

LII MICHIF OTIPEMISIWAK
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Michif Practice Model



Colleen Lucier · Caara Goddard



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*Graphics throughout this document are
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Artist Statement

Original Painting

Title: *Wildflower Wheel #1*, 2025

Artist: Leah Marie Dorion

Medium: Acrylic on canvas with mica flakes

Dimensions: 36" W x 36" H

This painting is dedicated to the wildflowers that have influenced Metis health and wellbeing throughout the generations. The four wildflowers featured in the painting are the dandelion, blue bells, yarrow, & thistle. These four wild flowers have brought much joy and comfort into the lives of many Metis people and families often they have been featured in the patterns of Metis beadwork designs. The centre of the Red River Cart wheel has the fruits and flowers that have sustained Metis people and symbolize the youth and their gifts which they bring to the community circle. The four cart wheel spokes have humming birds, butterflies, bees and dragonflies that all inspire us to seek out the beauty and joy in the circle of life journey. There are seeds blowing around the wheel connected by a lifeline umbilical cord symbolizing our need to connect with the cycles of the natural world for health and healing.

This painting is inspired by the quote by Christie Belcourt: *"We are resilient as a weed and beautiful as a wildflower"*

Visual Identity

The central logo artwork was originally created by Leah Marie Dorion for Lii Michif Otipemisiwak Family and Community Services' Life Promotion Protocol. With permission, this artwork has been carried forward into the Michif Practice Model as a broader visual representation of the model's teachings, values, and guiding purpose.

The LMO Life Promotion Protocol was developed to guide suicide prevention and response through an approach grounded in hope, purpose, belonging, and meaning. These same values are woven throughout the LMO Michif Practice Model, and the logo's original teachings now help shape the visual identity of the model as a whole.

We acknowledge that the **LMO Michif Practice Model** was developed on Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc territory, within the unceded ancestral lands of the Secwépemc Nation. We honour these lands and further recognize this place as the chosen home of the Two Rivers Métis Community.



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FOREWARD



Taanishi mii Zaamii. Colleen Lucier Dishinikashon. Mii noon di famii si lii Lucier (Lussier), Laroque, Lachevrotiere, Chartrand pi Brazeau. Ni wiikin daan territwayr kayaash ooschi Secwépemcul'ecw li moond itagawiikichik. Moon local di Michif si Two Rivers Métis Society Datooshkaan poor Lii Michif Otipemisiwak Family and Community Services.

Ni Kishchiitayimoon Aen li Michif Wiiyaan Southern Michif Language

With the dedicated support and guidance from respected Michif Elder Norman Fleury and Samson Lamontagne, LMO has been committed to the revitalization of the Southern Michif Language. It is a gift to bring this dialect alive in our daily practice.

My name is Colleen Lucier, and since 2011, I have been honoured to serve as the Executive Director of Lii Michif Otipemisiwak Family and Community Services (LMO), located on the ancestral, traditional, and unceded territory of the Secwépemcul'ecw in Kamloops, British Columbia, and the chosen home of the Two Rivers Chartered Métis Community. It is from this place that I offer these words as a reflection, an introduction, and an invitation into the pages that follow.

Métis family names are Lucier (Lussier), Laroque, Lachevrotiere, Chartrand, and Brazeau and carry with them histories of resilience, courage, and deep responsibility. Yet, like many of my generation, I did not grow up knowing my Métis identity, our stories, or the strength of the lineage I come from. For much of my life, I misunderstood that absence, believing it stemmed from shame or silence. Over time, I came to understand it instead as protection, an act of survival shaped by the impacts of intergenerational trauma and loss.

My dad's great-grandfather, Toussaint Lussier, stood among those who resisted in 1870 and again in 1885 to defend the land, rights, and sovereignty of the Métis People. My dad's grandfather, Chrysostome Lussier, was just a child in the aftermath of the 1885 resistance and the execution of Louis Riel, a moment that reverberated through generations. The fear, trauma, and upheaval that followed forced many Métis families to make impossible choices: to disperse, to assimilate, and to shield their children from further harm. In this context, disconnection was not abandonment of identity, but a necessary means of survival.

The legacy of colonial policies and practices, including residential schools, the Métis scrip system, and the road allowance experience, further fractured our sense of belonging. Many Métis People were left without a clear place in either Indigenous or non-Indigenous worlds, creating a profound and lasting disconnection from community, culture, and self. The spirit of Wahkohtowin, our understanding of interconnectedness and responsibility to one another, was strained, and with it, our collective memory of who we are as Otipemisiwak, those who govern and care for ourselves.

My journey back to that understanding has been guided by the generosity, patience, and wisdom of many Elders, notably Dave Barron, Pat Hartford, DeeDee Hurd, Peter Hourie, Joyce Munro, Don Beauchesne, Patrick Savard, Lynda Tilley, Fred Paquette, Ellen Ahdemar, Denise McCuaig, Wendy Chernivchan, Brenda Percell, and Norman Fleury. Their teachings, grounded in love, humility, compassion, and accountability, helped me reconnect to my Métis spirit and identity in ways that continue to shape my life and work.

Equally transformative were my early experiences as a young, very naïve child protection social worker with the Woodland Cree People of the Little Red River Cree Nation on the remote Fox Lake reserve in northern Alberta. The lessons I learned there, through relationships, lived experience, and traditional teachings, became the foundation of my understanding of what meaningful, relational, and culturally grounded practice can and should be. Those teachings continue to guide the work we do at LMO today, even across the many kilometres that separate those places.

Since 2012, LMO has been on a deliberate, ongoing journey to transform child welfare practice. Historically, the child welfare system has too often been associated with fear, mistrust, and the perpetuation of trauma, grief, and loss. With the support of Métis Elders, and with the expertise, dedication and guidance of Practice Consultants Caara Goddard and Cacheton Goddard, LMO has developed the LMO Michif Practice Model. This practice model draws on the Signs of Safety Practice Framework and is heavily inspired by our traditional Métis values of kindness and humility, and honours our ways of being, such as our spirit of generosity, our sense of accountability as demonstrated through our laws (i.e., The Laws of the Buffalo Hunt) and sense of commitment and responsibility to one another through our Paraantii (Kinship circle).

This model is not simply a framework; it is a living expression of who we are. It is grounded in the belief that by weaving our values and traditional ways of being into child safety and wellness practice, we can create systems of care that reflect who we are and anchor child safety and wellbeing in the protective factors found in culture. In this way, as a Métis child and family services agency, LMO has demonstrated how culture is not separate and apart from or an option to consider in child safety, but rather culture is at the heart of child safety work and to healing from the legacy of intergenerational trauma that is often at the root of why Indigenous children may be in need of child welfare interventions.

The LMO Michif Practice Model has emerged from our long journey of reimagining a system. It is both a reflection of where we have come from and a guide for where we are going. It reminds us that our cultural teachings have always held the knowledge needed to protect and nurture our children. It affirms that by remembering who we are, and by supporting others to do the same, we can transform systems, restore hope, and create better futures for Métis children, youth, and families.

At LMO, we continually seek to reimagine the child welfare system, shifting it toward one that fosters connection, strengthens belonging, and contributes to healing. For our team at LMO, every day is an opportunity to do better. I extend my deepest appreciation to our Elders, Board of Directors, and our employees for sharing in this act of reconciliation. I extend a further note of extraordinary appreciation to Practice Consultant, Caara Goddard, who believed in me and our vision, and stood by our Michif Team through all the trials and successes we experienced along the way. This would not have been possible without her support. I will be forever grateful that our stars aligned.

It is my hope that these pages will inspire, challenge, and invite you into this work with open hearts and minds. The path forward is one of reconnection, responsibility, and collective care. It is, ultimately, a return to ourselves as Métis People for our Métis People. As Métis Artist, Author and Activist, Christie Belcourt said, "We are resilient as a weed and beautiful as a wildflower. We have much to celebrate and be proud of."



Maarsii pi Pishkapmisho,
Colleen Lucier
April 2026





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INTRODUCTION

Since its incorporation in 1998, Lii Michif Otipemisiwak Family and Community Services (LMO, formerly known as Interior Métis Child and Family Services) has provided a range of Métis-specific support services to the Métis population residing in Kamloops, British Columbia, located within Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc, one of the 17 remaining communities of the more than 32 original communities in the unceded Secwépemcul'ecw territory. In 2021, the discovery of 215 unmarked graves of children on the grounds of the Kamloops Indian Residential School sparked a global awakening to the truths and atrocities of residential schools and an urgent call for reparation. As guests on these lands, the Michif Team at LMO is committed to walking respectfully with the Secwépemc Nation, ensuring that their commitment to improving outcomes for Métis children, youth, and families aligns with that of the Secwépemc People for their own children, youth, and families.



In 2017, LMO became the second delegated Métis child and family services agency in British Columbia. As such, responsibility for all child protection services was transferred from the provincial government to LMO. While the Métis Nation continues to work toward achieving jurisdiction over the safety and well-being of Métis children and families, the Michif Team at LMO is committed to practicing as though jurisdiction has already been restored, honouring the legacy of our ancestors who the Cree referred to as Otipemisiwak, which, loosely translated, means "the people who own themselves" or "the people who govern themselves".

As a delegated Métis child and family services agency, LMO followed the vision of its founding members and the guidance of local Elders to design a practice model intended to be different, feel different, and produce better outcomes for the Métis children, youth, and families we serve.

A critical question guides LMO's work:

How do we transform a system that has caused profound harm, grief, and trauma to Métis children and families into a system that fosters safety, well-being, and healing?

Like other Indigenous communities and agencies, LMO recognizes the need to rewrite child safety practices in a way that reflects who we are as Métis People and honours our values, teachings, and traditional ways of caring for children and families. Guided by local Métis Elders and contributions from nationally recognized Michif Elders, academics, and artists such as Norman Fleury, Leah Dorion, and Lisa Shepard, LMO began our journey of transformative practice and act of reconciliation as it relates to child and family services, by identifying our vision and the guiding principles that would define a Métis-specific child safety practice model. We then sought a practice framework that aligned with our vision. We found this alignment in the Signs of Safety Practice Framework, created by Andrew Turnell and Steve Edwards in collaboration with over 150 Western Australian child protection workers. Since 2012, LMO, in partnership with the esteemed Indigenous Child Welfare Consultant, Caara Goddard, has been diligently integrating Métis ways of being into the Signs of Safety Framework, ensuring our work is firmly rooted in Métis cultural practices and focused on creating safety and healing for those we are honoured to serve. This work culminated in the development of the LMO Michif Practice Model, where culture and compassion have been restored as protective factors in child safety work.

For more information on the development of Michif Practice Model, please view the following video: <https://youtu.be/4wjIH9d1Ey4>.

This manual outlines the LMO Michif Practice Model. It is intended to support all employees, contractors, and volunteers in gaining a deep understanding of the expectations and requirements for delivering child safety and well-being services on behalf of LMO. The content describes the LMO case management model applied across all service areas of practice. Rewriting child welfare practice begins with remembering who we are as Métis People and breathing life into our traditional Métis laws and ways of caring for one another through the many challenges of our contemporary world.

LMO is founded on the values of compassion and respect and the relationships we establish with the children, youth, and families are founded on Métis principles and worldviews with an emphasis on restoring traditional practices about the ways Métis people cared for one another during difficult times. By working together with our families, our hope is to reaffirm and restore connection to their community, their culture, and their Ancestors to foster resilience and provide opportunities for healing.



Otipemisiwak!

OUR VISION

That all Métis children, youth, and families live with love, honour, dignity, and respect, knowing they belong to a strong and proud People with a unique heritage and cultural identity.

The LMO Michif Practice Model emphasizes the importance of gathering the voices of the Michif child, their family, and those surrounding the family to gain multiple perspectives on a single situation and to understand harm or concerning behaviours fully. Michif Elders provide invaluable support, guidance, and mentorship, and they participate across all areas of LMO's service delivery model from intake to file closure.

Métis culture is woven into every aspect of our work. From the moment individuals walk through our doors, they are welcomed with the Michif language, music, and the warmth of a family-home environment.

OUR CONSTITUTION

The purpose of this Society is to:

1. Advocate for Métis children, youth, and families so that they can live with love, honour, and dignity, and respect, knowing they belong to a strong, proud People with a unique heritage and cultural identity.
2. Work respectfully with all levels of government to promote strong, healthy Métis children, youth, and families.
3. Offer family programming and child safety services that are embedded in and delivered with love, compassion, and respect.
4. Construct, hold, manage, and maintain culturally safe and affordable housing options for low-income or low to moderate-income clients who are receiving or who have received services from the provincial child welfare system.
5. Construct, hold, manage and operate culturally safe and affordable childcare spaces for clients who are receiving or who have received services from the provincial child welfare system and/or the Society.
6. Ensure our services are consistent with Métis traditions, values, and ways of caring for and honouring one another.
7. Cultivate and nurture a sense of belonging to one's Métis community and cultural identity.
8. Promote and demonstrate reconciliation in Métis child and family services.

GUIDING PRACTICE EXPECTATIONS OF THE LMO MICHIF PRACTICE MODEL

COMPASSIONATE PRACTICE

- Demonstrate an approach grounded in traditional Michif values of compassion, kindness, respect, humility, and generosity.
- Prioritize the cultivation of positive, non-judgmental, and supportive relationships with children, youth, families, and caregivers.
- Honour the LMO Michif Elders Council as an integral part of the LMO Michif Team, including Elders in home visits, family/youth planning meetings, programs, and seeking their guidance and support in delivering Métis culturally safe practices.
- Contribute to reconciliation by empowering children, youth, and parents to explore their identities as Métis people and the resilient history from which they come.

Traditionally, the Sash was worn by Métis men during the Fur Trade Era and considered a practical clothing item that served many utilitarian purposes. Following the Battle of Batoche in 1885, the Métis experienced many years of extreme hardship before they began to gather and re-build the Nation. During this time, the Métis Sash became one of the most recognizable political and cultural symbols for Métis people to express pride in their heritage, culture, and community.

Honouring our families with a Métis Sash is a way to establish a sense of belonging to Community and support their growing sense of identity.

HONOURING

- Offer the gift of tea, bannock and/or other culturally meaningful food upon each initial home visit.
- Facilitate a **Piihitikway (Welcoming) Meeting**, during which each member of the family is presented with a Métis sash to honour their Métis ancestry, connection to community, and to welcome them home.
- Acknowledge milestones such as birthdays and personal accomplishments.
- Host a celebration when files are closed.

Honouring and celebration are intrinsically woven into the Métis worldview. Traditionally, rites of passage, marriages, and chivaree's (Métis celebrations) were an integral part of Métis life.

Today, LMO continues this tradition by honouring milestones for our Métis children, youth, and families.

Elders have always been considered highly respected members of the Métis community and **LMO observes the traditional practice of seeking the voice of an Elder when making important decisions regarding the assessment process.** Our Elders have attained traditional knowledge through the oral transmission of our stories and teachings of our Ancestors and by way of their unique lived experiences within their family/community. Overcoming hardships during their own life, the Elders have learned how to walk gently within our community and are able to provide guidance about how to work respectfully with our vulnerable families.

TRANSPARENCY

- Complete clear rationale for all screenings and assessments, including the views of a Michif Elder.
- Conduct a Piihitikway Meeting at the beginning of services to introduce families to our service delivery model and affirm our commitment to decolonizing child welfare practice and prevention services.
- Invite *La Paraantii* to understand both the concerns and the goals, ensuring they can actively participate in co-creating the ongoing well-being and safety plan for the family.
- Complete and regularly review Family/Youth Plans following the LMO Michif Practice Model. *La Paraantii* is a crucial element in shifting responsibility for the care and well-being of children and families from LMO back to the family's own network.
- Facilitate client completion of **the Aykooshi (Exit Interview)** to learn directly from service recipients what is working well and what could improve.
- Complete closing meetings, recordings, and honouring ceremonies at the conclusion of services—through either in-person celebrations or by sending a Métis card and gift by mail.

TRADITIONAL TEACHINGS

- Wear a Métis sash pin during home visits or family meetings, or full Métis sash attire for court or community meetings, in recognition of our history as the “Forgotten People.”
- Include the Elder-in-Residence in home visits and meetings.
- Incorporate the ancestral Michif language in greetings and programming (**see A Relationship with the Michif Language and Culture**)
- Offer prayers at meetings, gatherings, and programming (**See Lii Michif Elder's Book and Prayers folder for resources**).
- Acknowledge the unceded territory of Secwépemcul'ecw and the Two Rivers Métis Chartered Community.

The **Piihitikway Meeting** is aligned with the traditional Métis value to welcome all that come to your door.

In keeping with this tradition, LMO welcomes families to work alongside of their personalized LMO care team to ensure they have access to supports while addressing the concerns.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE CORE PRINCIPLES OF THE SIGNS OF SAFETY FRAMEWORK

RESPECTFUL WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

LMO believes that respectful working relationships between service providers and family members are fundamental to ensuring child safety and supporting family healing. The best outcomes for vulnerable children, youth, and their families are directly linked to strong, respectful working relationships.

The formation of respectful relationships is the foundation for human change. Relationship-centered child protection practice is a core principle of the Signs of Safety framework, aligning seamlessly with Michif values and forming a central pillar of the LMO Michif Practice Model.

BEING GROUNDED IN EVERYDAY PRACTICE

The Signs of Safety approach emphasizes sharing, reflecting on, and improving practices directly “on the ground.” At all levels, we utilize appreciative inquiry, learning from the stories we tell, and reflective practice to understand what children, youth, families, communities, and workers perceive as effective practice in complex and challenging cases. This reflective approach is central to learning and growth within the agency.

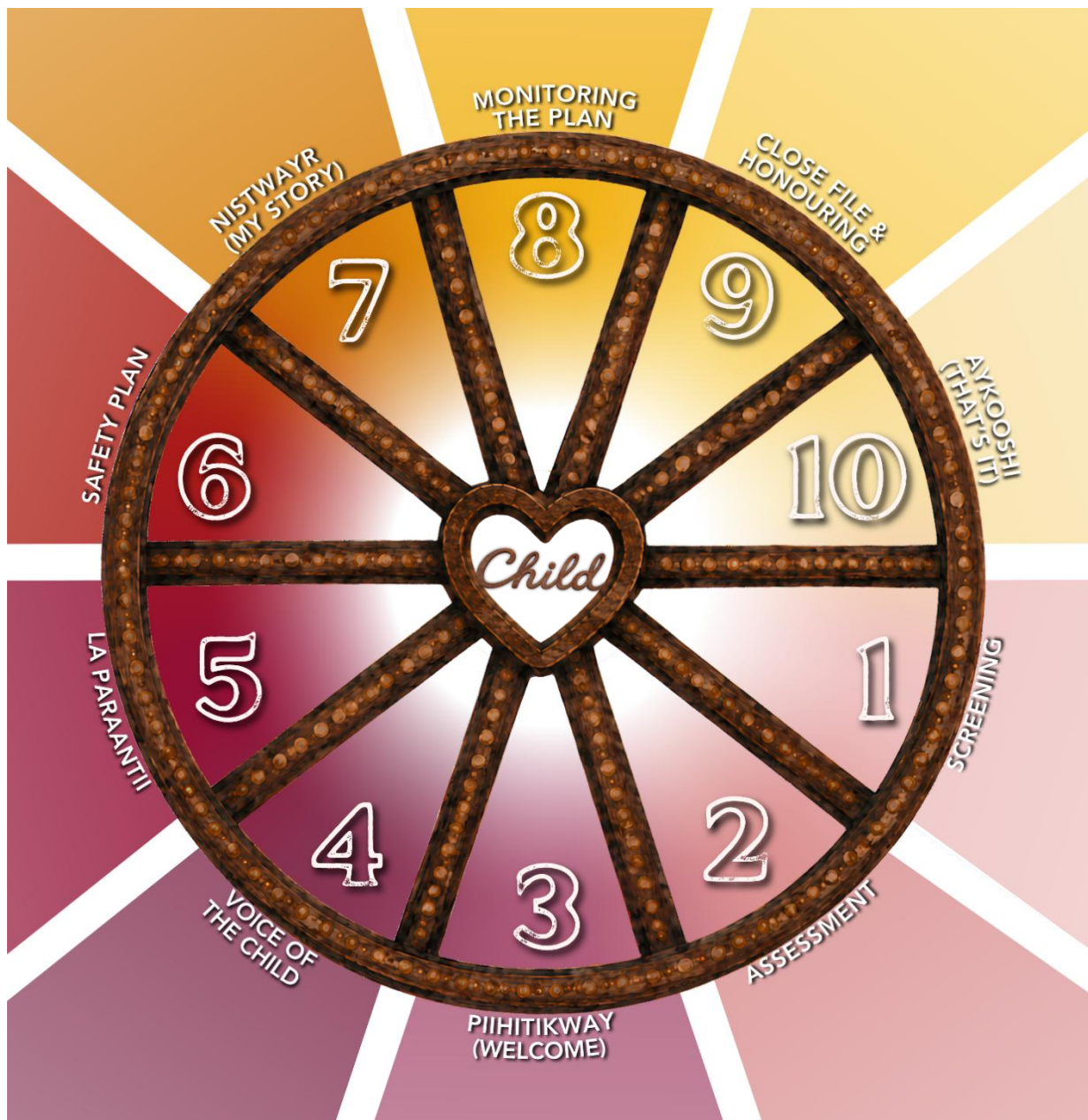
STANCE OF CRITICAL INQUIRY - DEMONSTRATION OF HUMILITY

LMO is committed to ensuring that our team remains open to multiple possibilities, adopting a questioning and inquisitive approach as our core stance in practice. We continually strive to understand the perspectives of children, youth, families, and the community. We know that we must approach this work with humility, recognizing that:

“The single most important factor in minimizing error (in child protection practice) is to admit that you may be wrong.”

Eileen Monro (2002)

10 STEPS OF ACCOUNTABILITY: WORKFLOW AND DECISION-MAKING



LMO developed the 10 Steps of Accountability to inform the LMO Michif Practice Model. These steps guide workers through workflow and decision-making processes while honouring Métis traditional and cultural ways of being.

Each of the 10 Steps of Accountability in the LMO Michif Practice Model reflects and honours traditional Métis practices, as described in the following:

STEP 1: SCREENING

In addition to the worker and team leader providing rationale for the outcome of a caller's report, workers are required to seek and document the views of a Métis Elder. By gathering and recording the perspectives of a Métis Elder, workers integrate traditional insights into child safety considerations and inform how LMO might approach a given situation.

Elder participation in all facets of practice will ensure that decision-making, meetings, and ceremony are grounded in traditional practices, values, and beliefs of the Métis people.

STEP 2: ASSESSMENT

The purpose of the assessment process is to gather balanced information from families and youth using a structured approach comprised of three columns and seven analysis categories. This approach supports a balanced consideration of both risk and protective factors and results in clear analysis in casework, referred to as Analysis Sets, which always include:

- Worry Statements
- Safety Goals
- Safety Scales

This analysis guides casework throughout the life of the case and may include Safety Planning Timelines for action.

- Upon first meeting with families or youth, workers are expected to greet and visit the home alongside an Elder, bringing a small gift of tea and cookies or a similar offering. This tradition reflects the Métis value of sharing and the cultural practice of arriving at someone's home with a food gift. Offering food is a gesture of respect, humility, and gratitude, intended to build comfort and reduce anxiety during what may be a stressful time for parents or youth. The gift and presence of an Elder are important strategies for reducing fear and building respectful relationships, which enhance a worker's ability to conduct a balanced risk assessment.

Tea & Bannock are considered traditional foods by Métis people and would always be enjoyed when guests visited the home. **LMO honours this tradition by bringing a food gift during our first visit to a family's home.**

- At the conclusion of the assessment, the worker, team leader, and Elder collaboratively provide their rationale for the assessment's outcome, using case-specific scales. This ensures the inclusion of traditional perspectives and guarantees that the voice of the Métis community is documented for the child and family to review.

STEP 3: PIIHITIKWAY MEETING

The Piihitikway Meeting serves to welcome and introduce the family or youth to LMO, our agency's philosophy of practice, and our commitment to reconciliation and the traditional values that have historically kept Métis children safe and families connected.

These meetings provide an opportunity to begin our journey with a family or youth by reminding them of who they are as Métis people, their resilience, and why the Cree refer to us as **Otipemisiwak** — those who govern and care for themselves.

Piihitikway Meetings provide the relational and cultural foundation of the Michif Practice Model, establishing the tone for trust, relationship building, and future engagement in child safety or well-being planning.

During the Piihitikway Meeting, each member of the family is presented with a Métis sash. This meaningful gift serves as a symbolic reminder of the child's, youth's, and family's Métis identity, the strength and resilience of their ancestors, and the knowledge that they are not alone, that they belong to a larger community and Nation ready to support them.

STEP 4: VOICE OF THE CHILD

The LMO Michif Practice Model places great importance on honouring the voice of the child. Throughout the casework process, workers strive to ensure that the child's voice is heard, documented, and meaningfully reflected in practice.

Rooted in Métis practices of placing children at the heart of the community (Auger, 2024), **the child's voice must be visible and captured from the initial screening process through to case closure.** This includes recognizing and honouring the ways children express who they are, and how they experience connection and belonging to their community, family, and culture.

To facilitate gathering the voice of the child, LMO has developed several tools designed to capture children's perspectives, including:

- **My 3 Cabins**
- **My 3 Flowers**
- **My 3 Red River Carts**
- **Safety Cabin**
- **Reasons for Living Inventory**
- **Life Promotion Plan**
- **Kwaayesh Ni Kaanawaymikawin (Connection and Belonging Assessment and Plan)**

These tools create space for asking thoughtful questions and documenting the child's feelings and thoughts, providing an avenue for parents and others to understand the child's experiences and perspectives.

STEP 5: LA PARAANTII

The Michif word *La Paraantii* was shared with us by **Michif Elder Norman Fleury**:

It refers to both blood and non-blood relationships and emphasizes the responsibilities we have toward one another. While often translated simply as “family relation” or “relative,” this translation does not fully capture the ethical depth of the concept. As a value, La Paraantii means the principle of caring for one another.

- In caring for one another, we share responsibilities that extend to the safety and well-being of children, who have always been honoured by Métis people as sacred gifts from the Creator. Children are to be loved, nurtured, and protected. Métis communities historically ensured that children were not raised in isolation. When challenges arose, family members stepped in to keep children safe and to ensure their needs were met. At LMO, our Michif Team is dedicated to reviving the spirit of *La Paraantii* and honouring the roles of noohkoom (grandmother), mooshoom (grandfather), taant (aunt), nook (uncle), koozin(n) (cousin), and others with whom a child feels a safe connection. These individuals are key to supporting the safety and care of children.
- In keeping with this tradition, the LMO Michif Practice Model requires that, before a Family or Youth Plan can be developed, a parent or youth must identify a minimum of two or three members of their *La Paraantii* who will work alongside them and the care team to create and monitor the Plan. By emphasizing the necessity of identifying one's *La Paraantii*, we align our practice with a deeply held traditional value and child safety practice. A larger *La Paraantii* network increases safety and resilience for a child or youth, ensuring many eyes, ears, and hearts are always open and available for support.
- Prioritizing bringing together *La Paraantii* also strengthens an individual's sense of belonging, which is an essential protective factor often lacking in the lives of those we serve. We contribute to child safety and healing by reinforcing this sense of belonging. For this reason, *La Paraantii* is an essential component of the LMO Michif Practice Model. Workers cannot proceed beyond **Step 2** without the active participation of the parents' or youth's *La Paraantii* network
-

STEP 6: FAMILY / YOUTH SAFETY PLAN

- Once *La Paraantii* has been identified, workers can support the parent or youth in developing their Family or Youth Plan. Like the Signs of Safety Practice Framework, **the LMO Michif Practice Model is a participatory, collaborative practice model.**
- As facilitators of a Family and Youth Safety Plan, workers help the youth or family select a ***“Captain of the Plan.”*** This role draws inspiration from the historical role of the “Captain of the Hunt.” In Métis culture, the *“Captain of the Hunt”* was recognized as a respected and capable leader of the community. Métis ancestors relied on bison for food, clothing, shelter, and other essential needs. Because bison were a finite and invaluable resource, Métis communities established strict rules known as the “Laws of the Hunt” to protect them. The “Captain of the Hunt” ensured the camp remained organized, that these laws were followed, and that consequences were applied when necessary. Similarly, the ***“Captain of the Plan”*** is chosen by the youth or family to serve as a leader who ensures the safety plan remains well-organized, monitored, and effective. This person is responsible for helping ensure that commitments are honoured and concerns are addressed efficiently.
- To emphasize the importance of this role, the ***“Captain of the Plan”*** is presented with a special sash and is asked to bring the sash to each meeting as a symbol of the collective commitment to the safety and well-being of the child or youth.

STEP 7: NISTWAYR (MY STORY)

- In addition to helping a child or youth **better** understand their life journey and the reasons they may not be living with their parents or within their kinship circle, Nistwayr provides an opportunity for a worker to explore with the child or youth the Métis history of struggles, resistance, and resilience. It helps connect the child or youth's experiences today to the broader context of Métis history.
- Understanding the past is crucial for healing. It is important for children and youth not to harbour negative feelings toward their parents, families, or cultural identity, as these feelings can contribute to self-contempt and internal pain. Learning about historical policies and practices such as scrip, road allowances, the residential school system, and racism can help foster understanding and compassion. This knowledge can also empower children and youth to focus on the strength and resilience of Métis people and inspire them to break the cycle of trauma that their families may have endured.

STEP 8: MONITORING THE PLAN

- Accountability was essential for our ancestors' survival. Métis people historically maintained well-organized systems and practices to ensure that children were safe and cared for, that families had sufficient food, clothing, and shelter to endure harsh prairie winters, and that communities could prosper. Roles and responsibilities were clearly defined and respected.
- By regularly reviewing and monitoring the plans that keep children and youth safe and well, and by reviewing and clarifying the roles and responsibilities of youth, parents, and their *La Paraantii*, we uphold this important traditional Métis practice of accountability.
- These reviews also reinforce the role of the **"Captain of the Plan"** by providing opportunities for this individual to share what is working well and to identify areas where the plan needs strengthening.

STEP 9: CLOSE FILE & HONOURING

- Ending services in a good way, regardless of whether the goals of mandated or voluntary services have been fully achieved, is a crucial part of the LMO Michif Practice Model. Practices that reduce fear and encourage individuals to reach out for support independently can help increase safety for children. Many Métis families have historically avoided engaging with child welfare services due to fear and mistrust. By incorporating celebrations, expressions of joy, and acts of honouring into our practice, we help strengthen relationships and create more positive associations with services. This reduces the fear of seeking help in the future.
- When files are closing, it is the responsibility of the worker to organize a celebration or recognition event. Celebrations can take many forms, such as a catered family dinner at the office or a home visit with an Elder, accompanied by the presentation of a special Métis gift. It is essential that the child or youth and their family feel recognized, valued, and honoured for their journey.
- In situations where files are closing due to a lack of engagement or the inability to ensure child safety, a Métis card and a small gift should be mailed to the individual. This communicates that support remains available and that the individual is welcome to reconnect in the future. When individuals feel respected and valued, there is a greater likelihood that they will seek help again if needed, rather than remaining afraid or disconnected.

