

Metis Child, Family and Community Services

Annual Report | April 1, 2020 - March 31, 2021



Vision Statement

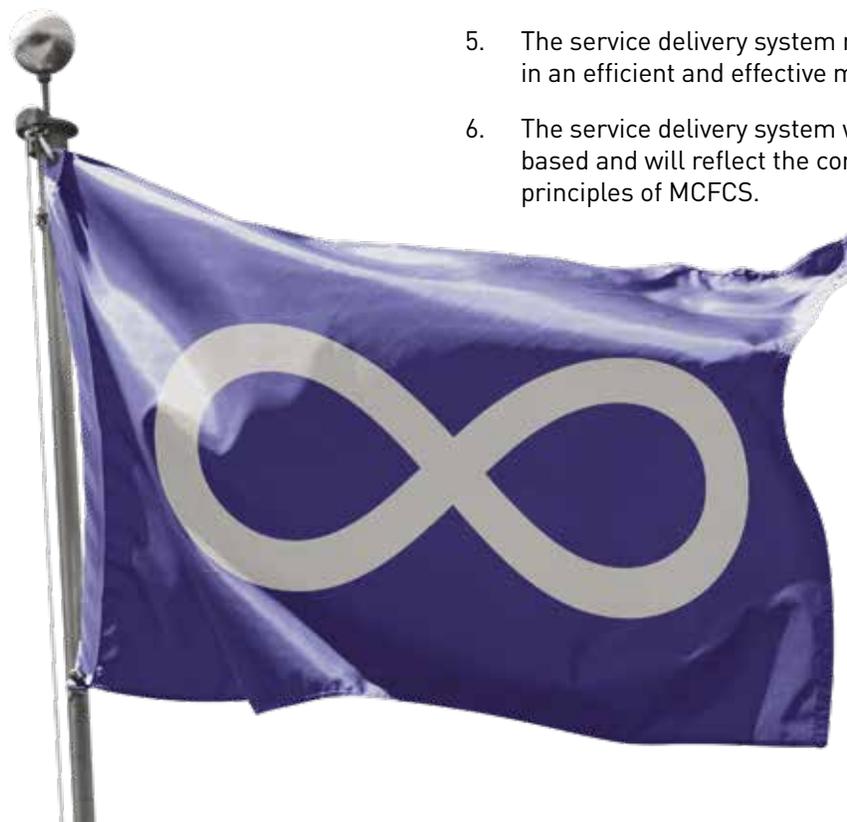
The Métis family and community is the cornerstone of our Nation and is built upon love, respect, honour, strength and heritage.

Mission Statement

Métis families and communities have the right and responsibility to care for children. Metis Child, Family and Community Services will work to strengthen the capacity of families to care for children through culturally relevant community-based programs. We believe in the inherent strength of our families and in the need to build on the capacity of our community to care for and nurture Métis children.

Guiding Principles

1. Métis families and communities are the cornerstone of the Métis Nation and the service delivery system must reflect this vision.
2. Responsibility for decision-making regarding Métis children and families lies with the family, extended family and community whenever possible.
3. The organizational structure promotes and supports community governance at all levels.
4. The service delivery system will encompass both formal and informal elements.
5. The service delivery system must be operated in an efficient and effective manner.
6. The service delivery system will be outcome based and will reflect the core guiding principles of MCFCS.





Greetings from the **President**

The Red River Métis have always cared deeply for our children and families. As youth we are taught the value of building connections within our villages and with our families. It is with these principles in mind that we continue to actively work in the best interests of our children, youth, and families – as we have for over 30 years. With the passing of An Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families we can now use this hands-on experience to build a new, distinctly Red River Métis, child and family services system for our families.

Over the past year, we have been working towards a Coordination Agreement that will fully return the jurisdiction over our children and families to the Red River Métis. These discussions have suffered from delays from the governments of Canada as well as Manitoba. One of the major delays has been the Manitoba Government's position that they came to the discussions only as "observers" with no mandate to enter into an agreement with us. We are happy to share that, as of August 2021, this mandate has finally been given and we can now fully continue our discussions with Canada and Manitoba.

While the discussions at that table continue, the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) has been engaging and consulting with our Citizens to ensure our Community has input as to what this system will look like, including the laws that are currently being developed.

Also over this past year, on July 6, 2021, the MMF signed a landmark Métis Self-Government agreement that immediately recognizes the MMF as the existing government of the Red River Métis – also known as the Manitoba Métis – which is the origin and core of the Métis Nation. Though we have always maintained that we are the government of the Red River Métis, this recognition agreement will open many new doors for the MMF. These are exciting times for your Métis Government as we continue to build upon the legacy of Louis Riel and other leaders that have come before us.

Of course, none of this work and progress would be possible without the hard work of Métis Child, Family and Community Services (MCFCS) Board Of Directors and staff. I sincerely thank everyone for their hard work and dedication.

I would also like to thank Minister Mona Buors and Associate Minister JoAnne Remillard as well as Chairperson Shirley Langan for their leadership and guidance as we continue forward, building a system for the Métis, by the Métis.

Meeqwetch,

President David Chartrand
LL.D (hon), O.M.



Message from the Minister and Associate Minister of Métis Child and Family Services

As Minister of Métis Child and Family Services, I am proud that Métis Child, Family and Community Services (MCFCS) has been able to sustain their important work despite COVID-19. We recognize that this Pandemic has created stress for families and that has meant more work for staff.

The Red River Métis has always valued forming a strong connection with those in our home and in our community. It is with this in mind that we knew we had to act quickly to implement the new federal CFS legislation.

The work to implement An Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families continues to move forward. The Manitoba Métis Federation is still in discussions with the governments of Canada and Manitoba to fully transfer the jurisdiction and authority to care for our children back to us, the Red River Métis. Separate from these discussions, we are also consulting with our Citizens to ensure our Community has input as to what this system will look like, including the laws that are currently being developed.

Indeed, these are exciting times in the field of CFS.

Of course, all of this work and progress would not be possible without the efforts of the MCFCS staff, led by Executive Director Greg Besant. I sincerely thank each and every one for their hard work and dedication. I, along with Associate Minister Remillard, would also like to thank Chairperson Shirley Langan and the rest of the MCFCS Board of Directors for the leadership and guidance as we continue our path forward in implementing this life changing legislation.

Merci,

Mona Buors, Minister
Métis Child and Family Services



Mona Buors
Minister



JoAnne Remillard
Associate Minister





Message from the
**Chief
Executive
Officer**
of the Metis Child and Family
Services Authority

On behalf of the Metis Child and Family Services Authority and our Board of Directors, I applaud the Metis Child, Family and Community Services Agency for their continued hard work and their ingenuity as we faced a global pandemic.

Child and family services is a very difficult field to work in. The Metis Child, Family and Community Services Agency and the staff have been able to find ways to deliver these services to children, youth, and families during an unprecedented time through creativity, patience, and perseverance.

I would like to thank the dedicated staff at the agency who went above and beyond to ensure uninterrupted service, whether it was to support children and youth at home to enable them to continue with their studies via remote learning, finding ways to continue visits between parents and children when the world was in lockdown, or delivering services to youth who were aging out of the CFS system during COVID-19.

A special thank you to Greg Besant, Executive Director, his management team and the Board of Directors who worked tirelessly when faced with new challenges every day over this past year.

