



Briefing note prepared for WMFN Chief & Council on WMFN Child and Family Services Jurisdiction Project

Purpose

The purpose of this briefing is to share with WMFN Chief & Council the process and outcomes of Kaniikaniit community consultation and engagements regarding Child and Family Services Best Interests of the Child (BIOC) development. This brief will outline what has transpired and been validated since our visit in July 2023, from the on-going social media and communications engagements, Project Team leadership, and our recent visit to community in April 2024. Highlights include a BIOC validation survey, on-going and regular CFSJ project awareness-raising campaign via Facebook, the WMFN website, the WMFN app, and direct home mail-outs, a youth engagement on Vancouver Island, and family gathering in-community. It's important to acknowledge and thank the many people who support us throughout this journey, in particular, Clorrisa Bigfoot and her team at the Health Centre, Theresa Davis, Councilor and Project Team member, and Communications staff Taylor, Lenora, and Randi.

Background

WMFN understands the responsibilities and work involved in exercising their jurisdictional rights towards self-determination, and since 2021, has focused on planning and engaging with and preparing the community for the changes ahead. Our focus has been to affirm WMFN's unique and distinct Best Interests of the Child principles as foundational statements that will inform laws, policies, practices, processes, programs, and services and we conducted a community needs assessment to help understand the gaps in services that exist and where WMFN strengths lie.

From April 6-11, Kathy Waddell and Gaileen Flaman visited West Moberly First Nation in anticipation of delivering a number of engagement opportunities previously planned with the support of the Project Team. These included the Brown Family Gathering: a pilot workshop, Health Centre staff lunch and learn, a community movie night, and presentation to Chief and Council. We were also fortunate to meet with Rainbow Horseman, Social Worker, based at the Health Centre. Despite travel delays and cancellations, and limited time to connect with project leadership, the engagements and experiences were worthwhile, informative, and reassuring in that we are headed in the right direction with slow, yet steady progress. A recent meeting with a member of the communication team for the Cowichan Tribes Child and Family Wellness Legislation Project confirmed this journey is one that will take years to be done in a good way and that Nations can anticipate "playing the long-game".

Discussion

5 statements

From a number of engagements, we conclude the community validates five key statements embedding the underlying principles of the Best Interests of the West Moberly Child:

- Decisions and actions regarding WMFN children, youth, and their families are child-centered, trauma-informed, culturally safe, holistically healthy, and grounded in land-based learning and healing.

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- Family and community nurtures the WMFN child's sense of identity and belonging and contributes to intergenerational healing.
- Family and community supports the mastery of their unique potential through academic and traditional education, life skills development, and extracurricular activities, empowered through experiential, land-based learning.
- The voices of WMFN children and youth are heard and responded to appropriately, respectfully, meaningfully, timely, effectively, and clearly.
- Family and community members have a responsibility to care for children and youth. Family representatives and elected leaders provide guidance, access and services that support the whole child and their families.

With these foundational statements confirmed, we can move forward to develop laws and policies, and a service delivery model first, then eventually a fiscal funding model and data and information management system, and finally the coordination agreement itself. Throughout this process, we will continue to update the community and seek their voices to contribute to the development of the law and its implementation.

Project Team

To ensure the project's momentum, a Child and Family Services Jurisdiction Project (CFSJP) Team was established with 6 WMFN members meeting monthly to advise and direct on recommended actions. Additional members would allow for even more diverse perspectives and recruitment efforts continue. Participants receive an honorarium in reciprocity of sharing their time, experience, and intellectual property. Often reporting on project plans and action items, community development and communications, the PT more recently advised on Kaniikaniit's Spring 2024 visit and planned engagements. The basis of the engagements was to validate what we believe to be the underlying statements that capture the BIOC informed through community consultation. These statements are described further in this brief.

The ultimate goal and scope

Proposing next steps, Kathy presented the progression of operational levels available to Nations seeking jurisdiction. Of the three levels of operational readiness, Chief and Council confirmed to aim for operational level C6. This level of readiness includes resource development, voluntary service delivery, protection services, and guardianship services for long-term care of children in need of protection.

C6 encompasses full child protection services which include: receiving, assessing and, as required, investigating reports of child abuse and neglect; deciding the most appropriate course of action if a child is deemed in need of protection; where necessary, removing the child and placing the child in care; and obtaining court orders or taking other measures to ensure the ongoing safety and well-being of the child.

Beyond this ambitious goal, the Chief and Council are left to consider scope: what is the level of responsibility and who will these laws apply to? Membership will need to be defined and obligations determined.

Working Groups

Efforts to establish Working Groups are now underway with the encouragement of C&C. Six groups have been identified to take the project further along the pathway to jurisdiction. They are:

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- Communications
- Law & Policy Development
- Service Delivery Model
- Coordination Agreement
- Fiscal Funding Model
- Data and Information Management

The nature of the pathway allows us to first focus on creating two necessary working groups; one to develop a Service Delivery model including processes and procedures and HR requirements, and another to draft and review laws and policies that support implementation. A preliminary list of potential members is envisioned including councilors, staff, and project team members to sit on these committees. Recruitment of the wider community is underway and an ask to C&C to distribute a poster (attached) to their families and friends.

Jurisdiction Coordinator

The project team proposed hiring of a CFS Jurisdiction Coordinator to better ensure community members are engaged in the child and family services jurisdiction process. Having a dedicated, full-time, in-place employee working in alignment with Kaniikaniit Consulting, the Health Centre, and the project team to provide communication, facilitation, and administrative support to the Project Team and Technical Working Groups, and any other established committees.

As Chief and Council approved the concept, the draft job description will be finalized and a hiring plan determined.

Logo

The project team decided upon a logo for the project that symbolizes the Nation, its children, and caretakers (seen in the header): Safely led by the grown swan, a trio of healthy, growing babes faithfully follow, trusting that what is ahead is good for them. The logo weaves in some of the visual components the community requested, and with further iteration, will bring in suggested colors, and illustrates the values represented in a healthy WestMo community; safety, togetherness, natural world, family, and leadership.

Next Steps

1. Leadership attendance and/or endorsement at engagements and events
2. Extend engagements to your family and friends (posters attached)
 - a. Virtual presentations
 - b. In-community visits to off-reserve members
 - c. "For Love" movie awareness

Attach: Posters (family gathering, movie night, lunch n learn, C&C powerpoint, photos)

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