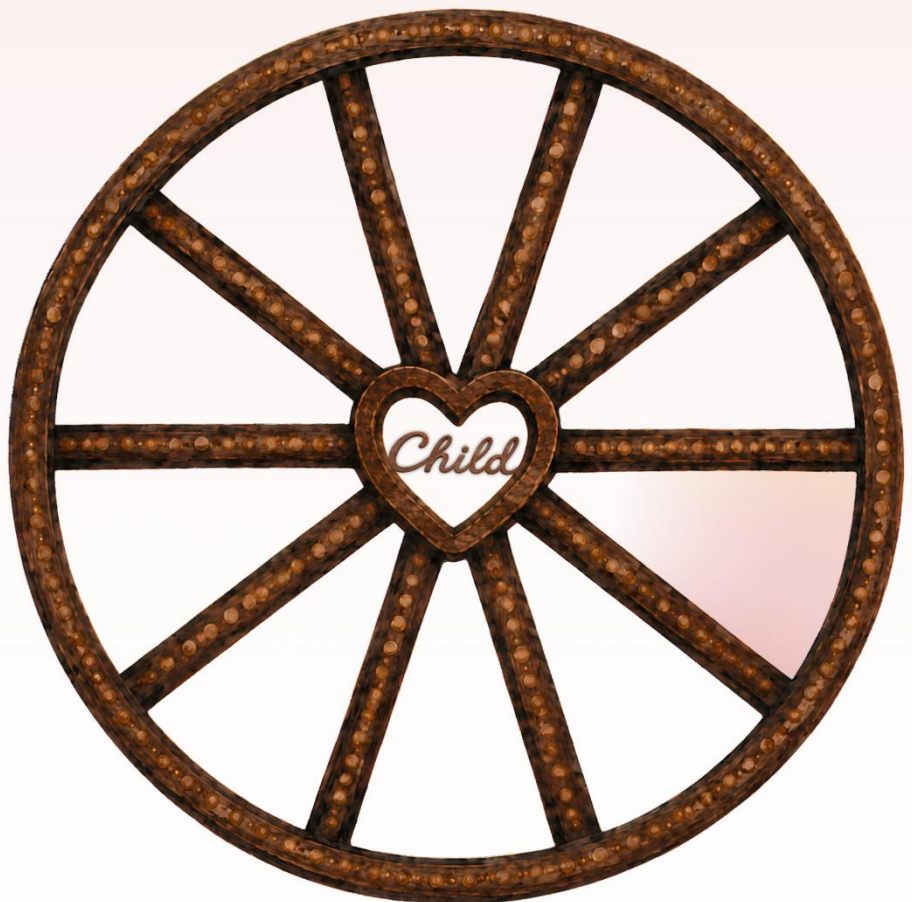
Canada's history of colonial policies has caused great harm and trauma to Métis people leading to poorer outcomes for many of our families. The Scrip System which systematically dispossessed the Métis people of their lands; the denial of our existence through the Road Allowance era; enrollment in Residential School; and the forced adoption of Métis children through the 60's Scoop are some of the underlying causes for Métis families to experience fear when faced with mainstream child welfare practices. What is most challenging is that loss of Wahkotowin and disconnected community has left our families struggling as many are aware of the trauma experienced by their ancestors that have affected their families generationally.

STEP 10: AYKOOSHI (THAT'S IT)

- Humility is an important traditional Métis value. Louis Riel serves as a powerful example of a leader who practiced humility, learning from others to improve and strengthen his leadership. Likewise, continual learning from those we serve is essential for the growth and evolution of the LMO Michif Practice Model.
- A worker's responsibility is not complete until they have provided families or individuals receiving services the opportunity to offer feedback. The LMO Michif Elders Council actively supports this feedback process. Workers must set aside time and create a safe space for youth and families to meet with an Elder to complete the anonymous exit survey. A digital version of the survey is also available.
- All information collected through exit interviews is summarized quarterly and shared with the LMO Board of Directors, the LMO Michif Elders Council, and the Michif Team. This feedback allows us to learn what we are doing well and to identify areas where our practice can improve.

STEP 1

Screening



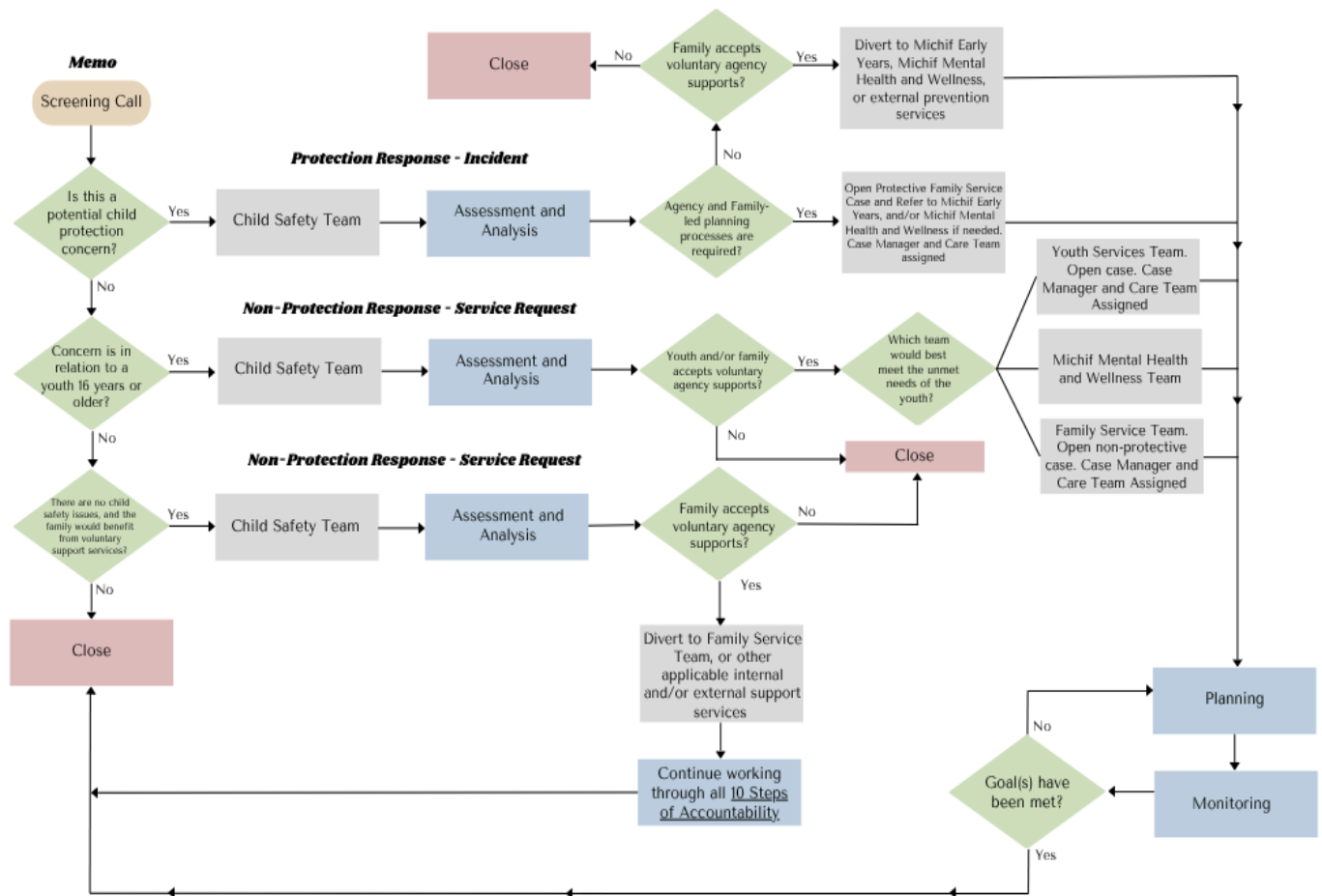
SCREENING AT INTAKE

The LMO Michif Practice Model is designed to prioritize the safety and well-being of Métis children within their families, supported by their *La Paraantii*. At the heart of LMO's child safety approach is nurturing a child, youth and family's sense of belonging to their Métis cultural identity and community. A strong cultural identity and sense of belonging are recognized as important protective factors that help strengthen a child's resilience. Gathering this crucial information begins with the very first phone call regarding a child's safety or well-being. The values of humility, generosity, and belonging are reflected throughout the LMO Michif Practice Model, from initial engagement with services to their completion.

Traditional parenting practices immersed Métis children into the Métis way of life to develop their sense of identity and to ensure a lifelong connection to their culture. From birth, the baby would always be kept at the center of activity by being propped up in a cradle board at home or against a tree during harvesting activities to nurture the child's sense of belonging to family and community.

INTAKE ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENT

Decision-Making Pathways Across the LMO Michif Practice Workflow



Three Key Steps in Intake Assessment

The Screener must proceed through the following steps to properly assess the situation:

1. Gather Information
2. Analyze the Information
3. Make a Pathway Decision

These steps help answer the following critical questions:

- Is this child or youth safe?
- How should this report be prioritized or responded to?
- Does this family have a strong la Paraantii network?
- **How has adult behaviour directly impacted the child?**

This last question helps determine whether the situation requires an assessment of child safety or is better addressed through a support services pathway.

Screening Process at LMO

- The Screener gathers, reviews, and analyzes the information provided by the reporter and, within 24 hours of receiving a call, determines which service pathway best aligns with the needs of the child, youth, and family.
- The first critical question to be answered at the Screening stage is:
“Is this a potential child protection concern?”
- The Screener must determine the most appropriate response that is as least intrusive as possible. LMO offers a wide range of support services. The Screener must assess whether the child’s wellbeing/safety can be ensured through referral to supportive services or if a more in-depth child protection assessment is required. Evaluating a family’s situation involves considering various factors, including family dynamics, immediate safety concerns, and the specific challenges faced. Through careful assessment, workers identify the most suitable services offered by LMO, ensuring responses align with the family’s unique needs and contribute to their overall well-being. This collaborative approach not only addresses immediate issues but also focuses on creating a healthier environment for both the child and the family moving forward.
- The Screener uses a balanced approach to assessment, maintaining equal focus on identifying potential harm to a child and recognizing what is working well within the family. The Screener relies on skilled questioning to gather information from the caller, ensuring that both concerns and strengths are captured.

Critical Steps to Ensure Child Safety

To conduct effective screening, the Screener will:

1. Clarify the Caller’s Role and Position:

Establish the caller’s relationship to the child and their level of concern. This provides insight into their perspective and the urgency of the situation.

2. Gather Information:

Upon receiving a report, the Screener utilizes the three-column assessment map, together with the analysis categories outlined in the [Intake Screening Map](#). This tool assists the Screener in formulating targeted questions for the caller and in systematically documenting the information provided. This structured approach ensures that all relevant details are captured accurately, thereby facilitating a thorough, thoughtful and balanced assessment of the situation.

- If the Screener receives a memo from Provincial Centralized Screening (PCS) or another agency, the information is reviewed to determine whether the report meets the threshold for a child protection response or not.

- Following screening of call details, there are three possible outcomes when managing a memo: the memo may be flipped to an Incident (protection response), flipped to a Service Request (non-protection response), or closed at the memo stage as No Further Action when no concerns or needs are identified.
- During the initial call, the Screener diligently captures the **family genogram**, identifying key relationships and connections within the family system. This essential step not only contributes to a deeper understanding of family dynamics but also highlights the importance of Métis ancestry in shaping the family's experiences. By highlighting significant individuals within the family, the Screener establishes a foundation for understanding the support systems available and how best to assist the family throughout the process. This foundational work ensures that the unique cultural context and familial ties are recognized and respected from the earliest stage of intervention.

Key questions guiding this process include the following:

- Who are the people to whom the child or youth belongs (la Paraantii)?
- Who can assist if support is required?

Here is an [Example of an Intake Screening Mapping](#) at LMO, as an [Intake Screening Map with Questions](#)

DECOLONIZING PRACTICE NOTE

Fundamental to the LMO Michif Practice Model is the commitment to decolonizing social work and support services. This approach requires a deliberate focus on culture as a foundation for safety, ensuring that all workers are trauma-informed and committed to healing and reparation from the intergenerational trauma experienced by Métis children, youth, and families.

Therefore, during the information-gathering phase of the screening process, the Screener must ensure that the screening assessment of harm or risk is balanced. This means that the Screener must explore existing strengths and safety to the same degree as they examine harm and areas of concern. A consistent focus on the “what is working well” column enables the Screener to perceive the family more holistically, rather than defining the family solely by the circumstances that led to the current report. This practice reflects the resilience inherent in Métis communities and must be integrated throughout all stages of the work, from the initial phone call to case closure.

In addition to maintaining a balanced assessment, the Screener is expected to apply a decolonizing lens when reviewing a family's history of child welfare involvement, often referred to as the Prior Contact Check (PCC). An Initial Record Review of a family's child welfare history is critical for understanding both patterns of harm and patterns of safety. When examining historical records, the Screener must remain vigilant in considering whether the information reflects previous workers' biases, judgments, and assumptions, rather than objective, behavioural details about the family's actual circumstances.

SCALING QUESTION

The use of scaling questions serves as an important tool for both checking one's biases and contributing to a balanced assessment. These questions enable individuals to rate their perceptions and emotions on a numerical scale, providing a structured method for evaluating situations and reflecting on emotional responses. Encouraging respondents to articulate their positions along a scale can help reveal underlying assumptions and perspectives that might otherwise remain hidden. This process fosters greater self-awareness among screeners, ensuring that screening decisions are more objective and grounded in reality. Ultimately, using scaling questions contributes to a more equitable and compassionate approach to understanding the needs and experiences of those involved, resulting in more effective and culturally sensitive support.

Scaling Question 1:

When reviewing the written record of past child welfare involvement (PCC), on a scale of 0 to 10, where would you rate yourself?

10 = I can see how the family was fully involved in prior assessment and decision-making processes regarding their child and family. Their participation was evident throughout the entire process, with their voices at the center of the work. It was reassuring to observe how the family was included at every stage, ensuring that their values and perspectives were respected and integrated into the plan. This level of involvement not only empowered the family but also fostered trust and collaboration, leading to more effective outcomes for their child.

0 = It appears that the documentation lacks a comprehensive approach that prioritizes the family's involvement in the assessment and decision-making process. The existing materials primarily reflect the perspective of the previous social worker, with limited input or engagement from the family members themselves. This oversight can undermine the effectiveness of services and may fail to reflect the family's true experiences, needs, and aspirations. To foster a more collaborative and supportive environment, it is essential to actively include families in discussions and decisions affecting their children and overall well-being. Ensuring that their voices are heard and respected can contribute to better outcomes and a stronger sense of ownership in the process.

Questions for the Screener:

- Where would you rate the written history?
- How well does the historical documentation demonstrate a balanced assessment of the family?
- Does the discussion of harm or worry adequately balance with the discussion of strengths and safety?

Scaling Question 2:

If we were to ask the family to review how the history of their involvement with service providers has been recorded, on a scale of 0 to 10, where would they likely rate themselves?

10 = The family would completely agree with the accuracy of the written documentation because it reflects their experience wholly and truthfully.

0 = The family would completely disagree with what has been written about them and would have a very different account of their history and involvement.

MICHIF ELDER CONSULT AT SCREENING

Elders are esteemed members of the community, recognized for embodying traditional values and teachings. They actively share their knowledge and cultural practices and are respected for holding individuals accountable in ways that prioritize the well-being of both families and the community. Their profound understanding of community dynamics enables them to offer valuable guidance on how to engage respectfully with vulnerable families.

Therefore, when reviewing and analyzing information, it is critical to incorporate the perspectives of Elders to ensure that our practices reflect an authentic Métis lens. When examining a family's history of child welfare involvement, workers should actively seek the views of a Michif Elder on how the history may be interpreted. Elders should also be included in discussions involving scaling questions to provide additional cultural insight and context.

GATHERING & ANALYZING INFORMATION USING THE ANALYSIS CATEGORIES

Past Harm

The Screener must clearly articulate the potential impact of concerning adult behaviour on the child when assessing the situation. If there is no identifiable history of harm to the child, the case may not necessitate further safety interventions. An analysis of past harm is crucial for determining whether to proceed with a more in-depth assessment or to redirect the matter to alternative services, such as prevention or support programs. A clear and comprehensive evaluation at this stage guides appropriate responses and ensures that resources are effectively allocated to support the safety and well-being of both the child and the family.

Guiding Questions for this Analysis Category:

- What specific behaviours of the adults who care for this child are causing concern?
- What has happened to the child because of these described adult behaviours?

It is essential that the Screener asks follow-up questions that help the caller provide clear, behavioural detail. This includes understanding how long the behaviours have been occurring, the severity or chronic nature of the concerns, and how the caller knows these behaviours have affected the child. Clarity and specificity are critical to an accurate assessment.

The **Harm Analysis Matrix** can be utilized at this stage to ensure a clear focus and understanding of this critical analysis category. This tool is typically completed with the guidance and consultation of a supervisor. It can assist the Screener in determining whether a report requires a child safety response. The matrix is also helpful for analyzing family history and understanding its relationship to current concerns. For more information on the Harm Analysis Matrix, please review **The Purpose of the Harm Analysis Matrix** and **Prompts for the Harm Analysis Matrix**.

Future Worries (Danger)

Future Worries, sometimes referred to as Danger, is the analysis category that, at Screening, focuses on what the caller and Screener, Team Leader and Elder are most concerned may happen to the child if the concerning adult behaviours continue and nothing changes. These worries are future-focused and are informed by what has already occurred (past harm), and any additional information gathered during screening. Based on this information, the Screener develops a draft Worry Statement that clearly describes the potential danger to the child.

The Screener can support the caller in articulating their concerns by asking focused questions such as:

- Based on what you know, what are you most worried will happen to the child if nothing changes within the family?

It is essential to acknowledge that in certain situations, **Future Worries (danger) may be present even when no past harm has occurred**. A common example is a situation where a 15-year-old is homeless and isolated, or a young woman is pregnant with her first child, using drugs and alcohol, and lacks support systems.

Complicating Factors

This analysis category requires careful consideration and must not be confused with past harm. Callers may sometimes report what they believe to be “harm” or “danger” when in fact the reported circumstances are factors that complicate the situation rather than directly causing harm to the child. It is the Screener’s responsibility to distinguish between harm, danger, and complicating factors.

For example, while parental separation or divorce may create additional challenges within a family, it does not necessarily constitute harm or immediate danger to the child. This category allows for acknowledgment of struggles the family might be facing that make the situation more complex, without conflating these difficulties with direct threats to the child’s safety.

Guiding Question:

- Are there circumstances occurring in or around the family that make the situation more complicated, even if they do not directly cause harm to the child?

Existing Strengths & Existing Safety

Screeners can often default to focussing their questioning primarily on problems or areas of concern and thus may base intake and threshold decisions predominantly on negative information; however, to conduct a balanced assessment, it is essential for the Screener to actively inquire about strengths and safety factors that exist within the family. Understanding these safety and protective factors is crucial to determining whether they can ease concerns and/or whether they can be leveraged to address identified risks. Although details in these categories will develop further as the assessment progresses, it is important to gather information about existing strengths and safety at the screening stage. This information informs better decision-making and supports a holistic view of the family's situation.

Like Harm/Danger and Complicating Factors, Existing Strengths and Existing Safety can easily be confused. Existing Strengths refer to the positive qualities, people, supports, or plans in and around the family. To be included as an Existing Strength or Safety, these must be relevant to the concerns being reported. Existing Safety, on the other hand, refers to actions, people, or plans that are known to have kept the child safe from the identified danger in the past, with the child present. These are demonstrated behaviours that have protected the child. When Existing Strengths and Existing Safety are explored clearly and thoroughly, they strongly inform future safety planning and provide important information for workers to acknowledge and honour the family's protective actions and caregiving efforts.

Guiding Questions:

- What are the best aspects of these parents' care for the child? (Existing Strengths)
- When the adults' concerning behaviours occur, what have they, others, or the children themselves done to protect the children from harm? (Existing Safety)

When a caller contacts LMO, they are often not expecting to discuss positive aspects of the family they are calling about. Therefore, the Screener must clearly explain why these questions are necessary and reassure the caller of the purpose behind exploring what is or has worked well within the family.

This explanation may include the following steps:

- Reassuring the caller that their concerns have been heard and taken seriously.
- Thanking the caller for their concern and acknowledge their care for the child and family.
- Whenever possible, assuring the caller that the agency will follow-up, assess the concerns if necessary, and/or ensure appropriate connections to services.
- Explain that to assess a situation for child safety or well-being properly, and to build constructive working relationships with parents and children, it is essential to explore both the positive and negative aspects of the situation.
- Asking permission to change the focus of the discussion, for example, by saying:
"Would it be okay if I changed direction a little and asked you some different questions about the situation?"

Safety Goal

At the screening stage, it is not mandatory for the Screener to complete the section of the assessment mapping that specifies safety or well-being goals and next steps. However, the Screener is encouraged to consider what information or circumstances would be necessary for them to have confidence in closing the case, ensuring the child's safety or well-being. Reflecting on these potential outcomes helps the Screener consider possible next steps and develop an appropriate action plan.

MAKE A DECISION

Caller Concern Scale:

The Screener should request that the caller rate the seriousness of their concern during the initial phone call. This helps determine the perceived severity and urgency of the situation.

Scaling Question (On a scale of 0-10):

10 = There are some worries for this family, but perhaps no more than would exist in any other family within the community.

0 = The situation is very serious, and the caller believes that if nothing changes immediately or very soon, significant harm will occur to the child.

Guiding Questions:

- Where would you rate this situation today on a scale from 0 to 10?
- What brings up as high as you are on the scale and what keeps you from being higher?
- What would you need to see happen to move even 0.5 points up on the scale?
- Following the analysis of all information gathered, the Screener should develop a preliminary assessment regarding whether the caller's information, combined with the **Prior Contact Check** and other relevant information, indicates that the situation for the child, youth, and family constitutes a child safety concern, a well-being issue, or simply a family who could benefit from engagement with the broader LMO community or programming.
- The Screener is expected to reach out to a Michif Elder and consult with their team leader to explore further and clarify their thinking.
- Again, the central question to be answered at this stage of the workflow is:
Are there potential child protection worries for this family?
- Scales are used to gain perspective on this question from the caller, the worker, the team leader, and the Michif Elder.

DECISION-MAKING: CLINICAL SUPERVISION

Two key judgment and decision-making scales support threshold and response decisions when determining the need for a child protection intervention. These scales are:

- One scale focused on immediate safety
- Another scale focused on the likelihood of future harm.

Immediate Safety Scale:

When reviewing information gathered and sorted through the Intake Screening Map, including any relevant considerations related to the child's developmental needs, the Screener should evaluate the immediate safety of the child.

Scaling Question (On a scale of 0-10):

10 = Although there have been behaviours that could be harmful to the child, there is confidence that the child is currently safe.

0 = The Screener believes that the child is being harmed or will be harmed in the coming days or weeks.

Guiding Question:

- Where would you rate this situation for the child today?

Likelihood Scale:

Scaling Question (On a scale of 0-10):

10 = The likelihood of something serious happening to the child is low, even though there are some concerning factors present in the family situation.

0 = Based on all available information, the chance that something serious will happen to the child soon is very high.

Guiding Question:

- Where would you rate this likelihood for the child or children involved?

During clinical supervision, the Team Leader leads the Screener through a questioning approach using the Safety and Likelihood Scales. The Team Leader then asks further questions to assist the Screener in articulating their analysis and rationale behind their judgment, such as:

“Why have you placed your rating at that number on the scale?”

Once the Screener provides their rating and rationale, the Team Leader asks clarifying questions to help identify protective factors and highlight the primary areas of concern in the situation under review. The Team Leader documents the Screener’s responses as closely to verbatim as possible. This detailed recording is instrumental in assisting the Screener to develop further and refine their rationale.

PRACTICE NOTE

Asking the Screener to slow down and allowing the Team Leader to document their responses helps the Screener think more clearly and deliberately about the situation.

During this consultation, it is essential to **involve the Michif Elder** to ensure their perspective is considered, based on the information assessed by the Screener. Elders play a key role in teaching traditions and Métis values, supporting both families and staff, and participating in honouring families through culturally grounded practices.

Through this collaborative consultation process involving the Team Leader, Screener, and Michif Elder, the team should be prepared to make clear decisions regarding three critical questions in screening:

1. Is the child safe?
2. If not, what priority and response time are required (immediately, within 24 hours, or five days)?
3. If the child is safe but there are well-being concerns, what additional support services can be offered, and which services would be most helpful or healing for the child, youth, and family?

The following video demonstrates how a Screener facilitates a scaling conversation at **Step 1: Screening**: <https://youtu.be/eXUQGg9NxoI>

COMPLEX CASES: GROUP SUPERVISION:

- In some situations, the Screener may encounter complex cases where uncertainty exists regarding harm or other analysis categories. In such circumstances, the Team Leader should consider organizing a group supervision session to create a learning opportunity for all staff. This process can involve either harm mapping or a broader mapping exercise.
- Group supervision promotes collective learning and assists the Screener in working through the next steps of the assessment process. It also enhances the gathering of further information and supports a more comprehensive analysis, ultimately contributing to the most informed and balanced judgment possible.
- The purpose of the Group Supervision process is not to make definitive decisions for the case or the intake itself. Instead, it is designed to help the Screener identify the steps they need to take to achieve greater clarity regarding decisions for the child, youth, and family mentioned in the report. This process should always include consultation with the Team Leader and, when appropriate, the Michif Elder.
- Once the team has reached clarity regarding their decision, there remains a responsibility to maintain transparent communication with the caller. It is essential to follow up with the caller to provide an update on whether there has been agency follow up or not.

Please see the [Group Supervision Process document for the Harm Analysis Matrix](#) for more information about facilitating Group Supervision at in **Step 1: Screening**.

The Métis people have always valued a democratic decision-making process which was evident in both the formation of a Council during the Buffalo Hunt and when the Métis formed a provisional government in 1869 during the Red River Resistance to assert their inherent rights to their homes and lands they had been occupying for over 100 years. Although, the Métis people experienced hardship for many years following Louis Riel's death in 1885, they were determined to rebuild the Nation and established the first Métis Association in Alberta during the 1930's. Gathering for discussion and debate continue to be practices are observed by the Métis Nation British Columbia governing body and their affiliated Charter Communities.

PRIORITY AND RESPONSE TIME: SUPERVISORY GUIDANCE

Child Safety Response

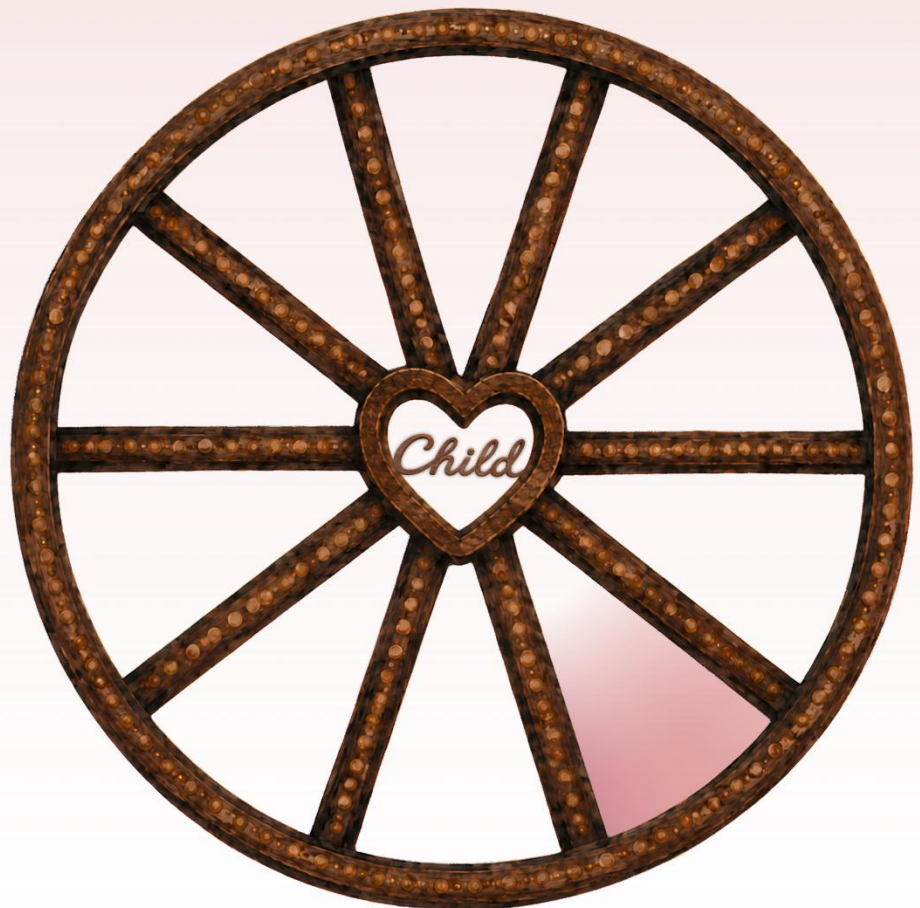
- When a response is determined to be a child safety response, the Team Leader and Screener work together to prepare questions guided by the Screening Assessment Map. This ensures that the perspectives of all individuals involved, including the child, are incorporated into the assessment and decision-making process. Gathering the voice and perspective of the child is mandatory in these circumstances to maintain a rigorous focus on child safety.
- Developing questions anchored in the Intake Screening Map helps the Screener clarify the guiding questions necessary for conducting a balanced child safety assessment in the next phase, which is the Child Safety Assessment Phase.
- Questions must be drafted for all seven analysis categories of the Screening Assessment Map. This preparation ensures that the assessor has practical and focused questions when meeting with the family and their *Paraantii*. It also fosters meaningful participation by the family and their support network in the assessment process during Step 2.

Additional resources and appendices that support **Step 1: Screening** (including any not referenced in the main text of this) can be found here: [**Step 1 Appendices**](#).

As well, please refer to the [**ICM system tips**](#) for guidance.

STEP 2

Assessment & Analysis



ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS

"The assessments aim to balance worries and harms with strengths, including existing actions being taken to address concerns and insights into the well-being of children and families."

(Auger, 2024, pp.11)

DECOLONIZING PRACTICE NOTE

During this phase of the work, it is essential to center the family, children, and their Paraantii (extended family and relatives) in the assessment and decision-making process. Participatory practice in assessment is rooted in the principle of working "with" families rather than doing things "to" them. Given Canada's colonial history and the use of discriminatory practices that disrupted traditional Métis ways of caring for and protecting children's safety and well-being, such as the Métis Scrip System, the Road Allowance experience, the residential school system, and the child welfare system, it is understood that even the act of having a child protection report filed about a family can be deeply re-traumatizing. Families all too often experience the system acting upon them and their children rather than engaging collaboratively and respectfully. Workers must therefore consider how best to engage with families in ways that minimize power imbalances and give people space to share any past experiences with child protection systems.

WORKFLOW AT ASSESSMENT FOR INTERVENTION & PREVENTION-BASED SERVICES

Whenever possible, workers should arrange meetings with families at times and locations that are most comfortable for them and should always invite families to bring supportive individuals along. It is also essential to ensure that an Elder is present whenever possible, as Elders provide essential cultural grounding and support. Workers should offer families as many choices as possible, including deciding when and where meetings will take place and determining when and where conversations with children should occur. Parents should be given clear explanations about how interviews with their children will be conducted and have the opportunity to ask any questions beforehand. During interviews with parents, family members, and collateral contacts, workers must adopt the same balanced assessment approach utilized at Screening that also focuses on understanding and exploring existing strengths, safety factors, and aspects of well-being.

It is critical to remember that the assessment process is not intended to serve as a fact-finding mission aimed solely at determining blame or fault. Instead, it is a collaborative process aimed at building a shared understanding of the safety or critical well-being concerns for the children, drawing on the perspectives and insights of everyone involved.

If there are immediate safety concerns for the child or children, workers must share these concerns with the family as soon as possible and provide the family with the opportunity to participate actively in creating an immediate safety plan (known as a Safety Plan Agreement). Throughout the assessment phase, workers should share their evolving understanding of the situation with the family in a timely manner, using clear and accessible language that reflects the information gathered. This practice note is not intended to serve as a scripted guide for decolonizing practice but instead serves as a reminder of the commitment to approach child and family service work differently, by working openly, transparently, and collaboratively with those involved. Upholding this commitment is essential to establishing a solid foundation for daily practice and ensuring that services remain respectful, culturally grounded, and responsive to the unique experiences of Métis families.

During this phase of the workflow at LMO, practice is guided by the following steps:

- **Step 2: Assessment and Analysis**
- **Step 4: Voice of the Child**
- **Step 5: La Paraantii**

Overview of Assessment at LMO

LMO delivers a wide range of intervention and prevention services, all of which are guided by the **10 Steps of Accountability** within the Michif Practice Model. While the core principles and steps remain consistent across the organization, the specific requirements and expectations of assessment vary depending on the service stream.

For example, when assessing child safety concerns, there are clearly defined standards that must be met, including home visits and, whenever possible, separate interviews with parents and children. In other service areas, such as on the Michif Early Years team or Michif Mental Health and Wellness team, assessment does not carry the same statutory requirements. However, assessment remains a core responsibility across all teams and is carried out using similar processes that are adapted to fit the unique context, mandate, and needs of each program and the families they serve.

The sections that follow outline what assessment looks like within Child Safety, Youth Services, Resources, Michif Early Years, and Michif Mental Health and Wellness. It is important to clearly reinforce that responsibility for assessment does not sit solely with the Child Safety team. Every team at LMO is accountable for following the **10 Steps of Accountability**, ensuring that all services are culturally grounded, relational, and focused on strengthening outcomes for Métis children, youth, and families — regardless of where their needs are best met within LMO's service continuum. This shared approach supports consistent, high-quality service delivery across all areas of LMO's workflow.