Respectfully,

Karla Hildebrand-Eden, Chief Executive Officer
Metis Child & Family Services Authority





Message from the **Board of Directors**

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am proud to present the 2020/2021 Annual Report of the Metis Child, Family and Community Services Agency. This report reflects the successes of the past year and highlights our ability to follow our Guiding Principles in the delivery of services for our Métis families and children.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the Metis Child, Family and Community Services staff for the on-going hard work, dedication, compassion, and professionalism that they bring to the families and children they work with each day. You work collaboratively to achieve the best possible outcomes for children in care. I recognize your efforts to provide strength-based, individualized care to children and families, despite rising caseloads and increased demands.

Children are at the heart of all we do at Metis Child, Family and Community Services. We provide supports, programs and services that meet their needs in a holistic and innovative fashion to prepare them for a healthy and successful future.

The COVID-19 pandemic created many unforeseen challenges, and it was important for us to navigate this unprecedented time together. Families, staff, and the Board of Directors pivoted quickly, and repeatedly, in response to the evolving nature of the pandemic. The generous support of the Manitoba Métis Federation during this time has been greatly appreciated.

We would like to extend our sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Manitoba Métis Federation government for always believing in and supporting Metis Child, Family and Community Services. President Chartrand and the Cabinet Ministers advocate tirelessly for our Agency, and their commitment is valued. The agreement, Bill C-92, signed between the Manitoba Métis Federation and Federal Government last year, to advance Métis rights to self-government is a tremendous milestone.

We would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Karla Hildebrand-Eden, CEO of the Metis Child and Family Services Authority and their Board of Directors, for their continued efforts in ensuring an efficient and essential child welfare delivery system. A special thanks to Madam Chairperson, Barbara Bruce, who continues to work diligently with us.

We are very grateful for the ongoing commitment and guidance provided to our Agency by Minister Mona Buors and Associate Minister JoAnne Remillard. It is an honor to have them both on our team.

On behalf of our Board of Directors, we would like to recognize Executive Director, Greg Besant, for his devotion and dedication to Metis Child, Family and Community Services. Greg is fearless, innovative, and collaborative. He is both patient and determined and works tirelessly to improve the child welfare system. As Chairperson, it is my absolute pleasure to work closely with Greg. He, and his executive team, contribute expertise with the programs and services they supervise.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention our Executive Assistant, Amanda Glassock. Amanda always strives for perfection with everything she does, and it doesn't go unnoticed. Thank you!

Finally, I would like to welcome Brenda Zak and Andrea Clarke to our Board and thank all our Board of Directors for their service. As volunteers, we are humble and driven by our passion to make a positive contribution to Metis Child, Family and Community Services.

Miigwetch,

Shirley Langan, Chairperson



2020-2021 Board of Directors

Chair: Shirley Langan, Winnipeg
Vice Chair: Beverly Webb, Interlake Region
Secretary: Edith Desrosiers, Southeast Region
Treasurer: Karen Beaudin, Winnipeg
Elder: Marcella Vezina, Southeast Region
Ex-Officio: Barbara Bruce, Authority Board Chair





Message from the
**Executive
Director**
of Metis Child, Family and
Community Services

It is impossible to reflect upon the past year without speaking of the COVID-19 pandemic, as it continues to change our daily lives. In that regard, I would first like to acknowledge the many losses of the families we work with as a direct or indirect result of the pandemic. Many in our community have been lost to COVID-19. Many others have been lost to suicide or overdoses at never before seen levels. Our thoughts and prayers are with you all.

I would also like to acknowledge the heroic work of our staff who have faced the pandemic as essential service workers. All staff were extraordinarily affected this year and had to make significant adjustments to their lives to continue working. Some staff had core portions of their jobs severely affected and had to be extra flexible. Residential care staff, support workers, and case carrying workers had to place risks to their own health aside to ensure the health and safety of others. Staff and leaders had to ensure everyone felt supported in meeting these daily struggles. A special thank you to every staff for their efforts in meeting the challenges of this unusual year.

Our success in meeting these challenges could not have been achieved without the support of the Metis Child and Family Services Authority and the Manitoba Métis Federation. Their supports were absolutely essential and included supports for staff work mobility, computers for children in care and hampers for youth and families. The assistance we received from the Children's Aid Foundation of Canada was also critical in meeting the needs of our children and families.

Even during the pandemic, the agency participated in several key initiatives, including the creation of Michif Kashkihtaaw – an electronic case management system. We have also pressed forward with efforts to ensure families are involved in and directing the decisions about their families and children. This is in line with the federal legislation and the long-standing vision of the agency.

I would like to thank the leadership of the Métis Government, President Chartrand, Minister Buors and Associate Minister Remillard. I also wish to thank our Board Chair, Shirley Langan, and our Board of Directors for their guidance and support. I also wish to thank the outgoing and incoming leadership at the Metis Child and Family Services Authority for their support throughout the past year.

It is my pleasure to present the Metis Child, Family and Community Services annual report for 2020/21.

Miigwetch,

Greg Besant
Executive Director

2020-2021 Agency Highlights

The launch of Michif Kashkihtaaw is the first step to ensuring the information about Métis children and families requiring support is held by the Métis Nation rather than the provincial government.

Creation of a dedicated Kinship and Community Care unit to ensure children who come into care are living with someone they know and the caregiver is supported from the time of placement. Today, 67% of the caregivers supported by the agency are related to or known to the child(ren) they are caring for!

The Métis Connect team facilitated family led conferences for more than 150 families and 260 children. Late in the year, the program was expanded to begin work to meaningfully re-engage with the families of children in ongoing care.

Through the support of the Manitoba Métis Federation we were able to supply children in care with more than 300 laptops to enable their full participation in remote learning during the pandemic.

The Métis Youth Work program was launched in which Métis youth in care or involved with the agency are provided 1:1 job support to complete required tasks throughout the agency and beyond. Youth sewed masks for other children in care, painted offices and helped move other youth to independent living apartments amongst other tasks.

The *All My Relations* training initiative began to spread the intensive family engagement model throughout both Métis and Michif Agencies.

The *1000 Futures* project was launched late in the year. It provides a focus on improving the outcomes for children in ongoing care in selected areas. As part of this, every child in ongoing care will have a Registered Education Savings Plan set up for them by fall 2021 and funded through federal grants.

The staff of the agency became increasingly mobile throughout the year through the roll out of laptops and cell phones to promote remote work and increase staff safety during the pandemic.

