



Métis Commission for Children and Families of B.C.

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

Focus Group #5 – Thompson/Okanagan, Region 3

Métis Community Services Society of BC, #201-2949 Pandosy St., Kelowna, BC
Tuesday, October 11th, 2011

Key Findings:

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

- Children and Youth:

Participants would like to see strong connections developed between the Métis community and their children and youth. Development of a healthy sense of cultural identity and pride through the promotion of Métis role models and mentors, engagement in cultural activities, nature programs, ceremonies and access to post secondary education were seen as ways of developing these connections. The importance of stable homes that provide independence, safety, love, health and security with secure attachments to parents and caregivers was also voiced. Our children need to believe that they are loved and that they matter as individuals – voiced one participant. Also the need to have access to one's Métis identity through the MCFD, MNBC, MCCF, Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents and the service agencies in the region needs to be provided.

- Families:

Families need access to basics such as healthy food, clothing, affordable and safe housing, reliable/accessible transportation, schooling, culture and guidance. The need for connections was also expressed. Connections to one's Métis heritage, to the larger Métis community and to elders where caregivers can go to seek advice, direction and support need to be in place. Participants noted that families also need to be informed of the services that are available to them through Métis agencies and organizations. Measures also need to be put into place to provide support in the face of a crisis including parenting programs, counselling services, life



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skills training, trauma recovery services, addiction and/or substance misuse services and family support services.

- Communities:

Communities need strong and healthy leadership provided to them at all levels including MNBC, MCFD, MCCF, The Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents and in the service delivery agencies in each region. Participants would like to see input and the wisdom of elders included in community consultation. Métis centres that are large enough to host the group learning of culture and give people a place where they feel that they belong are needed. An increase in the frequency of gatherings as a means to foster that sense of belonging is important.

- Service agencies:

Ideally the group felt that they would like to see all services under one roof including cultural services, family counselling, health care practitioners, Métis housing, elders' advocacy and youth supports. This would give all service providers the chance to communicate, connect and collaborate more effectively. For this to take place there needs to be ongoing funding and financial supports put in place. The input and support of elders must also be included. The need for Métis specific services whether it be cultural, language, spiritual or historical must also be considered.

Leading Practices and Lessons Learned

- Wrap- Around Services, Métis and Community Service Society (MCSS) B.C., Kelowna

Wrap-Around Services bring together a variety of individuals including all front line staff of the MCSS, Métis children and families, communities, youth, elders, counsellors, therapists, five co-located MCFD staff, the Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents, Métis Associations of Kelowna, Vernon, Penticton & Salmon Arm to provide a collaborative team approach to service "under one roof". The team is flexible to meet the needs of the children and families, and the planning meetings include the extended family and/or friends of the service users.

Key Outcomes: Having the collaboration of these groups provides for more effective sharing of information and a more holistic view of the needs of the individual. The team approach provides transparency for all members involved. It serves to strengthen the relationships between all key players – including the family. It gives families a chance to be heard, helped and supported. It also gives a stronger sense of cultural influence in the "prevention, intervention and the post-vention continuum."



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The Wrap-Around approach to services could be implemented in any other community but it needs to be supported by a strong team and leadership. Support from the community and elders are also crucial. Finally, long term funding is needed to provide continued success of these programs.

Indicators for Success

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

Overall growth, including:

- An increase in the number of people applying for Métis citizenship;
- An increase in the services offered to the Métis community and secured funding for such programs;
- An increase in the amount of Métis children graduating;
- An increase in the number of children and families staying together;
- More families accessing Métis services prior to MCFD involvement or other crises.

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

- The development of Métis specific family services;
- The formation of elders and youth groups;
- Opportunities for further growth and development through the promotion of health and well-being.

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 Thompson/Okanagan envisioned the following for the Métis children, youth and families in their region:

- An increase in self-esteem through the healthy functioning of families;
- Children experiencing less trauma and families experience less intrusiveness;
- Increased knowledge of being recognized as a Métis individual within the community;
- Increased awareness of having a unique Métis identity.



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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):

Continuing to gather the input from communities through focus groups and ensuring that Métis people have their own commission to foster their identity, to build collective policies and link service providers across the province, to gather data and research, to advocate on behalf of Métis families and to assist in the sharing of communications between communities.

- Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD):

To release funds to the Métis agencies over a period of time providing continuous commitment, an acknowledgement of the need for increased services to Métis people, a financial plan for housing, further proposals for contracts and to allow the decision making around funding and service delivery to be left to Métis agencies and communities.

- Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC):

To provide Métis people with a voice at the provincial and federal levels for affordable housing, to provide political support and influence legislative changes, to be more transparent and communicate more effectively with the people.

- Métis Communities:

To share information and communicate with each other, to provide affordable housing for a mix of elders, families and singles, to be identified, supported and involved in meaningful ways.

- Métis families:

To come together and provide volunteers for programs, to be informed, be proud of their accomplishments, participate in gatherings, be committed to positive change and become role models for the younger generations.



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- Métis individuals:

To pass on traditions and culture to the next generation, participate in events, be informed, volunteer, contribute gifts, pass on skills, mentor others, share information and decrease problems of addiction.

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

- Relationship building:

To foster relationships we need ensure that processes are inclusive. If a person self-identifies as Métis (including those without MNBC citizenship) then allow them to have a voice and assure them that their children matter. Strong leadership needs to be in place for the Métis community at large. Métis people need to be recognized as equal to First Nations and lateral violence between Métis individuals needs to cease. More opportunities for people to gather together (not just at the AGM) was also seen as a means to build strong relationships.

- Training:

Culture needs to be integrated into all training programs. For youth and adults training needs to include hunting, fishing and harvesting camps, vocational training and cultural activities. For service providers participants would like to see “Wrap-Around” and lateral violence workshops offered.

- Communication:

Communication using basic language by phone, advertising and marketing, updates to web pages and the use of newsletters were given as suggestions to improve communication between agencies and communities.

- Resources:

A library to house cultural and economic resources including wild mineral rights and hunting needs to be established. Funding needs to be in place to support these resources as well as provide the training opportunities mentioned above.