ASSESSMENT FOR CHILD SAFETY INTERVENTION SERVICES

Goals of Assessment for Child Safety Intervention Services

- To determine whether the child/youth has been harmed and if they are at risk of being hurt.
- To identify whether concerns are sufficiently serious to warrant an Immediate Safety Plan (Safety Plan Agreement), which would need to be developed collaboratively with the child/youth, the parents, and *La Paraantii* (the naturally supportive people in their lives) while the assessment process continues.
- To evaluate the significance of the harm to the child/youth and assess whether the family requires an LMO-led safety planning process.
- To explore which other support services within LMO may be able to contribute to supporting the child/youth and family at the time.

Preparation

- The assessment and analysis process should begin with preparation involving the Team Leader, assessing worker (referred to as the Assessor), and Michif Elder. This collaborative discussion focuses on how best to approach the work that needs to be undertaken with the child/youth and family. This preparatory approach applies to all service streams within LMO (Child Safety, Youth Services, Resources, Michif Early Years and Michif Mental Health and Wellness). This consultation process serves a clear purpose: to prepare the worker for intentional and purposeful interviews/discussions with the children, youth, parents, and *La Paraantii*. These individuals possess significant knowledge about the family's worries, strengths, and overall capacity of the youth and/or family.
- The worker, Team Leader, and Michif Elder should review the Intake Screening Map to identify gaps in information and determine where further critical details are needed to understand the youth/family's situation. This review helps ensure that the assessment process meets their goals.
- When time permits, social workers/assessing workers, Team Leaders, and Michif Elders should develop a plan for the assessment process. This plan should outline the best strategies for engaging the youth/family and *La Paraantii*. It should also focus on establishing a constructive working relationship with the children, parents, and *La Paraantii* within the assessment and planning framework. Questions should be prepared to align with the seven key analysis categories.

Please note, that when LMO receives an Incident record on ICM screened in by Provincial Centralized Screening or another MCFD/ICFSA office, the LMO Assessor will consult with their own Team Leader to determine the most appropriate approach for assessment and planning.

Team Leader Guidance

If a worker is struggling with acquire quality content in their assessment or are struggling with their analysis at this stage, it presents an excellent opportunity for learning through the **Group Supervision** process, particularly in mapping. Group Supervision for Mapping can support the worker in developing strong critical thinking around:

- Questions that can be asked during parent/child interviews
- Creating worry statements
- Defining safety goals (or connection and belonging goals)
- Developing case-specific scaling questions

Please see the **[Group Supervision Process for Mapping](#)** document for further Team Leader guidance in this area of workflow.

Interviewing Children, Youth, Families and La Paraantii

At the beginning of the assessment process, interviews with all involved parties are crucial for developing a balanced understanding of the youth's/family's situation.

Step 2 of the Michif Practice Model guides this work, focusing on the same seven analysis categories utilized at Screening:

- **Past harm**
- **Complicating Factors**
- **Future Worries**
- **Existing Strengths**
- **Existing Safety**
- **Next Steps**
- **Safety Goals**

Whether assessing child safety, prevention, or connection and belonging for children and youth, workers should prepare and use effective questions to explore the situation with the child, youth, parents, *La Paraantii*, and collateral contacts. When necessary, Group Supervision can help generate questions for interviews with children, parents, *La Paraantii*, and collateral contacts. The Elder should also be involved in this group supervision process whenever possible. The quality of information obtained by the assessing worker depends on how effectively they gather the most relevant details needed to reach clear, rational decisions at the end of the assessment phase.

PRACTICE NOTE

Part of completing **Step 2: Assessment and Analysis** is ensuring the voice of the child is captured and highlighted within the seven analysis categories. Refer to **Step 4: Voice of the Child** for a full description of how and when to incorporate the child's voice into the assessment process.

Meeting with the Youth or Family and Safety Assessments

- When assessing child safety, at initial contact, the Assessor should inform the parents that it is important for them to have all supportive people present for the first meeting. This ensures that the child's naturally connected *Paraantii* are engaged right from the beginning. This step upholds **Step 5** of the Michif Practice Model, which emphasizes the necessity of surrounding a child, youth and family with their *Paraantii*.
- When working with youth/parents and *La Paraantii*, workers organize their work around the core steps of any assessment:
 - Gathering information
 - Participatory analysis
 - Developing a clear decision-making rationale

- Interviews with children, youth, families, and members of *La Paraantii* follow a similar analytical approach to screening, in that information is gathered and explored across the three columns and seven analysis categories, but these conversations are more in-depth and detailed. The assessor should interview individuals separately when appropriate, using the questions prepared in collaboration with the Team Leader and the Michif Elder.
- Once initial contact is made with the family, the Assessor must complete the **Safety Assessment** on ICM to document how and why they believe the children are safe or not. Completion of the **Safety Assessment** is required within 24 hours of initial contact with the family.

Work with La Paraantii and Collaterals

- During the assessment phase, there may be critical service providers and members of *La Paraantii* who need to be contacted to help us understand the family's situation. These interviews should follow the same process as those conducted with children and parents. Information should be gathered, analyzed participatorily, and judgments made within the relevant analysis categories for safety, well-being, or connection and belonging.
- Not all information obtained from collateral sources needs to be included in the final Michif Family Assessment document. Workers should use their discretion and consult with their team leader when deciding what content is more appropriately documented as a "case note", documented in the Response tab of the Incident or Service Request, and what should be included in the participatory assessment, which will be shared with the family and *La Paraantii* and uploaded to Attachments tab of the Incident record in ICM.

Michif Family/Youth Assessment

- The **Michif Family/Youth Assessment** is a tool used to bring together information gathered through conversations with children, parents, and others connected to the family (both natural supports and professionals). It supports the Assessor in understanding whether a child or youth has been harmed or may be at risk of ongoing harm. The Michif Family/Youth Assessment is organized around seven analysis categories, which guide a balanced and thoughtful questioning approach when assessing child safety.
- The Michif Family/Youth Assessment (referred to as "the assessment" here) helps workers organize large amounts of information and clearly document how they have made sense of what they have learned throughout the assessment process.
- The assessment is also where the worker clearly articulates their analysis and decision making, including the next steps required. This includes identifying whether the assessment supports closing the file, diverting to another service pathway, or proceeding with ongoing family services, and clearly explaining the rationale for that decision. The assessment brings together the most critical information and analysis about a case in one place to support clear and transparent decision-making.

- Not all information gathered during an assessment will be included on the Michif Family/Youth Assessment. Information that does not fit within the analysis categories and does not inform decision making or how the Assessor concluded the assessment phase, must instead be recorded in the Response tab of the Incident record on ICM, rather than on the Michif Family/Youth Assessment Map.

All **Michif Family/Youth Assessments** will consider the following 8 elements:

- **La Paraantii:**
Who is involved and how they are involved.
- **Cultural Considerations:**
What cultural elements and Métis values have been incorporated?
- **Plain Language:**
Ensuring clarity and accessibility in all communication and documentation.
- **Behavioural Language:**
Using language that describes observable actions rather than judgments or generalizations.
- **A Strong Middle Column:**
Clearly articulating what's working well, including existing strengths and safety factors.
- **Use of Scaling Questions:**
Applying scaling questions to help guide decision-making and clarify perspectives.
- **Child's Voice:**
Ensuring the child's views, experiences, and perspectives are clearly documented and reflected in the assessment.
- **Risk-Savvy Thinking:**
Engaging in thoughtful analysis that considers both risks and protective factors.

These categories were initially derived from the Theory of Change and Results Logic research implementation of the SOS model (Bromfield et al., 2015) and have been adapted to fit the Michif Practice Model.

The voices of children, youth, and families are woven throughout all **Michif Family/Youth Assessments** and must be evident in all documentation related to the family. Assessors are expected to engage in meaningful conversations with families and employ effective questioning techniques that encourage families to think deeply and develop their own solutions. The aim is to learn each family's unique story and to identify who their *Paraantii* are, those individuals who can provide support and be included in the assessment and planning process.

For a demonstration of an Assessment Conversation, visit the link here:
<https://youtu.be/1Mf38H5Zpdc>

During the assessment phase, traditional teachings emphasize the importance of finding *La Paraantii* to surround and support the youth/family at the center. This approach empowers youth/families to undertake the challenging work required to achieve their goals while helping them connect with Métis values that they might not otherwise have known.

Historically, Métis families have always supported one another, especially vulnerable children and families, during times of hardship and crisis.

This traditional teaching will be discussed further in [Step 5](#).

Michif Elder and Team Leader Consultation

- Once interviews have been completed, information has been gathered using the questioning approach and the information has been sorted through in the **Michif Family/Youth Assessment**, the assessor reviews the **Closing Scale** on the assessment with the Team Leader and a Michif Elder. At this stage, a case-specific scaling tool may also be developed and utilized as part of the analysis set. The **Decision/Rationale** section of the **Closing Scale** must explicitly state whether there is sufficient safety or not to justify closing the case at the assessment stage.
- Following meetings with the child, youth and/or parents, *La Paraantii*, and any other significant parties, it is crucial to reflect critically and determine whether there are **increased or reduced worries** about the child's/youth's safety compared to the initial report. Workers must be able to clearly articulate their **rationale** for any change in level of concern.
- If there are increased worries at any stage of the assessment process, it becomes essential to ensure that any **Safety Plan Agreement** (Immediate or Interim Safety Plan) is focused on specific behavioural details, including who will carry out actions to ensure the child's/youth's safety while the remainder of the assessment is completed.

Safety Plan Agreements – Immediate and Interim Safety Planning

- Once interviews are completed and child safety concerns have been identified, workers must analyze all information gathered to develop a clear Safety Plan Agreement (Immediate Safety Plan) in consultation with a team leader.
- Safety Plan Agreements should clearly describe the child safety concern that requires planning and be developed collaboratively with those involved. The plan should outline specific steps to help prevent the concern from occurring, as well as clear actions to be taken if worries arise. It must identify who will do what, when, and how, and clearly state where the child or children will stay, or who will care for them, for the duration of the agreement. The plan should also describe how the Assessor will check in to ensure it is working and being followed. Safety Plan Agreements must include the dates they are in effect and the required signatures and consent of those involved.

Click [here](#) to see an example of a behaviourally specific Safety Plan Agreement. For additional information about the standards and requirements related to Safety Plan Agreements, refer to the [Safety Plan Agreements page](#) on iConnect and to [MCFD's Child Protection Response Policies: Chapter 3](#).

Analysis

- The process of formalizing the analysis involves the assessor creating finalized **Worry Statements**, **Safety Goals** and **Safety Scales**, documented on the Michif Family/Youth Assessment.
- There must be a Safety Goal and a Safety Scale paired with each identified Worry Statement
- The voices of the child/youth, parents, *La Paraantii*, and any other significant party must inform these finalized elements.
- The information distilled through this analysis should result in a completed [Michif Family/Youth Assessment](#) that clearly demonstrates the rationale and decision-making process.

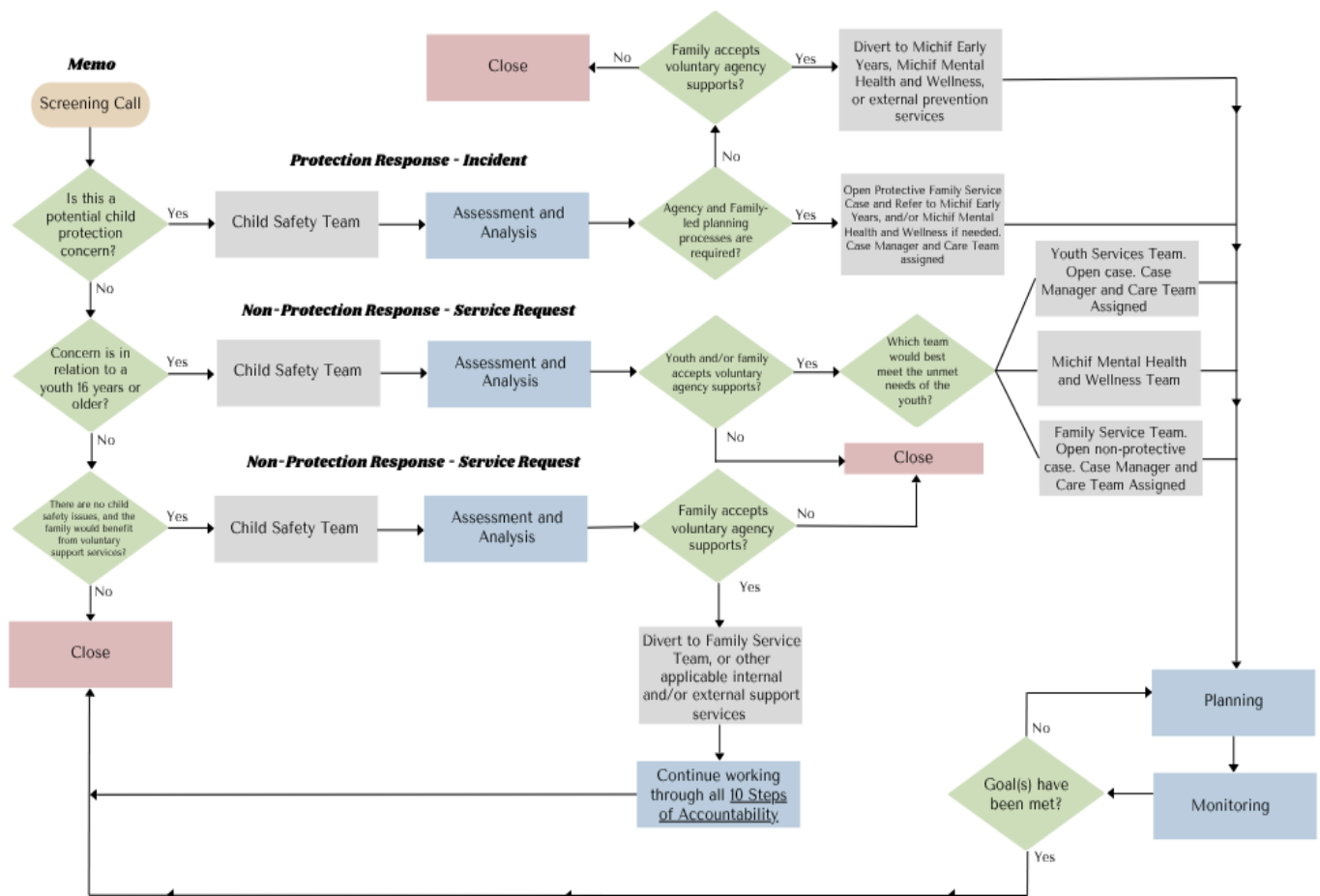
Next Steps

During the assessment process, the Assessor must consider the following questions to determine next steps:

- Does this youth/family require an LMO-led safety planning process to ensure that the child(ren)/youth involved is safe and well?
- Does the youth/family need to be connected to other services within LMO, such as the Michif Early Years team, Michif Mental Health and Wellness team, or a service provided by a community partner?
- Have the initial worries been resolved such that there is no longer concern about the safety and well-being of the child/youth involved, and the family/youth does not wish to engage further with LMO services?

ASSESSMENT OUTCOMES

Decision-Making Pathways Across the LMO Michif Practice Workflow



Decisions and Rationale at Assessment for Child Safety Intervention Services

Upon completing the assessment, and in consultation with the Team Leader, the Assessor must analyze the information gathered and determine whether the child/youth is safe. The Assessor must also clearly articulate the rationale for the decision made.

Possible Outcomes of the Assessment Phase

1. *Close at Assessment*

The Incident may be closed at the Assessment Phase when the Assessor determines that there is no ongoing risk of harm to the child/youth.

This may include situations where:

- the concern that brought the child/youth or family to LMO's attention does not fall within LMO's child safety mandate;
- the child/youth is safe and there are no other identified struggles requiring further LMO involvement; or
- the child/youth and/or family may be experiencing some struggles, but the family does not accept voluntary agency supports.

In consultation with a Team Leader, when the concern that brought the child/youth or family to LMO's attention does not fall within LMO's child safety mandate, when the child/youth is safe, and there are no other identified struggles requiring further LMO involvement, it may not be necessary to develop a full analysis set, including the **Worry Statement, Safety Goal, and Safety Scale**. However, the information documented in the "What's Working Well" middle column of the Michif Family/Youth Assessment, along with the rationale reflected in the closing scale, must still provide clear evidence to support the decision to close the case at the assessment phase.

Where appropriate, the Assessor must explore with the child/youth or family whether they are interested in voluntary or prevention-based services to address ongoing struggles or critical well-being concerns. These supports can help prevent future child safety involvement and strengthen protective factors such as connection to La Paraantii, Métis identity, and community. Where appropriate, families may also be invited to join LMO's community distribution list to receive information about cultural events and gatherings.

2. *Divert to Voluntary or Prevention-Based Services*

The Assessor may determine that the child/youth is safe, but that the child/youth and/or family would benefit from voluntary, prevention-based, or community support services.

This decision is made in consultation with the family and the Team Leader. If the youth or family is willing to engage in support, the case may be diverted to one of LMO's support teams or another appropriate community support service.

For example, if a family requires immediate support due to a child or youth experiencing suicidal ideation, a referral may be made to the Michif Mental Health and Wellness team. This decision

is made to ensure the child/youth receives timely support and, if necessary, to create a Life Promotion Plan. See [Step 6](#)

When diverting to voluntary or prevention services, the Assessor attaches the completed Michif Family/Youth Assessment, including:

- the rationale for diversion.
- confirmation that the child/youth is safe.
- the analysis set to support planning and shared understanding; and
- clear next steps for the receiving case manager.

3. Transition to Ongoing Family Services

If the Assessor determines that the child/youth is at ongoing risk of harm, the child/youth requires an LMO-led safety planning process to ensure their safety. In this situation, a Family Service file is opened and transferred to a child safety social worker, who will undertake the ongoing work necessary to ensure child safety.

In these circumstances, the following key documents and actions must be completed to support the next phase:

- A more detailed genogram, developed collaboratively with the family or youth, building on the initial genogram created during [Step 1: Screening](#).
- A completed Michif Family/Youth Assessment, clearly documenting the analysis and rationale for ongoing involvement.
- A Michif Interim Safety Plan, outlining what is currently keeping the child or youth safe while longer-term safety planning is developed.
- For youth who have expressed suicidal ideation or appear to be at risk, completion of a [Reasons for Living Inventory](#), followed by consultation between the Assessor and a Michif Child & Youth Mental Health and Wellness counsellor to prioritize worries and next steps.
- Where children are living outside the family home or a parent's access is limited, development of a **Safety Planning Timeline** in collaboration with the ongoing social worker. This professional Timeline is then translated into a family- and youth-friendly Timeline and shared with the family and their *La Paraantii* during a Michif Family/Youth Meeting.
- Arrangement of a [Piihitikway Meeting, Step 3](#), by the Assessor and ongoing social worker to welcome the family or youth into their Métis community and formally introduce LMO's role in supporting ongoing planning. Relevant team members and *La Paraantii* are included in this meeting as well.

ASSESSMENT FOR YOUTH SERVICES

The Youth Services team is grounded in the belief that healing, belonging, and cultural connection are not “add-ons”, but central to safety, well-being, and strong outcomes for Métis youth. From first contact through planning and follow-up, the process intentionally keeps relational support close: a Youth Wellness Counsellor remains part of every open youth services file to promote culturally safe, trauma-informed practice and to keep doors open to healing in whatever ways the youth is ready for.

Elder connection is built in (with an **Elder referral** required for all youth receiving services), and youth are supported to gather their people through meetings that fit their circumstances. Assessment leads to a shared understanding of unmet needs and next steps, and the care team moves into ongoing planning and monitoring through *Paraantii* meeting — developing either a **Life Promotion Plan** when suicide risk is elevated or a **Youth Connection and Belonging Independence Plan** when stability allows. The process also holds space for youth voice and meaning-making (Nistwayr), learning after critical incidents (**LMO debrief approach**), recognition of resilience (Honouring), and continuous youth feedback (Aykooshi survey).



Kikekyelc: A Place of Belonging

In 2020, LMO opened **Kikekyelc: A Place of Belonging (KKC)**, a 31-unit, culturally safe, affordable, and supported apartment community created with care and intention. KKC was developed to support Elders and Indigenous youth who have experienced involvement in the child welfare system, offering not just housing, but a foundation for connection, belonging, and healing.

The vision for KKC emerged from a deep awareness of the challenges faced by many Indigenous youth who spend much of their formative years in foster care, often aging out without the practical skills, connection to their cultural identity or community, or sense of belonging to their family or kinship circle needed to thrive independently. These realities have led to heartbreaking outcomes that call for a new, more compassionate, and culturally grounded response.

Following LMO's 2017 delegation agreement, through which LMO reclaimed responsibility for the safety and well-being of Métis children and youth, a clear commitment was established: to reduce the number of Métis children entering care and to strengthen connection and belonging for those already within the system. KKC is a meaningful expression of that commitment.

At Kikekyelc, youth are welcomed into a living environment where they can see themselves, their cultures, and their stories reflected and honoured. This innovative program-housing supports residents in building life skills for independence while also nurturing healing through relationships, cultural connection, including Elder mentorship, and community engagement. By centering belonging as essential to well-being, LMO is actively transforming service delivery and outcomes, working to break cycles of disconnection and create stronger futures for Indigenous youth and generations to come.

To learn more about Kikekyelc: A Place of Belonging, please check out this link: <https://www.communitylivingbc.ca/kikekyelc-a-place-of-belonging-video/>

For a detailed description of how the **Michif Youth Services** team works through the **10 Steps of Accountability**, please refer to the **Leading with and Incorporating Healing In the Delivery of Michif Youth Services at LMO** document.

For additional documents related to Youth Services and Kikekyelc, please refer to **KKC Appendices** and **Step 2 Appendices**.



ASSESSMENT FOR RESOURCES (CAREGIVER STABILITY)

Assessment within LMO's Resources Team operates with the understanding that caregiver stability is central to children's safety, belonging, and continuity of care. When challenges arise in an already approved care home or extended family living situation, assessment is used not to necessarily re-evaluate a caregiver's suitability, but to slow things down, understand what is happening, and plan collaboratively to prevent breakdown and further disruption for the child.

Caregiver stability assessment begins when a concern is identified through a "Resource Screening", completed by the Resource Team Leader. From there, the Resource team gathers and organizes information related to the worry, with particular attention to how current challenges are impacting the child in the placement. This includes exploring the caregivers' lived experience, existing strengths, stability, and success, and areas where additional support may be needed.

The assessment process is coordinated by the Resource social worker, who delegates members of the care team to gather information from multiple perspectives. This intentionally includes the voice of the child, the caregiver, family members, and other key people involved in the child or caregiver's life. Elder consultation is also built into the process to support cultural grounding, reflection, and guidance.

The **Caregiver Stability Assessment**, **Caregiver Stability Assessment Guiding Questions**, and **Caregiver Stability Assessment Worksheet** support a shared understanding across the care team and help move the assessment toward clear next steps. Where the information gathered identifies concerns that require immediate or more formal attention, a caregiver stability plan is developed collaboratively through a series of planning meetings. This plan is then monitored and revisited by the Resource social worker, with the goal of strengthening the caregiving environment, restoring balance, and supporting the child to remain safely and meaningfully connected within their care home whenever possible.

Here is an example of a **completed Caregiver Stability Assessment**.

ASSESSMENT IN LMO PREVENTATIVE SUPPORT SERVICES

As described previously, assessment is also a core responsibility across prevention services and is carried out using similar processes that are adapted to fit the unique context, mandate, and needs of each program and the families they serve.

Goal of Assessment for Support / Prevention-Based Services

To determine the willingness of the youth or family to work alongside prevention services staff to address critical worries.

- To identify the critical worries or issues facing the child, youth or family that are creating unmet needs or struggles for the child or children in the home.
- To establish connections with *La Paraantii* to develop a plan to support the youth's or family's unmet needs, address struggles, and ensure ongoing resources and support for the family in the future.

ASSESSMENT FOR MICHIF EARLY YEARS SERVICES

Assessment within Early Years programming at LMO is grounded in relationship, responsiveness, and an understanding that families arrive with both strengths and needs shaped by their own stories and contexts. From the point of referral onward, assessment is used to support thoughtful connection and helps the team understand how to walk alongside the family in a way that is timely, appropriate, and respectful.

The process begins with an **Early Childhood Development (ECD) Screening**, completed by the Team Lead when a referral is received.

This initial step supports an early understanding of the family's circumstances, current needs, and readiness for service, while also considering program capacity and fit. This screening tool helps guide decisions about how support may be offered, whether through consultant involvement, group programming, individual caseload support, or placement on a waitlist, and remains an internal tool used to support coordinated planning.

Once a family is connected, an assigned worker completes an **ECD Face Sheet**, which is placed at the front of the Early Years file to provide a shared snapshot of the child and family and to support continuity across the team.

From there, intake and assessment within the context Early Years services deepen through tools matched to the child's developmental stage and the family's priorities, including prenatal supports, Early Years (ages 0–6), and Métis-specific child development pathways for ages 7–12 and 8–18, including timelines that support bridging and transitions.

Assessment supports shared understanding, informs service planning, and helps the team remain responsive as circumstances change, ensuring that supports remain grounded in relationship, cultural safety, and the lived realities of Métis children and their families.

Additional forms/resources for Michif Early Years Services can be accessed below:

- [Family Intake for MIDP Perinatal Services](#)
- [Family Intake for MSCD Services 7 to 12 Years](#)
- [Family Intake for MSCD Services 13 to 18 Years](#)
- [MSCD 13 to 18 Years Transition Timeline](#)
- [Example of a Direct Support Goal Report #1](#)
- [Example of a Direct Support Goal Report #2](#)

ASSESSMENT FOR MICHIF MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS SERVICES

Mainstream suicide risk assessment practices typically focus on identifying risk factors, protective factors, and assessing the specificity of any plans and the potential risk of imminent harm. The primary objective of these assessments is to predict an individual's level of risk and determine whether immediate intervention is necessary. However, mainstream suicide risk assessment tools are rarely used proactively to identify broader needs or gaps in a person's life. Instead, they are designed primarily for the immediate detection and management of risk and are not intended to promote overall life or well-being.

Recognizing this limitation, we decided to shift our focus toward **life promotion**.

The [Reasons for Living \(Background Information\)](#) was selected as a valuable resource to support this shift.

Originally developed by Dr. Marsha Linehan, a psychologist with lived experience who also created Dialectical Behavioural Therapy, the RFL emphasizes protective factors and serves as a foundation for interventions that enhance elements believed to buffer against suicidal thoughts (Allen et al., 2019). The tool aligns well with a relational worldview, focusing on strengths and cultural norms such as respect for individuals, the avoidance of inappropriate or intrusive questions, and the understanding of the power of words. It promotes the strengthening of protective factors rather than centring solely on the assessment of risk factors (Crofoot Graham, 2002; Allen et al., 2019).

Both the original RFL and the youth-adapted versions have demonstrated strong clinical utility and validity in assessing suicide risk (Osman, 1996). They are effective in identifying individuals who may be at risk for suicide. Despite this, cultural adaptations of the RFL have largely been limited to validating translations of the language, without substantial modifications to the underlying constructs or deeper cultural frameworks (Chu et al., 2017).

Our team set out to modify the Reasons for Living Inventory to better reflect the cultural and contextual needs of Métis youth and communities. This effort involved drawing from both the existing literature on the RFL and valuable feedback gathered from youth themselves. Emerging research indicates that imagery plays a significant role in how youth experience suicidal thoughts, which may involve not only

explicit verbal thoughts but also mental imagery (Lawrence et al., 2021). In response, we integrated future-oriented and optimistic imagery into the adapted RFL to foster hope and positive visioning.

After creating the initial modified version of the RFL, we presented it to youth and Elders for additional input. Revisions were made based on their feedback to ensure the tool was culturally relevant, respectful, and effective in promoting life and well-being rather than focusing solely on risk assessment.

The **Reasons for Living Inventory (RFL)** is a tool that is a part of the Life Promotion Protocol.

It is a comprehensive, trauma-informed questionnaire developed specifically for LMO by Dr. Rebecca Sanford. It has been influenced through collaboration with Denise McCuaig, Michif Elders, and the voices of Indigenous youth. The RFL prompts youth to reflect on all the people, places, animals, and spiritual elements that provide them with a sense of hope, meaning, belonging, and purpose. The questions help workers understand how strongly a youth feels connected to these aspects of their life and how important these connections are to their overall well-being.

- For each question, there are spaces for youth to highlight specific words that describe what they currently have in their life and what they feel they need in terms of hope, meaning, belonging, and purpose. Importantly, the RFL also assesses whether the youth is currently experiencing, has previously experienced, or may be at risk of experiencing thoughts or behaviors related to suicide.
- This tool is primarily designed for youth aged 16 and older; however, it may also be used with younger adolescents if deemed appropriate by the worker, based on the youth's developmental stage and individual circumstances. A child-friendly version of the tool is currently in development to ensure its accessibility for younger age groups.
- The outcomes from the Reasons for Living Inventory play an essential role in informing both the Michif Family/Youth Assessments and the Michif Well-Being Plans. Typically, this tool is administered by the Michif Mental Health and Wellness team or by workers who have been trained in the Life Promotion Protocol.

Using the Reasons for Living Inventory

We have developed a plan to integrate the **Reasons for Living Inventory (RFL)** into practice, supporting proactive and preventive conversations focused on life promotion and guiding the planning of supports in crisis situations. It is important to note that the RFL should never be used during immediate crisis situations, as the part of the brain required to engage with the RFL's reflective questions is typically inaccessible during a crisis. Instead, the RFL is intended to function as a preventive tool, supporting life promotion, aiding in the development of safety plans, and facilitating stabilization and reorientation toward life-affirming goals following a crisis intervention.

The RFL serves as a valuable resource for directing attention to the elements in a person's life that help maintain their connection to living. It also assists in identifying areas that may require further support or development through longer-term interventions.

We acknowledge that, for some individuals, responding to the RFL's questions may evoke reminders of areas in their lives where they currently experience a sense of lack or disconnection. Although these aspects may not represent present reasons for living, they can still offer pathways toward hope for a better future. It is important to recognize that maintaining hope can be challenging, and at times, hope itself can feel burdensome, especially when change appears unattainable. Validating these experiences is crucial, as being seen and understood in one's pain can have significant healing power.

Our goal is to emphasize and support each person's connection to life and to engage in conversations that are affirming and oriented toward well-being. However, it is equally important to acknowledge and explore the realities in which individuals may not feel connected to life at the present moment. When someone is not yet ready or able to hold hope for themselves, staff members can play a critical role by carrying that hope on their behalf until they feel prepared to reclaim it for themselves.

"...hope of those things kept me going"

Michif Elder Patrick Savard

To use the RFL effectively, it is essential for staff to understand that the RFL serves as a resource to support generative, life-affirming conversations. The RFL is designed to initiate discussions about life promotion by exploring areas that represent strong reasons for living, as well as identifying areas that may benefit from further attention to enhance an individual's connection to life and their reasons for living. Given that some of the questions may evoke strong emotions, it is important that staff work closely and sensitively with the individual while completing the RFL. Staff should use thoughtful, appreciative inquiry questions to foster understanding, connection, and validation throughout the process.

Once the Reasons for Living Inventory has been completed, the counsellor will review and score the inventory and then explain the outcomes to the Case Manager. This collaborative process ensures that the insights gained from the RFL are integrated into the assessment and inform subsequent planning and support for the youth.

Please refer to [this document](#) for clarity surrounding when to use the RFL. As well, the following video demonstrates the process for completing the **Reasons for Living Inventory**:

<https://youtu.be/jrz0xOXaeQ0>

If the child or youth has experienced, is currently experiencing, or expresses future thoughts of suicide, a **Life Promotion Plan** will be developed collaboratively with the child or youth and their *La Paraantii* (see **Step 6**)

Referring Back to Child Safety Team

When working with children, youth, and families in any prevention or support service stream, workers remain responsible for reporting child safety concerns. If, at any point during assessment or ongoing work, concerns emerge that are more serious than those identified at intake or referral, the team must consider whether child safety involvement is required.

