



“What We Heard” Report

Child and Family Services Needs Assessment

Kaniikaniit Consulting
August 23, 2023



Gratitudes and Acknowledgements

Kaniikaniit Consulting is grateful for the opportunity to work across so-called British Columbia and pay deep respect to the traditional territories of the Dunne-za and Cree people.

We are honoured to play a small part in ensuring that our work with WMFN contributes to their self-determination to freely pursue their jurisdiction, as well as their social and cultural development.

We are grateful to all the West Moberly First Nation citizens who shared their memories, lived experiences, truths, and suggestions for this report.



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Background

- West Moberly First Nations Chief and Council have chosen to exercise their inherent rights and create laws for jurisdiction of children and families that will have Force of Law and take precedence over all other laws.
- Intention
 - Keep families together
 - Provide support to prevent children being at-risk
 - Place children in need of protection with siblings and community
- Identify the “Best Interests of the WMFN Child” (BIOC).
- Focus on cultural ties and preventative measures in programs and services.



Child and Family Services Needs Assessment

- We must first prioritize planning, engaging, and preparing community for changes.
- Collaborate with MCFD on S92.1 Community Agreement.
- Develop and implement a Child and Family Services Needs Assessment.
- Engagements:
 - October 2022 in-community
 - April 2023 in-community
 - Interviews, Focus Groups, Surveys, Facebook posts and polls
- Data tells the story of:
 - current community programming and services assets, needs, and gaps;
 - indication of community desire and readiness



Our Process - Methodology

Ensure participants are able to share their viewpoints freely and confidently in an environment that values respect, trust, transparency, and deep listening.

- One-hour confidential interviews
- Focus Groups
- Surveys
- Social media



100% OF MEMBERS BELIEVE
OUR COMMUNITY GETS TO
DETERMINE HOW TO IMPROVE
OUR HEALTH AND WELL-BEING!

Involvement with Ministry of Child and Family Development

- 61.5% of WMFN members surveyed were involved in Canada's Child Welfare system as a child.
- 50% of WMFN members surveyed have had children involved in Canada's Child Welfare system.

DESCRIBE YOUR DIRECT EXPERIENCE
WORKING WITH MINISTRY OF CHILD AND
FAMILY DEVELOPMENT.

USUALLY POSITIVE	1%
SOMETIMES POSITIVE	18%
NEUTRAL	9%
SOMETIMES NEGATIVE	45%
USUALLY NEGATIVE	27%

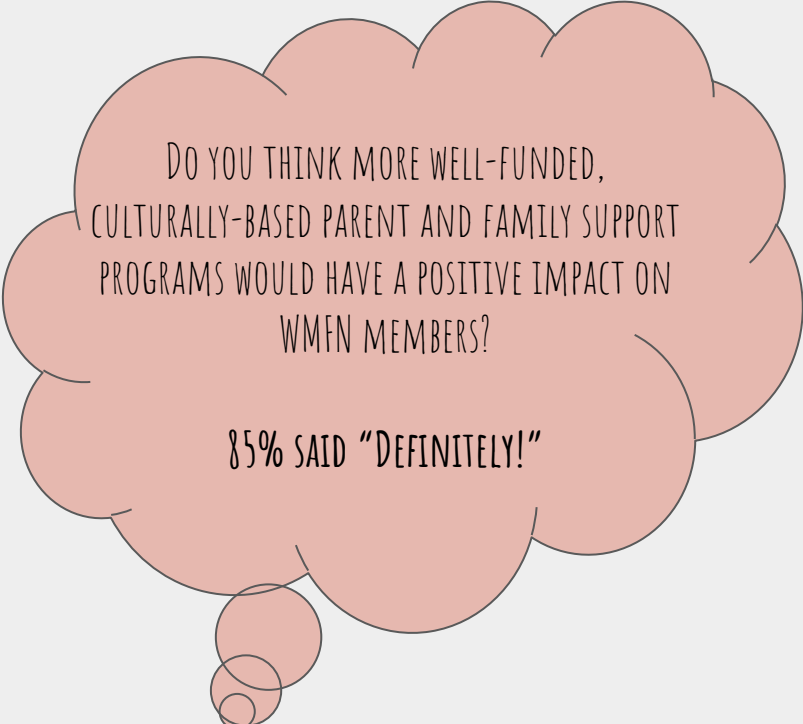
Experience with Canada's Child Welfare System

- People who experienced abusive, unsafe homes and needed love, care, and comfort.
- Caseworkers were inconsistent, lacked cultural knowledge and WMFN history.
- Parents and survivors spoke to needing protection, support, understanding, affection, food, and safe shelter as children.
- Members are unfamiliar with children's rights, lacked power, were unable to navigate the system, mistrust the Ministry, were worried about sibling separation, and insufficient funding for fostering.