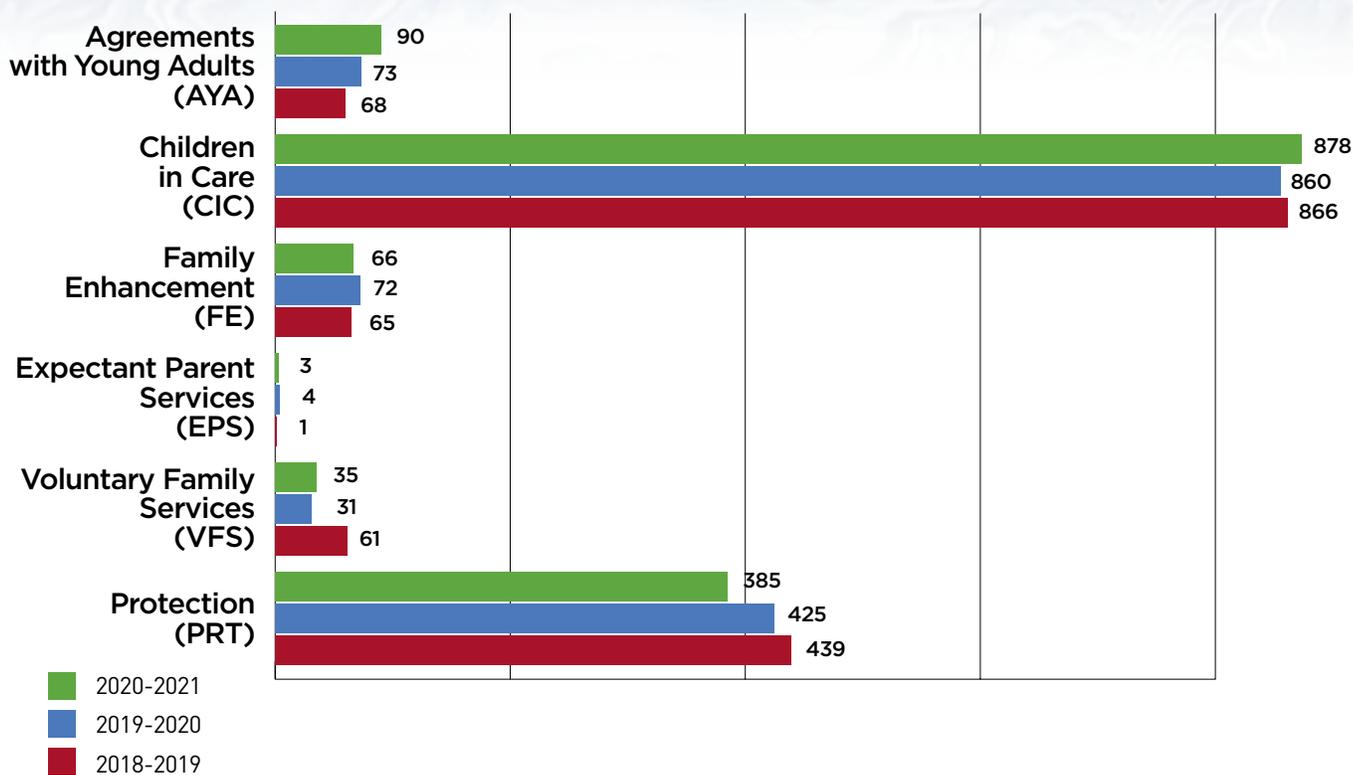
Year at a Glance

2020-2021 Stats

Regions	Protection	Voluntary Family Services	Expectant Parent Services	Family Enhancement	CIC	Agreement with Young Adult	Total Cases
Eastman	15	3	0	0	152	1	171
Interlake	17	3	0	0	180	42	242
Winnipeg	353	29	3	66	546	47	1044
Total	385	35	3	66	878	90	1457

Year at a Glance

3 Year Comparison



Métis Connect Stories

One of the challenges with a professionalized foster care system is that long term foster homes sometimes retire from caregiving or close their homes for other reasons, sometimes leaving children uncertain about their futures. In one such instance this year, Métis Connect assisted in building a network of birthfamily and family friends to turn what could have been a tragic situation into a positive one. Family, network members and staff worked diligently to address historical concerns and built a plan to address these issues in both the present and the future. This allowed the children to move in with their grandmother. She sends photos of the children to the workers to thank them.

A youth who had been in care since birth had lived with two caregivers in his life who were related to each other but not to him. He wanted to connect with his birth mother. Naturally. It took several months for the Métis Connect worker to locate her but did find her living in another province. Once found, a text message was sent and the mother replied immediately! Plans were made by staff, caregiver, youth and mother about how to manage the introduction. The youth and mother had a phone call in which the youth asked his mother some very tough questions which she answered openly and honestly. They have since been texting almost daily.

Métis Connect

(Programme Connect de Michif)

Metis Child, Family and Community Services established the Métis Connect Program in October 2018.

The goal of the Métis Connect Program is to support staff with a shift in practice where MCFCS staff will consistently include family and community as partners in support, planning and decision-making for their children. This will decrease the number of children coming into agency care and for children in care, will increase children's connections to family, community and culture and ensure the children have a sense of belonging.

The role of the Métis Connect workers is to coach and mentor MCFCS workers in a family seeing practice approach which includes searching for, engaging with and involving family and community as partners in the planning and decision-making for their children. The approach involves authentic and humble engagement practices.

While COVID-19 really had an impact on the number of in-person network meetings MCFCS Agency has been able to facilitate, we remain proud of the value that we still were able to provide with families during these times.

The Métis Connect program has been recognized as a valuable and inclusive practice approach by other child serving organizations such as the General Authority and Macdonald Youth Services.

In an effort to ensure the practice of humble engagement with families on their healing journey and to ensure that families are consistently invited to participate in planning and decision making, MCFCS and Michif CFS have entered into a 2-year contract with the Family Finding/Seeing model author, Kevin Campbell, and his co-author, Elizabeth Wendel. Kevin and Elizabeth will offer intensive training and ongoing coaching in the Family Finding/Seeing practice approach. The training will begin in May 2021.

Families are complex and sometimes solutions take time. In November, 2019 the family of a young girl started coming together to take responsibility for planning for her future. There were multiple plans presented over the following months with a number of family members expressing willingness to commit to lifelong care of her. Over time, with the Network continuing to come together for ongoing discussions, plans were discussed in terms of what was the most realistic, sustainable, and safe for her future. In October 2020 the little girl moved into her kinship home with family who has committed to support her throughout her lifetime.

**Quote of a father who had never met his children,
“And thank you for finding me and connecting me to my kids. If it wasn't for you this wouldn't have happened ... like an angel or something.”**

1000 Futures

In the last quarter of the fiscal year, a cluster of initiatives for children in care were branded as 1000 Futures.

The common theme of these initiatives was “a desire to improve the lifelong outcomes for children in care”.

Understanding the linkage between post-secondary education and health and wellness outcomes, the first project focused on ensuring all children in ongoing care have funds set aside within a registered education savings plan. This project will be completed by the fall of 2021, and the funds will come from federal government grants.

Our second objective was to ensure that children in care, who also have a disability, do not experience the ongoing poverty that comes with participation in the current adult income assistance programs. To this end, Registered Disability Savings plans are now being established for all qualified children in care.

The initial funding for this initiative will be invested in the fall of 2021. Without any agency contribution, the federal government will provide a \$1,000 dollar bond into each of these accounts annually. In addition to the initial amount, the agency plans to place approximately \$3,000 annually into each account (an amount that comes directly from the Children’s Special Allowance, that is received for these children). This action will result in a further grant from the federal government of approximately \$9,000 per year. There are lifetime limits set for the federal contributions, which will come into play at some future date.

The 1000 Futures initiative is also very focused on citizenship. The agency recognizes how integral connection to the Métis Nation is for the health of children in care and families receiving services. At the end of the fiscal year, we were working on 28 citizenships for children in care and families receiving services. We expect this program to continue until all eligible children in care receive their Métis citizenship.



The service team at the Royal Bank has demonstrated incredible passion and professionalism in assisting with the Registered Education Plan and Registered Disability Savings Plans for Métis children in care. Thank you for all your help in creating positive futures for children in care!

Further initiatives are in planning for coming years, to ensure Métis children in care have bright and promising futures.

Kinship and Community Care

One of the major areas of work for the agency during the past year has been building a focus on Kinship and Community care.

From a staffing perspective, this entailed:

- separating staff into their own work unit under a newly created supervisory position
- providing dedicated administrative support to the unit
- expanding staffing within the unit.

We also created a new process for the rapid identification, approval, placement and support of the new Kinship and Community care providers.