In these situations, the worker will use the **Threshold Scale** to help determine whether there is an ongoing risk of harm that falls outside the prevention mandate and requires involvement from the Child Safety Team. This decision is made collaboratively through consultation between the prevention or support worker, a child safety social worker, and their respective Team Leaders. The rationale for the decision must be clearly documented.

Threshold Scale:

Scaling Question (On a scale of 0-10):

10 = The family is experiencing some struggles, and there are critical well-being concerns that the family is willing and wanting to work on with the support of prevention staff. They are open to connecting with their *La Paraantii* and strengthening ties to their Métis culture.

0 = The worries for this family are more significant than what falls under our prevention mandate. The family requires support from a child safety worker because the children are believed to be at ongoing risk of harm and in need of an LMO-led safety planning process to ensure their safety.

The Threshold Scale must be reviewed collaboratively by the worker, their team leader, and the child safety team leader to ensure shared understanding and appropriate decision-making.

AYKOOSHI FEEDBACK SURVEY

At the end of the assessment phase in any service area, regardless of the outcome, the worker should ask the family or youth to complete the *Aykooshi* Feedback Survey and provide timely feedback on the services provided.

- If the family or youth declines to complete the survey, the assessor must document the reason for no survey completion in the Response tab of the Incident record.
- If a decision is made to end LMO involvement after the assessment phase, and the family/youth does not wish to receive ongoing services, a gift and card will be sent to them, along with an invitation to upcoming community events (see [Step 10](#) for more information). This is in line with LMO's commitment to reconciliation by strengthening one's sense of belonging and connection to their Métis cultural identity and community, as these are demonstrated as ongoing protective factors.



CASE TRAJECTORY AND SAFETY PLANNING TIMELINE

Case Trajectory

A case *trajectory* sets out the worries, goals, an outline of the steps to achieve the goals, and a method for measuring progress towards the goals.

Case trajectories must include:

- Worry Statement(s)
- Safety Goal(s)
- Safety Scale(s)
- Safety Planning Timeline

Practice Note

A Trajectory and Timeline are **NOT** the same thing!

Safety Planning Timeline

The Safety Planning Timeline establishes the timeframe in which the steps outlined in the trajectory are expected to be undertaken. It shows how the team plans to move from the Worry Statement(s) toward achieving the Safety Goal(s).

Here is the LMO [Safety Planning Timeline Template](#), and three examples of anonymized Safety Planning Timelines for reference:

- [Safety Planning Timeline #1](#)
- [Safety Planning Timeline #2](#)
- [Safety Planning Timeline #3](#)

Core Tasks of a Safety Organized Timeline

These core tasks include:

- Sharing the Worry Statements, Safety Goals, and Safety Scales with the family and obtaining their feedback. The analysis sets and timeline should then be shared with an informed, naturally connected *Paraantii*.
- Helping everyone, including the children, understand the issues through the creation of a [Nistwayr](#)
- Conducting a series of Michif Family/Youth Planning Meetings.
- Defining how the team will monitor the Michif Family/Youth Safety over time to ensure that the child/youth remains safe (See [Step 8](#))

The core tasks or steps involved in a Safety Planning Timeline are outlined in the [10 Steps of Accountability](#) in this **Michif Practice Model**.

LMO is committed to giving parents every opportunity to understand and address the child safety concerns that led to the agency's involvement. Whenever possible, social workers collaborate with parents and their *Paraantii* to develop safety plans that allow children to remain in their homes while worries are being resolved. We recognize that strong networks and culturally anchored supports are central to child and family wellbeing.

There are times, however, when it is not possible to create a safety plan that adequately protects the child while they remain in the care of their parents. In these situations, and only after meaningful efforts to collaborate have been exhausted, the agency may need to arrange for the child to stay with family or enter care to ensure their immediate safety and prevent further harm.

We also acknowledge the significant impact that removal has on children, parents, extended family, and community. When a child is placed outside the family home, workers must support parents to address the identified concerns while being mindful of timeframes that align with the child's developmental needs and best interests. Some parents may not be able to make the required changes within a timeframe that provides enough stability for their children's wellbeing.

In consultation with a team leader, workers must therefore engage in parallel planning, including actively supporting parents to resolve protection concerns and simultaneously planning for the child's permanency, should reunification not be possible. Clear, realistic timeframes must be documented and communicated, and progress must be monitored in partnership with the family and *La Paraantii*.

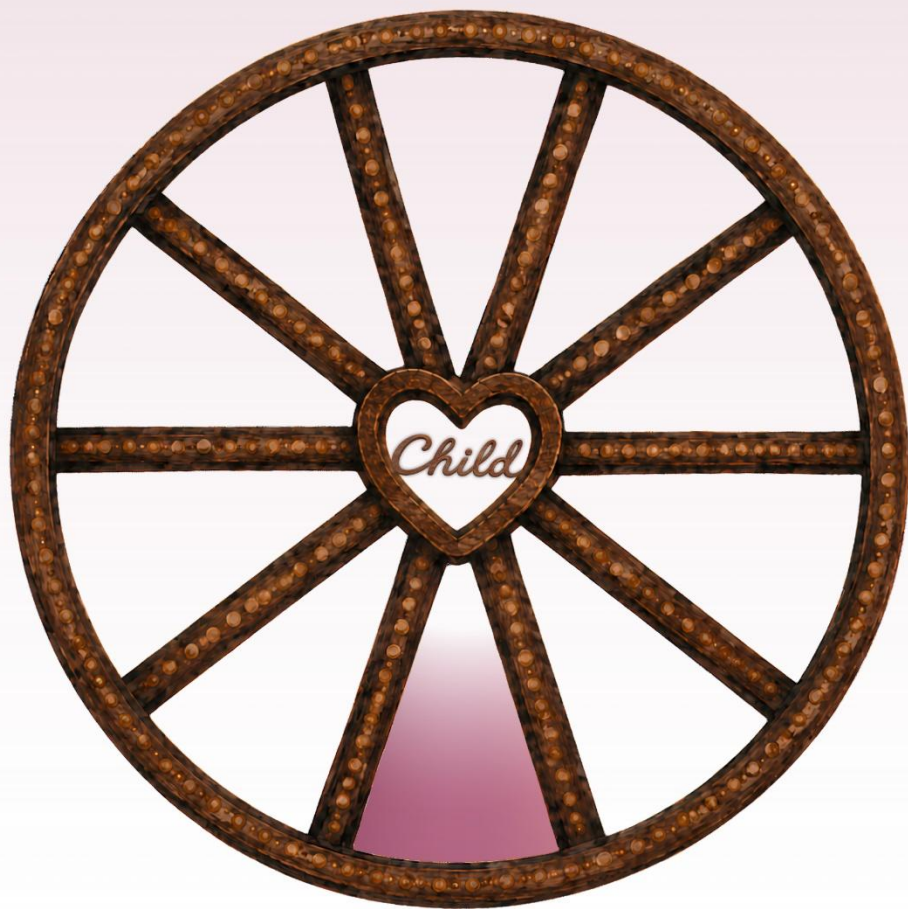
When parents are unable or unwilling to make progress on the agreed-upon Safety Planning Timeline, the focus must shift to securing long-term permanency for the child. Children deserve to grow up in stable, connected, and loving environments, not in prolonged states of uncertainty. Ensuring permanency, whether through reunification, family-based care, or another culturally grounded option, must remain paramount in all decision-making.

At this stage, a referral should be made to the Permanency Team to initiate the **Connection and Belonging Circle** process. For further details about this process, refer to [Step 6](#)

Additional resources and appendices that support **Step 2: Assessment and Analysis** (including any not referenced in the main text) can be found here: [Step 2 Appendices](#). As well, please refer to the [ICM system tips](#) for guidance.

STEP 3

Piihitikway



PIIHITIKWAY (WELCOME) MEETING

PURPOSE AND INTENTION

The child welfare system has long been recognized as an extension of colonial systems that have perpetuated trauma for Indigenous children, youth and families. The over-representation of Indigenous children in care throughout Canada is an indicator of how a system intended to keep children safe and support families has actually continued the erosion of the protective factors found within traditions and cultural ways of being that were once key to child safety within Indigenous kinship circles and communities. Today, child welfare involvement continues to be a fearful, debilitating, and trauma-inducing experience. As a Métis child welfare agency, LMO is fiercely aware of this history and the impact on Métis children, youth and families. For this reason, we must take extra steps to gain trust and demonstrate that LMO is different, and that we are committed to restoring traditional and cultural ways of being to work alongside families, keeping their children safe and their families together.

“Piihitikway, in our language, is a ‘welcome,’ it means ‘come on in...we welcome you in.”

Patrick Savard, Michif Elder
(Auger, 2024, pp.36)

This commitment begins from LMO's initial involvement with a youth/family and is further demonstrated and emphasized in Step 3 of the LMO Michif Practice Model: The *Piihitikway Meeting*. Piihitikway is a Cree word that is also used in the Michif language and means “to come in”. It is a warm greeting and evokes a welcome. At LMO, our team must establish a warm and welcoming tone when working with youth/families as this builds relationships, fosters connections and creates a sense of belonging; all of which are fundamental to increasing safety and, hopefully, to alleviating some of that initial fear.

Auger (2024) explains that child welfare remains a colonial system that subjects Métis families to ongoing experiences of colonial violence and intergenerational trauma. Taking steps to change this experience for families is a critical part of reconciliation. One of the most pivotal ways to accomplish this is by embedding culture into every aspect of practice, from the first phone call through to closing a family's file. Inviting families to participate in a Piihitikway provides an opportunity for Métis families to reconnect with their culture, identity, family, and history. It serves as a process of cultural resurgence, creating a sense of safety, comfort, belonging, and welcome into their Métis community, which is especially important given that many Métis people have limited knowledge of their Métis identity.

Creating a sense of safety for families at the beginning of services is a vital factor in ensuring engagement. Positive working relationships significantly contribute to the success of families in reaching their goals. Data from Auger (2024) indicates that 92 percent of families accessing services at LMO report feeling safe, and this sense of safety often begins with the *Piihitikway Meeting*.

The *Piihitikway Meeting* is a mandatory component of the practice model and holds equal importance to every other element of the LMO Michif Practice Model. It serves as a key mechanism for transforming the child welfare system through decolonization and fostering cultural revitalization. Providing supports that are firmly rooted in Métis culture is essential to ongoing planning and promoting the holistic well-being of Métis children, youth, and families.

“That’s when you’re starting to build that relationship to show that we understand that child welfare is a scary place. It’s a scary thing to be a part of. We understand that you’re not going to trust us... We understand, and we share our commitment to them.

We really hope that you’re going to feel comfortable with us by the way that we talk to you, the way we treat you... and with that first welcoming, my experience is that it ends well and then when we want to invite them back to start talking about some of the things we are worried about and that they might be worried about, they’re just more comfortable to do that.”

Colleen Lucier, Executive Director
(Auger, 2024, pp.37)

ROLE OF PIIHITIKWAY MEETINGS IN CASE TRANSITIONS

When the work is transitioning from an Incident or Service Request (Assessment phase) into an ongoing Family Services file, the Piihitikway Meeting serves as the formal point of transfer between the Assessor and the ongoing Family Services Social Worker. A separate “transfer” meeting with the family is not required. The Piihitikway itself supports this handover in a way that is relational, transparent, and grounded in Michif practice.

The Piihitikway Meeting provides families with a clear and consistent understanding of why LMO remains involved and reinforces how and why LMO practices differently from the mainstream child welfare system. It is a welcoming meeting that sets the tone for the ongoing work, rather than a meeting focused on further assessment, problem-solving, or planning.

Information related to the concerns or reasons for LMO’s continued involvement should not come as a surprise to families during the Piihitikway Meeting. These concerns are expected to have been communicated clearly and respectfully throughout the assessment process. Its purpose is to create shared understanding, reinforce transparency, and support a respectful transition into ongoing services.

ROLE OF THE ASSESSOR IN THE PIIHITIKWAY MEETING

The Assessor plays a key role in preparing for and participating in the Piihitikway Meeting as part of the transition process. Their role includes supporting continuity, ensuring clarity, and helping families experience the transition as intentional and respectful rather than abrupt or fragmented.

Families are encouraged to invite individuals they identify as important supports to participate in the Piihitikway Meeting. The Executive Director is also invited and participates whenever possible, offering leadership presence, reinforcing key messages about LMO’s approach, and supporting the relational tone of the meeting. Additional internal support may be involved in preparation to ensure Assessors feel supported and confident in organizing, facilitating and/or co-facilitating the Piihitikway Meeting.

The Piihitikway Meeting marks the conclusion of the Assessor’s involvement and the beginning of the ongoing relationship between the family and their Family Services Social Worker. When held as intended, it supports a smooth and respectful transition, strengthens trust, and establishes a solid foundation for the work that follows.

PROCESS AND TIMELINE

The *Piihitikway Meeting* is ideally held within the first 4 weeks after a social worker receives the file from the Assessor.

Please see the [LMO Practice Timeline](#).

The space where the *Piihitikway Meeting* is held should be warm and inviting, arranged with refreshments and gifts on the table. This gathering is designed to create a comfortable atmosphere for conversation, focusing on getting to know one another, who each person is, and where they come from.

“Honouring of Métis families, through providing services that reflect who they are as Métis people, creating hope and belonging.”

Denise McCuaig, Michif Elder

“This process is a crucial part of reestablishing connections that have been disrupted by colonization.”

Auger (2024)

Michif Elder Denise McCuaig (as cited in Auger, 2024) speaks about the unique way in which the *Piihitikway Meeting* aligns with Métis values, emphasizing the significance and importance of providing opportunities for families to share tea and cookies, meet with staff, and be offered choices in how they wish to move forward with child welfare services. These choices might include deciding when and where meetings will take place, determining who should be present during discussions, choosing how cultural practices are incorporated into their interactions with LMO, and deciding the pace at which they wish to engage in services.

It is hoped that the *Piihitikway Meeting* will help youth/families feel a sense of belonging and comfort and encourage them to return and trust that LMO will support them to the best of its ability, even when difficult topics must be discussed. During *Piihitikway Meetings*, LMO staff, Elders, and others involved will use this time to convey to families that they will be walking alongside them on their journey toward achieving their goals for themselves and their family.

KEY COMPONENTS OF PIIHITIKWAY MEETINGS

Several essential components of the Piihitikway Meeting must be honoured.

These are as follows:

- **La Paraantii:**

Youth/Families are encouraged to bring whoever they identify as their support people and who they wish to have part of their care team.

- **Li Pleu Vyeu (Elders):**

A Michif Elder must be present at *Piihitikway Meetings*. If an Elder is unavailable, staff must document the reason for their absence and include the rationale in their case notes. Elders provide families with opportunities to learn about Métis culture and to hear cultural teachings that may resonate with their experiences.

Please see the [Elders' Biographies](#).

- **Prayer and Land Acknowledgment:**

Typically, the Elder offers a prayer at the beginning of Piihitikway Meeting, often delivered in both Michif and English. Beginning with a prayer helps create a respectful atmosphere and can help ground everyone involved, easing some of the anxiety families may feel. A land acknowledgment is also shared, usually by an LMO staff member, though anyone present is welcome to deliver it as a sign of respect for the territory on which the gathering is held.

- **Michif Language:**

Incorporating the Michif language into Piihitikway is an important act of reconciliation and cultural reconnection. Although some staff may feel uncertain about their proficiency, practicing the language in front of families demonstrates humility and encourages families to engage with their language as well. Learning and sharing Michif make significant contributions to language revitalization efforts (Auger, 2024).

- **LMO's Commitment & Services:**

An overview of the historical and more contemporary events that have impacted Métis family systems, creating hardship and increasing the need for child safety and other interventions, is presented. Further, an overview of LMO's commitment to reconciliation through the development and implementation of the LMO Michif Practice Model. Key components and cultural practices that have been woven into the practice model and reviewed and highlighted. Youth/families receive information about the various programs and services offered through LMO and are invited to join LMO's Distribution List to receive updates about community events and gatherings. This ensures that youth/families feel welcome and informed about the supports available to them, as well as the many opportunities to engage with their Métis Community.

- **Cultural Teachings & Resources:**

Youth/Families are presented with a basket of cultural resources that they can take home. These materials help them learn more about their identity as Métis people and deepen their cultural connections. Sharing cultural teachings is an essential part of the *Piihitikway Meeting* process. It creates opportunities for Métis people to deepen their sense of belonging and develop a clearer understanding of their identity and heritage. These cultural teachings, shared with parents, youth, and *La Paraantii* during *Piihitikway Meetings*, can then be passed down to their children, fostering intergenerational knowledge and pride. There has been documented success in passing cultural knowledge to children, who often show genuine excitement about their identity as Métis people.

For cultural teachings and resources, refer to the [Métis History Booklet](#).

- **Understanding who will be their ongoing case manager for the work moving forward:**

It is important for families to be included in our processes in key ways and sometimes when they are involved with multiple workers it can be confusing. The *Piihitikway Meeting* is a key place to share who they will be working with moving forward (if that is changing) to achieve their safety goals as well as understanding of the steps we will go through together. Just as we expect them to bring a “**Captain of the Plan**” forward for their family and their family safety plan (see [Step 6](#)), we also need to be clear on who is the “Captain of the Work” moving forward as the case manager. LMO has a distinct framework that requires all areas of the organization to collaborate in care teams to do the healing/reconciliatory work for our Métis families.

In order to do this, we need to have a strong case manager who is responsible for completing the 10 steps and who will organize and conduct all the care team meetings. The case manager or “Captain of the Work” will be asking the care team members to support in various ways depending on their expertise and it is critical that this work is returned in a timely manner on all delegated files. If families have questions about this process, it is a great time during the *Piihitikway Meeting* to ask for clarity on this process and how it works.

The following video provides a practical demonstration of how to lead *Piihitikway Meeting*: <https://youtu.be/8fw0hxfF6vY>.

- **Presentation of a Métis Sash and Cultural Gift:**

Welcoming youth/families into the LMO Michif Community includes honouring their Métis identity through teachings and receiving cultural resources, including a presentation of a Métis sash by a Michif Elder. Recognizing and sharing cultural symbols, such as the sash, has been shown to foster pride among Métis individuals, thereby enhancing their sense of belonging to a distinct and resilient community. Providing the opportunity for families to be sashed during the *Piihitikway Meeting* helps establish LMO as a place of cultural acceptance, awareness, and safety from the very beginning of service involvement.

“The values and cultural practices involved in the Piihitikway Meeting are carried forward throughout all follow-up Michif Family/Youth Planning Meetings”

(Auger, 2024, pp.12)

“I remember distinctly the Taanishi Kiya Song...and [my son] was singing it loud and proud at home, and that was a really big turning point for me... little things that I’m noticing... that gave me hope that it’s not going to be something that’s lost.”

Métis Mother

(Auger, 2024, pp.30)

Strengthening cultural pride for individuals who have often experienced oppression can increase their confidence and empower them to take meaningful steps toward healing and achieving their personal and family goals. This practice represents an important step toward generational growth and contributes to a growing sense of Métis pride across generations

(Auger, 2024, pp.81)

“Well, I’ve seen at LMO, the little kids and that, they just like the idea that they’re Métis. It is something they will never forget.”

Fred Paquette, Michif Elder

“Our families come here and learning the traditions that are way back, they go, “Oh my gosh, it’s so unbelievable how we feel,” and I said, “you know what that is? It’s your roots. Your roots are coming back and you’re actually feeling who you are and be proud of who you are, and that is your strength. You want to be a good, strong Métis woman, believe in yourself. If you believe in yourself, you can do anything in this world that you want”

Lynda Tilley, Michif Elder

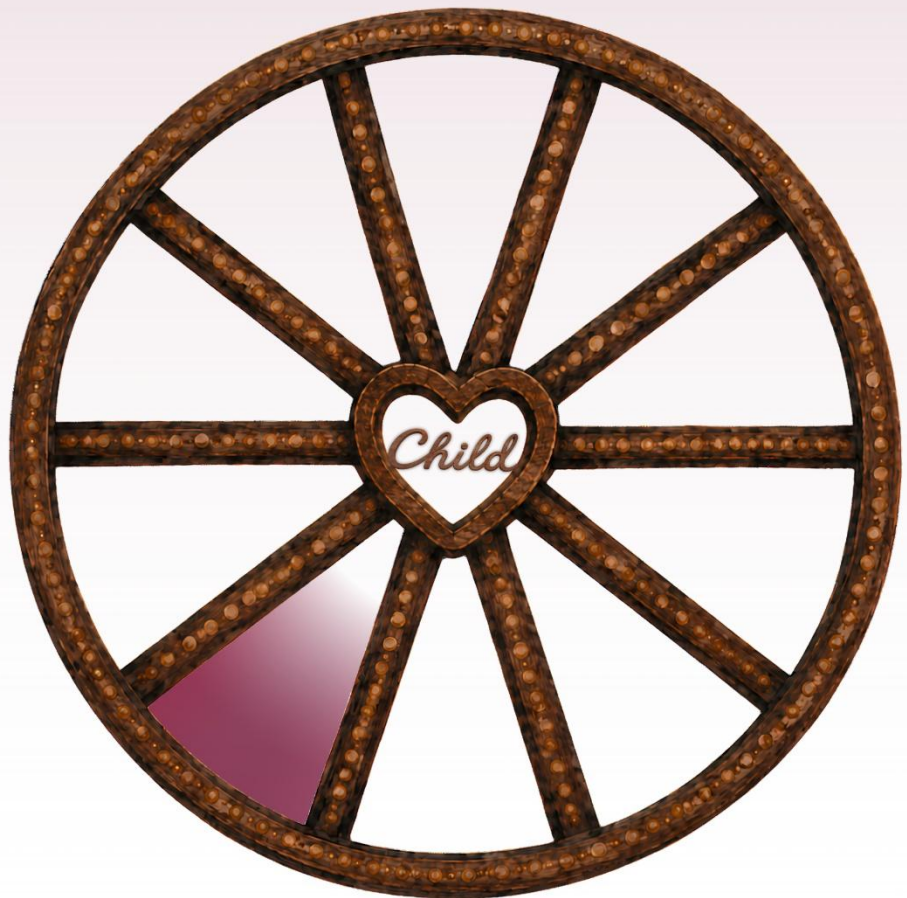
(Auger, 2024, pp.81)

The Piihitikway Meeting aligns with the traditional Métis value of welcoming all who come to one’s door. In keeping with this tradition, LMO welcomes families and extends an invitation to work collaboratively with the LMO care team. The goal is to ensure families have the support they need to address concerns while also offering opportunities to build meaningful connections to their community and culture.

**Wendy Chernivchan,
Métis Knowledge Keeper**

STEP 4

Voice of the Child



VOICE OF THE CHILD

Clearly capturing the voice of the child places them at the center of their Métis community and helps workers gain a genuine understanding of how the child is faring within their family and *La Paraantii* (Auger, 2024). Step 4 of the LMO Michif Practice Model focuses on ensuring the voice of the child/youth is consistently heard, understood and included in every step of practice from the initial screening process to case closure. Using different culturally and age-appropriate tools, the child's voice should be visible and audible in all documentation, including the ways in which worrisome adult behaviours are impacting them.

Traditionally, Métis children were encouraged to ask questions, engage in debate, and seek the opinions of others as part of developing strong critical thinking skills. Children were included in all aspects of family, community, and social life, where they could observe parents and community members modelling these behaviours during discussions of significant matters.

LMO has adapted the My Three Houses tool, originally created by Maggie Greening and Nicky Weld, to capture the child's voice meaningfully.

These culturally adapted tools include:

- [My Three Métis Cabins](#)
- [My Three Red River Carts](#)
- [My Three Métis Flowers](#)

For children under the age of 12, LMO uses a culturally adapted version of the Safety House tool, originally developed by Sonja Parker, to support meaningful conversations about safety.

These culturally adapted tools include:

- [My Safety Cabin](#) and
- [My Safety Red River Cart](#)

For youth, other culturally adapted tools have been created to gather their insights and experiences.

These culturally adapted tools include:

- [The Reasons for Living Inventory](#)
- [The LMO Life Promotion Plan](#)
- [Kwaayesh Ni Kaanawaymikawin – Connection and Belonging Assessment \(11+\)](#)

These tools create intentional opportunities for workers to engage in meaningful conversations, allowing them to discuss with parents and *La Paraantii* how to respond to and interact with children and youth, and to express their feelings, thoughts, and needs. Workers are expected to document these conversations thoroughly so that the child's/youth's voice can be shared with parents and *La Paraantii*. A critical, and often overlooked, aspect of this process is ensuring that workers not only capture and share the child's voice but also meaningful improvements in the child's or youth's life based on what the child/youth has expressed about their experiences.

CAPTURING THE VOICE OF THE CHILD

Genogram

Completing the family's genogram is an ongoing process that evolves as more information is learned about the family's relationships and connections. A crucial part of understanding who surrounds the child is asking the child directly about significant people who are or have been part of their life. Sometimes these individuals are related by blood, and other times they are chosen family, forming part of the child's *La Paraantii*. It is essential to capture all these people and their relationships to the child or youth and to reflect this information accurately on the genogram.

Developing a genogram with a child, youth, or family is a straightforward and effective way to identify key members of *La Paraantii* and to understand the roles they play within the family. Completing the genogram at this stage of the process allows the worker to hear directly from the child who is important in their life, from their perspective. While the genogram is initially created in Step 1 and may be expanded during Step 2 as the family shares their perspectives, intentionally revisiting the genogram in Step 4 ensures the child's voice is meaningfully integrated, highlighting who they identify as significant and the roles those individuals play in their life.

My Three Cabins

When interviewing children during **Step 2** particularly when there are concerns about potential harm, workers typically use tools such as **My Three Métis Cabins**, **My Three Red River Carts**, or **My Three Métis Flowers** as templates for the interview process.

This method mirrors the process used with parents and *La Paraantii*, offering the child an opportunity to share their perspective and experiences in a structured way.

- 1. Explain the Interview Process to Parents:**

Whenever possible, explain the purpose of the interview to the parents and seek their permission to speak with the child.

- 2. Decide on Presence:**

Determine whether the child should be interviewed with or without a support person present, considering the child's comfort and safety and noting the rationale and TL approval for not interviewing the child alone.

- 3. Introduce and Use the Tool:**

Explain the "My Three Métis Cabins" tool to the child and work through it using a separate sheet of paper for each cabin, flower, or cart.

4. **Engage the Child Creatively:**

Use words, drawings, and any other creative methods to help the child feel comfortable and engaged in the process.

Let the Child Choose the Starting Point:

Often, it is helpful to begin with the Métis Cabin of Good Things, especially if the child is feeling anxious or uncertain. It is essential to give the child the choice of which cabin, flower, or cart they wish to start with.

5. **Seek Permission to Share the Child's Voice:**

Once the activity is completed, obtain permission from the child to share their responses with parents, *La Paraantii*, Elders, and other professionals involved. Address any safety concerns the child may have about who will see the information. If unsure how to proceed, consult with a Team Leader. Explain to the child what the next steps will be and keep them involved in the process, especially if they are currently living outside their parents' home.

6. **Present Details to Parents and Caregivers:**

Share the child's insights with parents or caregivers, ideally during a *La Paraantii* meeting, usually beginning with the Métis Cabin of Good Things to highlight the strengths and child's positive experiences.

During this process, workers should first ask parents the following question before sharing the child's corresponding drawings or statements: "What do you think the child would say is good" and "what do you think they are worried about" and "what do you think they hope could be different?"

The "My Three Cabins," "My Three Flowers," and "My Three Métis Carts" tools are designed to help children express what is going well in their lives, what worries them, and what they are most hopeful for. These tools empower children to choose who they wish to share this information with, giving them control over how their voice is shared and honored. However, there may be circumstances where it is not possible to keep a child's voice private from their parents, particularly when sharing the child's perspective is necessary to help parents understand how their behavior impacts the child's life. If this situation arises, the child should be informed beforehand that their information will be shared, and the worker should explain why it is important for their voice to be heard. If a child expresses fear or indicates they may be harmed if what they shared is disclosed to their parents or caregivers, this information must be discussed with a Team Leader before it is shared. While the child's voice remains essential to the work, careful consideration is required to determine how to share this information in a way that does not jeopardize the child's safety.

While these tools are primarily designed for younger children, they can also be effectively used with adolescents if deemed appropriate by the worker, based on the youth's developmental stage and comfort level.

A video demonstration of a child interview using **My Three Cabins/Carts/Flowers** can be found here: <https://youtu.be/6XSPqxckyRo>.

Ma Trwaa Kabaan (My Three Cabins)

- ***Kabaan di Miiaashin*** (Cabin of Good Things)
- ***Kabaan di Aynket*** (Cabin of Worries)
- ***Kabaan di Pawatamihk*** (Cabin of Dreams)

Ma Trwaa Shaarett (My Three Carts)

- ***Shaarett di Miiaashin*** (Cart of Good Things)
- ***Shaarett di Aynket*** (Cart of Worries)
- ***Shaarett di Pawatamihk*** (Cart of Dreams)

Ma Trwaa Fleur (My Three Flowers)

- ***Fleur di Miiaashin*** (Flower of Good Things)
- ***Fleur di Aynket*** (Flower of Worries)
- ***Fleur di Pawatamihk*** (Flower of Dreams)

My Safety Cabin/Red River Cart

Sonja Parker, from Perth, Australia, developed the Safety House tool (Parker, 2009) as an extension of the My Three Houses (Three Cabins) process. This tool visually engages children in building their own safety plan. Through this process, children explore what life will look like in their place of safety, who among *La Paraantii* they believe should live or visit there, and what rules should govern this place of safety. A scaling question is also included to help the child indicate where they feel they are on their path to safety.

The **Safety Cabin** or **Red River Cart** process explores five key elements with the child:

Ma Kabaan di Pishkayta (My Cabin of Safety)

- ***Awaana wiikiw dans la kabaan di pishkayta*** (Who lives in the Safety Cabin)
- ***Awaana kiiwookew dans la kabaan pishkayta*** (Who visits in the Safety Cabin)
- ***Lii daanzhii moond*** (People I don't feel safe with)
- ***La lway di la kabaan di pishkayta*** (The rules of the Safety Cabin)
- ***Ma aen pchi shmayn di pishkayta*** (My Path of Safety - Scaling)

Ma Shaarett di Pishkayta (My Cart of Safety)

- ***Awaana dans ma shaarett di pishkayta*** (Who is in my Cart of Safety)
- ***Awaana oochipita ma shaarett di pishkayta*** (Who pulls my Cart of Safety)
- ***Lii daanzhii moond*** (People I don't feel safe with)
- ***La lway di la Shaarett di pishkayta*** (The rules of the Safety Cart)
- ***Ma aen pchi shmayn di pishkayta*** (My Path of Safety - Scaling)

Undertaking the Safety Cabin or Red River Cart process with children should be conducted in conjunction with **Step 6**, where more comprehensive safety and well-being plans are developed. At this stage, it is important for everyone involved to understand that this children's tool is intended to inform the rules and plans for the family, ensuring that all participants know what is necessary to keep the children safe and well. This creates an opportunity to bring the child's safety vision to parents and *La Paraantii* so their perspectives can directly contribute to developing a stronger safety plan. It also emphasizes to parents and *La Paraantii* that their primary accountability lies not with LMO, but with their own children.

The Connection and Belonging Assessment/Plan

“KWAAYESH NI KANAWAYMIKAWIN - BEING TAKEN CARE OF IN A GOOD WAY”

The Connection and Belonging Assessment/Plan, known as **Kwaayesh Ni Kanawaymikawin**, has been developed to assess how a child or youth, particularly those involved in the care system, is doing across eight key dimensions identified in collaboration with Métis Elders and leaders. These domains are recognized as crucial factors in supporting Métis children and youth. They provide a framework to ensure cultural considerations are integrated throughout the child’s experience in care, ultimately helping to improve outcomes and foster well-being. This assessment tool was originally developed by Andrew and Pene Turnell and later adapted by Colleen Lucier and Caara Goddard, with translations provided by Norman Fleury.

Workers may prepare for the assessment by engaging in group supervision or by developing their own questions for the first two columns of the assessment (“What are some good things about...?” and “What are some things that worry you about...?”) prior to meeting with the youth.

These conversations may unfold over multiple meetings, allowing the worker to gather sufficient information to develop meaningful scaling questions. This approach helps workers understand where the child or youth currently stands in terms of well-being and identifies their greatest unmet needs.

The final column of the assessment—“What do you think needs to happen, who can help, and how will they help?”—guides workers in developing actionable next steps.

