

“I want to see a more culturally sensitive environment”

Métis Women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Parent Experiences and Perspectives on Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care (IELCC)



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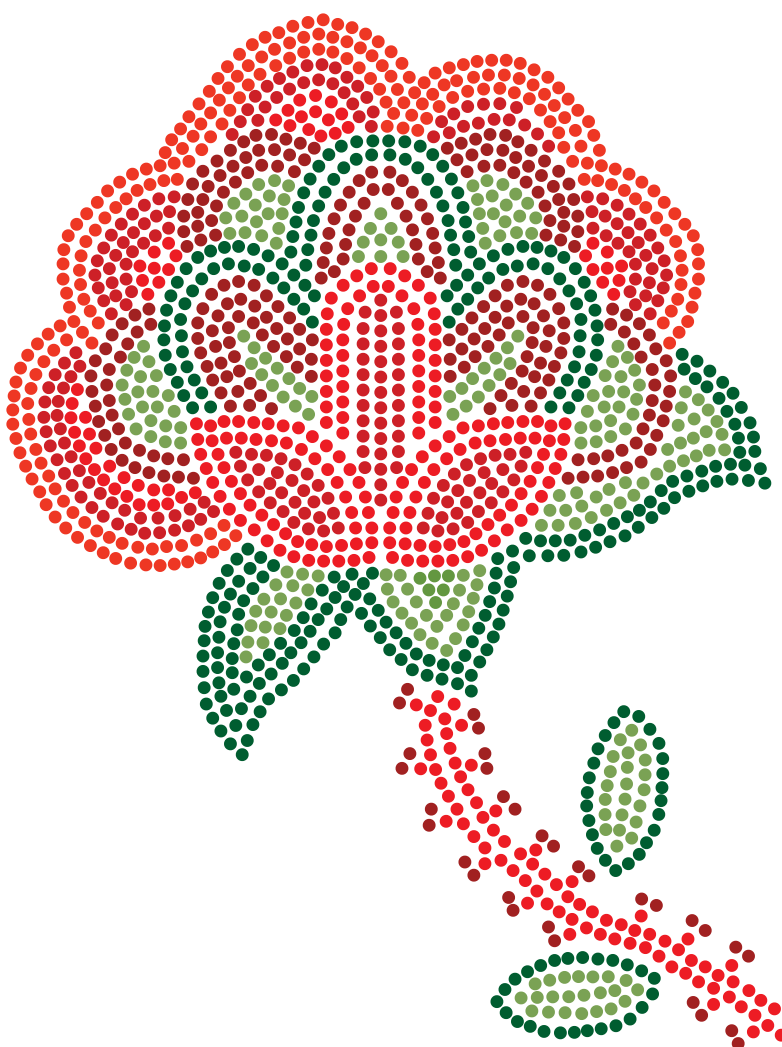


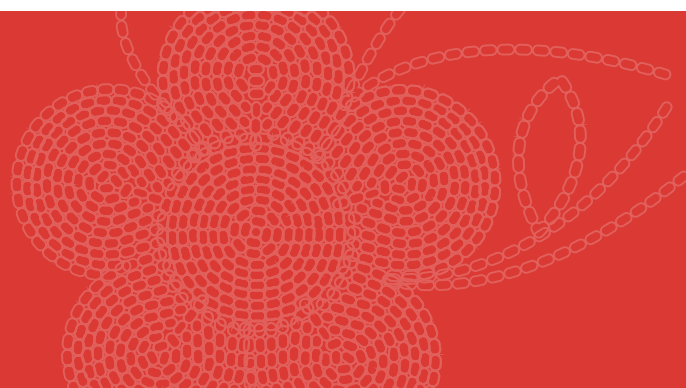


Table of Contents

1. Introduction	5
2. Executive Summary	6
3. Methodology	8
i. A Métis Approach to Gender-Based Analysis	8
ii. Data Collection Procedure	8
iii. Quantitative Data	9
4. Historical Background: Métis Families and the Raising of Children	10
i. Métis families and the raising of children	10
ii. The impact of colonialism on Métis children and families	12
iii. The Impact of Land Dispossession	12
iv. Racist and Derogatory Attitudes Towards Métis Parent-Child Relations	13
v. Forced and Coerced Change: Changing Economic Systems and Ways of Living	14
vi. Métis in Residential, Mission, and Day Schools	15
vii. Child “Welfare” and the Sixties, Seventies, Eighties, and Millennial Scoops	16
5. Intergenerational Social, Economic, and Cultural Impacts on Métis Early Learning & Childcare	17
i. Loss of Culture and Intergenerational Transmission of Culture	17
ii. Intimate Partner Violence, Domestic Violence, and the Child Welfare System	17
iii. Access to Education and Employment	19
iv. Disability/Accessibility and ELCC	19
6. Review of Existing Gender-Based Data on Métis Early Learning & Childcare	21
7. Survey Data	27
i. Respondent Biodata	27
ii. Number of Children, Average Age of Children, Living Situation	27
iii. Access to and Experiences with Early Learning and Childcare Programming	28
iv. Challenges and Insights into Care	30
8. Interview Data	40
i. Racial discrimination	40
ii. Issues of affordability	41
iii. Subsidy Need and Barriers/Challenges to Access	41
iv. Lack of access to ELCC programming/spaces	43

v. Issues in accessing accessible ELCC program for Métis children with disabilities/accessibility needs.....	44
vi. Importance of traditional teachings, knowledge, and language for children	45
vii. Impacts on Métis women and 2SLGBTQIA+ parent's health and well-being.....	46
viii. Challenges with respect to employment.....	47
ix. Perspectives and feelings about lack of support	47
x. Perspectives on Métis-specific ELCC programming	48
xi. Interviewees suggestions for improvement.....	50
9. Environmental Scan	51
10. Recommendations.....	59
11. References	60





1. Introduction

This report addresses the experiences of Métis people who self-identify as women and/or as 2SLGBTQQIA+ living today within Canada, with a focus on early learning and childcare (children ages 0-6). One of the most detrimental legacies of ongoing colonization has been the destruction of Métis family relationships and its consequences on/for the raising of Métis children. While Métis children were traditionally raised within Métis culturally grounded, maternally led family units, wherein linguistic and cultural transmission was ever-present, Canadian state policies geared towards the assimilation of all Indigenous peoples has had profound impacts in disrupting such cultural flows. In addition, the changes brought by transformations to Métis family and community life has meant a shift in the nature of child-raising with significant negative impacts for Métis children's access to culturally relevant and responsive care in the most formative, early years of their lives.