The goal is to have any child entering care placed with a person known to the child and family (if the parents are not able to look after the child for a period of time). Often, these caregivers are already part of the extended family network that has been supporting the parent on their path toward healing.

An Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families:

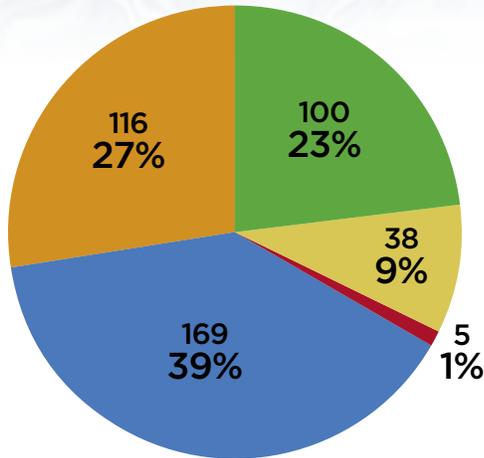
“16 (1) The placement of an Indigenous child in the context of providing child and family services in relation to the child, to the extent that it is consistent with the best interests of the child, is to occur in the following order of priority:

- a) with one of the child’s parents.
 - b) with another adult member of the child’s family.
 - c) with an adult who belongs to the same Indigenous group, community or people as the child.
 - d) with an adult who belongs to an Indigenous group, community or people other than the one to which the child belongs.
 - e) with any other adult.”
-



Kinship and Community Care Placements

Kinship and Community Care Placements



- General Foster Homes
- Specialized Foster Homes
- LIFE Homes
- KINSHIP (Licensed CS)
- KINSHIP (Places of Safety)

As of March 31, 2021, 67% of the care providers we support are family, or otherwise known to the child.

What this means is that the number of unlicensed placements continues to rise, due to our focus on placing children with family and known others. At this time, all kinship caregivers are required to have licensing by provincial legislation – and this is not different for family or stranger-based foster care.

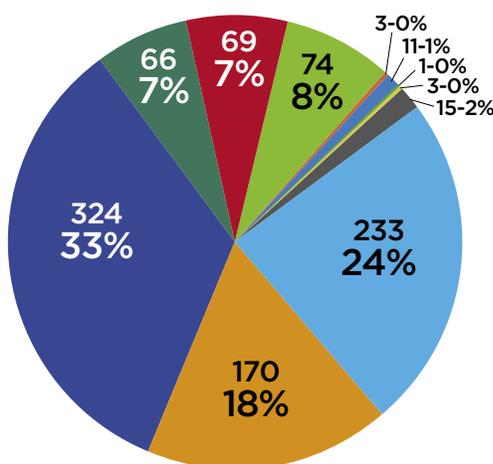
The agency seeks to balance the risks presented by not having a home fully licensed with the known harm done by placing a child outside of their family. In this regard, we complete all necessary checks, as well as a rapid home assessment, as part of the placement approval process.

Approximately 46% of the specialized homes have at least one of the caregivers in the home identifying as Métis. In addition, approximately 24% of the general foster homes have a Métis caregiver in the home.

Children in Care

The lifelong impact of being raised in care, and apart from your family, can never be understated. In addition to the effect on the child and immediate family, there are also lasting impacts on the Métis Nation itself. As a result, when children are in care, the agency diligently works to mitigate these impacts within the constraints of the child welfare system. Having children raised within their family, or if family is not an option, within a culturally appropriate home, is a primary way to mitigate these lifelong impacts.

Children in Care: by Placement Type



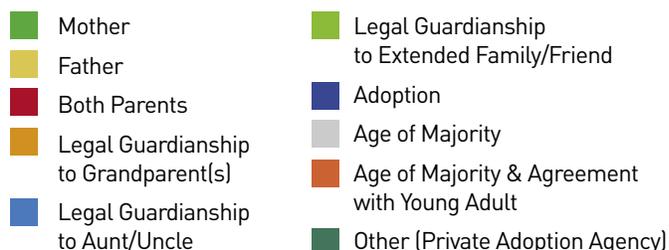
Forty-two percent of children in care reside with related or community caregivers. A community caregiver is a person known to the child or family who is willing to care for the child. As many of our Specialized and some of our General Foster Homes are also Métis, slightly more than half of children in our care reside in homes with a Métis caregiver.

- Kinship & Community
- General Foster
- Residential
- Correctional Facility
- Adoption
- Other
- Kinship & Community Licensed
- Specialized
- Independant Living
- Health/Mental Health
- Own Home/Relative
- Out of Province

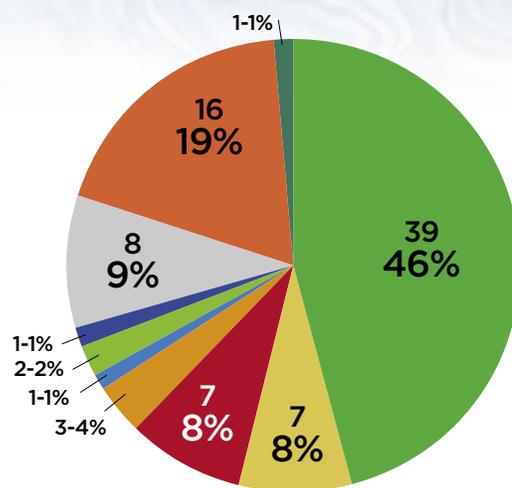
Reunification/Alternate Legal Permanency

Children may be reunified with a parent at any point in the child's time in care, regardless of the type of order in place. Also, some families choose to have another family member or acknowledged family member take guardianship, or to adopt a child, so they are not raised in care.

Fewer children were reunified, or achieved alternate legal permanency this year than last, due to both the pandemic and the fact that fewer children were in temporary care than the year prior.



Number of Children Reunified: 2020-2021

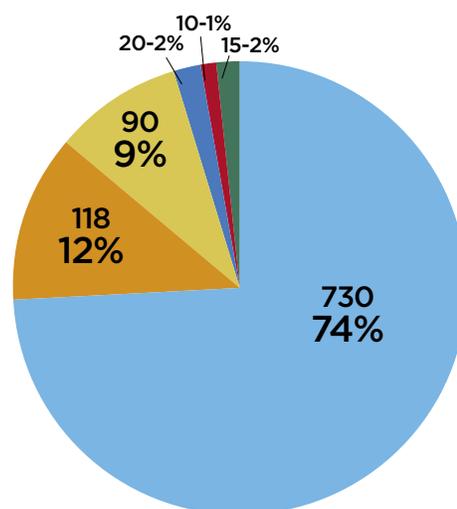


Permanent Orders

The number of children impacted by Permanent Orders continues to grow annually. The federal legislation makes clear the necessity of continuing to reunify these children and of keeping them connected to their culture.



Legal Authorities of Children in Care



	Eastman	Interlake	Winnipeg	Agency
Permanent Orders	142	173	415	730
Temporary Order / Petition Filed for Further Order	8	4	106	118
Transitional Planning (Agreement with Young Adult)	1	43	46	90
Voluntary Placement Agreement (VPA)	2	1	17	20
Apprehension	0	2	8	10
Supervised for Other Agency	1	3	11	15
	154	226	603	983



Family Services

(Li services di familles)

Over the course of this year, the COVID-19 pandemic affected almost every aspect of our daily lives.

At the same time, and partially due to the pandemic restrictions, social isolation, school and child-care closures, and instability in employment, housing, and resources have created unprecedented conditions for families trying to raise their children.