This ensures that any plans created are clearly understood by the youth and that the youth is willing and able to participate in achieving the goals set out. The youth’s plan will always include specific details about who will do what when there are concerns identified in the earlier parts of the assessment (see [**Step 6: Safety/Wellbeing Plan**](#)). Workers are reminded to use the child’s or youth’s exact words when documenting responses in each domain and to provide the youth with a copy of the completed assessment template.

The Eight Domains of the Connection and Belonging Assessment:

- **La Paraantii – Your Relatives:**

This domain explores the people the child considers family, whether related by blood or through chosen relationships. It emphasizes the importance of knowing one's roots, feeling a sense of belonging, and identifying those who can provide lifelong connections for both celebrations and difficult times.

- **Kiikiwaahk – The Place Where You Live or Your House:**

This focuses on the child's sense of safety and belonging in their living environment. It is important that the child feels comfortable, can have fun, and can create a space that reflects who they are.

- **Aen Michif Niiya – I Am Métis/Michif:**

This domain looks at how the child stays connected to their Métis identity, culture, and community. It emphasizes that being Métis is part of their bloodline, passed down through generations, and highlights the strength, resilience, and gifts inherited from their ancestors. Learning about their identity helps children and youth grow into proud, hardworking, and contributing members of their community.

- **Miyoopimatishihk – Feeling Safe in Your Mind, Body, and Spirit:**

This domain addresses overall well-being, encompassing access to health services such as doctors, dentists, counseling, and support programs that contribute to feeling safe and well.

- **Otipemisiwak – Independence and Resilience:**

Métis people are historically known for their independence and resilience. The Cree term *Otipemisiwak* means “the people who own themselves” or “the people who govern themselves.” This domain focuses on helping children and youth develop skills necessary for leading healthy and positive lives, building respectful and supportive relationships, and becoming positive contributors to their community. In practical terms, this might relate to decisions about school, curfews, daily routines, or where they wish to live in the future.

- **La Bonn Zaafayr Di Vii – The Good Things in Life:**

This domain captures activities, interests, friendships, cultural events, and other pursuits that bring joy and fulfillment to the child's life.

- **Kaa-Wiichihitoyaahk – Helping One Another:**

Métis people traditionally took care of each other, with family and neighbours stepping in to help during times of need. This domain examines how children and youth embody the spirit of generosity passed down from their ancestors, whether through volunteering at school, within their family, or in their community.

- **Nistwayr – Understanding Their Circumstances:**

This final domain seeks to understand what the child knows about why they are not living at home and why social workers are involved in their life.

For a Connection and Belonging Template, click [here](#), and to see an example of a completed Connection and Belonging Assessment and Plan, click [here](#).

Please also review the [practice guidance for Connection and Belonging Assessments and Plans](#) for a more detailed explanation of how to work through all domains. Additionally, there are practice tips and sample questions to review when completing the Connection and Belonging Assessment for children 4 and older [here](#).

The **Kwaayesh Ni Kaanawaymikawin [Connection and Belonging Assessment](#)**, when completed alongside the **[Connection and Belonging Factsheet](#)**, replaces MCFD Care Plans for children in care as well as the Cultural Safety Agreement. This approach ensures that culturally grounded and child-centred practices guide all aspects of planning and service delivery.

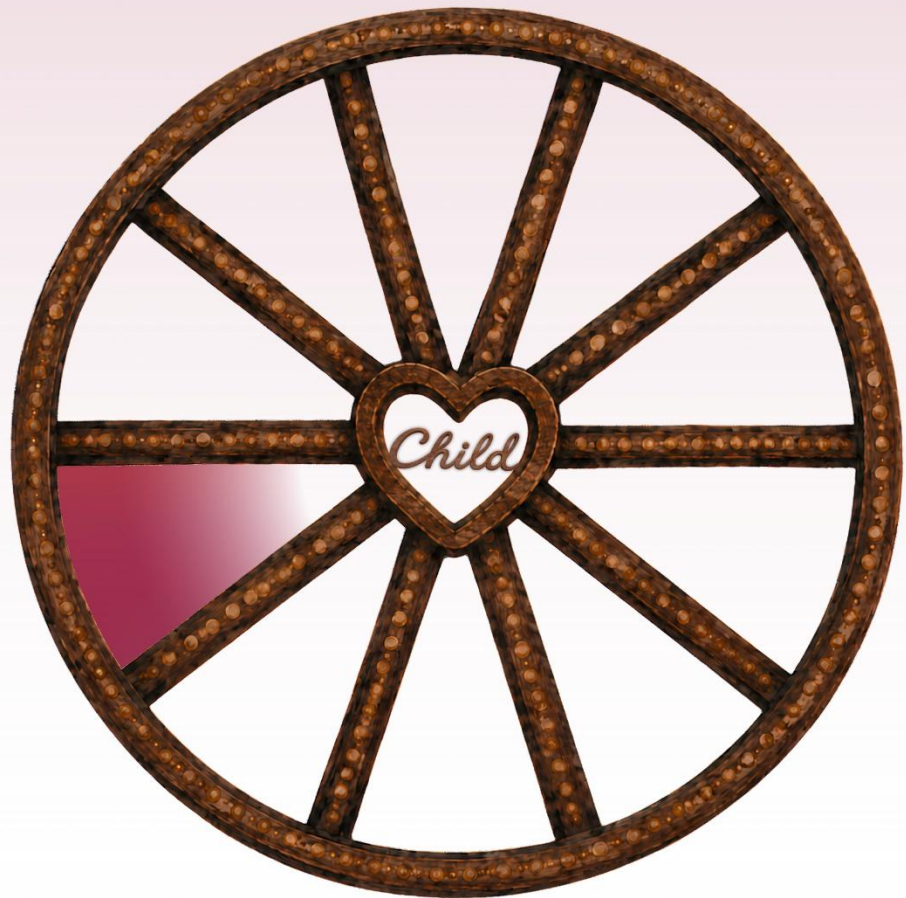
Additional resources and appendices that support **Step 4** (including any not referenced in the main text) can be found here: **[Step 4 Appendices](#)**.

DECOLONIZING PRACTICE NOTE

Multiple resources have been created to capture the voice of the child in meaningful ways. Completing these tools with children, youth, and families helps ensure that the child's voice remains central to the work and is not overlooked. Centering the child's voice is a crucial step toward reconciliation. Listening to and amplifying the perspectives of children and youth represents the first phase of reconciliation, helping to transform practices that have historically excluded their experiences and insights.

STEP 5

La Paraantii



LA PARAANTII (KINSHIP)

The Michif term **La Paraantii** was shared with us by *Norman Fleury* and encompasses the idea of both blood and non-blood relationships, as well as the deep responsibilities we hold toward one another within these connections. While *La Paraantii* can be simply translated as “relation” or “relative,” such a translation does not fully capture the ethical and cultural nuances of the term. As a core value, *La Paraantii* embodies the principle of caring for one another, as expressed in Métis Ways: Miyopmatisiwin (MNBC, 2017). This principle entails a shared responsibility for one another’s well-being, extending especially to the safety and welfare of children, who are honoured within Métis culture as sacred gifts from the Creator, deserving of love, nurture, and protection.

Among the Métis people, caring for one another and children has always been carried out in the spirit of *La Paraantii*. At LMO, we are committed to reviving this spirit and to recognizing and honouring the essential roles played by kokums (grandmothers), mooshooms (grandfathers), aunties, uncles, cousins, and other individuals with whom a child feels a safe and meaningful connection. These relationships are vital to the care and safety of children. Traditional practices of *La Paraantii* are deeply interwoven into Métis worldviews, ways of being, values, and beliefs. *La Paraantii* represents the heart of how Métis people understand connection, kinship, and the reciprocal relationships that link individuals to one another and all aspects of creation. It is the essence of how Métis communities value and care for one another.

Historically, *La Paraantii* included close family relationships such as parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. However, the concept of kinship extended far beyond immediate family, encompassing the broader community as well. Members of the community who were not related by blood were also considered part of a child’s *La Paraantii* and were often referred to as “aunt” or “uncle.” There was no distinction between blood relatives and community kinship ties, and all members of a child’s *Paraantii* recognized their inherent responsibility to love, care for, and protect the child.

“We are all longing to go home to some place we have never been - a place, half-remembered, and half-envisioned, we can only catch a glimpse of from time to time. Community. Somewhere, there are people to whom we can speak without having the words catch in our throats. Somewhere, a circle of hands will open to receive us, eyes will light up as we enter, and voices will celebrate with us whenever we come into our own power. Community means strength that joins our strength to do the work that needs to be done. Arms to hold us when we falter. A circle of healing. A circle of friends. Someplace where we can be free.”

Starhawk
(Amelse et al. 2018)

La Paraantii represents the most critical step in decolonizing child welfare, ensuring that children remain with their families and communities and facilitating the return of children to their parents whenever possible. Colonization resulted in the deaths of as many as 90 percent of Indigenous peoples, severely disrupting Indigenous ways of life and deliberately displacing Métis people as part of efforts to separate families and achieve assimilation into Western society (Tamburro, 2013).

“Colonization dis-membered our culture, dis-membered our people, dis-membered our families. Our job is re-membering.”

Theda Newbreast

The intergenerational trauma stemming from this forced separation continues to impact Indigenous communities today. One of the ongoing consequences is the erosion of *La Paraantii*, leading to a diminished network of support for families striving to stay together and work through challenges as a cohesive community. Restoring and strengthening *La Paraantii* is therefore essential for healing, preserving cultural identity, and promoting the well-being and stability of Métis children, youth, and families.

DECOLONIZING PRACTICE NOTE

The impact of colonization has significantly disrupted traditional parenting practices within Métis families and is often overlooked as a contributing factor to why Indigenous children continue to be removed from their families and communities (Healy, 2014). As Fournier and Crey (1997) powerfully state:

“When we removed children from their own homes and put them in foster homes about which we knew next to nothing, no matter how we cloaked our actions in welfare jargon, we were putting those children at risk... The welfare department which employed me was the biggest contributor to child abuse in the province.”

(Fournier and Crey, 1997: 86 - as cited in Sinclair, 2004)

True reconciliation requires what is known as ReconciliACTION, which are tangible steps taken by social workers to repair severed family connections, support displaced people, and restore relationships to land, *La Paraantii*, and ultimately, to the identities of Métis individuals and communities. This involves moving beyond words and symbolism into concrete practices that ensure families can stay connected and heal from the intergenerational trauma caused by historical policies of assimilation and separation.

DEFINING A SENSE OF BELONGING

Littlebear (2000) describes kinship as a “spider-web of relations,” highlighting how extended families create interconnected circles of support that provide balance, love, and guidance from birth (as cited in Carriere & Richardson, 2009). These insights reinforce why *La Paraantii* is one of the most vital steps within the LMO Michif Practice Model. Many subsequent steps in our practice rely on engaging a child or youth’s *Paraantii* to help ensure safety, well-being, and cultural connection. Yet, this is also an area where families often need significant support and encouragement, as many individuals who seek help may feel isolated and disconnected, lacking a natural network of support they can rely on during times of difficulty.

Before any child safety can be developed, youth or parents must identify their circle of natural support, or *La Paraantii*, who can work alongside them and the LMO team to co-create and monitor their plans. Emphasizing the importance of identifying and engaging one’s *La Paraantii* aligns practice with crucial traditional Métis values while strengthening child safety practices. Research consistently shows that the broader and stronger a child or youth’s *Paraantii*, the safer and more resilient the child is likely to be, as there are more individuals available to provide support, watch over their well-being, and intervene when needed.

As Carriere and Richardson (2009) note:

“To foster a sense of balance, social workers must assist children to know their family and history. Through this process, children may then go on to recognize their place and responsibility in the larger universe, gained through cultural teachings. Importantly, this goal implies that retaining kinship ties is part of overall community health and strength.”

The spirit of *La Paraantii* contributes profoundly to an individual’s sense of belonging, which is essential for healing. Unfortunately, this sense of belonging is often weak or absent in individuals who are struggling to care for their children or youth. Strengthening a person’s *Paraantii* fosters their sense of identity and belonging, which in turn supports their capacity to heal and achieve their goals.

Prioritizing *La Paraantii* is therefore a fundamental component of the LMO Michif Practice Model.

As John L. McKnight insightfully observes:

“Competent communities have been invaded, captured, and colonized by professionalized services.”

(John L. McKnight - as cited in Amelse et al., 2018, pp.5)

Social workers cannot proceed beyond Step 2 in the practice model without establishing a clear understanding of a family's *Paraantii*. The safety and well-being of Métis children, families, and communities depends upon fostering strong connections and a sense of belonging. Disconnection and low levels of cultural connectedness often correlate with a range of negative emotions, such as loneliness, anxiety, jealousy, anger, depression, and low self-worth. Maintaining family ties, preserving history, and respecting traditions are all vital components of *La Paraantii* and are necessary for the survival and flourishing of Métis families (Carriere & Richardson, 2009).

It is not uncommon for children and families involved with the child welfare system to have limited or no established *La Paraantii*. In many situations, if strong, connected supports had been present earlier, the child safety concerns may have been addressed before agency involvement became necessary. LMO approaches this not as a deficit, but as an opportunity to rebuild relationships, strengthen connection and belonging, and restore protective cultural structures.

When families are unable to identify or gather their *La Paraantii* for planning, LMO provides support by engaging Métis Elders who can help reconnect the family to their community, culture, and relationships. Elders play a vital role in helping families uncover, strengthen, or re-establish *La Paraantii* that can come forward to participate in planning, offer ongoing support, and contribute to the safety and wellbeing of the children.

Workers who require Elder involvement as part of a family's *Paraantii* must submit a **referral**. There is a **Elder Referral Guide** workers designed to support workers in knowing the process for making this referral. This process ensures that Elders are meaningfully connected, appropriately supported, and informed of their role in helping families move toward safety, stability, and cultural continuity.

DECOLONIZING PRACTICE NOTE

Centring the voice of the child and the importance of *La Paraantii* is not merely a practice strategy—it represents the first phase of reconciliation. Capturing and amplifying the perspectives of children and youth ensures their experiences inform and shape practice, helping to break cycles of disconnection and contribute meaningfully to healing and community resilience.

WHAT LA PARAANTII LOOKS LIKE WITHIN EACH STEP OF THE LMO MICHIF PRACTICE MODEL:

LA PARAANTII - STEP 1: SCREENING

- When a child protection concern is brought to LMO's attention, the Screener initiates efforts to identify *La Paraantii* by asking initial genogram questions. These early inquiries help the Screener gather information about the family's structure and significant relationships.
- The Screener may also ask relationship-focused questions to identify existing strengths, sources of safety, and any worries within the family, all from the perspective of individuals who are part of the child's *Paraantii*. This balanced approach helps provide diverse insights, enabling the Screener to make well-informed decisions regarding whether there is a potential risk to the child's safety. Additionally, the Screener explores how *La Paraantii* have supported the family in the past, their current involvement, and whether they are likely to remain engaged in supporting the family moving forward.
- *La Paraantii* plays a critical role from the very beginning of involvement. If *La Paraantii* demonstrates the capacity to provide sufficient support to the family, and the Screener's level of concern is reduced, the Screener may decide to instead offer voluntary support services to the family rather than proceed with an assessment of child safety.

LA PARAANTII - STEP 2: ASSESSMENT & ANALYSIS

Anti-oppressive practice is grounded in principles of minimal intervention and least intrusive measures. It recognizes the family's essential role in ensuring the safety and well-being of their children. Within this framework, *La Paraantii* is honoured and recognized as an integral part of the safety and support network for children and families (Healy, 2014). The involvement of *La Paraantii* during assessment and analysis ensures that planning is culturally grounded, strengths-based, and collaborative.

DECOLONIZING PRACTICE NOTE

"Connectedness may be described as a form of attachment that implies a broader grounding in a person's total environment than does attachment to one or two central figures. For these reasons, connectedness may be a more appropriate term and framework for assessment than attachment in working with indigenous children and families."

(Carriere & Richardson, 2009, p.57)

Finding La Paraantii

The child protection process can often be experienced as deeply shameful, vulnerable and intimidating for families. Social workers frequently face significant challenges in identifying *La Paraantii*, particularly among Indigenous families, where colonization has disrupted and disassembled family connections. It is essential for social workers to consistently emphasize the importance and significance of involving *La Paraantii* to support vulnerable children, youth, and families, even when families may initially be resistant to this idea.

A guiding principle of practice is:

No *Paraantii* = No safety = No long-term connections and well-being

Many families struggle to identify individuals whom they consider part of their *La Paraantii*. If, at the conclusion of the assessment phase, the decision is made to close the Incident without any further social worker involvement, the social worker should still discuss with the family the significance of involving *La Paraantii* for the children's long-term well-being and support. However, if at the end of the assessment there remain significant concerns about the children's safety, and a safety plan needs to be developed in collaboration with the family and *La Paraantii*, further steps are necessary.

In these circumstances, it is often helpful for the social worker, alongside an Elder and the internal care team (if one has been established), to engage in group supervision. This collaborative process can help generate thoughtful questions aimed at assisting the family in exploring potential *La Paraantii* connections (see [here](#)). Identifying *La Paraantii* is a critical requirement to move forward with meaningful and effective work within LMO.

Brandt and Turnell (2015) have developed a series of questions (see [here](#)) designed specifically to support families in exploring and identifying *La Paraantii*. These questions encourage families to reflect on past relationships, current supports, and future hopes for building or restoring connections with *La Paraantii*, ensuring that children and youth are surrounded by a network of caring and committed individuals.

“Family Finding offers the best methods and tools for child protection professionals to find the naturally connected network around the child and around the parents... to build safety that lasts”

Andrew Turnell

Once La Paraantii is Found

Once *La Paraantii* has been identified, it is essential to engage them actively in conversations that contribute to the assessment and safety planning process.

The following guiding questions can be used during **Step 2** of the **LMO Michif Practice Model** to support this engagement and ensure that *La Paraantii* perspectives are meaningfully integrated into the work:

- What are the best aspects of these parents' care for the child?
- When the adults' worrying behaviours are occurring, what have the parents, others, or the children themselves done to protect the children from these behaviours?
- What are the specific behaviours of the adults caring for this child that cause you concern?
- What has happened to the child as a result of the concerning adult behaviours?
- Based on what you know, what are you most worried might happen to the child if nothing changes within the family?
- Are there any circumstances or factors in or around the family that make the problems more complicated?
- Who else shares concerns about this family's situation?
- Who do you see currently helping and supporting the family?
- Who do you believe could help this family to keep the children safe?

These questions are designed to elicit detailed information and perspectives from *La Paraantii*, allowing for a more comprehensive and culturally informed assessment. They also help build a collaborative approach to planning for the child's safety and well-being.

“Every time we develop a safety network for children we simultaneously develop a healing network for their parents”

(Amelse et al., 2018, pp.5)

LA PARAANTII - STEP 3: PIIHITIKWAY MEETING

The Piihitikway Meeting serves as a significant moment for parents and youth to invite individuals from *La Paraantii* into their experience as members of the Métis community. It also provides an opportunity for families to expand their circle of *La Paraantii* by introducing them to Michif Elders. Through this process, families come to understand the essential role that *La Paraantii* plays in their journey of healing, connection, and cultural identity.

The thing that I found most helpful was the way I saw Elders look at me. Many seemed to look right through the barriers, the politics, the boundaries and the status debates. Reflected in their eyes, I began to see myself as a granddaughter, a member and a relation.

(Anderson, 2000, p. 29 - as cited in Carriere & Richardson, 2009).

- Parents and youth often find it challenging to identify members of *La Paraantii* to invite to their Piihitikway. In such cases, social workers can revisit **Network Questions** to help families think creatively and hopefully about potential connections, asking questions such as, “Who would you want to invite to your Piihitikway Meeting if things were different?” Finding and engaging *La Paraantii* is an ongoing process throughout the work with Métis families, youth, and children.
- During the Piihitikway Meeting, it is common for the “**Captain of the Plan**” to be identified. This role is deeply rooted in traditional Métis ways, where certain individuals are entrusted with the responsibility for the safety and well-being of the group. The *Captain of the Plan* is honoured with a special sash during the Piihitikway Meeting and is recognized as the person who will hold everyone accountable to the Michif Youth/Family Safety Plan and who the case manager will call to see how the plan is working. The *Captain of the Plan* will bring the special sash to each meeting as a symbol of the commitments made and their responsibility to hold everyone accountable.
- *La Paraantii*’s involvement in the Piihitikway Meeting provides a meaningful space for relationship building. It marks the beginning of strengthening existing relationships and fostering new connections. This gathering creates a space where *La Paraantii* can come together to share a common understanding of the impacts of colonialism and engage in the sharing of Métis traditions, teachings, and cultural stories. It is also a valuable opportunity for families and their support networks to share personal stories of struggle and resilience, reinforcing the collective spirit and cultural identity of the Métis community (Auger, 2024).

LA PARAANTII - STEP 4: VOICE OF THE CHILD

Just as we engage parents in conversations about the people who are meaningful and supportive in their lives, it is equally important to take time to ask children about their connections. Social workers should ask children who they remember having close relationships with, who they currently feel connected to, and who they wish they still had a close relationship with.

Similar **Network Questions** can be used when speaking with children; however, it is essential to modify the language to align with the child's or youth's developmental level and understanding. This ensures that we are capturing *La Paraantii* from the child's perspective, even in cases where parents may no longer view those individuals as supports.

Once individuals are identified through the voice of the child, the social worker should help find creative and appropriate ways to involve these people in planning meetings, alongside those identified by the parents. Involving individuals who hold significance for the child strengthens planning and ensures that the child's support network reflects their connections and sense of belonging.

LA PARAANTII - STEP 5: INITIAL MEETING WITH LA PARAANTII

Grounded in Safety in Belonging

The initial meeting with La Paraantii is a foundational step in organizing safety through belonging. This meeting brings together those who care about the family to establish shared understanding, relational commitment, and clarity about how safety will be created and sustained over time.

- Invite La Paraantii into an active role in supporting safety and healing
- Ensure clarity about what is being asked of each person and the level of commitment required

Grounding the Work in Métis Ways of Caring

- Revisit the teachings shared in the Piihitikway Meeting about Métis people caring for their own
- Emphasize that children are safest when surrounded by their people—those who know them, love them, and remain present over time
- Reinforce that this work is not new; it reflects long-standing cultural practices of ensuring children and youth are well cared for within their community

Safety is Demonstrated Through Action and Belonging

- Be clear that safety is not defined by agreement, intention, or plans on paper
- Safety is demonstrated through consistent, observable actions over time, within the context of caring relationships
- Introduce the expectation that both the family and La Paraantii will show how safety is being created and maintained.
- Share the existing interim plan developed prior to involving La Paraantii

Monitoring and Demonstrating Progress

- Establish a shared approach to noticing, recording, and reflecting on progress (e.g., safety journals, check-ins, WhatsApp/Facebook groups) and ensure everyone understands how the work will be monitored and how confidence in safety and wellbeing for the children will be built over time

Transitioning Ownership to the Family Network

- Clearly communicate that the plan will move from being agency-led to family- and La Paraantii owned.
- Position the agency's role as supporting, guiding, and stepping back as safety becomes embedded in the family's everyday life, with the Captain of the Plan being responsible after LMO steps away.

Safety Planning Timeline and Pace of the Work

- Share the Safety Planning Timeline at this initial meeting, or as soon as one has been developed, to provide clarity about direction and expectations.
- Emphasize that the pace of the work must allow for safety to be demonstrated—in a timeframe that works for the children. Help La Paraantii understand if we get stuck in the Safety Planning Timeline with no forward movement, we will all come together to make other decisions in the best interest of the children.

The following video provides a demonstration of leading a *La Paraantii Meeting* at LMO:
<https://youtu.be/IFmgRcGdOI0>

LA PARAANTII - STEP 6: SAFETY PLAN

- Building relationships with *La Paraantii* should be approached with the same level of commitment and care as building relationships with parents or youth. *La Paraantii* must feel equally supported by LMO staff, as their role is intended to continue long after any child protection concerns have been resolved. It is essential to actively foster compassion and understanding within *La Paraantii* for the parents or youth who may be experiencing challenges. Many members of *La Paraantii* have likely endured significant difficulties alongside their parents or youth, and they may require guidance and support in repairing relationships, establishing healthy boundaries, and maintaining sustainable connections.
- In child safety cases, it is also critical that *La Paraantii* fully understands the concerns that have brought the family to the attention of LMO. While *La Paraantii* members do not have to agree with all the concerns, they must have a clear understanding of the issues so they can effectively contribute to the safety plans.
- Parents and youth often become dependent on paid supports for basic needs, such as assistance with grocery shopping, transportation to medical appointments, or other essential tasks. However, it is crucial to identify natural supports alongside these professional services. Natural supports within *La Paraantii* represent individuals who are committed to the long-term safety, stability, and well-being of the children or youth and who will remain involved after professional services have ended.
- Before responding to families or youth, staff should consistently reflect on key questions such as:
 - *Who in La Paraantii can help?*
 - *How can I support them in reaching out to La Paraantii or involving more members of La Paraantii in the planning and support process?*

Colonization sought to erase entire cultures, including that of the Métis people, leading to significant losses of ancestral knowledge, traditions, and connections. Métis individuals and communities have shared the profound impacts of this loss, which continues to shape present experiences and identity.

- ***Nistwayr*** represents an intentional act of reconciliation and cultural preservation. It is a practice dedicated to capturing and honouring the stories and histories of Métis children, youth, and families so that these stories—and the people themselves—do not fade into obscurity or become disconnected from their heritage. Including *La Paraantii* in this step ensures that the process encompasses the voices and insights of all significant individuals in the lives of parents, youth, and children. It brings together their blended perspectives to create a shared and comprehensive understanding, particularly for the children, about why LMO is involved with their family.
- The *Nistwayr* narrative is developed collaboratively and must be agreed upon with the parents. Before it is shared with the child or youth, it should be shared with *La Paraantii*, ensuring that the adults who hold important relationships with the child are prepared and responsible for helping the child understand the family's struggles, even when those conversations are difficult. This process can be challenging for families and requires considerable skill and sensitivity from social workers to facilitate challenging conversations and foster strong, trusting relationships under difficult circumstances.
- The *Nistwayr* should reflect not only the challenges faced by the family but also the important individuals and resources contributing to the child's or youth's future safety and well-being. For children in care, it may also include a genogram as part of their story, as well as other cultural supports and references. Ultimately, the *Nistwayr* is designed to bring together diverse perspectives from all those who love and care for the child within *La Paraantii*, combined with the social worker's professional insights, to create a narrative that supports healing, understanding, and connection.

LA PARAANTII - STEP 8: MONITORING

- *La Paraantii* are an integral part of the monitoring process. Without the involvement of *La Paraantii*, it is not possible to effectively monitor a plan, and thus, progress within the Michif Practice Model cannot proceed. The presence and engagement of *La Paraantii* are essential for understanding the analysis conducted in [Step 2](#), contributing to the creation of the plan in [Step 6](#), and participating in the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the plan over time.
- When staff are reviewing how a family or youth is doing, their work extends beyond checking in solely with the family or youth. It is equally important to reach out intentionally to *La Paraantii* to capture their perspectives. Staff should inquire about how *La Paraantii* believe the family or youth is progressing, how they have been able to offer support, and the ways in which they have observed the family or youth demonstrating success and growth. The voice of *La Paraantii* in [Step 8](#) serves as a critical indicator for the social worker to assess the family's or youth's readiness to move toward file closure.
- It is essential to apply scaling techniques with *La Paraantii* in the same way they are used with families and youth. Listening to *La Paraantii* helps to identify what aspects of the plan are working well, where additional support may be needed, and how the community can continue to play an active role in maintaining the family's or youth's safety and well-being.
- Spending time engaging with *La Paraantii* and capturing their voices does not need to occur solely in formal office settings. Relationship building with *La Paraantii* can and should occur in more natural environments, such as on the land or within the community. Activities might include sharing coffee or tea, going for a walk, or spending time together at home. These efforts help foster a sense of community and belonging for *La Paraantii*, encouraging them to remain connected to their Métis community and to consider engaging in other services offered through LMO, even after their formal involvement with the agency has concluded.

LA PARAANTII - STEP 9: HONOURING AND CLOSING

Throughout their work, staff are committed to strengthening family connections to ensure that children remain closely linked to their *La Paraantii*, culture, and community long after their files are closed. Achieving this goal requires persistence and consistency, especially given the intergenerational impacts of disconnection and separation that have affected many Métis families and communities.

Honouring is a time when staff can celebrate with families/youth, and *La Paraantii* for all the hard work they have accomplished. This step ensures we have another opportunity to wrap *La Paraantii* around the family, providing them with a sense of hope to move forward in a positive way with a renewed sense of belonging to their *Paraantii*, culture, and community. To be re-membered in their Métis communities and reconnected to their people.

As Elder Larry shared:

“The children must be safe and that’s our bottom line, but we’re challenging what is safe and what’s unsafe, and we err on the side of keeping the family intact.”

(as cited in Auger, 2024, p. 39)

LMO’s work is founded on the values of compassion and respect, with relationships established with children, youth, and families grounded in Métis principles and worldviews. Central to this practice is the commitment to restoring traditional Métis ways of caring for one another during challenging times. Through collaborative efforts with families, LMO seeks to reaffirm and restore connections to community, culture, and Ancestors, fostering resilience and creating opportunities for healing.

As part of the closing process, it is important to consider how *La Paraantii* can participate in providing feedback about their experiences with LMO services. This could include inviting *La Paraantii* to complete the [**Step 10**](#) survey or engaging them in other meaningful ways to share their perspectives.

Their input is invaluable for ensuring continuous improvement and for maintaining culturally responsive and effective services.

Michif Knowledge Keeper, Wendy Chernivichan

LA PARAANTII - STEP 10: FEEDBACK AND CONTINUOUS LEARNING

Collecting feedback from families, youth, and *La Paraantii* is a vital part of LMO's commitment to learning, improving services, and ensuring that practices remain culturally grounded and responsive. The feedback process is not only about evaluating services but also about honouring the voices and experiences of those who have been involved with LMO, ensuring their insights contribute to shaping future practice.

At the conclusion of services, families and youth are invited to participate in the [**Aykooshi \(Exit Interview\)**](#) to share their reflections on the support they received, the relationships built, and their overall experience with LMO.

In addition to families and youth, it is equally important to invite *La Paraantii* to share their perspectives. This can be achieved in several ways:

- Providing *La Paraantii* with the opportunity to complete the same exit survey as families and youth, with adaptations as needed for clarity and relevance.
- Holding informal conversations with *La Paraantii* to gather qualitative feedback about their involvement in planning, monitoring, and support processes.
- Offering group sessions or circles where *La Paraantii* can share collective reflections on their experiences, challenges, and suggestions for improving LMO's practice.
- Encouraging *La Paraantii* to contribute any cultural teachings or wisdom they believe would strengthen the support offered to other families in similar situations.

The insights gained through these feedback mechanisms serve several critical purposes:

- Highlighting what families, youth, and *La Paraantii* found helpful and meaningful.
- Identifying areas where services or practices could be improved.
- Recognizing successes and celebrating the efforts of families, *La Paraantii*, and LMO staff.
- Ensuring that Métis cultural knowledge, values, and worldviews remain central to LMO's work.