We do know from existing research that the residential and day school systems have had profoundly negative impacts on Métis children for generations, and that the legacies of these schools are still being felt to today, through the form of intergenerational trauma. In addition, the emergence of the child welfare system that arose alongside the residential and day school systems, and which continues through today, continues to impact the lives of young Métis children and their families. As such, in this report we outline the need for sustainably supported, culturally responsive, and community-engaged, controlled, and accountable Métis-specific early learning and childcare programming.

As those who bring our children, the Creator's gifts, into the world, Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people have been especially impacted by the challenges faced in accessing early learning and childcare programs that meet the needs outlined above. As Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak (LFMO) has written elsewhere, Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ face "a unique form of marginalization and discrimination; first, as Indigenous peoples; second, as Métis—the 'invisible' among Aboriginal people; and third, as women." 2SLGBTQQIA+ people often face a fourth form of marginalization, being misrecognized, and treated in accordance with colonial gender ideologies.

In order to understand the systemic marginalization of Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people as it pertains to early learning and childcare, it is necessary to understand how historical trauma as it specifically pertains to altering Métis families and the raising of Métis children. While Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people show incredible resilience and strength in navigating colonialism's impacts on their families, it remains that the ongoing crisis that Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people face with respect to accessing safe, secure, and culturally responsive Métis-focused early learning and childcare is the direct result of the consequences of colonization and ongoing gaps in policy initiatives.

This report therefore critically analyzes Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people's experiences with respect to early learning and childcare (herein referred to as ELCC) and includes a series of recommendations based on extensive review of historical, archival, survey, and interview-based data.

There is growing awareness of Métis peoples' experience and struggles with respect to securing safe and affordable early learning and childcare. This is especially acute for parents with children from the ages of 0-6 years. In part the growing awareness comes from the work undertaken by Statistics Canada to gauge the early learning and childcare (ELCC) issues of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit more broadly, but the growing awareness is also linked to the direct advocacy work of Métis women and 2SLGBTQIA+ parents. Métis have taken great strides to shed light on the history of displacement and dispossession our nation has experienced. Across Canada there is increased understanding and recognition of the impacts of systems of land dispossession, marginalization, and educational discrimination. That we have outlined at length in previous policy work. While there is growing awareness of the struggles Métis people have faced as a whole, policy makers and government officials still know less about the challenges accessing quality and affordable ELCC services. We know even less about how this issue affects Métis women, and 2SLGBTQIA+ peoples who are disproportionately tasked with providing childcare to their own children and the children of friends and family. This is crucial given that LFMO's Métis-specific gender-based analysis of the situation reveals that Métis women, 2SLGBTQIA+ parents, and their children face significant challenges with respect to securing safe and affordable ELCC, a direct result of the intersecting layers of oppression Métis women and 2SLGBTQIA+ peoples experience on the basis of colonialism, racism, sexism, gendered discrimination, homophobia, and transphobia. This report addresses the situation of Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ peoples in the context of ELCC.

Readers of the report will find that Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people experience multiple challenges when accessing ELCC. One of the biggest challenges they encountered was a lack of Métis cultural teaching in their childcare locations. Respondents noted that they for the most part did not have access to Métis teachings as children and saw this same dynamic playing out with their children and grandchildren. Caretakers felt it was extremely important to pass down Métis teachings to their children, but they received no help from their children's daycare and early learning facilities. This report finds that Métis women and 2SLGBTQIA+ parents experience large financial barriers in finding ELCC services. 56% of this community received no support to offset the cost of ELCC. 60% of people pay between \$251 and \$750 per month for these services, with people living in large cities like Vancouver and Toronto pay more than \$1100 per month. While expensive, these programs were also often hard to access. Many respondents noted extremely long wait list and a lack of ELCC availability. This was exacerbated for families looking to find care for children with special needs. These families experienced the most challenging times in accessing ELCC. Further, 71% of people surveyed reported experiencing some form of challenge in accessing ELCC. One of the central themes that appeared was Métis women's desire for a Métis specific early learning and childcare programs. For example, 99% of respondents believe Métis culture and language should be incorporated into childcare centres and early learning facilities. 57% of the people surveyed believe it was important to have a ELCC that was run by Métis people and for Métis children. Métis respondents also discussed having these locations be open to all Indigenous children, primarily out of concern for the potential for the deepening of racism through the separation of Métis children from other children. However, they wanted the content and teachings to be focused on Métis culture.

Readers will note that at times the report suffers from notable gaps in the discussion of 2SLGBTQIA+ people's experiences. Wherein Métis-specific data and reports have been available, they have been included, however it bears mentioning that the situation for 2SLGBTQIA+ identified Métis people remains woefully underexamined. As is consistent in other studies regarding Indigenous experiences, research focused on 2SLGBTQIA+ experiences lack a distinctions-based approach with notable gaps in focus on Métis experiences and lived reality. There are few statistics, if any, that speak directly to Métis 2SLGBTQIA+ people's experiences with respect to ELCC and reflects an urgent need for future study. As will be discussed, at least some of this is attributable to the fact that pre-existing research has taken a pan-Indigenous (or pan-Aboriginal) approach. To that, Indigenous-focused data collection methods have

not historically utilized a distinct category of self-identification for 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. 2016 Census data generated on the sociodemographic characteristics of First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and non-Indigenous early childhood educators and assistants reveal the typically problematic use of “male” and “female” designators with no option akin to 2SLGBTQQIA+ who for those people who may not exist within the sexed binary presented to them.¹

The discrimination here is immediately apparent, as respondents were given multiple options for self-identification within the category of Aboriginal. It bears mentioning that the Canadian Census for 2021 worked to address the past anti-2SLGBTQQIA+ approach of census-taking.² Further to this, one of the greatest limitations in understanding the experiences of Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people with respect to ELCC is the relative lack of focused data. While some statistical information is available arising from recent census reporting (the 2011 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, the 2017 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, and the 2016 Canadian Census) there is a greater deal of work to be done. Wherein data can be extracted based on Métis self-identification within the aforementioned survey data sets, categories based on self-identification as Métis may not be accurately reflective of the Métis experience itself.³ In addition to this other studies data generalizes and combines the experiences of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit into categories of either “Aboriginal” or “Indigenous.” This leads to the negation of the distinct experiences of Métis in statistical data collection.⁴ Further to this end, few focused studies exist as to the situation of Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. In fact, currently available statistics, while they can be extracted and evaluated on the basis of self-identification as Métis and through a binary gender lens, there continue to be constraints, as mentioned, on 2SLGBTQQIA+ data.