Programs, Services, and Elements in Effective Prevention Services

- 92% said parenting and healthy family programs.
- 77% said youth programs and activities and support for families dealing with MCFD.
- 69% said violence prevention programs, affordable housing, in-home supports and family-based services, and cultural programs.
- 85% said programs and services based in culture and knowledge.
- 77% said culturally appropriate services.
- 69% said implementing legislation, policies, and regulations developed by the WMFN community.



DO YOU THINK MORE WELL-FUNDED,
CULTURALLY-BASED PARENT AND FAMILY SUPPORT
PROGRAMS WOULD HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON
WMFN MEMBERS?

85% SAID "DEFINITELY!"

What's Working



- Assets: Established Youth and Family Counsellor; Recreation Coordinator; engaged Health Manager; dedicated Addictions and Mental Health Counsellor, and recently hired Mental Health Clinician.
- High numbers of members in-community are using WMFN programs and services: Medical Travel Assistance, Lunch Program, Life Coaching, Swim/Gym Night, Dinner & Movie Night, Bingo, and the Health Fair.

What's Not



- Health Centre's Parenting Program received no engagement.
- Some wellness services have been “on hold” or ended with the pandemic.
- Absence of programs that prevent and address poverty and violence.
- Perception of less Nation support for members living outside of community.
- Need for more land-use lessons/activities to prepare individually and collectively for an uncertain future.



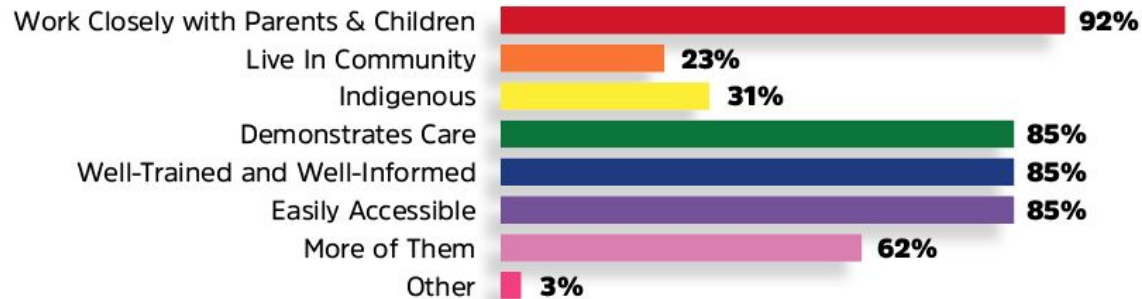
What Gets in the Way



Barriers to participation include:

- Vacant positions (Social Worker, Culture Coordinator)
- Disorganized and/or far-away
- Transportation needs for off-reserve members
- Underfunded, inconsistent programming
- Competing schedules
- Long waitlists
- Feeling embarrassment or shame (stigma)
- Unfamiliar and lacking in awareness of what is available
- Uncomfortable family dynamics
- Too busy

Elements of an Effective Child Welfare Worker



Leadership & Communication

- Members feel C&C are helpful, listening, following policy, responsive.
- Perception of nepotism and “that side of the family is helped” with current electoral process.
- Enforcement of bylaws and rules on reserve is not seen.
- Self-leadership
 - Some members rise, some succumb, from poverty, addiction, accountability
 - Awareness of need for collective healing and personal empowerment
 - Culture of secrecy, isolation, perceived favoritism, mistrust
- Some supporting departmental programs are capacity-challenged, lack participation metrics, have little to no engagement, require members to initiate and follow-through, lack space, and are yet to get off the ground.

Leadership & Communication

- Challenges in communication:
 - Consulted 100's of times, but not heard.
 - Newsletter is huge and only briefly read.
 - Website lacks "Member" section, regular updates, and content.
- 2021 Comprehensive Community Plan
 - Identified the major challenges faced in parenting and caring for children (finances, extra-curriculars, keeping kids busy)
 - Informed the 2020-2025 Council Strategic Plan and subsequent departmental programs, services, and initiatives addressing those needs.
- Few members were aware of the 2021 Programs and Services Guide and question how it is/was distributed and whether to expect an annually updated Guide.

Health & Safety

Individual, familial, and communal healing is needed along with family support. Why?

- Historical quarrelling, imbalance of electoral division, tension between families.
- Settlement money correlates to increases in substance use and domestic abuse.
- Unhealthy reliance on child tax and social assistance.

Programs are better attended when they:

- Align with relevant life choices and opportunities
- Receive reminders and rides
- Are supported by detailed promotional materials



Health & Safety continued

Some families are seen by the larger community as needing essential parenting skills, training, and support.

- Unhealthy behaviours and dysfunctional family dynamics have been normalized or ignored.
- Known unsafe homes are housing functioning addicts and socially-isolated kids.
- Community intervention is crucial as outsiders are feared.

