



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 #2 – North Central, Region 5
Kikino Métis Children and Family Services, 369 Victoria St, Prince George
Tuesday October 4th 2011

Key Findings:

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

- Children and Youth:

Participants at the Prince George focus group envision a future where Métis youth and children grow and learn in a culturally safe space full of opportunities, and become strong and successful adults with a sense of belonging to Métis culture and community. Elders are seen to play a central role in sharing culture and language, and providing the love and guidance that children and youth need. A key recommendation is the establishment of a recreation centre that is youth-friendly, youth-driven, and allows for youth leadership opportunities.

- Families:

Participants spoke to the importance of Métis culture shared within the family. Elders in the family provide traditional teachings and storytelling, act as role models and guide their families through life. Another central theme is that of the family as a support, providing love, nurturing, and laughter. Healthy families are seen to be those that are strong and connected, and have a sense of “family togetherness;” accordingly, many participants spoke to the need for support and help for families, with a key outcome being fewer children in care.



Métis Commission for Children and Families of B.C.

- Communities:

Community engagement and collaboration was considered to be the cornerstone of a healthy Métis community. Métis communities can support Métis children and youth by getting involved, being open to communication, sharing culture and language, and working together. Basic needs for Métis community members include safe housing and other safe places; healthy food to eat and share with one another; and sober social activities.

- Service agencies:

Participants advised that Métis child and family service agencies need to have strong lines of communication with the community, and avenues for sharing ideas with other agencies. Through increased community engagement and availability, Métis agencies will be able to be more responsive to the unique needs of the people they provide services to. A strong theme here was the importance of Métis agencies being culturally centered and rooted in Métis values and traditions. Participants noted that Métis agencies should provide hands-on activities and recreation programs for Métis children and youth. To achieve these goals, participants recognized that Métis agencies require support from community members and funding from government.

Leading Practices and Lessons Learned

- Prince George Métis Elders Society, Prince George

The Prince George Métis Elders Society (PGMES) is an integral part of the local community. The Elders keep a very full schedule that sees them involved with Head Start and Early Childhood programs, a babies and young parents group, at-risk youth and women, Métis youth in all stages of their schooling, other seniors, and multi-cultural organizations. The Elders work closely with Kikino Métis Children and Family Services, local friendship centres and local schools in providing support; teaching Métis culture and the Michif language; and engaging Métis children, youth, families, other Elders, and members of the broader community in cultural activities like crafts, beading, drumming, and jigging. PGMES promotes a holistic vision of being proud to be Métis through inclusive practices where all peoples who want to become involved with or receive teachings from the Elders are supported to do so.



Métis Commission for Children and Families of B.C.

The Elders advise that they do not expect honoraria for their work; the gifts, food, pictures, letters and ‘thank you’s’ from those they serve is enough for them. The Elders receive recognition and respect in the community, and consider this appreciation and acknowledgement ample reward.

What makes the PGMES such a successful and thriving group and what in turn would be needed to build a strong, engaged Elders society elsewhere? At the core for the Prince George Elders is their level of commitment: to each other, to Métis culture and sharing it, to going out into the community, and to making and keeping appointments. PGMES has a strong core group of approximately 12 Elders who consistently attend. Through all the volunteering and effort put into their work, the Elders note that there is always joy, laughter and fun in their gatherings.

Key Outcomes of the Prince George Métis Elders Society: Elders connect and continue to grow and learn through sharing and active engagement with each other and with their community. Elders are a recognized and respected asset to both the Métis and the entire local community. Reciprocal learning occurs between the Elders and the people they work with. A dynamic and engaged Métis community continues to be fostered and supported.

- Circle of Families Camp at Gavin Lake; North Cariboo Métis Association, Quesnel

The Circle of Families Camp was established several years ago through a partnership between MCFD and the Quesnel-based North Cariboo Métis Association (NCMA). The camp is held in winter and summer, with the most recent camp occurring in August 2011. NCMA workers bring at-risk families from throughout the North Central Region (Quesnel, Williams Lake, Prince George, Mackenzie, and other communities) to the remote location of Gavin Lake, BC, where a busy and full week of cultural/traditional and practical/survival activities await. Activities include traditional jigging and dancing, drumming, archery, canoeing, GPS training with a forestry worker, wood carving, axe throwing, a talent show, skating on an outdoor lighted ice rink (winter camp only), and a host of games for the whole family. There are no electronics, cell phones or other social media devices allowed in the camp; the focus is on open communication and healing relationships within the family unit. There is also a “free store” at the camp, where families can take clothing, furniture or other donated items that they may need.

The camps are very successful, as indicated by the number of those involved; last year, the Circle of Families Camp was attended by 86 participants. What makes it work? The camp is supported by lots of community involvement, and through NCMA’s partnerships with MCFD and other agencies. NCMA also draw funding from a range of sources, and independently fundraise and promote the camp at the local level through flea markets, bake sales, and so on.



Métis Commission for Children and Families of B.C.

For this kind of program to be effectively implemented elsewhere, the lead agency would need to not only locate and work with an adept organizer, but also the “champions” in their community – engaged, healthy and respected community members with dedication, passion, love, and caring.

Key Outcomes of the Circle of Families Camp: Fractured families come together in a culturally safe environment, practice open communication, and begin to experience healing. Families in need receive clothing, furniture and other needed items without added financial burden. A range of important traditional practices and survival skills are learned.

Indicators for Success

Participants in Prince George spoke to the following key outcomes that become possible through the implementation of the Métis Service Delivery Framework:

- Métis children, youth and families are proud to be Métis
- Métis children are happy, healthy, confident and take pride in who they are
- Métis youth become role models to those younger than them
- Elders and teachers role model healthy behaviour and a strong sense of self
- Métis Elders provide traditional teachings
- Safe spaces exist for families, youth and individuals who need them
- Métis communities are made up of whole, healthy families

Indicators are signs that tell us whether what we are doing is working or not. Once an organization or project has established its goals, objectives, strategies and outcomes, it is useful to identify indicators that we can use to measure the progress of work or the effectiveness of our initiatives. Participants in Prince George recommended the following key indicators for the Métis Service Delivery Framework:

- Less Métis children in care (CIC)
- Removed Métis children returning to their families more frequently
- More Métis children learning Michif language
- More Métis children and families having a sense of Métis identity and culture
- Greater percentage of Métis children completing high school
- More education on Métis history, culture and language in the school system
- Continued Elder involvement in community and in child welfare service delivery



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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):

Continue holding focus groups and reaching out to communities. Act as a data collection, information sharing and communications body.

- Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD):

Forge relationships and build connections in Métis communities and with Métis agencies like Kikino. Provide Métis-specific cultural awareness training and education for MCFD staff. Increase funding to Métis service agencies.

- Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC):

Increase visibility and presence in the Métis communities. Focus on culture and work to heal the divisions. Provide more funding and resources to Métis communities.

- Métis Communities:

Provide family oriented community events and gatherings. Advocate for Métis people more effectively by increasing local profile and presence through advertising, communication with other service agencies, and establishing partnerships.

- Métis families:

Become involved and take responsibility by asking questions, self-advocating, and becoming informed on issues. Nurture our bodies through our spirituality.

- Métis individuals:

Enhance awareness of both local and Métis community issues, and become active and engaged in the community. We have to honour taking care of ourselves.



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

Due to the depth and quality of discussions, the Prince George focus group did not engage in a discussion of next steps. However, as seen above, plenty of recommendations and next steps that will guide the development of the provincial Métis Service Delivery Framework emerged from the earlier discussions.