¹ See Frank, Krystn and Arim, Rubab. “Indigenous and non-Indigenous early learning and child care workers in Canada.” *Statistics Canada*. 25 Aug 2021. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/36-28-0001/2021008/article/00005-eng.htm>.

² Gemmill, Angela. “New gender questions in 2021 census ‘a good start,’ transgender, non-binary advocates say.” *CBC News*. 7 May 2021. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/sudbury/gender-questions-2021-census-sudbury-1.6017153>

³ See Chris Andersen’s discussion on the problems created by the racialization of Métis in the Canadian Census and issues around the problems of self-identification in Andersen, Chris. “From nation to population: the racialization of ‘Métis’ in the Canadian census.” *Nations and Nationalism* 14, no. 2 (2008): 347-368; see also Andersen, Chris. “The colonialism of Canada’s Métis health population dynamics: caught between bad data and no data at all.” *Journal of Population Research* 33, no. 1 (2016): 67-82; Andersen, Chris. “The colonialism of Canada’s Métis health population dynamics: caught between bad data and no data at all.” *Journal of Population Research* 33, no. 1 (2016): 67-82; Andersen, Chris. *Métis: Race, recognition, and the struggle for Indigenous peoplehood*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014; Gaudry, Adam, and Darryl Leroux. “White settler revisionism and making Métis everywhere: The evocation of Métissage in Quebec and Nova Scotia.” *Critical Ethnic Studies* 3, no. 1 (2017): 116-142; Leroux, Darryl. “‘We’ve been here for 2,000 years’: White settlers, Native American DNA and the phenomenon of indigenization.” *Social studies of science* 48, no. 1 (2018): 80-100; Leroux, Darryl. *Distorted descent: White claims to Indigenous identity*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2019.

⁴ See Andersen 2008, 2014. See also Patrick, Caryl. (2014). *Aboriginal Homelessness in Canada: A Literature Review*. Toronto: Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press; Thistle 2017.

3. Methodology

i. A Métis Approach to Gender-Based Analysis

This report takes a distinctions-based approach that also prioritizes a gender-based analysis framework. A Métis-specific GBA+ analysis centers Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people in the research while also being attentive to impacts on/for those identifying as Métis men. It also addresses the multiple layers of oppression and positionality of people in considering the impacts of policies and initiatives that impact them.⁵ Yet in the context of researching and writing about Métis children and ELCC, it is also important to note that engaging in a wholistic analysis that takes the family as a collective unit is *also* a lens that is attentive to gender. Gender-based analysis does not mean an absence of the discussion of the collective, but rather an attention to when/where/how differential outcomes may be attributable to sexist discrimination and marginalization. As Métis women and 2SLGBTQIA+ people are also involved in raising the next generation of those who identify as Métis men, GBA+ in ELCC research is itself holistic.

ii. Data Collection Procedure

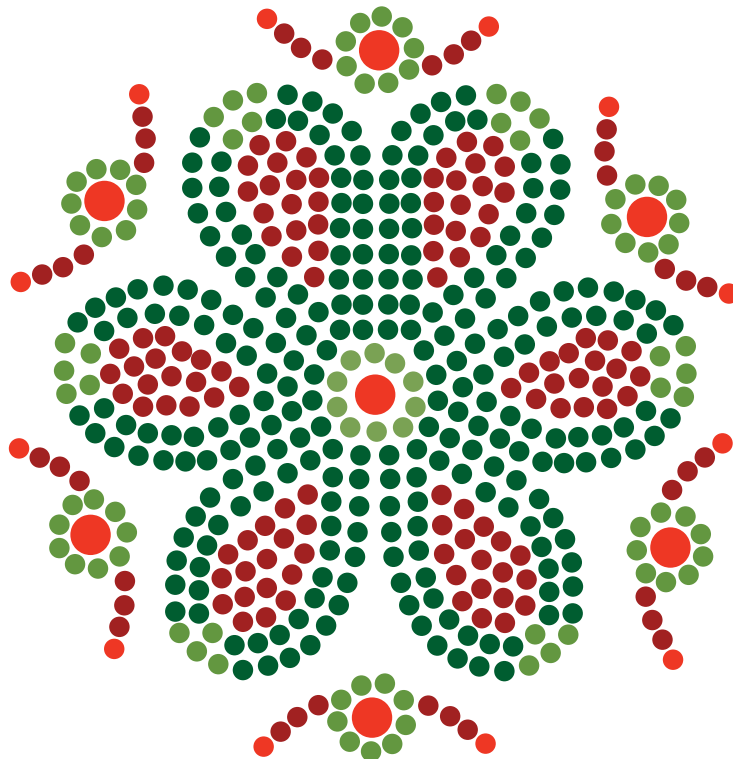
For this study the researchers deployed a gender-based analytical lens centering the experiences of Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people. We used a mixed method approach that involved the use of a survey, conversational interviews, document analysis, and literature reviews. Over the course of six months, we conducted semi structured in-depth interviews with Métis women and members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Both authors recruited Métis women and 2SLGBTQIA+ people via social media and through connecting with our pre-existing networks. We also used snowballing methods which included asking people we interviewed to share our information with other Métis women and 2SLGBTQIA+ people willing to speak to us. Using this approach, we interviewed 18 total participants from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario. Each interview lasted approximately 1 hour and were conducted via telephone or Zoom video call. We added substantial historical information to help frame our interview data and to help readers understand how historical oppression and ongoing structural violence has contributed to the issues raised in this report with respect to culturally grounded, respectful, accessible, and affordable early learning and childcare programming. Our interviews were transcribed verbatim and through NVivo Transcription. We then used Dedoose, a qualitative data analysis software package to organize interviews and create “themes” or patterns across the 18 interviews we conducted. Using this approach, we compiled a series of key findings which we describe in detail in our findings section. This method of analyzing ethnographic data follows the process described in Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw.⁶

⁵ Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak. « Métis Specific Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) Tool. 2019. <https://metiswomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Metis-Specific-GBA-Tool.pdf>.