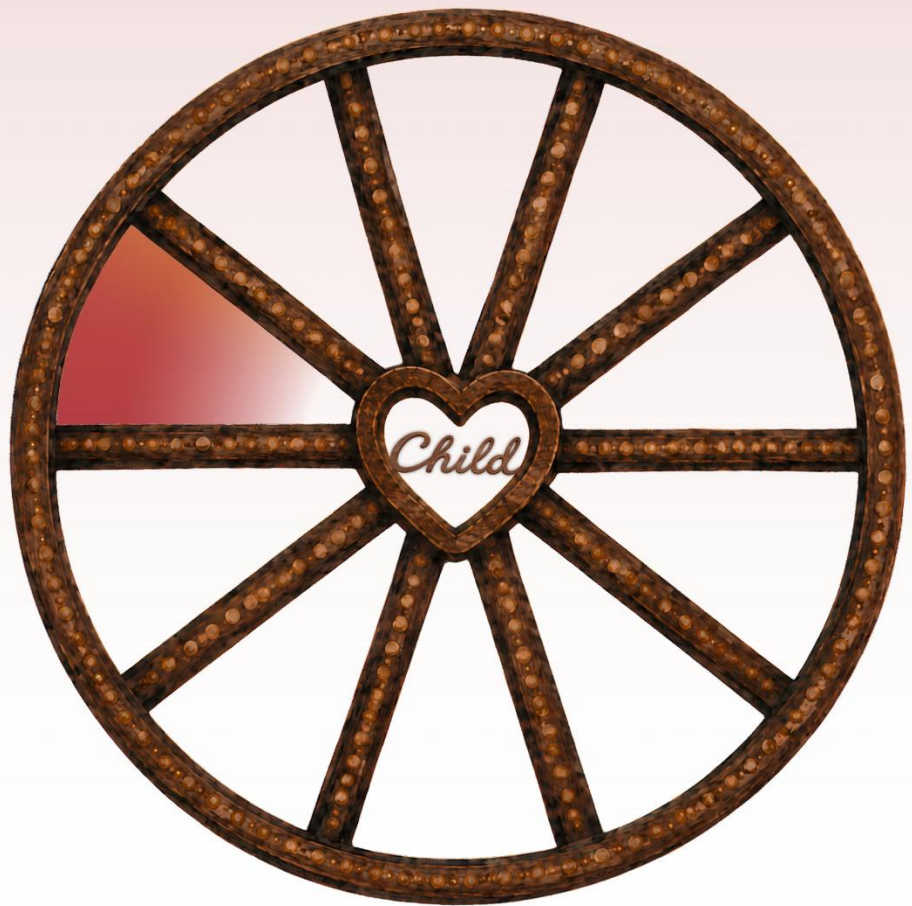
Feedback is documented and reviewed as part of LMO's ongoing commitment to reflective practice and organizational learning. Themes identified through feedback are shared with staff and leadership to inform training, policy development, and service delivery improvements.

LMO remains dedicated to doing its work “in a good way,” always striving to enhance relationships, cultural safety, and the well-being of Métis children, youth, and families.

Additional resources and appendices that support [**Step 5**](#) (including any not referenced in the main text of this) can be found here: [**Step 5 Appendices**](#)

STEP 6

Safety Plan



SAFETY/WELLBEING PLAN

LMO's primary objective is to transform child safety services and outcomes for Métis children and families. We have worked hard to reclaim responsibilities in areas such as child protection, early childhood development, mental health, housing and housing supports, CLBC community inclusion services, childcare services and, hopefully in the future, services for children and youth with special needs (CYSN). Our goal is to decolonize these systems by rebuilding them in ways that reflect Métis values and traditional ways that we took care of one another, supported one another and held one another accountable. As a result, service delivery at LMO will look and feel different from what families and workers may have experienced in other organizations. This difference is intentional. In fact, it is a sign that we are moving in the right direction.

LMO has created a practice model that honours and values every member of a care team. There is no hierarchy within this model. We often use the image of the wheel from a Red River Cart to describe how the care team functions. Each spoke is essential to the wheel turning and moving a family forward. When one spoke is cracked or broken, the entire wheel is compromised and may eventually fail, leaving the family, represented by the cart, stuck or delayed while repairs are made. Continuing with this imagery, the cart must also have direction. In child safety, the social worker acts as the case manager. The case manager is responsible for guiding and pulling the cart forward by identifying priority safety concerns, determining what needs to be done to address them, and ensuring a clear plan is created, monitored, and adjusted as what is working well becomes evident. In keeping with Métis-specific practices, a **Captain of the Plan** is also identified from within *La Paraantii*. This individual helps keep everyone accountable and supports the transition from an agency-led safety plan to a family-led safety plan. They may also be involved in difficult discussions and decisions if permanency planning becomes necessary for the children.

It is the case manager's responsibility to direct and manage the case, and it is important that members of an internal care team follow the case manager's direction. Without direction, we end up spinning our wheels, and nothing moves. This is what often happens when files remain open for extensive periods of time. If a member of the care team is unclear about expectations or feels that a request falls outside their role or scope of responsibilities, they should first discuss this with the case manager. If the issue cannot be resolved, the team member should then speak with their Team Leader. Since Team Leaders share a common understanding of the **LMO Michif Practice Model** and our overall vision, we expect Team Leaders to help team members see how a request aligns with our practice, collaborative vision, and willingness to do things differently and think outside the box. If something appears unreasonable or completely outside the scope of our work, the Team Leaders will seek clarity between each other and resolve the concern. If it cannot be resolved at this level, the situation will be presented to our Practice Manager for direction.

For any delegated file, the social worker (case manager) is responsible for ensuring clear, consistent, and transparent communication among families, *La Paraantii*, and all members of the care team. This includes supporting a shared understanding of the journey being undertaken with the family. Timely and consistent sharing of relevant information is essential to restorative practice and collective accountability. Key aspects of this communication include providing families and care team members with copies of completed assessments and plans, and organizing regular care team and family meetings. This collaborative and participatory approach supports shared understanding, strengthens decision-making, and provides clear rationale throughout the child safety process (Auger, 2024).

The following video demonstrates how to lead an **Internal Care Team Meeting**:
<https://youtu.be/elsj4kSo4AI>

Creating an effective and sustainable plan requires the social worker to engage in multiple, intentional planning sessions with all participants to ensure the plan is meaningful and that the family/youth and *La Paraantii* feel confident it will remain effective long after professional involvement has concluded.

There are **six key criteria** that must be considered to develop robust safety plans for children and youth. These criteria are integrated into the **Michif Model's 10 steps of accountability** and are described below:

1. Strong and Clear Analysis

The safety plan must be grounded in a thorough analysis of information gathered during the assessment process (see [Step 2](#)). This includes translating assessment findings into clear Worry Statements, Safety Goals, and Safety Scales. The analysis process ensures that all concerns are explicitly articulated and understood by everyone involved.

2. Middle Column Focus

A strong safety plan requires a thorough examination of the strategies/rules identified as “working well” during the information-gathering process. This middle column holds critical information about existing safety measures and strengths within the family/youth. Case Managers must work closely with families, youth, and children to identify and incorporate these strengths into the plan.

[Pene Turnell's article](#) further elaborates on using the “middle column” to inform strong assessment and safety planning.

3. Nistwayr

Nistwayr accounts for approximately 50% of effective safety planning, as described by Susie Essex. Achieving a shared understanding of the worries held by LMO is essential. This shared understanding must be communicated clearly with the family, their children, and *La Paraantii*, ensuring that everyone is working from the same knowledge base when developing the plan.

4. Informed Paraantii

The importance of involving *La Paraantii* cannot be overstated. Future safety and the possibility of case closure cannot be achieved without their active participation and understanding. *La Paraantii* must be fully informed about the concerns, the plan's contents, and their role in supporting the child or youth's safety and well-being.

5. Series of Safety Planning Meetings

Safety planning is an ongoing process rather than a one-time event. It cannot be completed in a single meeting and signed off. Instead, it requires a series of safety planning sessions where the plan is continuously revisited, revised, and updated. This ongoing process ensures that the plan remains relevant, practical, and responsive to the family's or youth's evolving needs and circumstances, helping to determine when sufficient safety and well-being have been achieved.

6. Monitoring and Review

Continuous monitoring and review are critical to confirming that the family's or youth's strengths are consistently demonstrated as protective factors over time. Ongoing meetings with the family/youth and *La Paraantii* allow for regular evaluation of what is working well and where adjustments may be needed. This collaborative approach ensures that the plan remains effective and that any emerging concerns are addressed promptly.

The collective efforts involved in these six criteria contribute to the creation of safety plans that are not only practical and culturally appropriate but also sustainable and meaningful for families, youth, and their broader support networks.

SAFETY PLANNING

It is crucial for workers and leaders to understand that the safety planning process is not about simply producing a document at a desk that resembles a list of conditions attached to a supervision order, as was common practice in the past. Examples of past service plans, that read as informal supervision orders, might include statements such as: *“Mom will attend drug and alcohol counselling,” “Mom and dad will attend respectful relationship counselling,” or “Child will attend Child and Youth Mental Health services.”*

This approach to working with families and youth is ineffective and rarely enhances the safety or well-being of children and youth. At LMO, we are committed to engaging in relational, participatory, and decolonizing work with Métis families, youth, and children. This means creating plans collaboratively and intentionally with families, youth and *La Paraantii*, so that everyone involved understands who will do what when the identified worries arise.

Historically, when parents were experiencing challenges, there were traditional practices in place to address the concerns to minimize the impact on the child. If one of the parents was having a difficult time, they would leave the home until the concern had been addressed. Alternatively, a family member would move into the home to support the family while they addressed the difficulty within the family.

Effective plans for families, youth, and children must address several key components:

- **Prevention of Worries:**

The plan should outline proactive measures to prevent the identified worries from occurring. This prevention is not always achieved solely through formal services; it often involves leveraging family strengths, cultural practices, and community resources.

- **Response to Worries:**

The plan should specify clear actions to be taken when the worrying behaviours or situations begin or are about to emerge. Everyone involved should know their role in responding effectively and promptly.

- **Monitoring of the Safety Plan:**

The safety plan must be treated as a living document that is continuously reviewed and revised. The safety plan must include clear steps for how the care team and *La Paraantii* will track whether the plan is being followed and whether it is working. Monitoring must be active and ongoing—through agreed-upon check-ins that is shared with those involved in supporting the family, and regular review of the case specific scale(s)—so that everyone can see what is improving, what is not working, and what needs to change. As new information emerges, the safety plan is updated to ensure the family has a plan that works to keep children safe and well.

Above all, it is essential to remember that:

Safety is strengths DEMONSTRATED as protection over time

This principle underscores that genuine safety does not rely solely on external services or imposed conditions but is rooted in the family's demonstrated ability to protect and care for their children consistently over time. The involvement of *La Paraantii* strengthens this capacity, ensuring that plans are sustainable and culturally meaningful long after professional involvement has concluded.

Returning to the analysis set developed at the conclusion of the assessment phase, it is essential to revisit the established safety goals and the corresponding safety scales to determine whether the safety plan is achieving its intended outcomes. For example, in cases involving intimate partner violence, there may be a need for separate plans: one specifically designed for the victim, incorporating their own distinct *La Paraantii*, and another family-focused plan outlining how the perpetrator of violence will manage their emotions and behaviours. Such a family plan might include clear steps for how one parent will respond calmly when feeling upset or agitated, ensuring that the other parent and children do not feel scared or threatened.

It is also essential to recognize that safety plans cannot be fully developed in a single meeting with *La Paraantii*. Typically, there will be multiple key issues requiring attention, such as parenting challenges, mental health concerns, depression, and other complexities. Therefore, creating an effective plan necessitates a series of meetings with the family, youth, and *La Paraantii* to collaboratively establish the rules, strategies, and steps necessary for the plan's success.

The Safety Planning Timeline developed during the assessment phase (see [Step 2](#)) should serve as a reference point, illustrating how safety planning meetings will unfold and progress over time. The Timeline should also reflect the development of the plan, accommodating the evolving nature of the family's or youth's circumstances and needs. The pace and structure of this process will depend on several factors, including the assessed level of risk, the capacity of the family, youth and *La Paraantii* to engage in and support the plan, and the degree of vulnerability of the children/youth involved.

There is much to consider when working to ensure that strengths are effectively demonstrated as protection over time. Workers are encouraged to connect with their Team Leaders for additional guidance and support in navigating these crucial aspects of practice.

THREE PHASES OF SAFETY PLANNING: IMMEDIATE, INTERIM AND LONG-TERM SAFETY PLANS

Immediate Safety Plans

In safety planning, it is common practice to develop an immediate safety plan (Safety Plan Agreement) at the beginning of opening an Incident, or even directly following the screening process, when required. These immediate plans (Safety Plan Agreements) are intended to last only for a brief period, typically no longer than a couple of weeks, while the Assessor begins working through the assessment phase. However, a frequent challenge in practice has been that once Assessors establish “immediate safety”, they may not revisit or revise these initial plans, allowing them to remain on file far longer than intended. For example, immediate safety measures might include a no-contact order for a parent, arrangements for children to stay with a grandparent for the weekend, or temporary placements in respite care or with an aunt to allow tensions to cool down or ensure sobriety.

These types of temporary safety measures are not the kind of comprehensive, sustainable plans the LMO Michif Practice Model aims to achieve. Instead, our goal is to create rigorous plans that are effective and lasting. We want plans that have been tested and observed to work, where *La Paraantii* has witnessed their success, and where children themselves have confirmed that the plans make them feel safe and supported.

As team leaders, it is crucial to consistently ask workers, “*What is the plan that enables us to close this file?*” before confidently proceeding with file closure.

Interim Safety Plans

Interim safety plans are developed during the assessment phase. At this stage, *La Paraantii* may not yet be fully involved, but it is still important to identify individuals who can step in to provide support in various ways while work begins on the tasks outlined in the Safety Planning Timeline.

Long-Term Safety Plans

Long-term safety plans represent a deeper and more sustainable process that begins once *La Paraantii* has been established and is meeting regularly in an ongoing Family Service case. Additionally, the creation of the ***Nistwayr*** ensures that everyone—including the family, youth, *La Paraantii*, and the children—has a shared understanding of why safety workers are involved with the family.

Once this shared understanding is achieved, workers are ready to commence a series of structured safety planning sessions. During these sessions, practitioners work through one issue at a time, preparing thoughtfully and carefully, often in collaboration with the internal care team during group supervision.

This preparation is critical and can be supported by using the **Safety Planning Worksheet** as the sessions frequently involve navigating complex family dynamics, historical issues, and the impacts of intergenerational trauma.

IMMEDIATE

How safe is this child right now?

Where 10 is: there are some worries but nothing that needs an immediate response.

And 0 is: if we don't do something immediately, the child could be seriously harmed

What needs to happen to increase this child's immediate safety?

What is keeping this child safe tonight?

Who is helping?

How is this being recorded?

INTERIM

What needs to be in place so we know the child is being kept safe while we complete our workflow process?

Who is helping?

What are specific details about what people are doing now?

What more does everyone think needs to happen?

Who will do what, when?

What might they see that would mean they would be worried?

What will they do if they are worried?

How is this recorded?

LONG TERM (ADULT & CHILD)

Addresses ALL key issues in relation to the danger:

- Scale (particular issue)
- Existing Strengths and Safety (explore in detail)
- Triggers and Stressors (identify and discuss openly)
- Red Flags (what will we see?)
- Specific details about who will do what in everyday life to keep the child safe from the danger articulated in the danger statement

Adult Version

(signed – has a Captain of the Plan)

Child's Version

(Top rules) – explained to children
Who needs a copy?

Plans have been tested over time to work.

INCORPORATING THE VOICE OF THE CHILD

It is also essential at this stage to return to the voice of the child using tools such as the [My Safety Cabin](#) Adapted from Sonja Parker's "Safety House" model, the Safety Cabin guides social workers through five key areas to explore with children, helping them articulate what safety looks and feels like in their home. Once completed, insights from the Safety Cabin can be shared with the family and *La Paraantii* to review how the current safety plan addresses the child's identified needs and where further work may be required.

STRUCTURE OF SAFETY PLANNING MEETINGS

It is vital to maintain a structured approach to safety planning meetings that reflects Métis cultural values and practices. Meetings should involve a Métis Elder, the Captain of the Plan, and other cultural elements such as opening with a prayer, a land acknowledgement, and, if helpful, the use of a talking feather, stick, or rock to facilitate respectful communication. Setting respectful agreements at the onset ensures that all participants understand the purpose and expectations for the meeting.

During initial meetings, the social worker should read the analysis sets (**worry statement(s), safety goal(s), and safety scale(s)**) in full to ensure everyone shares the same understanding of the worries, strengths, and goals. As the process moves forward along the established timeline, it is intended that the *Captain of the Plan* will gradually assume more of the facilitation and leadership responsibilities, allowing the social worker to step back. This shift signifies the restoration of responsibility for the children's/youth's safety and well-being back to their family and natural support network, where it rightfully belongs.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NEXT STEPS AND PLANNING

Understanding the difference between “next steps” and the development of concrete rules within a safety plan is crucial for effective planning. Next steps are actions that describe what individuals will create, decide, or arrange in the future. For example, *Zach and his mom will choose a day to spend time together.*” This statement represents a next step because it outlines an intention to make a decision or arrangement, but it does not yet specify the exact details of the action.

In contrast, a rule specifies a clear and concrete expectation about what will happen, including who is involved, what they will do, and when it will take place. For example: *“Zach and his mom will spend Thursday afternoons together, engaging in an activity of their choice.”*

This statement is a rule because it provides precise details about the arrangement, ensuring clarity and accountability for everyone involved.

An effective safety plan must go beyond general next steps and clearly articulate rules that answer these essential questions:

- Who will do it?
- What will they do?
- When will it happen?
- How will it be carried out?

THE ROLE OF THE CAPTAIN OF THE PLAN

The **LMO Michif Practice Model** is a participatory, family-led approach. As facilitators of the planning process, social workers ensure that each youth or family identifies a “*Captain of the Plan*”. The role of the *Captain of the Plan* is inspired by the traditional Métis role of the “Captain of the Hunt.” Historically, the Captain of the Hunt was a respected leader chosen to guide and protect the community during the highly organized and vital buffalo hunts. The buffalo provided essential resources such as food, clothing, and shelter, and preserving these resources required careful organization and strict adherence to the “Laws of the Hunt.” The Captain maintained order in the camp, determined when hunts would begin, and enforced the established laws to ensure fairness and safety for all involved.

At LMO, the *Captain of the Plan* is similarly entrusted with leadership and responsibility. This person is selected from the family or youth and is available to support, guide, and help monitor the family’s or youth’s safety plan. The Captain ensures that the agreed-upon rules are followed, helps keep everyone focused on the plan’s goals, and serves as a point of contact for the case manager to inquire about progress. They may play a key role in sustaining the family’s or youth’s progress after professional involvement ends.

The Buffalo Hunt was not merely an economic activity but also a significant political and social event. Held twice annually, the hunt began with the establishment of a Council, which democratically elected a Senior Captain of the Hunt. The Captain oversaw the daily operations of the camp, decided when the hunt would commence, and enforced the Laws of the Hunt to maintain safety and fairness.

As Métis communities grew, the number of families participating in the annual summer hunt expanded to approximately 1,200 individuals, who travelled from three Métis communities to join the event. Once the Senior Captain of the Hunt was elected, the Council established the Laws of the Hunt, ensuring that all participants adhered to the rules. This high level of organization contributed to both the safety of the community and an equitable distribution of resources.

This historical model of collaborative leadership and community accountability informs the LMO Michif Practice Model’s approach to modern safety and wellbeing planning. It reinforces the importance of participatory decision-making and shared responsibility in maintaining the safety, well-being, and cultural continuity of Métis families.

SUPERVISORY GUIDANCE

Sometimes it is helpful when reviewing a safety plan to use a feedback scale and see if all the components we are wanting to see have been included in the plan. Here is an example of a **Safety Planning Feedback Scale** and some follow up points to help guide the process and give constructive feedback as we learn how to do stronger plans with families:

10 = The plan reflects open and honest conversations about who will do what when worrying behaviours occur. This includes clear discussions about triggers, stressors, red flags, and potential “what if” scenarios. There are steps in the plan that clearly address the issues identified in the Worry Statement(s). Family, youth and La Paraantii have been actively involved in developing the plan, and over time, have been able to adapt the plan based on what has shown to work or not. Because there is such strong evidence of the adult or long-term safety plan working and being followed, a child-friendly safety plan has been developed and tested.

0 = There are no clear rules outlining who will do what when issues arise, or how the steps in the plan work to address the issues identified in the Worry Statement(s). There has been no or minimal involvement from La Paraantii and the family in developing the plan, including absence of a Captain of the Plan. The plan focuses primarily on services and professional interventions and monitoring, rather than family-led solutions.

PLANNING FOR PERMANENCY WHEN SAFETY IS NOT ACHIEVED

CONNECTION AND BELONGING CIRCLES

When safety has not been achieved within a timeframe that meets the needs of the child(ren)—particularly for younger children, where timeframes must be shorter—there must be a clear and intentional shift in planning.

In these circumstances, the focus moves toward identifying and securing lifelong connection and belonging for the child(ren). This may include extended family members or other significant people in the child's life who can provide permanence, stability, and cultural connection.

We recognize that, historically, Métis children have too often remained in the care system until aging out without achieving meaningful, lasting connections or positive outcomes. This practice must change. At LMO, our responsibility is to remain grounded in what is best for the child(ren), ensuring that planning actively supports long-term belonging and relational permanence.

As a general guide, when safety has not been demonstrated over time—and there is growing concern that timelines are no longer aligned with the child's developmental needs (often around the six-month mark, and sooner for younger children)—workers are expected to begin actively engaging others to identify who can provide lifelong connection for the child(ren).

This work is carried out through **Connection and Belonging Circles**. These circles are structured conversations that bring together family and significant people to identify and commit to long-term roles in the child's life.

The Permanency Team will support this process through a series of three (3) Connection and Belonging Circle meetings, guided by the following documents:

- [Foundational Connection and Belonging Circle](#)
- [Connection and Belonging Circle](#)
- [Permanency Connection and Belonging Circle](#)

PRACTICE NOTE

Indicators to Shift Toward Connection and Belonging Planning

Workers should begin considering a shift toward Connection and Belonging Planning when:

- Safety has not been consistently demonstrated over time, despite active planning
- Safety plans are not holding, or require ongoing professional oversight to remain in place
- The same worries continue to re-emerge without meaningful change
- When families have got stuck early on in their Safety Planning Timelines and have gone long periods of time without any forward momentum (maybe still stuck in interim planning and no *La Paraantii* involved).
- The child(ren)'s developmental needs (especially for younger children) require more timely permanence.
- There are growing concerns that the current plan will not lead to long-term stability, belonging, and relational permanency.

This shift is not a failure of the family or the work to date. Rather, it reflects a continued commitment to ensuring that Métis child(ren) experience safety, stability, and a strong sense of belonging over the course of their lives.

Please refer to these additional documents:

- [Family Connections Circles Process](#)
- [Family Finding Closing Documents](#)
- [Family Finding Process Document](#)
- [Family Geneology Form](#)
- [Family Finding and Permanency Referral](#)

PLANNING IN MICHIF MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

THE LIFE PROMOTION PLAN

When outcomes on the Reasons for Living Inventory (RFL) indicate a risk of suicide, or when a child or youth is actively experiencing suicidal ideation, they will develop a **Life Promotion Plan (LPP)** alongside a Michif Mental Health and Wellness Counsellor. The purpose of the Life Promotion Plan is to support individuals in understanding what to do and who to turn to when feelings of suicide are present.

The Life Promotion Plan (LPP) is closely linked to the RFL. The insights gathered from the RFL—including the four dimensions of hope, meaning, belonging, and purpose — help guide the development of the LPP. During the planning process, staff should pay attention to which areas stand out as either strong protective factors or as gaps where support may be needed. The specific words and examples shared by the youth in the RFL should be directly incorporated into the LPP, ensuring that the plan reflects the youth's own voice, values, and lived experiences.

For more information on instructions for completing the LPP, please click [here](#). As well, the following video demonstrates the process of developing a Life Promotion Plan https://youtu.be/JA_UzyDA13I.

The Life Promotion Plan was created by Dr. Rebecca Sanford in collaboration with Denise McCuaig, Métis Elders, and Indigenous youth. It represents a comprehensive and culturally grounded approach to addressing suicide through a framework of life promotion rather than solely risk management. The plan is designed to be fluid, adaptable, and responsive — a living document that evolves as the circumstances and experiences of the youth change over time.

Creating the Life Promotion Plan should always be a collaborative process between the youth and a trusted staff person who is trained in the Life Promotion Protocol. Although there are specific steps involved in completing the plan, it should be approached as a conversation rather than as a rigid form to be filled out. It is acceptable—and often helpful—to complete the sections out of order, allowing the conversation to flow naturally and in a way that feels safe and supportive for the youth.

It is crucial to understand that The Life Promotion Plan is an intervention, not a form to complete.

The value lies in the dialogue and exploration that takes place during its creation. This conversation helps build insight, awareness, and coping skills for navigating moments when suicidal thoughts arise.

Suicidal thoughts can come and go, sometimes unpredictably. The goal of the Life Promotion Plan is to increase the youth's capacity to cope and to avoid acting on those thoughts when they occur.

Throughout the process of developing the plan, staff should continually ask themselves the guiding question: *Will this plan be helpful to the youth in not acting on their thoughts when they arise?*

When completing the Life Promotion Plan, it is important to be as specific as possible. The more concrete and detailed the information, the greater the understanding of the youth's experiences and the more practical and effective the plan will be in supporting them during challenging moments.

STEPS INVOLVED IN THE LIFE PROMOTION PLAN:

1. Identifying Triggers for Suicidal Thoughts or Behaviours

- The first step in the Life Promotion Plan involves identifying the factors, situations, and circumstances that might trigger suicidal thoughts or behaviours for the youth. While suicide is often associated with mental health challenges, it is important to recognize that the underlying causes are frequently more complex and multifaceted.
- Workers must remain open and curious when exploring potential triggers. These triggers could include experiences such as disappointment, a lack of basic needs or resources, rejection from family, or situations where the youth feels ignored or disconnected. When reviewing the plan with youth, staff should guide them in naming the situations, feelings, or experiences that could contribute to suicidal thinking.

2. Recognizing Warning Signs

- This step focuses on identifying the warning signs that might signal the youth is approaching a crisis. It involves exploring the physical, behavioural, emotional, and cognitive signs that either the youth or others might notice when suicidal thoughts begin to surface. Because some individuals may find it difficult to recognize or articulate their own warning signs, staff should offer observations gently and seek confirmation. For example:
"I've noticed in the past that sometimes your face becomes flushed when you're upset. Does this feel true for you?"
- This section should cover both early and late warning signs, which can be unique to each person. Understanding early warning signs can help staff and support networks intervene proactively and reduce the likelihood of the situation escalating into a crisis.

3. Understanding Core Needs and Motivations

- This step explores the underlying needs and motivations connected to suicidal thoughts and behaviours. Workers should help youth reflect on what purpose these thoughts or behaviours might serve, such as:
 - Providing a sense of control
 - Offering an escape from unbearable emotional pain
 - Communicating feelings or distress
 - Attempting to influence others' behaviour

Workers should remember:

- Behaviour always makes sense when we take time to understand it.
- Understanding behaviour requires exploring the function or purpose it serves and the needs it helps meet.
- Addressing core needs proactively can reduce the frequency and intensity of suicidal thoughts.

While there is no simple solution, identifying and understanding the core needs behind suicidal thoughts allows staff and youth to explore options for responding that extend beyond referring solely to mental health services. Many pathways exist for meeting core needs, and plans can be designed to address these areas proactively.

4. Identifying Effective Coping Strategies

In this step, youth and staff explore what helps the youth cope when experiencing suicidal thoughts or feelings. This section should include specific, concrete actions the youth can take. The more detailed and diverse the list, the more prepared everyone will be to support the youth during moments of distress.

Potential coping strategies might include:

- Distraction activities
- Grounding techniques
- Preferences for staff support or peer support
- Contacting crisis lines for immediate support, with staff assistance in making connections if needed
- Drinking water
- Drumming
- Listening to a curated playlist of music
- Screaming or crying as a release
- Smudging
- Participating in a sweat lodge ceremony
- Engaging in prayer
- Reflecting on personal values
- Sharing laughter, jokes, games, or activities
- Walking or spending time outdoors
- Tapping techniques
- Seeking fresh air
- Spending time in nature
- Revisiting reasons for living, as captured in the Mental Wellness Plan
- Practicing or listening to Métis language

This section may also include accompanying the youth to the hospital when needed or at their request. It is important to include both coping strategies that might traditionally be viewed as “healthy” and those that might be seen as less healthy. The focus should be on harm reduction and identifying strategies that can help keep youth safe in moments of crisis.

When adding strategies, staff should ask:

- *How likely do you feel you would be to use this during a crisis?*
- *What might make it difficult for you to use this strategy?*

Here you can find the [Mental Wellness Plan](#) template.

5. Creating a Safe Environment

- This step focuses on identifying ways to make the youth’s environment physically and emotionally safer when suicidal thoughts or feelings are present. This section should include non-negotiable safety measures for the immediate situation, such as removing access to means of self-harm or ensuring the youth is not left alone.
- Additionally, the language used throughout the plan should reflect terms and phrases that the youth finds comfortable and familiar, particularly in discussing how to communicate needs or talk about feelings and experiences.

Here is an example of a completed [Life Promotion Plan](#), and a video demonstrating a Life Promotion Plan being reviewed and monitored can be found here: <https://youtu.be/UYQdCgULWI8>.

PLANNING IN YOUTH SERVICES

All youth in permanent care, temporary care, or receiving services under a Youth Agreement or the SAGE Program will be required to have an interim plan developed following completion of the **Connection and Belonging Assessment**. If they are deemed to be at high risk of suicide after doing the Reasons for Living Inventory (RFL), they will do a **Life Promotion Plan**. Otherwise, the youth will have a **Youth Connection and Belonging Independence Plan** completed.

Following completion of the Reasons for Living Inventory (RFL) (which should be completed within 60 days of a youth coming to LMO for services), the Youth social worker alongside the Youth Wellness counsellor will sort through the RFL outcome. If the youth scores high for suicidal ideation, rules and strategies will be developed in the youth's Life Promotion Plan (LPP). The youth, their social worker, wellness counsellor, and *La Paraantii* will continue to assess (and scale) if the LPP is still necessary or if the youth is ready to move on to their independence planning. This ongoing review ensures the plan remains current and responsive as the youth's greatest unmet needs evolve over time.

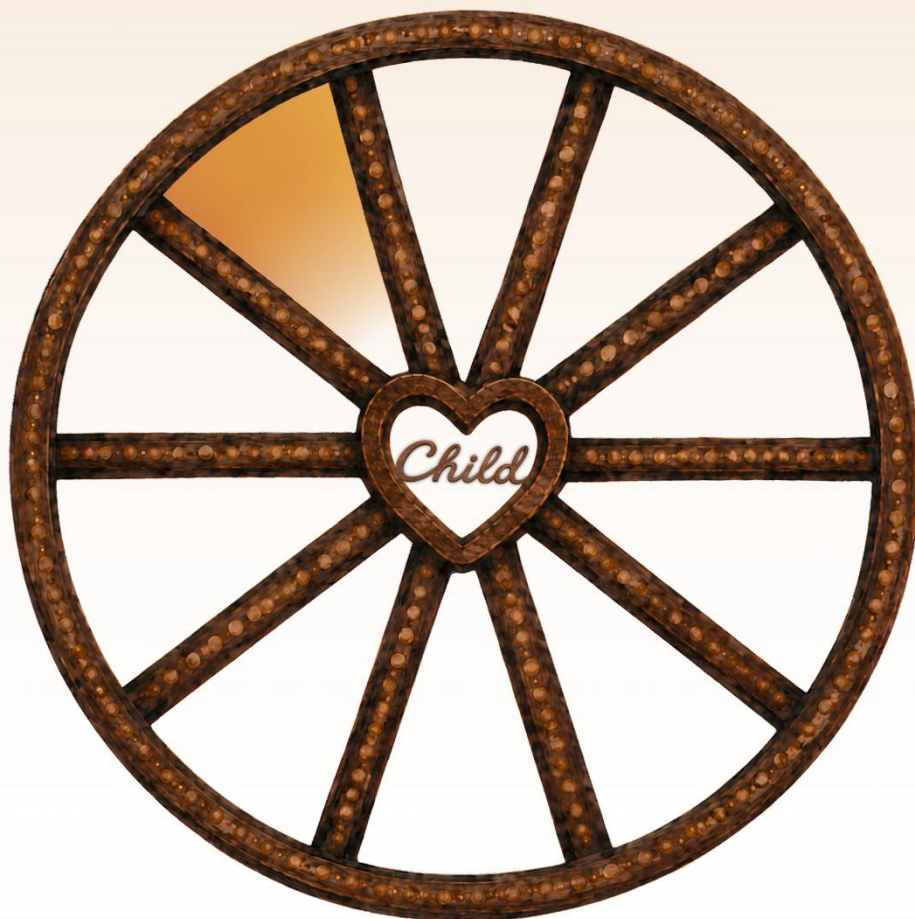
For more information on planning within Youth Services at LMO, please refer to the **Leading with and Incorporating Healing in the Delivery of Michif Youth Services at LMO** document.