This situation is even more relevant for families that are already facing social, systemic and racial oppression. With the closure or limited access to vital resources, limited social interaction for children and parents, and disruption of normal routines, families and workers have been forced to be more creative and resourceful than ever.

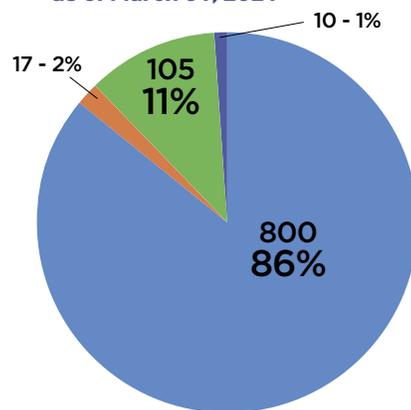
While this disruption has created hardship for many, it has also magnified the strengths, resilience, and grit of the families we serve. There have been countless examples of the family network coming together to support one another, to ensure safety and to ensure the growth and well-being of their children. It has been an honour for us at Family Services to work alongside these families.

These same family strengths, resiliencies and grit are exemplified within our Annual Report statistics:

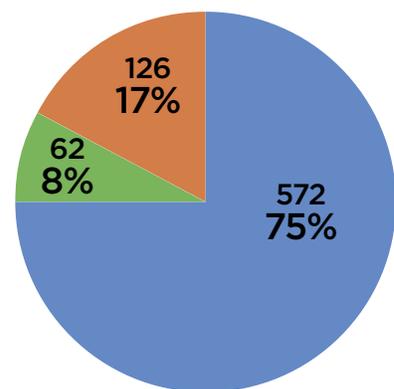
- a continued trend of decreasing apprehensions and temporary orders
- a continued trend of increasing placements with families and community
- a decrease in the length of service that families need.

Family Services is adamant in its approach to listening and engaging with the voice of the family and community and to working alongside that voice to plan and make decisions for their children.

Supporting Families to Care for their Children as of March 31, 2021

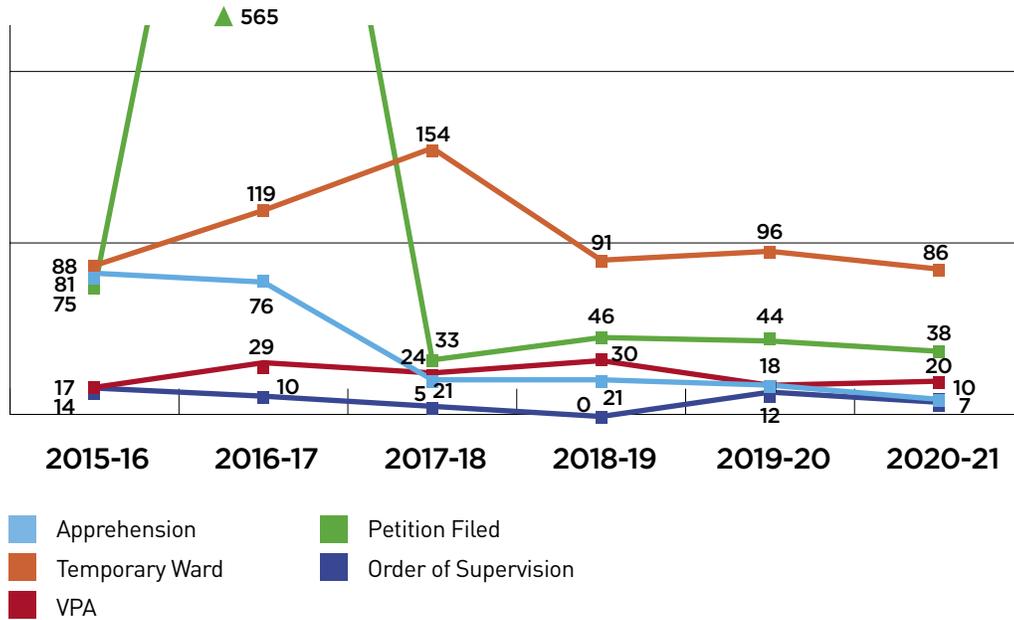


Number of Children Being Supported in their Family by Case Type as of March 31, 2021

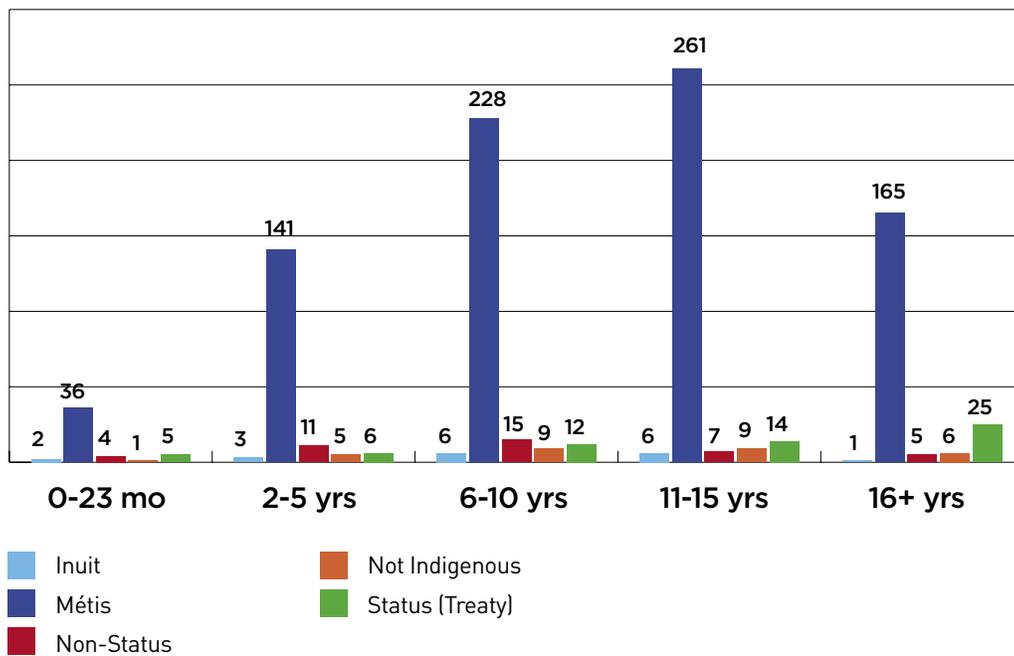


■ Children at Home
 ■ Voluntary Placement Agreement
 ■ Temporary Ward/Petition for Further Order
 ■ Apprehension
 ■ Protection
 ■ Voluntary Family Services
 ■ Family Enhancement

Children in Care: by Legal Status



Children in Care: by Indigenous Status and Age



Family Enhancement

(L'aide pour li familles)

The Family Enhancement Team walks alongside families to provide supportive services that focus on the families' overall strengths, needs and the well-being of the children.

Family Enhancement approaches families from a relational perspective, recognizing that all families have strengths, and natural support networks. The importance of having children remain within their family is always emphasized.

The Family Enhancement worker helps families build on their identified strengths. They also focus on family need that have been identified through an assessment process, which is used to broaden the families' support networks. In addition to the needs assessment, the Family Enhancement team also offers Sharing Circles, with the support of the program's cultural worker, and planning meetings with extended family members.

Métis CART

(Chim de riponse d'addiction communautaire)

In the 2019/20 fiscal year, it was announced that the agency would be receiving further pilot funding for the Métis Community Addiction Response Team (Métis CART). Although the launch of the program was delayed by the global pandemic, the program eventually did launch on June 30, 2021. The Métis CART pilot is being run by our Family Enhancement team.