⁶ Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (2011). Writing ethnographic fieldnotes. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

iii. Quantitative Data

This section describes findings based on a large-scale survey we conducted. We distributed this survey via multiple social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Reddit and through our independent networks. This survey included 35 closed open and close ended questions. We collected 736 responses. From these responses we narrowed it down to 263 individuals for the first portion of the survey which provides general demographic information. For the second portion of our survey titled “Challenges and Insights” we received 341 responses. Both sections give us some key insights into the challenges and experiences Métis women and Two-Spirit people face in attempting to access childcare. We chose these individuals because they completed most of the survey. The information collected via the survey gives us a broader picture an understanding of where individuals are coming from and where the Métis community is currently residing. This survey also gives us a broader understanding of how many children Métis families have as well as several other key portions of demographic information. We include small charts in this section to describe key information collected during this survey.



4. Historical Background: Métis Families and the Raising of Children

To understand how and why Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples experience issues with accessing safe, secure, and culturally responsive ELCC to the extent that they do, and in order to demonstrate why ELCC initiatives *must* take an accountable, justice-oriented lens, it becomes necessary to outline how/why Métis families have been harmed via colonization. A reconciliatory approach to relations with Métis women, 2SLGBTQQIA+ people and their wider families acknowledges the cultural destruction and familial breakdown that were the basis of colonial dispossession, and in turn works to address contemporary circumstances by offering redress for past wrongs. It is thus crucial to “look back” in order to move forward. Additionally, a historical analysis also demonstrates how historical forms of mistreatment at the hands of various forms of government continues to affect the lives of Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

i. Métis families and the raising of children

Family life is the heart and soul of the Métis Nation. Children and elders are significant poles on the continuum of Métis life and for many are “the heart and center of our society.”⁷ As Métis scholar Kim Anderson writes that for Michif (Métis), as with other Algonquian peoples - like the Nehiyawak and the Anishinaabek, “The health of the young...was intimately connected to the health of the family and community.”⁸ Even before they are brought earthside, while they are still in utero, Métis children exist within an interconnected web of kinship relations responsible for ensuring the well-being of them and their mother. Catherine Graham and Tanya Davoren write, in a study undertaken for the Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC), “Historically they were raised by their parents, their extended family, and the community. Children remained in the family circle and when problems or challenges arose, a family or community member would intervene to provide support.”⁹ Everyone within Métis communities felt a responsibility to/for the raising of Métis children and “[c]hildren were regarded as very special because they were everybody’s future.”¹⁰ Anderson likewise echoes that children are “precious to us because they represent the future. They are not considered possessions of the biological parents; they are understood to be gifts on loan from the Creator.”¹¹ Some Métis communities, particularly those in central

⁷ Dorion, Leah Marie. (2010). “Opikinawasowin: The Life Long Process of Growing Cree and Metis Children.” *MA Thesis*. Athabasca: Athabasca University, 2.

⁸ Anderson, Kim. (2011). *Life Stages and Native Women: Memory, Teachings, and Story Medicine*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 39.

⁹ Graham, Catherine, & Davoren, Tanya. (2015). *Sharing their Stories: Narratives of young Métis parents and Elders about parenting*. Prince George, BC: National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health.

¹⁰ Métis Centre, National Aboriginal Health Organization. (2008). *In the words of our ancestors: Métis health and healing*. Ottawa, ON: National Aboriginal Health Organization.

¹¹ Anderson, Kim (2000). *A recognition of being: Reconstructing Native womanhood*. Toronto: Second Story Press, 159.

and northeastern Saskatchewan, followed what Métis author, artist, and educator Leah Marie Dorion identifies as *Opikinawasowin*. *Opikinawasowin*, loosely translated into English, refers to the “child rearing way” and encompasses a series of teachings for parents as to how to guide and raise their children.¹² Between 2003-2006, Métis elders from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, the Northwest Territories and the Métis Settlements of Alberta, gathered together to share their experiences and perspectives with the *National Aboriginal Health Organization’s* (NAHO) Métis Centre. At the gatherings, they likewise emphasized and reinforced that Métis children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren are the “most valuable assets” within Métis families, communities, and the Métis Nation.¹³

For many families the transitions that come with the arrival of new life were eased by the fact that Métis communities were innately “matrilocal”. Métis scholar Brenda Macdougall contends that in northwestern Saskatchewan, for example, “matrilocal,” meant that by and large “women remain in their mother’s household after marriage, along with her husband and children. Sons move out of their mother’s household after marriage to join the household of their wife’s family.”¹⁴ This ensured that when children were born there was a robust matrilineal presence in their lives and a sharing of child raising duties across familial generations. The importance of children and the commitment to collective caretaking was reflected in how family and community members cared for the baby in utero but also at once upon their birth. When a Métis child was born the mother and an extended network of maternal relatives begin the work of caring for the child. Métis elder Maria Campbell recounts that when her mother was slow to recover from childbirth, “her grandmother would stay and manage the household while her dad’s two younger sisters looked after the children and cooked the meals.”¹⁵ In some cases, community midwives stayed on after children were born to help families transition to life with a new child and to accord those who had given birth time to recover.¹⁶ In Dorion’s study, interview participants asserted that “the powers of the grandmothers to oversee and monitor the implementation of childrearing” needed to be restored.¹⁷ This also enabled the intergenerational transmission of Métis knowledge and ways of living, being, and seeing in the world. Protocols and customs guided the early years of Métis children, ones that outlined how to communicate with and physically care for a baby.¹⁸ Everyone had a responsibility for helping “children to explore and discover their talents and gifts....Listening, caring, sharing, respect, and self-respect [were considered] qualities that need to be taught to help children and youth thrive.”¹⁹

As most Métis children were breast-fed, they developed close bonds with their mothers, receiving essential nutrition. Children were breast-fed throughout their early years, and breastfeeding was common until the mid-twentieth century when Indigenous communities were pressured to abandon breastfeeding in favour of bottle-feeding. Campbell recounts that public health nurses came into her community and “told mothers that it was unhealthy to breast-feed.”²⁰ The breastfeeding relationship was seen as a sacred one that strengthened

¹² Dorion, 2.

