the voice of the people, create a common vision across the province, provide coordinated cultural support for the provincial education system.

- Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD):

To lobby for and/or provide more funding for the training of Métis individuals in the social work field, to advocate with the Ministry of Education to make attendance mandatory for school aged children and to do more networking with Métis groups.



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- Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC):

Collaborate efforts between Métis service agencies such as the MCFD, Ministry of Education and Métis communities and work to secure more funding for an increased number of Métis social workers.

- Métis Communities:

Communicate with one another using mediums other than email as not everyone has computer access. Remember to include elders in events by keeping them informed via the telephone or mail. Celebrate their successes and praise their children for their efforts.

- Métis families:

To be held accountable and teach the children values, morals and responsibility.

- Métis individuals:

Be passionate, have dreams and goals, establish connections with the MCFD and take on a “Just do it!” attitude.

## *What are the next steps in developing a provincial Métis child and family services framework?*

- Relationship building:

Host community gatherings to promote celebration, sharing, food, dance and music. Provide education around “What is a Métis?” Provide healing opportunities for families and communities. Provide healing around the legacy left by the Residential Schools – break the “vicious cycle.” Promote Métis pride in the self, family and community.

- Training:

Provide further educational training for students in the early high school years around Métis culture and nationhood. Provide training for “healing facilitators” and form healing support groups in the communities.



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- Communication:

Develop strategies to relay information to all Métis people. Make use of a “telephone tree,” mail-outs, community bulletin boards, CBC radio and television, the local newspapers, coffee shop newsletters, emails, school newsletters and verbally at Métis meetings.

- Resources:

Recognize that the most powerful resource is the people as a whole - not just the youth and the elders but all of the families. Continue to secure adequate funding for program delivery.