Substance use is the single most common issue for families that come into contact with child welfare, and the resulting safety issues often lead to children coming into care. By providing rapid, robust interventions early in the process, we hope to keep children in the care of their parents, while those parents are on their healing journey. Should children not be able to safely remain in the care of their parents for a time, it is the goal of the Métis CART program to work with the family network to plan for who will then care for the children.

To accomplish this, Métis CART pairs an experiential peer family mentor and case manager with an in-house Addictions Foundation Manitoba (AFM) Counsellor, and a mental health therapist, to walk alongside parents whose substance use has led to child safety worries. The Métis CART staff also work in partnership with our Métis Connect program to ensure that there is a network of support for the family, who also participate in the planning and decision-making.

A Métis CART Story

A mother's previous partner and the father to her three middle children (whom he was parenting), initially refused any CFS involvement in providing support to the mom in her time of need.

The Métis CART worker believed that she had to help this man see things from a different perspective, as there were no other identified supports for the mom's youngest child, should the mom's struggle with substance use continue.

One morning, the worker was given a package of freshly frozen pickerel and immediately thought of this dad and his love for cooking - as this is a big part of his culture. In addition, the worker thought that the dad may not have the means to purchase fresh fish, because of his need to budget for a household of 5 children.

When the worker called the dad, he answered with an angry tone. However, when he was told that the worker had freshly frozen pickerel and that she wanted to know if he wanted it, the dad's tone quickly became gentle and warm, and he accepted her offer.

Sometime later, it was determined that the mom could not safely care for her little girl.

The worker and the Peer Family Mentor drove to the dad's home, and the worker went to the door. The dad answered and welcomed the worker in. The dad was told we had to place the mom's little girl for a time and was asked if he would be willing to care for her. Although not the father to this child, his response was, "of course, this is her family". It's unimaginable that one fish can have such an impact on a relationship.



Infinity Care

Our Alternative Care Program consists of four sub-units, each with a unique mandate. While our emphasis is on keeping or placing children within their families, there is an ongoing need for general and specialized caregivers – especially Métis caregivers. Far too many of our Métis children in care are being raised outside of their own family and culture.

This year, we were very happy to have been able to add another supervisor to the team. This addition has enabled us to have a supervisor for the Kinship and LIFE program, while the other individual manages the general and specialized foster care program, and our placement desk.

The Alternative Care team faced great challenges providing our services and care during the pandemic. Our team had to adapt the way that we do our case management by using technology for home studies and virtual home reviews. Our caregivers have also had to deal with a great deal of adversity in service delivery - from limitations in respite and supports to requirements for home schooling.

LIFE Program (Programme de vie)

The LIFE (Live In Family Enhancement) Program offers a unique opportunity to keep the family together while children are in care. Families are matched with a trained LIFE mentor who acts as a role model and supports, advocates, guides, and mentors the parents to promote the health and well-being of all family members. The family resides in the LIFE home for eight months, or as long as needed. The LIFE mentor helps the parents improve their parenting and life skills, deals with attachment issues, builds structure and routine, and ensures the safety and well-being of children in the program. In the past year, we have been able to expand the program by two homes (giving us a total of six LIFE homes).

This year, our coordinator has been busy restructuring the program. By reviewing the process of moving in, we want to ensure that families have all the information necessary at the move-in date to create a smooth transition in and out of the program. In the end, we want to help our parents complete the program successfully, and avoid the unknown, which is where they struggle the most.

Foster Care and Specialized Foster Care Program

(Foster care et Programme de Foster care specialisii)

The Foster Care and Specialized Foster Care programs are responsible for the recruitment, screening, training, licensing, and ongoing support of foster parents, who provide care to children of all ages, with a variety of needs. For youth that need highly skilled, specialized caregivers to help them through life, the Specialized Foster Care Program provides customized homes selected for, or designed around, a child or youth's particular needs. Throughout the program, these homes receive enhanced support and training from highly experienced staff.



Kinship Care (Soins d'parentii)

Kinship Care is a living arrangement where children who cannot reside with their parents live full time with a relative. Kinship care is focused on minimizing trauma to children and parents while enhancing the existing skills and connections within the family. The program is based on the belief that "Strong families raise strong children".

Annually, the Kinship Care program offers support, training, advocacy, and resources to approximately 300 kinship homes. The child's worker, the child's family and the Kinship Care Worker, work together to help keep children in their family networks, while maintaining and developing an awareness of the strengths and challenges faced by these families.

In doing so, our Kinship Care program can utilize the valuable wisdom and knowledge that a family possesses and build on it. The program's focus is to provide the families with a strengthened ability to deliver the quality of care that all children need to experience future success and happiness. Every effort is made to have children entering care placed with their family, and in the coming year we have dedicated further staff resources to strengthen the program.

Group Care Resources (Ressources de soins d'groupe)

Gladys Cook and Eagles Nest (La maison de Gladys Cook et Nique d'eagle)

Gladys Cook House and Eagles Nest are Agency-operated short and long-term placement resources. The staff build relationships and giving the youth a feeling of stability and commitment. If a youth comes to live in our home during the school year, staff drive them to their school. We do this so they experience one less change in their lives, and so we keep them connected to their teachers, friends, and community. Our Youth Care Workers also offer cultural and recreational opportunities such as community centres, YMCA, fishing, MCFCS Cultural Camps and related activities.

There is also a greater focus on what the youth want, which allows them to be a part of their Care Planning. With increased focus on life skills such as shopping, cooking, meal planning, cleaning, and budgeting, our youth will have a greater chance of success moving into adulthood. The staff make every effort to support family visits and involve family members in goal setting or making plans.

The pandemic created many challenges for the youth over the past year, as we had to transition to virtual family contact and remote learning. The youth adjusted well and showed a great deal of maturity, understanding and responsibility during an uncertain time. Staff provided any necessary equipment or supplies to maintain family connections, helped with schoolwork, and enhanced engagement to minimize the impact on the youth, as we all adjusted to a new normal.

RAILS (SVAAR - Services de vie autonome pour li adolescents de Rosedale)

Rosedale Adolescent Inter-Dependent Living Services (RAILS) is a seven unit, nine bed inter-dependent living program. It supports youth aged 16-21 to live on their own with the support and guidance of staff, that are available onsite 24 hours a day. Staff mentor the youth in areas such as budgeting, proper nutrition, smart shopping, educational support, personal health, and hygiene, as well as other independent living skills. Staff also provide educational, employment, recreational and cultural activities in the Common Area.

Youth have been participating in the Métis in Motion workshop series provided by our Infinity Youth program staff. When a youth or young adult leaves RAILS, they can also receive outreach from staff for up to three months as they move on their own to independent living. The pandemic was incredibly impactful on the progress of the youth at RAILS, as programming was put on hold to follow the public health guidelines and restrictions. The youth were very socially responsible and respectful of these health guidelines, doing their part to ensure everyone's safety. Remote learning proved to be challenging at first, but with staff assistance and encouragement, some school credits were achieved.

Infinity Child and Youth Programs

(Programme d'enfants pi li jeunes)

Metis Child, Family and Community Services runs programs all year long for children and youth that focus on health, culture, and personal development. Staff from this area participate on the Spirit Helpers and Workplace Health & Safety Committees, assist our Agency picnics, and organize our Youth Celebrations. New programs are added as funding allows.