¹³ Edge, Lois, and Tom McCallum. “MÉTIS IDENTITY: SHARING TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND HEALING PRACTICES AT MÉTIS ELDERS’ GATHERINGS.” *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal & Indigenous Community Health* 4, no. 2 (2006), 105.

¹⁴ Macdougall, Brenda. (2011). *One of the family: Metis culture in nineteenth-century northwestern Saskatchewan*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 57.

¹⁵ Anderson 2011, 50.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Dorion, 2.

¹⁸ Anderson 2011, 57-58.

¹⁹ Graham and Davoren, 8. See also Métis Centre, National Aboriginal Health Organization. (2008). *In the words of our ancestors: Métis health and healing*. Ottawa, ON: National Aboriginal Health Organization.

²⁰ Anderson 2011, 61.

the connection between mother and baby/child. Its extension through the early years would later come to be disrupted by the imposition of colonization. In the present, Métis toddlers may find themselves weaned from both breast *and* bottle feeding wherein parents require them to attend daycare centres that encourage a transition to the consumption of pasteurized cow's milk, water, and finger feeding. The earlier move away from intimate feeding practices is but one significant transition in the lives of Métis children.

ii. The impact of colonialism on Métis children and families

For Métis women and Two-Spirit peoples, and their children, the origins of the problem are to be found in Métis experiences of/with colonialization. As Dorion writes “[h]istorical colonial policies used by the state and church were focused on breaking down the Cree and Metis family unit in order to facilitate quicker assimilation and integration of the family into mainstream society.”²¹ As the Métis elders who met with NAHO outlined that Métis children (and youth) face a number of significant challenges arising from the legacies and impacts of colonization. By no means an exhaustive list, they cited:

*drug use, abuse and/ or addiction, alcohol or alcoholism in the home, gang membership, school violence or bullying, no father in the home, child abuse or family violence, sexual abuse or pedophiles, non-Aboriginal foster care, the intergenerational impact of residential school, poverty, and/or prejudice and discrimination. Contemporary issues such as Aboriginal children in foster care, gang violence, bullying, addictions, and prejudice...*²²

All of these systemic struggles find their roots and origins in the impact of colonialism on Métis children and families. Many of these issues manifest in the earliest years of Métis children's lives. As such, any approach to ELCC for Métis children that is oblivious to this fact, only further facilitates policies and practices of neglect and assimilation. In addition, the dispossession of Métis of land rights is one of the root causes as it has been aggressive efforts to displace Métis families from their homelands. Dispossession of land rights has not been, however, experienced in a vacuum but finds its footing in anti-Indigenous racism that positioned the Métis as inferior to Canadians of European ancestry. At the same time, land dispossession was interwoven with the imposition of foreign mores of sexism and misogyny that devalued Métis women and Two-Spirit peoples' roles within Métis families – and subsequently within the Métis Nation.

iii. The Impact of Land Dispossession

When Canada formalized itself as a country in 1867, it set its sights on expanding through present-day Manitoba, and connecting a railway across the prairies, through the Rocky Mountains, in order to create a continuous travel route to the colony of British Columbia and both expand and consolidate lands it sought to claim for itself. As tensions flared between the Métis and settler Canadians in the Red River area, Métis continued to carefully navigate and negotiate a relationship with Canada that would see Canada recognize and respect the self-determination and self-government of the Métis Nation. In the late 1860s, however, settler Canadians living in the Red River Settlement area organized themselves out of both a sense of rightness and self-righteousness, determined to overthrow the Métis provisional government of Red River led by Métis leader Louis Riel. As LFMO has previously noted in its work on Métis women and 2SLGBTQIA+ peoples' housing experiences, when violent, roving bands of settlers made their way through the Red River area, it had an extremely detrimental impact on Métis families. Children often bore witness to such racist violence, even when they were not directly

²¹ Dorion, 16.

²² Edge and McCallum, 105.

targeted by it²³. Any attack against the Métis Nation was a direct attack against the children of the Métis Nation - as the future of the Métis Nation - that the Canada government was set on assimilating out of existence.

In February 1870, the “Portage Gang,” an organized group of pro-Canadian settlers living at Portage la Prairie (that included notable Canadians such as Charles Mair, Charles Arkoll Boutlon, Thomas Scott, and John Christian Schultz) broke into and ransacked the home of Henri Coutu and Catherine Lagimodiere Coutu. The Coutu children were present in the home and were likewise a target of their harassment.⁹ The family’s association with Louis Riel disposed them to an already existing danger due to being Métis. Such violence would only be extended with the arrival of the Canadian government’s Red River Expeditionary Force (RREF), a punitive military expedition dispatched to Red River. A few short months after the Manitoba Act received royal assent (May 12, 1870), bringing the Red River area into Confederation as the Province of Manitoba, as the late historian Lawrence Barkwell writes, the Red River Expeditionary Force (RREF) of 1,200 men entered Fort Garry on August 24, 1870.¹¹ Barkwell notes that the conduct of the soldiers stationed at Fort Garry would be reported in newspapers both near and far – in Red River, in Ontario and Quebec, and as far away as New York – as a “reign of terror.”¹² In providing a notable list of RREF assaults and attacks against Métis people, Barkwell details the fact that the RREF openly assaulted Métis throughout Red River. The violence was continuous and came to a head in 1885 when the Canadian government once again directed its armed forces to attack the Métis Nation at the village of Batoche. The experiences of Métis in the wake of the Reign of Terror in Red River and in the aftermath of the attack at Batoche, would spread outward across the homeland and transform Métis family life.