Additional concerns are:

- Community safety particularly, off-leash dogs
- Infrastructure development lacks community cohesion
- Activities and safe places for youth

Culture & Community

Members wish to reclaim their unique cultural identity and traditional practices, in contrast to the current culture which aligns more with the colonial culture.

- Children continue the family lineage and assist with living.
- Children no longer live and learn from grandparents.

Today, kids are often on their screens, isolated, and disconnected from land and language, and not engaged in traditional ways of living and learning.

Old, outdated proverbs continue to silence, shame, and shrink the self-worth of developing youngsters while demoralizing and deflating outspoken adults.

Culture & Community

Due to the current cultural climate, many members feel the need to leave community and have no intention of returning.

- Settlement money supports this action.
- Little opportunity for higher education, high-level sports, and activities for teens.
- Single dads lack childcare and are forced to choose between working and parenting.
- Harmful gossip, bullying, and substance abuse is normalized.
- Criminal activity is covered up, accountability is avoided, “whistle blowers” and “watch dogs” feel they can’t do anything more.
- Perception of biased response depending on individual and/or family.



Education & Land-based Knowing

For many, education is key and lots of funding is available.

- Easy access to childcare and training
- Connection between Health Department and School District is crucial.

Members want young people educated on tradition, treaty, history, and inherent rights.

- Child-centered teaching focusing on mental and emotional wellness and hands-on, experiential education.
- Great desire for traditional teaching from Elders but challenged with time constraints, access to Elders, and mainstream learning practices.

Education & Land-based Knowing

Family groups have differing needs, interests and connections to the land.

- Some love living in close proximity and others feel it's more culturally appropriate to have space and move freely.
- People have forgotten that land provides connection, inspiration, and good medicine.
- Curly's legacy - connection to the land - fear that it is broken, resulting in disease and unwellness.
- To recover, young people must understand how and when that happened and what they can do to reclaim it.

Strengths

- Member's desire to foster children
- Subsidised housing
- Grief & Loss education
- Physical well-being
- Good people with good hearts
- Proud, fierce, kind, hard-working people
- Welcoming community
- "Culture is still part of us"
- Beautiful environment
- WestMo Days
- Increasing human resources
- Developing health programming

Needs

- Respite for parents/caregivers
- Indigenous worker at the school
- Transportation Buddy
- Accountability Buddy
- Extended family homes
- Good foster parents
- Support for children ageing out of foster care
- Seasonal activity calendar
- Milestone observations
- Safe spaces and supervised-visit location
- Compassionate, non-judgemental support and advocacy
- Desire to change and growth mindset
- Prevention education



Opportunities

- Partnerships and good relations with Saulteau
- “Go and Do” mentality and growth mindset
- Networking
- Traditional celebrations
- Gatherings and food
- Behavioural contracts for families and children
- “People already on their healing journey”
- Annual Plan of Action, revisited regularly (Strategic Plan)
- Cultural/seasonal work accommodations
- Unique history, language, and stories
- Lake waterfront access for recreation
- Connection to spirit, culture and land

Challenges

- Colonized, traumatised people needing to heal
- Under-developed personal awareness, leadership, and interpersonal skills
- Family group tensions
- Unbalanced representation (governance)
- Money mindset “feast or famine”
- “All talk, no action” impression of leadership
- Communication





“What Does a Healthy WMFN Look Like” Graphic Representation

Data visualization is a quick and effective way to communicate information in a universal manner using visual information.

- It helps people see, interact with, and better understand the results of engagement activities, such as surveys, interviews, and focus groups.
- This visual illustrates the desired outcome voiced by citizens of West Moberly First Nation.
- Ideally, the images, language, and feelings one senses when looking at the graphic recording align with WMFN values, guiding principles and Best Interest of the WMFN Child.

Recommendations - next steps

Leadership and Communication

- ❑ Create a united vision for WMFN law, Child & Family Services, and a healthy community
 - ❑ Begin law creation
 - ❑ Design and develop prevention based service delivery model
- ❑ Jurisdiction Project team
- ❑ Complete development of and maintain regular updates to website
- ❑ Print and distribute 2021 Programs and Services Guide to all members households
- ❑ Report on the work that has been completed on the strategic plan

Health and Safety

- ❑ Children's Rights education for parents and children
- ❑ Address community safety issues fairly and consistently
- ❑ Understanding Intergenerational Trauma workshop
- ❑ Track participation rates
- ❑ Complete Health Centre basement and furnish for supervised visits, gatherings, workshops and Youth Centre

Recommendations - next steps

Culture and Community

- Develop WMFN Cultural Competency training
- Personal Awareness & Empowerment training
- Finish distributing “Family Tree” booklets
- Create spaces for children and youth: youth centre, sports field and playground

Education and Land-based knowledge

- Treaty Rights education
- Honorariums for participation
- Celebrate successes
- Develop land-based healing programs



Maarsi, Mussi, Thank you!