The Child and Youth team acknowledges different holidays by preparing food and activities to mark the occasions, and youth from all programs come together to share in the holiday spirit. The two weeklong cultural camps give up to 15 children each week an opportunity to learn about their Métis history and culture as well as participate in fun activities. Some sites that youth have visited during these camps include: Seven Oaks House, the St. James Museum, Lower Fort Garry, and The Forks. The team also

organizes cultural activities such as sweat lodges, sharing circles, sweet grass, sage and cedar picking.



Circle of Life (Cercle de vie)

The lives of children involved with child and family services are often filled with trauma and loss, whether they are in care or they are living with their family. It is of the utmost importance that children are supported in every aspect of their lives to build resilience and help them heal from the traumas they have faced.

The Circle of Life Program provides 1:1 support for children between the ages of 7 to 15 years, who are both in and out of care. Staff are goal-oriented and strength-based when working with the unique needs of each child or youth. They encourage youth to develop better communication and conflict resolution skills. The programming promotes resilience and the development of positive and healthy relationships.

Not only do children and youth participate in healthy and fun activities, but the team also helps them to focus on cultural and educational elements. Children and youth are guided in discovering their culture and heritage and have taken part in sweats, smudging, sharing circles,

cultural crafts, and lessons of the sash. They are taught the benefits of incorporating those teachings into their everyday lives, while instilling positive values and respect for themselves and others.

Little Bears (Li P'ti ours)

Little Bears group provides bi-weekly programming for children ages 7-15 and adds a group element for children and youth receiving services from the Circle of Life program. In the past, this group has participated in Métis games, played the spoons, learned to jig, and learned about Métis history. They have visited various cultural sites like The Forks, Seven Oaks House, and the St. James and St. Boniface Museums. A favorite activity for the group is "Métis Night", where they make their own Bannock dogs from scratch and enjoy traditional foods that include stew, pickerel, pea soup, wild rice, and blueberry pie. At each gathering they have a meal which helps them to focus and enjoy the planned activity.

Each evening includes a component related to Métis history and culture, which in the past, has included smudging and sharing circles (when possible). The time together also allows the youth to form trusting and supportive relationships. And this relationship building can help them create stability, which is critical in other areas of their lives.

Although public health orders prevented this group from meeting regularly, there were opportunities for smaller groups to meet with their peers, enabling them to stay connected.

Skills for Life (Li connaissances pour la vie)

The Skills for Life team provides 1:1 and group support to youth between the ages of 15 to 21. The team is goal-oriented and focused on the needs of the youth, to prepare them for adulthood. Using cultural, educational, and recreational components, staff can guide the learning of necessary life skills such as budgeting, banking, resume building and job search, nutrition, cooking, personal care, and safety. This program assists youth by helping them develop problem-solving skills, and by showing them how to navigate other services through nonprofit or government programs.

Working with the youth, our staff try to determine which areas they should focus on to prepare our young people for independence when they age out of care. This year, to assist in that process, the Skills for Life team utilized a survey tool that consisted of 217 questions, covering areas of hygiene and health, substance use and mental health, nutrition, residence stability, medical, financial, education & career, transportation, baby preparation, child rearing, justice, daily life skills, healthy relationships, family connection and adult support, sexual awareness, community and networking, social interaction, independence and goal achievement, personal aesthetics and self-actualization.

Through continued funding received from the Children's Aid Foundation, we were able to offer therapy/counselling to youth who have aged out of the care of our Agency. The Foundation also provides programming alongside the Métis Spirit program. Finally, the Children's Aid Foundation and the MMF Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples (UPIP) program provides financial support for our staff to prepare and present mental health and job readiness programming.

Cultural Craft Night (Li crafts culturel)

The Infinity Circle of Life and Skills for Life teams work together to provide weekly opportunities to learn crafting at the McGregor location. We try to ensure that there is an educational and cultural component in each session. Children and youth make cultural crafts, learn lessons of the sash, learn Michif words and phrases, and share a meal. They have worked on beading projects – earrings, key chains, moccasins, and mitts. They enjoy painting rocks, canvases and talking sticks; as well as making drums and dream catchers. Our program room holds many examples of the work by our talented artists. Throughout the pandemic, staff made up and distributed kits for participants, so that classes could be held virtually.

Spirit Helpers Committee (Comitii d'aide pour li esprits)

The Spirit Helpers Committee is made up of staff members from throughout the agency. With the support of Children and Youth Programming staff, the committee has organized sweat lodge ceremonies, sweet grass, cedar and sage picking for youth and agency staff. These activities give them the opportunity to learn about medicines and Ceremony for those interested in exploring the First Nation's side of their culture.

The Agency works diligently to ensure that the culture of our children has been considered in every case plan. We continue to use the cultural planning bundle, and this is a primary focus for our Cultural Worker working with children placed in non-culturally appropriate homes. This is an inclusive document for families, youth, and staff.





Cultural Camp

Historically, Cultural Camp is offered over two weeks in July and August by the Spirit Helpers Committee, Métis Spirit Program and Children and Youth Program staff. Youth visit historical sites, go medicine picking, enjoy Métis games, participate in ceremonies, listen to teachings, and get to sample traditional Métis food. Unfortunately, the pandemic restrictions prevented us from holding a camp in 2020.

Fiddling and Jigging Groups (Li Violon et la jig)

Through Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples (UPIP), we have been able to offer fiddling and jigging lessons to children in care and children not in care that are associated with the Agency. Utilizing Agency owned fiddles, we now have ten youth who attend virtual lessons on Wednesday evenings. Jigging lessons were also adapted to a virtual platform that has been attended by youth ages 5-12 years old.

Métis Spirit Program (L'esprit di Michif)

The Métis Spirit Program is a unique funding partnership between the Agency and the MMF. Métis Spirit Workers engage with youth between the ages of 18 to 25 that do not have an Agreement with Young Adults, and that are no longer receiving any Agency supports.

Youth often think they don't need or want help from the Agency, such as the financial assistance available with an Agreement for Young Adults. But many times, youth find themselves struggling to navigate life and systems on their own. Even young adults that received assistance from the Agency up until the age of 21 may still require support and advocacy. Those youth would still be eligible for support from the Métis Spirit Worker for four more years.

Although the Métis Spirit Worker is limited in their ability to help financially, they are there to assist young adults who voluntarily engage with this program to receive ongoing support, advocacy, and connections to community resources, homelessness, employment, and job readiness. The Métis Spirit Worker also helps the young adult identify their goals and assists them in their achievement. We can even help explore adult education and post-secondary opportunities for the youth.

The demands are great, and adulthood is becoming even more complex. We hope that one day the Agency can host two Métis Spirit Workers, to help us meet the ever-increasing demands on the program.

Family Support

Family Support Program (Support pour la famille)

In keeping with the vision to better support our families, rather than have children come into care, Family Support has been shifting its focus in the past year to more preventative work. By building relationships and offering added levels of support, we hope to resolve problems earlier and reduce trauma to children and families.

It is, however, still extremely important that children in care be actively connected to their families of origin. Most of the Family Support Program service is still focused on Supported Family Time. With COVID-19 impacting our ability to have in office visits, we had to move all our visits into the community. This was equally challenging, as many of the locations were restricted or closed.

The Family Support team was busy providing Parent Education to families this year. Family Support Workers either met with parents in their yards, community or over the phone to stay connected and meet their needs as they came up.

Butterfly Program (Papillion) (No Butterfly due to COVID-19)

This program is offered to families that are in the reunification process or in the LIFE Program. If reunification is no longer possible, we focus on how to make family time meaningful and strengthen the existing attachment. Family Support staff are assigned to a family for a duration of 12-20 weeks along with a Heart Stories Attachment Therapist. During this time, the family also works with their family support worker and therapist to build and strengthen their attachment with their child/ren.