Both interpersonal violence (such as the Portage Gang) in the form of racist settler aggression and hostility, and organized state violence (such as the two coordinated military attacks), would sow the seeds of mass disruption to the lives of Métis families, lead to the fracturing and dispersal of extended kinship groups, and would lay the foundation for the urgent need of equitably accessible, culturally responsive early learning and childcare we see today. As a result of racist shame and abuse that Métis dealt with many Métis families tried to hide their Métisness and stopped passing traditions down to the next generations. While some families were able to continue with the intergenerational transmission of particular cultural practices (such as hunting and trapping), as Graham and Davoren note, Métis dispersal across the Métis Nation homeland meant fracturing ties between branches of families. Dorion recounts that “teachings about traditional child rearing are not being shared by the Elders to the degree they were a few generations ago.”²⁴ The early years of children have been altered as a result and in many families, “the transmission of traditional teachings between the generations” has been restricted, if not having ceased altogether.²⁵ For those families who were able to remain closely connected, those Graham and Davoren interviewed reported that even though they grew up “in close proximity to extended family” it did not automatically translate into a “strong Métis identity.”²⁶ As we discuss next, a number of core factors and transformations altered the lives of Métis children in the early years, their parents, and their extended families within which they were originally raised.

iv. Racist and Derogatory Attitudes Towards Métis Parent-Child Relations

Métis parents have often had to contend with derogatory attitudes towards their parenting styles and in turn are conditioned to temper their expectations when it comes to demanding change in ELCC programming towards an approach that is not only Métis-friendly but Métis *informed*. Yet the roots of a lack of consideration paid towards Métis child-rearing approaches such as (in the case of Dorion’s work), Opikinawasowin, is that there has long been a derogatory attitude towards Métis and other Indigenous peoples’ approaches to raising our children. Nathalie Kermoal,

²³ “Our ancestors would be proud of us”: Métis Women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People’s Housing Histories, Experiences, Struggles, and Perspectives. *Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak*. 2022. <https://metiswomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/LFMO-Housing-Report.pdf>

²⁴ Dorion, 8.

²⁵ Dorion, 22. See also Kelly, 2008, Mussell, 2008; Bondin-Perrin, 2009.

²⁶ Graham and Davoren, 17.

a historian at the University of Alberta, references Oblate missionary Alexandre Taché, and his disparaging attitude towards Métis women's approaches to child-raising. Taché "opined that Métis women on the Prairies sacrificed the overall well-being of their children because of the pleasure they took from them and their apparent fear to correct their behaviour (*la crainte de les reprendre*).²⁷ Taché also posited that Métis women "failed" to "instill obedience and industriousness in their offspring, arguing that English-speaking Métis were quicker to settle on land because they had been shaped by the influence of 'civilized' women much earlier."²⁸ Taché eagerly anticipated the arrival of Grey Nuns to Red River, believing that they would "correct" this problem (the problem being framed as Métis mothers' raising of their children in traditional Métis ways).²⁹ Kermoal likewise notes that even eminent historians writing on the Métis, such as Marcel Giraud, perceived Métis treatment of their children as a form of exaggerated affection. This, alongside an absence of corporal punishment and coercion, was a marked distinction from Eurowestern approaches to education.³⁰ It is thus clear that assimilation was the intent from the outset of encounters with religious figures such as Taché, that they had a particularly negative, racist and sexist view of Métis women, and that these were some of the earliest directed attempts to disrupt Métis mother-child relations.

v. Forced and Coerced Change: Changing Economic Systems and Ways of Living

Dorion writes that in addition to "[o]ppressive colonial and assimilation policies used by the state and church" another major contributor to Métis children's loss of language and identity in northeastern Saskatchewan in particular, has been "modernization in the north."³¹ With the decline of buffalo hunting and the fur trade - the major economic backbone of the Métis Nation - along with heavy-handed colonial policies that restricted the abilities of Métis to continue hunting and trapping for sustenance without the threat of arrest by conservation authorities and other policing entities, Métis have been forced to adapt to the wage labour economy. The result has been that "children today are missing out on land-based teachings since we have all become so disconnected from the land and the natural world due to modernization and assimilation."³² In central and northeastern Saskatchewan, for example, Métis families experienced an abrupt and "shocking transition from the bush into modern life" defined by "a wage labor and modern socio-economic system."³³

Colonization would not only impact mothers and children but everyone within the family unit and circle, as "Métis men found themselves in a position of not being able to provide for their families in the way they traditionally had, which disrupted traditional family structures. Moreover, the dislocation of community and fragmentation of families meant that many Métis found themselves on their own without the family and community supports to which they were accustomed."³⁴ The forced and coerced changes to Métis family life would eventually see a greater number of Métis women needing to enter the wage economy, fundamentally altering Métis familial life and child-parent relationships. This would generate a longstanding need for ELCC programming that would enable Métis women to aid in the economic support of their families. As such, where Métis kinship units - primarily matrilineal and matrilineal - would form the backbone of raising and educating a child in their early years, Métis families are increasingly dependent on ELCC programming and initiatives.

²⁷ qtd. in Anderson 2011, 67. See also Duval, Jacinthe. "The Catholic Church and the formation of Métis identity." *Past Imperfect* 9 (2001). 71.

²⁸ Duval, 71.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Anderson 2011, 67.

³¹ Dorion, 33.

³² Dorion, 41.

³³ Ibid. See also, Dorion, 42.

³⁴ Graham and Davoren, 8.