The social worker may extract some pertinent information from their **Kwaayesh Ni Kaanawaymikawin Connection and Belonging Assessment** section titled *"Who will do what and how will they help?"* to get them started on their planning. This ensures that the initial planning directly reflects the youth's voice and identifies concrete actions and support people. In addition, social workers will be expected to analyze the youth's greatest unmet need as identified through the Kwaayesh Ni Kaanawaymikawin assessment and thoughtfully determine the priorities for the youth in either plan. If the youth resides at KKC, the plan will likely include specific rules or expectations related to housing requirements.

Additional resources and appendices that support **Step 6** (including any not referenced in the main text of this) can be found here: **Step 6 Appendices**.

STEP 7

Nistwayr



NISTWAYR (MY STORY)

UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA AND HONOURING STORIES

Children, youth, and families involved with the child welfare system often carry histories of multiple traumatic experiences throughout their lives. Each traumatic event can significantly affect brain development and functioning, influencing behaviour, emotional regulation, and the achievement of developmental milestones. Unfortunately, individuals in these circumstances are frequently viewed primarily through the lens of their behaviours rather than as people shaped by complex and often painful life experiences.

A powerful perspective shift, often attributed to Dr. Bruce Perry and further popularized through his collaboration with Brené Brown in *What Happened to You?*, encourages us to move away from the question “What’s wrong with you?” and instead ask, “What happened to you?”. This reframing promotes a more compassionate, trauma-informed approach, fostering deeper understanding and pathways to healing. The **Words and Pictures (Nistwayr)** process also plays a pivotal role in developing relational resilience, which has often been stripped from Métis families due to colonization. Métis children need to know why people are worried about them and how *la Paraantii* is going to step in and support them and their family alongside of LMO helpers. We know from research that isolation is a risk factor for many forms of child abuse and this process helps for everyone to have a shared understanding of the worries that have happened, even if everyone involved doesn’t agree.

Understanding a family’s story is fundamental to knowing how best to support them in healing and achieving their goals. **Documenting these stories — particularly those involving trauma — requires significant time, skill, empathy, and sensitivity.**

For Indigenous families, and particularly within Métis communities, storytelling is not only an act of sharing experiences but also a restorative practice. It serves as a vital means of decolonizing social work processes, ensuring that personal and community histories are preserved, honoured, and not lost or erased once again. The social worker or any LMO helper involved can ask questions to learn what has already been shared with the child(ren) and to start the conversation to help the parent think through the value of the process.

Here are some useful questions that could be asked:

- What do you think your kids are most wondering about right now?
- What do you think are the biggest questions your kids have about everything that's happened since LMO has been involved with your family?
 - What do you think could be helpful for your child if they got answers to these questions?
- What have you done in the past to talk with your kids about hard/tough stuff? What was helpful about that process? What do you think your kids would say they appreciated about the talk, even if it was hard?
- When it comes to what LMO is worried about and your disagreement with the concerns, who do you think is the most important person your child hears from? We want to work together to create the words and pictures so your child can hear your perspective and our perspective. What do you think could be helpful for your child if they heard from both of us?

CAPTURING THE VOICE OF THE CHILD

During **Step 2**, the assessment phase, tools such as *My Three Cabins*, *My Three Red River Carts*, and *My Three Flowers* are used to meaningfully capture the voices and experiences of children. These tools help the social worker (and others involved) understand, from the child's perspective, what feels worrisome or difficult, who the important people are in their life, and what is going well. This understanding supports the early development of a shared story that helps children make sense of why LMO is involved with their family.

In **Step 7: Nistwayr (My Story)**, we are moving towards getting the parents (and professionals) perspective to help the children better understand the worries and for everyone involved to have a shared understanding (even if we don't all agree) around what has happened and what we are all working towards to make things safer for the children. This is a therapeutic, restorative and trauma informed process that can make a huge difference in the casework, but it can be challenging to bring families along in this work.

- **My Three Cabins** provides children with a framework to express their understanding of challenges within their families, allowing them to share their perspectives through their own lens. This tool helps ensure that children's thoughts, feelings, and experiences are central to the assessment process.
- **Words and Pictures/Nistwayr** is a tool designed for adults, including social workers and caregivers, to explain protection concerns to children in clear, age-appropriate, and compassionate language. It helps children make sense of complex situations by translating adult language and concepts into terms they can understand.

However, **Words and Pictures/Nistwayr** can only be effective when workers collaborate deeply with families and *La Paraantii* to develop a shared understanding of the concerns. Achieving clarity and openness is essential—even if full agreement on every detail is not possible—to create safety plans that are meaningful and workable for everyone involved. The collaborative Words and Pictures/Nistwayr approach with the parents and *la Paraantii* helps bridge the gap between the parents perspective and the child's understanding of the situation. This helps both the parents and *la Paraantii* to see the concerns through the child's eyes, fostering empathy and connection as well as create an environment to respond consistently to the child's questions or comments.

- When children don't have a shared, coherent narrative this can lead to confusion and emotional distress. By involving parents in the process of developing and sharing the Words and Pictures/Nistwayr, the impact of trauma is minimized for both parents and children. The process fosters openness and consistency rather than leaving their child to fill in the gaps with potentially harmful assumptions more confusion and emotional distress.
- Sometimes professionals are worried that sharing these concerns will further traumatize the children. We need to help everyone involved to understand that as LMO helpers, it's our job to help Metis children understand their world. We're not pointing fingers or assigning blame. The focus is on what happened and what we're doing to make sure the child feels safe now. If we avoid these conversations, we're not protecting them, we're leaving them to face their fears alone and not growing relational resilience. We know from research if we do not come up with a clear Nistwayr now they will grow up with unanswered questions and possibly even more trauma. This process will help us all make sense of this in a safe, collaborative way and help them develop relational resilience for life, knowing who their *la Paraantii* are and reconnect them to the Metis value of caring for our own.

For further guidance, please refer to the **Purpose and Steps** and **Key Phrases** associated with Words and Pictures.

BUILDING TRUST THROUGH THE WORDS AND PICTURES PROCESS

For the **Words and Pictures** process to result in strong and lasting safety plans, it is essential that families feel genuinely heard, understood, and respected. This is particularly crucial in the context of reconciliation and the impacts of intergenerational trauma. Many of the challenges faced by families today have roots in the experiences of their parents and grandparents, who endured colonization, displacement, and systemic oppression. The social worker needs to be listening carefully for moments of resilience throughout the challenging times and to be able to unpack a bit around “What happened to them” for the parents as well as the children as often there are intergenerational issues to be shared.

- Acknowledging and honouring this legacy is a vital aspect of our practice. The **Words and Pictures** process offers a structured and compassionate approach that helps reduce feelings of shame and blame while fostering transparency, understanding, and mutual respect between families and professionals.

A video demonstration of conducting a Words & Pictures conversation can be found here: <https://youtu.be/SRqnVtOck-Q>.

Workers should follow the **14 Steps** described in [this document](#) for creating Words and Pictures and utilize the preparation document as a guide for gathering and organizing information. Case Managers who are newer to this process are encouraged to seek support from their care teams as well as their Team Leaders and others who have created these stories for families before.

Team leaders must assist in reviewing and refining drafts and can facilitate reflective **Group Supervision for Words and Pictures** sessions to help navigate any challenges that may arise during the process.

Susie Essex developed the Words and Pictures approach as part of safety planning in situations where there is often denial, disagreement, or different perspectives of what has happened to children. For this reason, it is important that social workers include all relevant perspectives, even when those perspectives differ or conflict.

For example, in a significant domestic violence case involving police or medical professionals, a Dad may state that he has never physically harmed the Mom. At the same time, a child may share through their *Three Cabins* that they feel scared when their dad yells, while also expressing good, positive experiences, such as enjoying time playing hockey with him. The Mom may share little or remain unsure about how to speak about what has happened.

The social worker's role is to bring these perspectives together into a single, balanced story that also includes the professional concerns, such as worries raised by LMO, police, or medical providers about injuries or harm to children, so that there is a holistic and honest explanation of what has occurred. This requires workers to stand in their authority, even when the process is uncomfortable, while also ensuring that the story reflects the family's strengths, resilience, culture, and care for one another. Families are always more than a single incident or moment in time.

Words and Pictures should reflect this balance through simple language and stick-figure drawings that families can share with their *La Paraantii* and their children. The goal is to support a shared understanding of the worries and what needs to change, so the family and their support network are prepared to move into meaningful safety planning.

Susie Essex has described Words and Pictures as "50% of safety planning," because until worries are clearly understood and shared with the people who will help keep children safe—family and *La Paraantii*—we cannot effectively develop safety plans. While Words and Pictures is identified as Step 7 in the practice model, in practice it often occurs earlier in the Safety Planning Timeline, prior to Step 6 (Safety Planning).

A Words and Pictures as part of a safety planning process is usually between 10-15 frames and will unpack 4 key questions:

1. Who is worried?
2. What they are worried about?
3. What happened then?
4. What are we doing to sort out the worries?

OTHER KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

- It will be a blend of perspective: professionals involved (including the caregiver if applicable), family, child and *La Paraantii* and will be told in third person (trauma technique) to be somewhat removed from the events.
- Always use stick figures, not clip art or photos (you don't need to be an artist to draw stick figures!). The social worker and their care team is responsible to create the stick figure pictures, not the family. The family may draw some of the easier pictures if they are adamant they would like to be involved, but they may not be able to convey the messages that the social worker has determined are integral to the story.
- The pictures are as important as the words and need to emphasize key pieces that we are unpacking in that particular frame.
- We never draw the traumatic event, instead we draw the scene after the event and especially we look for moments of resiliency. For example, the auntie coming to the home to take the children to her house, the doctor talking to mom about some of his worries, and/or the child asking for help when he was confused about what happened.
- The story always starts with a positive frame and ends with a positive frame that will catapult us into safety planning processes and answers that final question:
 - "What are we doing to sort out the worries?"

NISTWAYR AND CONNECTING METIS YOUTH TO THEIR STORIES

When children are older (youth or young adults) and are still unable to live with their family and continue to require services, it is critical to engage them in a similar process to help them make sense of what has happened. Research consistently shows that many youth in care report not understanding why they could not live with their family. In many cases, Words and Pictures were not completed during their early years, leaving them with unanswered and confusing questions about what has happened to them.

Youth who present with what are often described as “high-risk behaviours” are frequently carrying the impacts of this confusion, along with the absence of adults who were able to help make sense of their life story. Part of our work is to understand what happened internally for the youth as a result of these gaps in understanding and explanation.

In addition to addressing these unanswered questions, the Nistwayr process offers Métis youth a culturally grounded opportunity to explore their identity, history, and resilience.

Nistwayr draws on the same foundational principles as Words and Pictures, including the use of the four guiding questions; however, youth are engaged in a much more active and self-directed way than younger children.

The process begins by centring the youth’s questions:

- *What do they want to understand about what happened to them?*
- *What do they know about the harder parts of their family story?*
- *Who could help fill in missing pieces, and how might those people be involved?*

The process may also move beyond stick-figure drawings to more creative forms of expression, such as artwork, writing, poetry, or photo-based storytelling. Youth need to have greater control over how their story is created and shared than in a Words and Pictures which is most often completed as part of a family safety planning process with parents and *La Paraantii*.

Here are examples of anonymized Words & Pictures for review:

- [Words & Pics Example #1](#)
- [Words & Pics Example #2](#)

The central aim is to ensure the youth's questions are answered and their perspective remains at the forefront, allowing meaningful healing and trauma-informed work to take place. When appropriate, sharing the completed Nistwayr with family and La Paraantii is an important part of the healing journey, supporting connection, understanding, and reconciliation.

An example of a **Nistwayr** can be found here: [Sample Nistwayr](#).

It will also be important for the youth to have a better understanding of the past for their Métis heritage, and the workers can encourage them to include historical events and policies such as the scrip system, residential schools, and the displacement of Métis communities to road allowances. This allows the youth to place their personal and family experiences into a broader historical context and helps them avoid internalizing feelings of shame or blame while encouraging them to embrace their identity with pride and compassion. It also highlights the strength and resilience carried forward from their ancestors, instilling a sense of connection and belonging.

A [set of guiding questions](#) has been developed to help youth share their **Nistwayr** stories.

TOWARD RECONCILIATION AND HEALING

Our role in child welfare extends beyond ensuring immediate safety. It includes walking alongside families on their journey toward healing and restoration. This work requires us to create space for families to share their stories, to honour their histories, and to understand the deeper roots of the challenges they face today.

For Métis and other Indigenous communities, this commitment means engaging in practices that are trauma-informed, culturally safe, and deeply grounded in the principles of reconciliation.

As social workers, we must have the courage to confront and acknowledge these historical and ongoing injustices and how they have impacted their lives today. Equally important, we must possess the skill and compassion to help families make sense of their experiences in ways that foster growth, connection, increase resiliency and long-term wellbeing.

The province of Manitoba came into Confederation in 1870 as a result of negotiations between the Métis people and the federal crown following the transfer of Rupertsland from the Hudson's Bay Company to Canada in 1869. Section 31 of the Manitoba Act granted 1.4 million acres of land to the children of Métis families residing in the province prior to 1870 with the purpose of extinguishing any future treaty rights. The federal Crown established a Scrip Commission to process individual land grant applications which was plagued by fraud and theft of land entitlements from the onset and it is estimated that less than ten percent of eligible applicants realized their Scrip through the issuance of a land or money scrip. This resulted in Métis people being further dispossessed of land that they had been legally guaranteed through s. 31.

Once the Métis people were displaced and disposed of their land, they continued to be discriminated against and ostracised within society leading a once prosperous people to building wooden shacks in the road allowance. "Road allowances are lands surveyed and reserved by the government of Canada for the purpose of future road development designated for public use."

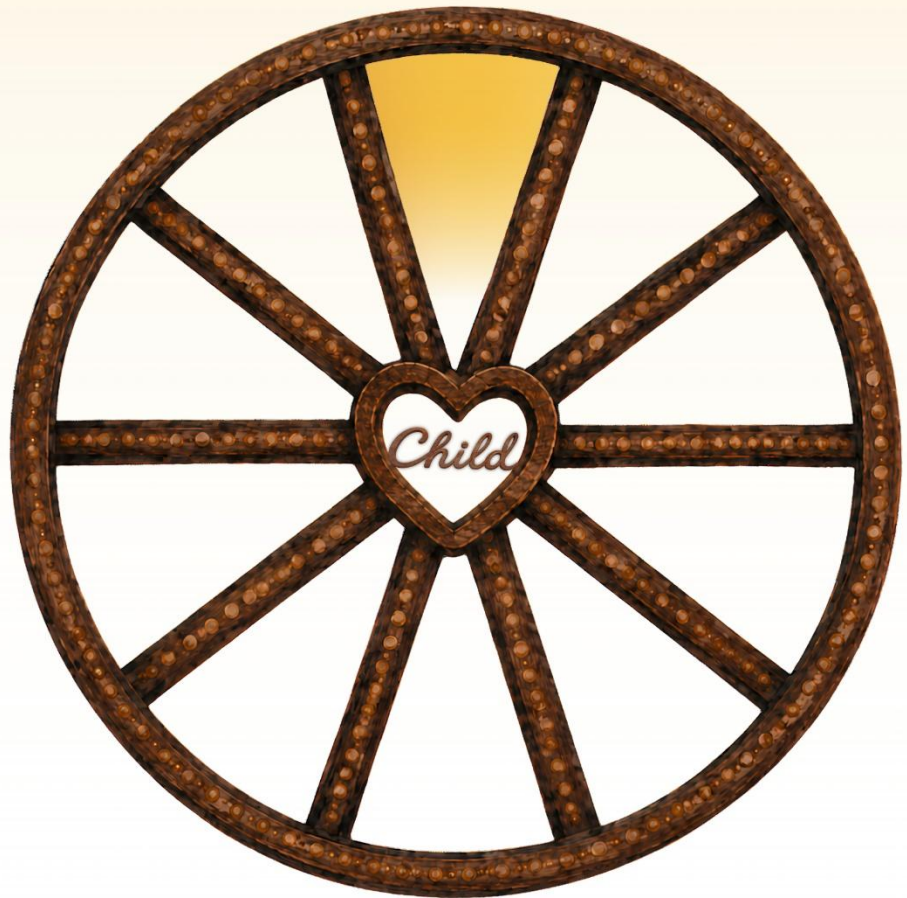
Large Métis communities developed on this unused land; however, they had minimal access to provincial services and were unable to enrol their children in school because they did not pay taxes to any government taxes.

<https://metisarchitect.com/2017/08/09/road-allowance-communities/>

Additional resources and appendices that support **Step 7** (including any not referenced in the main text) can be found here: **Step 7 Appendices**.

STEP 8

Monitoring the Plan



MONITORING THE PLAN

In child welfare, there is a risk of becoming complacent, particularly when working with families over extended periods. However, complacency can be harmful, as it may result in children remaining in care unnecessarily and families being left without the support they need, perpetuating colonial systems of care in which Métis voices remain unseen and unheard. There are many instances where workers have created immediate or even interim safety plans for families at the onset of the work together and then have not monitored them to see if those plans have increased safety over time. Many ongoing plans are actually just services plans where families are expected to attend and complete services, and the worker hopes the behaviours we are worried about change as a result of attendance. We know that behaviour change is a challenge and will require much more support than a promise made or compliance with service attendance.

Services do not equate safety.

When plans are not actively monitored, not only by social workers, but by people to whom the child is important to/belongs to (*La Paraantii*), we will close files prematurely without the issues being addressed, or alternatively, leave files open for years that become lost in 'casework drift' because we are worried about the adult behaviours, but don't have a clear idea of how to keep track of the plan and what is working or not.

Monitoring an agency led safety plan involves bringing families, *La Paraantii*, and workers together regularly to reflect on progress, review the rules/steps of the current safety plan, and confirm that all parties are able to share what is working and not and modify the safety plan until we are all confident it is working to increase safety and wellbeing for the children. This collaborative process is essential to ensure that the support provided is relevant, timely, and accurately reflects the family and children's lived experiences and evolving needs. When we think about the timeline of a file, monitoring represents the final third of the Safety Planning Timeline. During this stage, everyone is working together to support the shift from an agency-led safety plan to a family-led safety plan, ensuring that:

"Strengths have been demonstrated as protection over time."

SCALING AS A MEASUREMENT DEVICE

At each Review (Monitoring) meeting, the case specific **scaling question(s)**, originally developed during the assessment phase, are asked to everyone present. Scaling is as important for social workers as it is for families/youth and members of their Paraantii. Conversations led by using scaling questions keeps practice grounded, promotes accountability, and helps ensure that everyone understands. Each participant is invited to share:

- A number on a scale from 0 to 10 that reflects their view of progress towards the safety goal
- A rationale for their chosen number, including why they are rating it as high as they are and what is preventing it from being higher.
 - The number itself is not an actuarial score or a rating tool. The number reflects each person's perspective and is meaningful only when the rationale is provided as well as what the individual would need to see to move up on the scale.

This approach fosters a shared understanding among all involved regarding:

- What is working well for the family or youth and which rules in the current plan are working to keep children and youth safe.
- The barriers or challenges that may be limiting progress and where attention is needed to increase safety or wellbeing.
- What needs to be adjusted or strengthened in order to move closer to the safety goals and eventually close the delegated file.

How many Review Meetings (monitoring meetings) do we need?

The frequency and amount of Review Meetings will depend on the level of risk we are managing in a file. For instance, if we have an unexplained injury case, a sexual abuse case or a denied case of domestic violence, and we have younger children involved, we will need to have more meetings for a longer period. The case manager needs to consult with their team leader to make these decisions and to keep on track with the Safety Plan Timeline they have developed in Step 2.

MONITORING THE DEVELOPMENT OF PLANS

Monitoring extends beyond day-to-day safety and well-being and includes ensuring that plans remain effective and relevant as a family's or youth's circumstances change. As new information or incidents of harm to children arise during the safety planning stage, the social worker must determine whether these concerns represent a new issue that was not previously assessed in the analysis phase (Step 2), or whether they fall within the scope of the existing analysis of harm and danger and plan.

When a new concern reflects a different type of harm or risk than what was previously assessed, an additional assessment is required. This includes developing a new analysis set and having a safety planning meeting to create specific steps or rules related to the new concern. For example, if LMO was involved with a family because of a parent's depression and intimate partner violence, and a child later discloses sexual abuse, this would require a separate analysis set and additional safety planning.

If, however, a new report relates to an issue already identified in the existing analysis, such as another incident of the same parent's violent behaviour, this information can be brought to the next Review (Monitoring) Meeting. In these situations, the focus is on examining how well the current plan is working, identifying where it may need to be strengthened or adapted, and determining whether the plan is adequately preventing or responding to the concerning behaviour.

In all such circumstances, case managers must consult with their team leader to clearly assess whether the current safety plan is effective and to determine whether an additional analysis set is required. Effective monitoring helps confirm that plans:

- Evolve and adapt over time to reflect changes in the family's/youth's situation and needs
- Include and honour the voice of the Captain of the Plan, the family and *La Paraantii* in every phase of development.
- Accurately reflect the family's/youth culture, strengths, and lived experiences.
- Allow opportunities to promote resilience and success through acknowledging and honouring successes no matter how small. Continued positive reinforcement builds confidence and restores hope in believing things can be different and cycles can be broken.
- Establish a clear and achievable trajectory toward closing the file safely and with confidence moving from an agency-led safety plan to a family-led safety plan.

LMO has a **Monitoring Tool** template to guide their work in this Step.

Ongoing oversight of safety plans is critical for supporting meaningful progress and ensuring that interventions remain aligned with the safety goals, the cultural context of accountability and *La Paraantii's* support. The Captain of the Plan has a key role in monitoring and will be the one who will be taking over the facilitation of the meetings along the way. Métis families always had ways to keep their children safe and well and had leaders within the family to support that. The introduction of the Captain of the Plan brings back what has been inherently lost along the way and may take time for families and *La Paraantii* to get used to these new roles and to step out of the old ways of being continually monitored and judged by professionals. We believe when a safety plan doesn't work, it is a fantastic opportunity for the family/youth and *la Paraantii* to come together with the care team and see how we can refine the safety plan and bring more rigour to it.

MONITORING TOOLS:

Safety Journal:

Early in the Safety Planning Timeline, the social worker may have introduced a Safety Journal to be used by *La Paraantii* and the family/youth to document and monitor what is working (or not) with the plan (either an interim or long-term safety plan). The way the social worker and the internal care team decide to use the Safety Journal is up to them. They can use 3 columns and have *La Paraantii* document in each of the columns when they are with the families/youth, or they can simply just put the date, what they saw demonstrated, how it was evidenced, and what was good about it or what we need to discuss in the next Review Meeting.

Introducing a Safety Journal requires a level of openness, honesty and transparency that can take time to achieve, as many people involved with child welfare in the past have felt “policed” and not supported. This is a new way of working with families/youth, and we want to be clear and explain how this Journal will help everyone know how we are improving the situation for the children/youth and where we need to focus moving forward. It will also be helpful as we move towards reunification or having files closed to evidence to Team Leaders/Practice Managers/Judges, where we have seen the plan be “demonstrated over time”.

It is important for the family/youth and *La Paraantii* to know the Safety Journal will be brought forward in the Review Meetings to review how the family/youth have been working the plan with *La Paraantii* and what we need to amend or celebrate. We always want to celebrate our successes, no matter how small, in the monitoring phase.

Group Messaging (WhatsApp, Messenger, etc.)

The social worker and the care team may create an electronic group via Facebook, group text, or WhatsApp that only includes the family/youth, Captain of the Plan and *La Paraantii* and the social worker, to communicate important pieces of information as they pertain to the safety plan. These groups will be a place for everyone to chat about/check in with each other on how the plan is working (or not) and will create an openness and transparency that is important for us to do this work differently. The Captain of the Plan will be the administrator of the group, and as we work towards closing the file, the professionals will leave the group to transition from an agency-led safety plan to a family-led safety

plan. The hope is that *La Paraantii* and the family/youth will maintain this means of communication long after the safety file is closed as a way to stay connected, involved and prevent the need for future child welfare involvement.

DECOLONIZING PRACTICE NOTE

A Métis Perspective on Accountability

Accountability has always been, and continues to be, a fundamental part of Métis ways of being. Historically, Métis communities developed well-organized systems designed to ensure the safety and well-being of children, the sufficiency of food and shelter, and the overall prosperity of the community. Every individual had a specific role, and these roles were respected and upheld as essential to the collective good.

When families faced challenges, Métis culture relied on three core, culturally grounded approaches to address concerns:

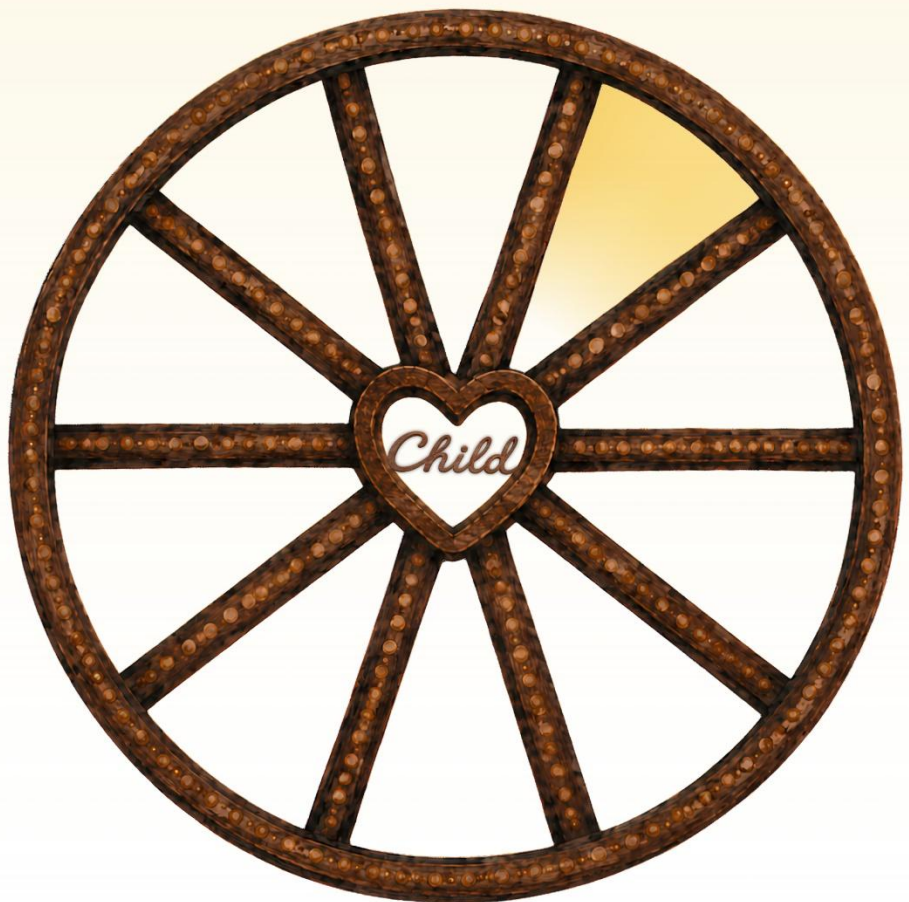
1. Drawing on the strength and knowledge of *La Paraantii*, recognizing the power of kinship and extended family networks in supporting families through difficult times.
2. Relying on clearly defined roles and responsibilities, ensuring that community members understood their part in maintaining safety, well-being, and harmony.
3. Ensuring that everyone remained connected and accountable, maintaining strong relationships and open communication so that support could be offered promptly and effectively when needed.

These traditional practices continue to serve as guiding principles for contemporary social work practice, reminding us of the importance of community, relational accountability, and collective responsibility in supporting Métis families and children.

Additional resources and appendices that support **Step 8** (including any not referenced in the main text of this) can be found here: **Step 8 Appendices**.

STEP 9

Close File & Honouring



CLOSE FILE AND HONOURING

ENDING SERVICE IN A GOOD WAY: CELEBRATION & HONOURING

Ending service in a good way is a vital component of the LMO Michif Practice Model. This commitment is important regardless of whether all goals for voluntary or non-voluntary services have been fully met. When the process of closure is approached with intention, respect, and care, it helps build trust, fosters positive relationships, reduces fear and increases safety as Métis families and youth will feel comfortable seeking support in the future if needed.

When families or youth conclude their services with LMO, an honouring ceremony is held. All LMO staff, Elders and the family/youth's *Paraantii* are invited to come together to celebrate the family/youth's growth and the successful completion of their services. This ceremony serves to mark the closing of one chapter and the beginning of another, encouraging the family/youth to move forward in a good way, supported by the care and strength of their *Paraantii*. Cultural gifts are presented during the ceremony, and a sashing ceremony may also be included. This moment provides an opportunity for participants to share reflections, witness the family/youth's progress, and offer meaningful messages that they can carry with them into the future. Often, these messages are written, laminated, and presented as keepsakes for the family/youth to keep.

ADDITIONAL STEPS WHEN CLOSING DELEGATED FILES

Throughout the continuum of working with families/youth, it is important to honour families/youth often, as this builds resilience, fosters positive relationships and encourages one to keep moving forward, especially during difficult times. Shifting from an agency-led safety plan to a family-led safety plan that children can understand is a tremendous accomplishment and restores a traditional Métis practice that merits celebrating. The social worker and the internal care team, along with *La Paraantii* and the family/youth, will know the plan has been working and will have handed over the responsibility for the plan moving forward to the “Captain of the Plan”. This is an important part of closing a delegated file. Moving forward, should challenges arise again, the Captain of the Plan will have the plan and strategies to implement in order to bring everyone back on track without having to involve child welfare authorities. The family will have restored the traditional role of *La Paraantii*, and the spirit of **Otipemisiwak**.

We will want to share a meal with everyone who has been a part of the work together, including our Elders and anyone else the family wants to invite, and the social worker can highlight some of the key pieces of the work together that have been most impactful for him/her. This is a key part that should be included on the Safety Planning Timeline that we have created when we first started our work together with the family. At this time, the delegated portion of the file may close, but the family may wish to continue on with Voluntary Services with their internal care team members or otherwise, or just be a part of the ongoing programming and community events that LMO offers.

This information would be documented by completing the [LMO Closing Recording](#), which is loaded onto the case on ICM once signed.

We want our Métis families/youth to feel a sense of connection and belonging to our Métis community and be able to feel supported. If the social worker has created a Nistwayr for the family or youth during their work together, they might want to add a few pages to the end to include some key messages of resiliency or honouring from the Captain of the Plan or others. They will also want to make sure the child-centred safety plan (done in a stick figure format) is a part of the honouring for everyone to see and highlight how the family and *la Paraantii* are working to make things much better for the children. If we are closing youth files, we have often been involved for a number of years. Therefore, it will be important to honour milestones and significant accomplishments throughout our time together, not just at the end of our work. We will want to involve the youth in how they most want to celebrate their end of services as a rite of passage for them as Métis adults now.

They will be presented with gifts and a written honouring (see examples [here](#)) that they can keep and will be invited to a beautiful meal to celebrate with those who they identify.

Fear and apprehension about the child welfare system, deeply rooted in a long history of colonial harm, have prevented many Métis families from seeking help or engaging in prevention services. Many families feel that if they ask for help, they will end up with more intrusive measures. We hope that we have had the time to create consistent relationships and develop trust to be able to move past this history and help the families grow in their capacity to care for their children in stronger and more cultural ways. As we embed celebration, joy, and honouring into our work, we take significant steps toward rebuilding trust, restoring relationships, and promoting dignity and healing within the Métis community.

CELEBRATION AND HONOURING IN METIS WORLDVIEW

Honouring milestones and recognizing growth are fundamental aspects of Métis culture and history. Traditionally, significant events such as rites of passage, marriages, and chivarees, which are lively Métis community celebrations, were central to the social and cultural life of Métis communities.

Today, LMO continues these cultural practices by celebrating and acknowledging important milestones in the lives of Métis children, youth, and families. Through ceremonies, storytelling, and shared gatherings, LMO upholds these traditions, fostering a sense of belonging, cultural pride, and community connection.

This video offers a demonstration of how honouring can be expressed in practice:

https://youtu.be/Fs3c_tpcF0

DECOLONIZING PRACTICE NOTE

A Métis Perspective on Accountability

- The Métis Sash: Identity, Belonging, and Strength
- The Métis Sash has long stood as a symbol of practicality, resilience, and pride within Métis culture.
- During the Fur Trade Era, it served as a versatile garment worn by Métis men, valued for its utility and cultural significance.
- After the Battle of Batoche in 1885 and through many years of hardship, the sash evolved into a powerful emblem of political and cultural resistance, helping to unite Métis people in their pursuit of recognition and rights.
- Today, it remains a profound symbol of nationhood and cultural belonging, representing both historical endurance and contemporary identity.