Each week, the family time is recorded, with the parent, family support worker, and therapist watching the video immediately afterward. The family support worker leads the discussion with guidance from the therapist and provides feedback about the family interaction in the video. Then activities are introduced that will enhance and promote attachment between parent and child. These activities are worked on throughout the week as "homework".

The model is to be strength-based and provide parents with positive feedback. We always want to build off the existing strengths of the parents and continue to encourage parents to work on their parent/child attachment.

Christmas Hampers

In partnership with the Manitoba Métis Federation, every December for the last five years, the Family Support program has provided Christmas hampers to families that receive services from our Agency.

Last year proved to be challenging for the program, as many stores were not allowed to sell non-essential items at Christmas. In response, our team had to be creative with our shopping, and we made sure we still purchased items that were needed by our families. As a result, last December, we were able to deliver 43 hampers to unsuspecting families. We also received extra funding this past year, so we were able to give our Kinship homes hampers as well.

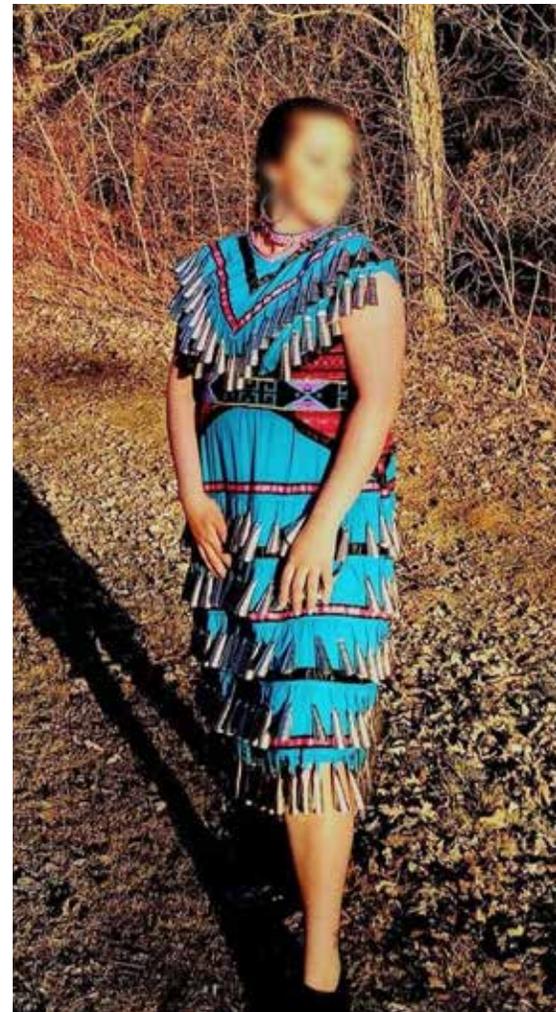
The hamper program is a favorite of staff and families alike. Being able to provide families and children with items to make their Christmas's a little bit better definitely makes our jobs that much more rewarding.

Youth Celebration (Celebration di jeunes)

The Child and Youth team is also responsible for one of the Agency's most important events - the Age of Majority Celebration. This year, 59 youth were celebrated at our 37th Youth Celebration.

Each celebration offers youth the opportunity to bring together family, friends and people who have supported them on their journey. No one leaves the celebration without being touched by the experiences of these young people and without being struck by the closeness of relationships they share with family and professionals alike.

Unfortunately, as has been the case with most of our programming, we had to adapt this event last year to accommodate the restrictions around COVID-19. As a result, the honouring of our youth turning 18 looked much different this year than it has in the past. Rather than the traditional ceremony, gift bags were distributed to all participants by Agency staff. Their gifts included Indigenous artwork, a Métis sash, a write up, lanyard and hoodie, a \$100 gift card, and information on our Skills for Life and Métis Spirit Programs.





Métis Youth Work Project

This past year marked the first year of the Métis Youth Work Project, which provided work experience opportunities to Agency youth between the ages of 17-20 years old.

Some of the job readiness skills these young people acquired included:

- Safe and secure transportation of customer property
- Timely removal and disposal of unwanted possessions
- Step-by-step process for effectively painting interior walls
- Creation of cloth masks.

While the Métis Youth Work Project provides its participants with valuable work experience and skills, in practice, the reach has been much greater. All told, the Métis Youth Work Project assisted both Agency families and the Agency itself in addressing a variety of critical needs, which in the process has left a lasting and positive impression on the broader community.

Youth Recognition (Reconnaissance di jeunes)

We would like to congratulate and honour every student who succeeded in a very unusual and challenging year!

Grade 8 Grads/Honourable Mentions

Isaiah R Violet A

Grade 12 Grads

Jorden K	Kayla S	Dason G	Michael Y	Dustin N
Derrell S	Latisha G	Patrick W	Renee G	Ashton L
Hailey B	Steven G	Joshua R	Tyler W	Alyssa D
Tierra B	Kaylee P	Anthony G	Tyson M	Jordan F
Skyler L	Anthony M-L	Curtis T	Dakota M	Antonio S
Cassy P	Hailey S	Louis P	Robyn R	Brandon S
Kerrien S				

College Degrees

Theodore S

My Garden of Support

I started as a flower in a pot that got wrote off as a weed,
Then I met my new supports who wanted to help me to succeed,

Just as I began to wilt like a rose,
And each bad experience built up and fell like dominos,
I was picked up before I could get crushed into the ground,
I got transplanted to a beautiful acreage that had flowers all around,

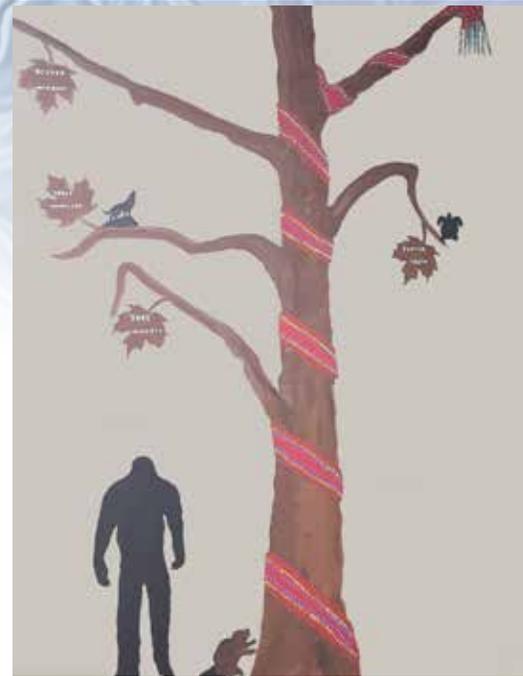
I had more than I could ask for,
I moved from a broken home to a place where good intentions were
set only to restore,

Later on when my placement broke down,
I fell hard feeling like the talk of the town,
But I was supported throughout the whole thing,
From home to home and each painful sting,

I had a safety net to fall back on, a village you could say,
I learned more about my hidden culture with each and every day,

Learning of medicines and teachings that made this flower bloom,
Building arts and crafts sparked my creativity deep within,
These people showed me what it was like to be believed in,
And all of these opportunities I never would have known about,
Had it not been for these people who instead of picking me out like
a weed, taught me how to sprout.

Renee Gratton



Thank you to all the children and youth whose art is highlighted throughout this report!

Cover Art by
Jayden S.