Employment rates and other economic factors arising from colonization have created an entirely different economic situation than what Métis lived within prior to colonization. This has directly altered Métis family life. Colonization would not only impact mothers and children but everyone within the family unit and circle, as “Métis men found themselves in a position of not being able to provide for their families in the way they traditionally had, which disrupted traditional family structures. Moreover, the dislocation of community and fragmentation of families meant that many Métis found themselves on their own without the family and community supports to which they were accustomed.”³⁵ The forced and coerced changes to Métis family life would eventually see a greater number of Métis women needing to enter the wage economy, fundamentally altering Métis familial life and child-parent relationships. This would generate a longstanding need for ELCC programming that would enable Métis women to aid in the economic support of their families. As such, where Métis kinship units - primarily matrilineal and matrilocal - would form the backbone of raising and educating a child in their early years, Métis families are increasingly dependent on ELCC programming and initiatives.

vi. Métis in Residential, Mission, and Day Schools

The extension of residential schools, mission, and day schools had grave impacts on Métis parent-child relationships, and in leading to the further destruction of Métis children's place within the web of Métis kinship networks. The harm wrought by residential schools, day, and mission schools, is well documented. Métis children were impacted by both forceful removal to residential schools but also by mission and day schools. At a very young age (within the early years) those who attended day schools would come to experience a system that shared the same objective as residential schools - to assimilate Indigenous children into a Canadian society largely defined by Anglo-Canadianness. Graham and Davoren write that “both types of schools served as mechanisms for separating Aboriginal children from the perceived ‘unhealthy’ influence of their parents and for obliterating the Aboriginal culture of children.”³⁶ It mattered little whether parents placed their children in them because they felt they had no other options or because they were forcibly removed from their families and remanded to residential schools, as the schools did not intend to and did not provide anything but a subpar education for children and did little more than separate children from their families - physically, culturally, linguistically, spiritually, and emotionally.³⁷ In the absence of children to raise parents did not develop necessary “parenting skills, and children suffered from a loss of self-esteem and an inability to express feelings.”³⁸ In turn, children learned that “punishment, abuse, coercion, and control” were normative models for adult-child/parent-child relationships.³⁹ One of the most devastating consequences wherein children were forced to abandon the Michif language and other Indigenous languages spoken by Métis in the home, is that they were rendered incapable of even *speaking* with parents who may have only spoken those languages. Some children returned home from schools so afraid to speak their Métis languages, that they could not communicate with their parents much at all. The intergenerational impacts of residential, day, and mission schools cannot be understated. A number of our interview participants reflected on a deep pain at the intergenerational loss of language and cultural knowledge. Interview participants reflected on the consequences of this loss, and the hope that they have for the expansion of Métis-specific ELCC programming, so that their children may be able to begin to recover some of what was lost for their generations. Given that ELCC curricula in most provinces undoubtedly follows a non-Métis way of teaching and learning, for many the exposure of their children to institutionalized care and public schooling extends the exclusion and marginalization experienced among prior generations, where schools are not shaped by Métis worldviews, culture, knowledge, and language. This compounds the history of assimilatory approaches to educating Métis children.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid, 9.

³⁷ Ibid. See also Chartrand, Larry, Logan, Tricia, & Daniels, Judy. (2006). Métis history and experience and residential schools in Canada. Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

³⁸ Ibid, 9.

³⁹ Dorion, 22.

As one of our interview participants reflects, and which we will return to later, there is often an unacknowledged trauma involved in enrolling one's child into ELCC programming at the hands of (primarily) non-Indigenous strangers. They spoke of the pain of dropping their child off to be cared for by strangers, in the shadow of such significant, traumatic generational history. This can translate into further difficulties in establishing childcare arrangements for Métis women and 2SLGBTQIA+ parents.

vii. Child “Welfare” and the Sixties, Seventies, Eighties, and Millennial Scoops

These processes of dispossession have been compounded through and by the introduction of the child welfare system into Métis children's lives. Graham and Davoren write that these and ongoing interference in Métis families' lives “have undermined the efforts of Métis to establish and maintain healthy family structures to this day.”⁴⁰ While observing the impacts of modernization on their lives, the Cree and Métis people interviewed by Dorion all noted that the arrival of the child welfare system to their lives in the 1950s and 1960s had a majorly negative impact on children and their families.⁴¹ Given that provinces have historically refused to work in “collaboration with the Metis on social child welfare issues” it becomes clear that the system was founded on the same assimilatory logic of residential and day schooling, and other colonial policies.⁴² As Métis scholar Jacqueline Maurice writes, programs such as the Adopt Indian-Métis Program (AIM) in Saskatchewan had devastating impacts on Métis parent-child relations.⁴³ Métis children were in effect “scooped” from their families and placed for adoption, quite often, for reasons of so-called “neglect” and abject poverty - that was the direct result of Canada's structured attempt to assimilate Métis into Canadian society. The Adopt Indian-Métis program is perhaps the clearest example because of its name, but similar practices and processes took place in other provinces. For its part, the AIM program began in 1967, and continued to formally operate through the 1970s. First Nations and Métis children made-up the largest proportion of children removed from their families in this period in Saskatchewan. The focus of the AIM program was to place First Nations and Métis children into adopted families. For those children who were not able to be placed with adoptive families, they often languished in temporary placements and foster homes, with many experiencing repeated displacement through their young lives. They were then being pushed out of the foster care system upon aging out and, in essence, abandoned.

As the Métis National Council has reported, given that information about Métis identity was not “routinely collected or analyzed,” the true extent of Métis child apprehension may never be known.⁴⁴ The pain and trauma is then multiply compounded for Métis children and their families. Although the term ‘60s scoop implies that this was policy and practice confined to the 1960s, Métis children continue to be removed from their families in the present moment. Although formal adoption is becoming less common, the child apprehension system (or child welfare system as it is commonly referred to as), stands in its place. Métis children are often removed to foster families and group homes.⁴⁵ While there has been a gradual shift since the 1980s, to “transfer control over child welfare through the creation of ‘tripartite agreements’ with First Nations and Metis governments,”⁴⁶ it remains the case that Métis children are overrepresented in child welfare statistics. This continues to have a grave impact on the parent-child relationship that requires all levels of government to take full responsibility and to develop long-term, sustainable, and immediate plans for supporting healthy Métis parent-child relationships.

⁴⁰ Graham and Davoren, 9.

⁴¹ Dorion, 40.

⁴² See Dorion, 41.

⁴³ Maurice, Jacqueline Marie. *De-spiriting aboriginal children: aboriginal children during the 1960s and 1970s child welfare era*. National Library of Canada= Bibliothèque nationale du Canada, Ottawa, 2004. 1.