Honouring families with a Métis sash carries significant meaning:

- It strengthens individual and collective identity, particularly for those reconnecting with their cultural roots.
- It reaffirms each person's place within the broader Métis community.
- It recognizes the resilience, courage, and contributions of Métis individuals and families.

For home visits and family meetings, wearing a Métis sash pin is an appropriate and respectful gesture. In more formal contexts, such as court appearances or community gatherings, wearing the full Métis sash reflects honour, cultural pride, and quiet resistance, especially given the Métis history as the Forgotten People.

RESTORING LA PARAANTII THROUGH CLOSURE

Ending service in a good way honours the traditional values of *la Paraantii*, and the Captain of the Plan, which include kinship, connection, and mutual responsibility.

This approach helps to:

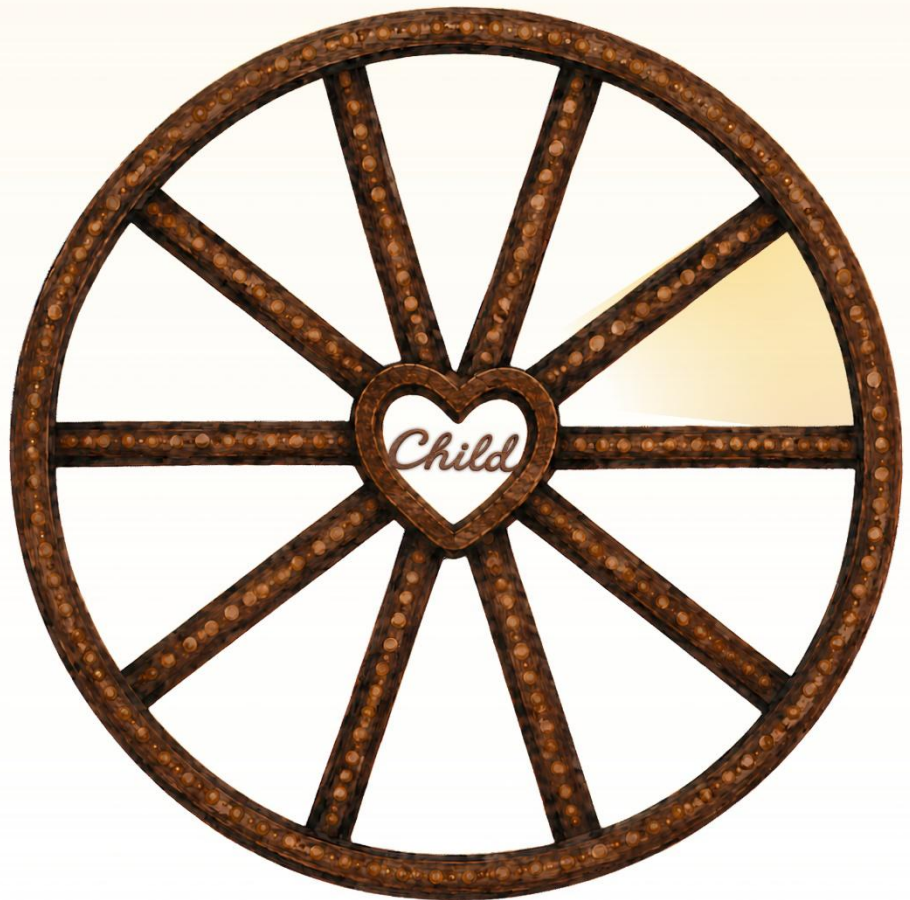
- Restore dignity and build trust in systems of care
- Encourage Métis families to view themselves as capable, resilient, and whole
- Celebrate who families and individuals are, rather than focusing solely on what they have endured or survived
- Create more capacity within Métis family systems for children/youth to be supported by a bigger circle of people. Parenting and societal issues have continued to become more challenging in these past few years, and Métis families have always relied on support to raise their children/youth well.

Honouring families, creating space for joy, and recognizing progress, even in small steps, reflects our commitment to culturally grounded and trauma-informed practice. These efforts support healing and help foster a sense of belonging and hope for the future.

Additional resources and appendices that support **Step 9** (including any not referenced in the main text of this) can be found here: **Step 9 Appendices**.

STEP 10

Aykooshi



AYKOOSHI (EXIT INTERVIEW)

THE AYKOOSHI SURVEY: LEARNING THROUGH HUMILITY

The **Aykooshi Survey** is an important tool designed to give those receiving services a meaningful opportunity to reflect on their experiences with LMO services. The survey contains a series of thoughtful, open-ended questions that provide space for individuals to share both the strengths and challenges they encountered during their journey with LMO. As LMO is a learning organization, committed to improving their service delivery based on what is working, our final step asks for those we have worked with to help us understand ***what was the difference that made the difference!***

The term “Aykooshi,” a Michif expression for *“that’s it, it is done”*, serves as an important reminder for us to slow down, listen deeply, and honour the perspectives of those we serve. This practice reflects the essence of Métis values, where reflection and humility are intertwined.

Why it Matters

The feedback received through the Aykooshi Survey is:

- Confidential, ensuring that individuals can speak freely and honestly about their experiences
- Used to strengthen and improve our practice, helping us become more effective and responsive
- A guide for what we should continue doing because it has created meaningful and positive impacts
- A signal for where change, adaptation, or growth is necessary to better serve Métis children, youth, and families

Completing the LMO Michif Practice requires more than the delivery of services; it requires creating opportunities for families/youth to share their voices. Offering families/youth the chance to complete the Aykooshi Survey is an essential and non-negotiable part of our practice. It signifies respect, accountability, and our ongoing commitment to learning and growth.

The survey also creates an opportunity to close the service experience in a good way, ensuring families feel heard and valued. It can help ease the transition out of services and foster trust, increasing the likelihood that families will return for support in the future if needed.

THE VALUE OF HUMILITY IN MÉTIS PRACTICE

Humility is a core value deeply embedded in Métis teachings and worldviews. It calls each of us to remain open to learning, to acknowledge and accept when we have made mistakes, and to value the voices of those we serve genuinely. Practicing humility ensures that our work remains community-centred and respectful.

Louis Riel, one of the most influential Métis leaders in history, exemplified humility in both word and action. Despite his high level of education and the significant respect he commanded, Riel led with graciousness, empathy, and a vision for justice and unity. His leadership serves as a profound example of how humility can guide effective, compassionate, and culturally grounded practice.

Louis Riel was a well-educated young man who participated in establishing a Provisional Government when the federal crown decided to resurvey lands in Red River for incoming migration despite the 12,000 people residents. His gracious and articulate manner were soon acknowledged by the community and he was asked to lead the people to defend their inherent rights during the Red River Resistance in 1869 and once again during the Battle of Batoche in 1870. Today, he is celebrated and honoured for his efforts to defend the rights of his people

At LMO, humility is not merely a personal value but a professional expectation. It influences how we approach every aspect of our work, from assessments and planning to closing files and seeking feedback. It reminds us that we do not have all the answers and that those we serve are experts in their own lives.

By practicing humility, we:

- Create space for genuine partnership and shared decision-making
- Encourage honest dialogue and feedback from families, youth, and *la Paraantii*
- Acknowledge the historical and ongoing impacts of colonization on Métis communities
- Commit to continuous learning and improvement in our services

Through humility and practices like the Aykooshi Survey, we affirm that Métis children, youth, and families are not just recipients of services but active participants and valuable teachers in our collective journey toward healing, safety, and cultural reconnection.

DECOLONIZING PRACTICE NOTE

A Lesson from Our History

When the federal Crown decided to re-survey Métis lands in 1869 and again in 1884, Louis Riel stepped forward to help establish a Provisional Government. Although still a young man, he was recognized for his articulate voice and thoughtful leadership. Riel guided Métis and First Nations people in both Red River and Batoche, defending their rights with a blend of humility and unwavering strength.

Riel's example teaches us several important lessons for our practice today:

- Strength and humility are not opposites. They can and must coexist in leadership and advocacy.
- Listening to the people we serve is both a powerful act of resistance and a profound expression of care.
- Our work must always be grounded in community voice and accountability, ensuring that those most affected are central to decision-making.

These teachings remind us that true leadership in social work is not only about taking action but also about listening deeply and standing in solidarity with the communities we serve.

HONOURING FEEDBACK AS PRACTICE

Offering the Aykooshi Survey is a meaningful way to honour the voices of families and youth. It reflects our commitment to humility and ensures we carry forward the values of our ancestors. Gathering feedback through this process:

- Builds trust between families and LMO
- Creates space for healing and open dialogue
- Reminds us that learning and growth are lifelong journeys

To serve our communities effectively, we must always remain willing to listen, reflect, and make changes based on what we learn.

In order to determine whether we have successfully created a culturally sensitive, holistic, rigorous, and innovative child welfare policy and procedures manual for Métis children and families. Our goal is for this manual to support staff and leadership in implementing transformative, anti-oppressive practice within the mandated child safety realm. To evaluate this, we will collect and analyze the outcomes from the Aykooshi Survey. This feedback will help us identify our strengths and the areas where we need to continue growing and improving.

A video demonstration of a worker leading a parent through the **Aykooshi Survey** can be found here: <https://youtu.be/J2IGjenyQT8>

Additional resources and appendices that support **Step 10** (including any not referenced in the main text of this) can be found here: **Step 10 Appendices**.

SUSTAINABILITY OF THE LMO MICHIF PRACTICE MODEL

Ensuring the long-term sustainability and integrity of the Michif Practice Model is essential for maintaining high-quality, culturally grounded services for Métis children, youth, and families. We are committed to ongoing reflection, collaboration, and continuous learning to keep the manual living and relevant. Sustainability is not a static achievement but a dynamic process that requires vigilance, humility, and adaptability.

ONGOING EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK

- Regular evaluation and feedback are foundational to sustaining effective practice. This involves creating formal structures and informal opportunities for staff at every level to contribute their experiences and insights.
- Agency staff, practice leaders, and front-line workers will be invited to participate in structured review sessions, feedback surveys, and reflective supervision. Their insights will help identify what is working well and where improvements are needed.
- Consultation with other Métis organizations using the Michif Practice Model is a critical component of this work. By connecting across communities, we can share innovative practices, learn from each other's experiences, and collectively problem-solve challenges that arise. These partnerships will also help ensure that the manual evolves in ways that reflect broader Métis realities and diverse community contexts.

Through this ongoing process, we aim to:

- Ensure the manual remains responsive to emerging needs, research, and community feedback
- Support culturally safe, community-informed practices that resonate with the lived experiences of Métis families
- Strengthen our shared commitment to building Métis self-determined systems of care that are rooted in traditional knowledge and contemporary practice

A crucial part of this evaluation process involves listening to the voices of families and youth through tools like the Aykooshi Survey. Their feedback will help guide revisions to the manual and inform staff training and development.

DECISION MAKING

The Role of Elders

Elders play an essential role in the sustainability and integrity of the Michif Practice Model. Their presence and guidance ensure that practice is not only professionally sound but also culturally respectful and connected to Métis worldviews.

Elders bring:

- Traditional teachings that help contextualize modern practice within centuries of Métis cultural wisdom
- Métis values of humility, respect, courage, and kinship, which guide interactions with families and within teams
- Deep wisdom that supports families in navigating difficult situations and supports staff in understanding cultural context and appropriate responses
- Guidance in honouring the family's journey, ensuring that services reflect the unique strengths, challenges, and histories of each family

Elders are partners in practice. They participate in meetings, share cultural teachings, help shape the wording of plans like Words and Pictures, and ensure that plans align with Métis ways of being. Their involvement strengthens trust and helps families feel seen and respected in their cultural identity.

GROUP SUPERVISION AND COMPLEX CASES

- Group Supervision is a structured, collaborative process designed to support thoughtful decision-making in complex situations. It creates a safe space for staff to think deeply about their practice and seek guidance when navigating difficult cases. Here is a [Group Supervision 1-pager](#) for quick reference.
- The primary goals of Group Supervision are to:
 - Clarify next steps when information is incomplete, or when decisions feel uncertain and when workers are lost in “the noise”
 - Encourage critical thinking and collective wisdom by inviting diverse perspectives, including those of Elders and Team Leaders
 - Examine practice through a cultural lens, ensuring that decisions reflect the values and worldview of Métis communities
 - Promote emotional support and resilience for staff dealing with emotionally charged or high-risk cases
 - To bring rigour to some of our more complex files to have more people’s “best thinking” at the table and help us make the best decisions possible.

- Group Supervision is not meant to replace individual accountability or make casework decisions for workers. Instead, it provides guidance and shared analysis, helping practitioners feel confident and supported as they move forward.

Key components often include:

- Creating analysis sets including case specific scaling questions developed in earlier practice steps (see [**Group Supervision Process for Mapping document**](#))
- Practicing creating and asking stronger strength-based questions (see [**Strengths-based Questions document**](#))
- Support for creating stronger Safety Planning Timelines right after assessment and before the ongoing work starts (see [**Group Supervision Process for Trajectory document**](#))
- Preparing for *la Paraantii* meetings (see [**Safety Planning Worksheet**](#) and [**Group Supervision Process for Safety Planning**](#)) and identifying ways to engage families and *la Paraantii* more effectively (see [**Group Supervision Process for Networks document**](#))
- Helping to create questions for families and *la Paraantii* and youth for work on Nistwayr and getting support on developing some of the more challenging frames (see [**Group Supervision Process for Words & Pictures document**](#)).
- Brainstorming questions to prepare for good child interviews with children using **My Three Cabins/Red River Carts** tool (see [**Group Supervision Process for My 3 Houses**](#) here).
- Reflecting on the cultural implications of decisions and ensuring alignment with Métis values.

By integrating regular Group Supervision into our practice, we uphold a high standard of accountability, encourage shared learning, and reduce the isolation often felt by staff managing complex cases.

Sustainability of the Michif Practice Model will be achieved through a continuous cycle of practice, reflection, feedback, and revision. This approach ensures that our work remains vibrant, culturally grounded, and effective in supporting the safety, wellbeing, and cultural identity of Métis children, youth, and families.

DECOLONIZING PRACTICE NOTE

Métis Decision-Making Traditions

The Métis Nation has a long history of democratic, participatory, and consensus-driven decision-making. These traditions are rooted in values of respect, collective responsibility, and ensuring the wellbeing of the entire community.

During the Buffalo Hunt, councils were formed to govern decisions collaboratively. Community members gathered to discuss strategies, establish rules, and ensure fair distribution of resources. Every voice mattered, and leadership was guided by the goal of protecting the community and maintaining harmony.

In 1869, Métis leaders established a Provisional Government during the Red River Resistance. This government was formed to protect Métis lands, families, and inherent rights. Decisions were made through collective dialogue and community engagement, reflecting deep democratic principles and a commitment to self-determination.

These traditions live on today through contemporary Métis governance structures, such as Métis Nation British Columbia and its affiliated Charter Communities. Open discussion, debate, and

OUR PRACTICE REFLECTS OUR GOVERNANCE

At LMO, our practice is intentionally shaped by the governance traditions of the Métis Nation. Every voice matters, and decisions are made with, not for, the community.

- We believe that the best outcomes are achieved through dialogue, mutual respect, and the inclusion of diverse perspectives.
- Consensus, cultural grounding, and collective responsibility form the foundation of our approach.
- We honour the wisdom carried by Elders, the lived experiences of families and youth, and the insights of practitioners and community partners.

This commitment ensures that our services remain culturally safe, community-driven, and deeply connected to the values and governance practices of the Métis people. It also reinforces the principle that meaningful change and sustainable solutions arise when we work in true partnership with those we serve.

In our daily work, these values show up in how we facilitate meetings, seek input from families and *La Paraantii*, and include Elders and community leaders in decision-making processes. We take time to build relationships and ensure everyone understands their role and voice in shaping plans and solutions. By honouring governance traditions in practice, we create spaces where Métis children, youth, and families feel respected, heard, and empowered to be active participants in their own journeys.

Conclusion

CONCLUSION

The LMO Michif Practice Model stands as a living commitment to the decolonization of child welfare practice and to the ongoing healing from the impacts of cultural genocide experienced by Métis families. It is built on the understanding that culture itself is safety and calls on all who work within these systems to embed Métis identity, knowledge, and values into every stage of practice — from first contact to case closure.

This work is not simply about policies or procedures. It is about restoring trust, honouring identity, and creating systems of care that reflect and uphold the unique strengths, worldviews, and lived experiences of the Métis people. It requires a willingness to do things differently—to work in partnership with families, communities, and Elders; to listen deeply; and to challenge colonial practices that continue to cause harm.

Through the principles and practices outlined in this manual, we actively answer the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's 94 Calls to Action, particularly those that address child welfare, education, and Indigenous child and family services. We strive to build services that not only protect children but also nurture cultural pride, family connection, and community resilience.

DECOLONIZING SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

At the core of the LMO Michif Practice Model is the transformation of social work itself. This transformation calls on workers to go far beyond procedural compliance or policy checklists. It demands a fundamental shift in how we see families, how we engage with communities, and how we understand our own roles as helpers and protectors.

Workers are called to:

- **Practice cultural humility in all interactions.**

This means approaching every family and child with respect, curiosity, and openness. It means recognizing that we are always learners and that Métis families carry expertise about their own lives, culture, and strengths. Cultural humility also means being willing to examine our own biases, challenge our assumptions, and acknowledge the limits of our knowledge.

- **Approach their work through a trauma-informed lens.**

Trauma-informed practice is not just a set of techniques—it is a way of seeing people as more than the sum of the harms they have experienced. It requires understanding how trauma, including the trauma of colonization and systemic racism, affects brain development, behaviour, relationships, and a person's sense of safety. Workers must be skilled in creating safe spaces, avoiding re-traumatization, and responding compassionately even when faced with challenging behaviours.

- **Commit to both personal and collective healing and reparation.**

This work is deeply personal. It asks each worker to reflect on their own identity, experiences, and place within systems of power. It also calls on organizations to acknowledge historical and current harms, and to actively pursue practices and policies that repair relationships, restore trust, and promote reconciliation.

- **Actively resist and dismantle systems of oppression, racism, and colonial control.**

Decolonizing practice is not passive. It demands courage to challenge policies, practices, and beliefs that continue to harm Métis children and families. It means advocating for systems that value Indigenous ways of knowing, honour cultural safety, and restore decision-making power to communities.

Workers must be equipped and supported to see families not merely through the lens of risk, but through their strengths, cultural identities, and relationships. For example, during the screening process, workers are expected to give equal weight to:

- Harm and risk
- Strengths, safety, and what is working well

Maintaining this focus on the “middle column” of safety and wellness allows us to see the full story of a family, rather than only the concerns that led to a report. When we focus only on deficits, we risk contributing to cycles of harm and removing children from families unnecessarily. But when we look equally at strengths and protective factors, we uncover resources that can support safety, healing, and long-term wellbeing.

This approach aligns with the resilient spirit of the Métis people, who have continued to gather, rebuild, and thrive despite generations of displacement and systemic oppression. It honours the wisdom of Métis ancestors who maintained community cohesion, mutual aid, and cultural identity through centuries of adversity. And it reflects our shared responsibility to ensure that every child grows up safe, connected, and proud of who they are.

In transforming social work practice, we not only protect children—we contribute to the restoration of Métis communities, the healing of intergenerational trauma, and the creation of a future where families are empowered, supported, and seen in their full humanity.

A rigorous focus on this “**middle column**” of safety and wellness allows workers to see the whole story of a family, not just the concerns that led to a report. This shift aligns with the **resilient spirit of the Métis People**, who, despite generations of displacement and oppression, continue to gather, restore, and thrive.

LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE AND RESILIENCE

Traditionally, Métis children learned through experiential methods – by doing, trying, failing, and trying again. Knowledge was not simply delivered in words or instructions but woven into everyday life through observation, participation, and hands-on experiences. Skills like hunting, beading, storytelling, and language were passed down through demonstration, gentle correction, and repetition. When a child struggled to learn a skill, they were not punished or shamed but guided with patience, encouragement, and care. Elders, parents, and extended family members all played a role in this learning, ensuring that children felt valued, capable, and supported as they grew into contributing members of their community.

Traditional parenting practices involved the process of experiential learning to encourage children in developing age-appropriate skills. Resiliency was acquired when children who were learning through the process of experiential learning made mistakes made mistakes but continued to work towards mastery. Later, these early life lessons would be vital when children and families were enduring hardships as a result of the impacts of colonization, hardships endured as a result of the impacts of colonization developed the spirit of resiliency

These teachings fostered core values such as:

- **Resilience**, as children learned that mistakes were not failures but stepping stones toward mastery.
- **Persistence**, as they were encouraged to keep trying even when tasks were difficult, knowing that their community stood behind them.
- **Community-based learning**, where knowledge was shared collectively, and everyone had a role in teaching and supporting one another.

These same principles must guide our practice today. Families who have been impacted by colonization, residential schools, and the Sixties Scoop have often been disconnected from traditional ways of learning and caring. Many carry the weight of intergenerational trauma, grief, and loss. They deserve the same patience, time, and culturally safe support to heal and grow that our ancestors offered so freely.

Just as our ancestors supported one another during times of challenge, we are called to walk alongside Métis children, youth, and families. We are called to offer compassion, consistency, and culturally relevant care. This means creating space for families to learn at their own pace, honoring their efforts without judgment, and recognizing that healing and change are processes that require time and trust.

It also means viewing setbacks not as failures but as part of the journey. Our role is not to impose solutions but to work collaboratively, drawing on the wisdom and strengths that exist within every family and community. We must remember that the goal is not only to keep children safe but to help them thrive, rooted in their culture, connected to their *Paraantii*, and confident in who they are as Métis people.

By following these principles, we honor the teachings of our ancestors and help build a child welfare system that is truly transformative, culturally grounded, and focused on long-term well-being.

THE ROLE OF ELDERS IN PRACTICE

Elders are knowledge keepers who provide spiritual, emotional, and cultural guidance. They carry stories, teachings, and wisdom passed down through generations, offering a deep understanding of Métis identity, values, and community life. Their presence in child welfare practice is vital because they help bridge the gap between Western systems and Métis ways of knowing and being.

When reviewing a family's child welfare history, a Michif Elder can:

- Offer insights into what the family's past involvement may reflect, helping workers look beyond the surface and understand the broader context of the family's experiences and challenges
- Share teachings related to traditional parenting practices, values, and cultural expectations, reminding us how Métis families have always cared for and protected children within extended networks of kinship and community
- Help workers interpret documents and information through an Indigenous lens, providing cultural and historical context that can shift understanding from one of blame and deficit to one of resilience and survival

Seeking an Elder's guidance is not an afterthought or a procedural step to check off a list. It is an essential part of ethical and culturally safe decision-making. Involving Elders ensures that our work is grounded in *La Paraantii*, the interconnectedness of all beings, and reflects the values of respect, relationship, and shared responsibility.

RECLAIMING AND RESHAPING SOCIAL WORK

As Indigenous scholars have noted:

“Aboriginal social work combines culturally relevant education and training with Indigenous knowledge, healing practices, and community values—within a decolonizing context.”

(Sinclair, 2004; Tamburro, 2013)

This perspective calls us to transform social work education and practice so it genuinely serves Indigenous communities and contributes to healing and justice. It is not enough to simply add cultural content to existing frameworks. Social work must be reimagined and reshaped to reflect Indigenous worldviews, values, and approaches to care.

This means social work education and practice must shift to include:

- Indigenous ways of knowing and being, which honour holistic understandings of health, family, community, and spirit
- Anti-oppressive and strengths-based approaches, ensuring that Indigenous families are seen for their resilience and capacity rather than defined only by deficits or risk
- Participatory and inclusive research methods, so Indigenous people lead and define the questions, knowledge, and solutions that affect their lives
- Critical analysis of structural inequities like poverty, homelessness, and systemic racism, recognizing how these systems have harmed Indigenous communities and continue to shape the challenges families face today

We must also have the courage to acknowledge the harm that social work itself has caused. As Sinclair (2004) reminds us:

“...the welfare department which employed me was the biggest contributor to child abuse in the province.”

(Fournier & Crey, 1997, as cited in Sinclair)

This stark truth underlines the urgency of transforming social work from a system of control and surveillance into a practice of partnership, respect, and healing. Reclaiming and reshaping social work is a fundamental part of reconciliation, ensuring that Indigenous families and communities are no longer harmed, but instead supported to thrive.

OUR COMMITMENT

Our work must begin and end with humility, recognizing that healing is a journey we share as families, communities, and practitioners. The LMO Michif Practice Model is not simply a static document. It is a living and evolving commitment that guides how we engage with Métis children, youth, and families every day.

It calls us to:

- Restore dignity, by seeing Métis families through a lens of strength, resilience, and potential rather than solely through risk and deficits
- Rebuild trust, through transparency, respect, and meaningful relationships grounded in cultural understanding
- Celebrate culture, ensuring that Métis traditions, language, and ways of knowing are integrated into practice as essential sources of identity, belonging, and healing
- Ensure that Métis families are no longer forgotten, by centering their voices and experiences in every decision and action we take

We walk forward together, guided by the teachings of our ancestors and inspired by the hopes of the families we serve. We know that healing is possible, because our Nation has always found ways to survive, adapt, and thrive. Now, we are reclaiming not only survival, but our right to live with pride, connection, and wellbeing.

Final Words

The LMO Michif Practice Model was created with hope for a future that honours Métis children, youth, families, and communities, and for systems of care that reflect the dignity, strength, and belonging of our people.

At the heart of this work is honouring. Honouring our children by seeing their safety, identity, voice, and belonging as inseparable. Honouring our families by recognizing their strengths, their histories, and their capacity for healing. Honouring our Elders by carrying forward the teachings, stories, and guidance they have entrusted to us. Honouring our ancestors by remembering that the knowledge needed to care for our children has always lived within our people.

This model asks us to hold practice as a responsibility. Every conversation, decision, meeting, and plan carries the potential to either deepen harm or support healing. La Paraantii, understood as our circles of kinship, reminds us that child safety is strengthened when children remain connected to the people, stories, culture, and relationships that help them know who they are and where they belong.

The hope for the LMO Michif Practice Model is that it will help transform practice for the good of our people. It is intended to support better conversations, stronger relationships, more thoughtful decisions, and a renewed commitment to Métis ways of caring for one another. It also calls on systems to change, while reminding us that our values, our responsibilities, and our ways of knowing continue to offer a path forward.

WITH GRATITUDE

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APPENDICES

Michif Language (3)

- A Relationship with the Michif Language and Culture
- Living Michif – Reclaiming our Traditional Language and Values in Child and Family Services
- Michif Dictionary – Norman Fleury 2013

Michif Prayers (12)

- Dave's Prayers
- Even Though...Prayer
- Feast Prayer
- Fred's Prayer
- Graduation Prayer
- Graduation Prayer (Grace)
- Joyce Munro Opening your Heart to a Child
- Mazie Beed's Prayer
- Mediation Closing Prayer
- Meeting Prayer
- Mother
- Prayer Book

Introduction (7)

- Copy of 10 Steps of Accountability to the LMO Michif Practice Model
- Group Supervision One Page Guidance
- Lii Michif Elder's Book
- LMO Michif Practice Model 6 Month Timeline
- LMO Michif Practice Model Dashboard 10 Steps
- LMO Michif Practice Model Timeline with Written Practice Guidance
- 10 Steps and Values – Simplified

Step 1 (9)

- Intake Screening Map
- Example of a Screening Map
- Intake Screening Map with Sample Questions
- Harm Analysis Matrix – Blank
- Harm Analysis Matrix including prompts
- Purpose of Signs of Safety Harm Analysis Matrix
- Group Supervision Process – Harm Analysis Matrix
- ICM System Tips
- Group Supervision Process – Appreciative Inquiry

Step 2 (35, not incl. KKC folder)

- KKC (6)
 - Intake Screening Map – Youth
 - Kikekyelc Resident Rules and Service Agreement – Annual Review
 - KKC Tenant C&B
 - Move-In Tenancy Policy Guide
 - Screening – Questions for the Youth – Young Adult
 - Tenant Handbook – Final
- Group Supervision Process for Mapping
- Michif Family Youth Assessment Template
- Anonymized Michif Family Assessment Map
- Strengths Questions
- The Middle Column Article
- Safety Plan Agreement Example
- Reasons for Living Inventory

- Guide for Making a Referral to an Elder Mentor
- LMO Michif Youth Services – Service Delivery
- Caregiver Stability Assessment Guiding Questions
- Caregiver Stability Assessment Template
- Caregiver Stability Assessment Worksheet
- Caregiver Stability Assessment Example
- ECD Screening Form
- ECD File Face Sheet
- Perinatal MLDP Support Intake
- MSCD Intake Birth to 6 Years
- MSCD Intake 7-12 Years
- MSCD Intake 13-18 Years
- MSCD 13-18 years Transition Timeline
- Development and Support Plan Template
- LP Anonymized Direct Support Goal Report
- PK Anonymized Direct Support Goal Report
- RSC Anonymized Early Years Direct Support Goal Report
- Reasons for Living Inventory Background Information
- When to use the RFL
- Case Example RFL
- Safety Planning Timeline Template
- Timeline Example (final Timeline for C)
- Anonymized Reunification Timeline
- Anonymized Reunification Timeline for CG
- Anonymized Family-Friendly Reunification Timeline
- Group Supervision Process for Safety Planning Timeline
- Group Supervision One Page Guidance
- Connection and Belonging Practice Guidance
- LMO Connection and Belonging Face Sheet
- LMO Interim Placement and Initial Connection and Belonging Plan

Step 3 (3)

- LMO Michif Practice Model 6 Month Timeline
- Michif Elder Council Member Bios
- Metis History Booklet

Step 4 (15)

- My Safety Cabin
- My Safety Cart
- My Three Cabins
- My Three Flowers
- My Three Red River Carts
- Connection and Belonging Assessment – 11 years
- Connection and Belonging Assessment – 4-10 years
- Anonymized Connection and Belonging Assessment
- Connection and Belonging Practice Guidance
- Question Ideas for the 4-10 year old Connection and Belonging Practice Guidance
- Connection and Belonging Face Sheet
- Disciplinary Standards – Words & Pictures
- Group Supervision for My 3 Houses
- Interim Connection and Belonging Plan & Placement Request
- Rights of Children in Care – Altaya's form

Step 5 (6)

- Involving your Supports Guiding Questions
- Safety Network Questions
- Family Safety Circles
- Group Supervision Process for Networks
- Guide for Making a Referral to an Elder Mentor
- Referral Form Networks

Step 6 (27)

- Safety Planning Worksheet
- Foundational Connection and Belonging Circle
- Connection and Belonging Circle
- Permanency Connection and Belonging Circle
- Family Connection Circles Process
- Family Finding & Permanency Referral
- Family Finding Closing Document
- Family Finding Process Document
- Family Genealogy Form
- Life Promotion Plan Template
- Life Promotion Plan Instructions and Tool
- Life Promotion Sample Questions
- Anonymized Life Promotion Plan
- Mental Wellness Plan
- Youth Connection and Belonging Independence Plan
- Anonymized High Risk Youth Plan
- Youth Safety Planning Worksheet
- Michif Safety Plan or Youth Plan Template
- Group Supervision for Safety Planning
- Group Supervision Process for Safety Planning Timeline
- Internal Care Team Review Meeting Template
- Revised Early Years Direct Support Goal Report
- Safety Planning Doc
- Care Team Member Update Report
- Case Managers Guide to Collaborative Case Management
- Example of a Resource Stability Plan

Step 7 (12)

- Words & Pictures Template
- Words & Pictures Explanations – Purpose and Steps
- Words & Pictures Explanations – Key Phrases
- Creating Words & Pictures Handout
- Group Supervision Process for Words & Pictures
- Anonymized Words & Pictures for A and R
- Anonymized Words & Pictures for K
- Sample Nistwayr
- Questions for Nistwayr
- A Words and Pictures for Every Case
- Nistwayr Booklet
- Words & Pictures to Explain SW Involvement

Step 8 (4)

- Michif Practice Model Monitoring Tool
- Care Team Member Update Report
- Internal Care Team Review Meeting Template
- Youth Debrief on Crisis Response

Step 9 (6)

- Closing Transfer Recording
- Father's Honouring Ceremony – DW
- Father's Honouring Ceremony – TB
- KS – Shawl Honouring Speech
- SH – Moving out Honouring
- SR – Youth-Women's Honouring

Step 10 (1)

- Feedback Survey