⁴⁴ “What We Heard: Report of the Métis Nation’s Engagement with Métis Sixties Scoop Survivors.” Métis National Council. <https://metisnationsk.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/What-We-Heard-Report-2019-final1.pdf>, 15.

⁴⁵ “Sixties Scoop: The Métis Experience.” Métis National Council. nd. <https://metisnationsk.com/sixties-scoop/>

⁴⁶ Dorion, 24.

5. Intergenerational Social, Economic, and Cultural Impacts on Métis Early Learning & Childcare

i. Loss of Culture and Intergenerational Transmission of Culture

As Graham and Davoren note, “due to the ongoing process of colonization, the child-centred values of Métis communities began to dissipate over time.”⁴⁷ The disruption of Métis people’s relationship to land also directly impacted the intergenerational transmission of land-based culture that Métis passed on to their children. Dorion writes, “because the Metis were dispossessed of a land tenure system...this made parenting practices relation to the bush, on the land, in the camp, and on the trap line very difficult to pass forward.”⁴⁸ The long-term consequences of this, and a lack of protected land and harvesting rights, has “had a devastating impact on the identity of many Métis as their culture is intrinsically connected to the land.”⁴⁹ In addition to the damaging impacts on the transmission of culture, displacement and the impacts of racism and discrimination also meant that parents did not pass their language on to children in the course of the children’s early years. As Lois Edge and Tom McCallum write, at gatherings held for Métis elders to talk about their lives and lived experiences, a number of the Métis elders in attendance expressed regret “in not teaching their language to their children.”⁵⁰ As 2001 survey data reflected, Métis children were “least likely to speak an Aboriginal language than other Aboriginal children.”⁵¹ As one of our interview participants reflected, Métis-informed early learning and childcare is not widely available. In their region in Northwestern Ontario, that note that while ELCC program has become matter at including Anishinaabe children’s cultures, they’re not doing anything for their Métis...you’re living in the middle of the eastern fringe of the Métis Nation...They learned nothing about Métis people. (Katrina)

ii. Intimate Partner Violence, Domestic Violence, and the Child Welfare System

Violence within families, as an extension of the impacts of colonialism, undoubtedly jeopardize the well-being of Métis children and cause great disruption within Métis women and 2SLGBTQIA+ peoples’ lives. As LFMO has previously noted within our report, “‘My ancestors would be proud of us’: Métis and 2SLGBTQIA+ People’s Housing Histories, Experiences, Struggles, and Perspectives,” there are gaps in quantitative data related to gender-based and familial violence that can in turn be used to develop a picture of the early years living situation for Métis children.⁵² Broader statistics that speak to the situation of Indigenous women and girls, is not distinctions based. The few statistics available do reflect the fact that Métis women experience intimate-partner violence at higher rates than non-Indigenous women. The 2018 Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces revealed that Métis women were nearly twice as likely (46%) to “experience physical abuse by an intimate

⁴⁷ Graham and Davoren, 8.

⁴⁸ Dorion, 42.

⁴⁹ Graham and Davoren, 8.

⁵⁰ Edge and McCallum, 95.

⁵¹ Ibid, 103. See also: Aboriginal Peoples Survey (2001) Statistics Canada. Ottawa.

⁵² “Our ancestors would be proud of us” 2022.

partner in their lifetime compared with non-Indigenous women (22%).⁵³ In fact, the number reported was in fact higher than that reported for First Nations women (42%).⁵⁴ A staggering 63% of Métis women reported experiencing psychological intimate partner violence, a rate higher than that reported for non-Indigenous women (42%) and First Nations (57%).⁵⁵ In addition, Métis women reported experiencing sexual abuse “by an intimate partner in their lifetime” at rates higher than First Nations women (26% for Métis versus 18% for First Nations), and more than double that of Indigenous women (11%).⁵⁶ Nearly half of all Métis women who responded to the study reported experiencing sexual violence by intimate partners or other parties (48%).⁵⁷ Lack of access to safe, affordable, and secure housing for Métis families and for Métis women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in particular, contributes to these rates of violence. This in turn has a direct impact on access to ELCC programming. The lack of safety and security for Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in the context of their roles as parents to young Métis children, has significant impacts on the children themselves. In addition to witnessing violence at a young age, Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people’s struggle for safety and freedom from violence often means disruptions and impediments to access and attendance in early learning and childcare programs.

It is also a cyclical problem - whereby Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ parents make lack access to stable and secure childcare and early learning programs, they in turn (as will be discussed later in this report), may struggle with obtaining stable and secure employment - that would allow them to support themselves and their child(ren) should they need to flee an abusive situation. One of our interview participants, Katrina, a mother of 2 young children, reflected on this at length. When they were forced to leave their domestic partner, they returned to where they were raised, only to find that it was nearly impossible to access daycare and before and after school care programming for their young children. This in turn made it exceedingly difficult for them to secure employment. In fact, they were forced to live off of the little savings that they had in order to survive and keep their family intact:

“It was a challenge. I was on the wait list for over a year and a half in order to get them in the first year. So, the backstory is we ended up having to vacate our house in Alberta because my ex had a mental breakdown and was threatening to kill us. Oh my God, we were getting three days to vacate our house. I had to abandon our house and pack up and move here.

I was working at a job where I was making \$70000 a year, by the way. That was fine. I could keep up. Oh my gosh. So, when I moved here, that was the first thing I did. I took myself down to the office and they said, “Yeah, honestly, you probably won’t get in.” And I said, I’ll put my name on the bottom of the list like I need...I need to get there.

So, I knew that I, you know, you have to put food on the table. How do I put food on the table? I know I’m not getting a high paying job like that again. And so, I started applying to Wal-Mart to more to McDonald’s everywhere, and it became, “We can’t hire you because we want evening and weekends”... So I was unemployed living off of my savings. (Katrina)

⁵³ Ibid, 23; see also Heidinger, Loanna. “Intimate partner violence: Experiences of First Nations, Métis and Inuit women in Canada, 2018.” *Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics*. 19 May 2021. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2021001/article/00007-eng.htm>

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

iii. Access to Education and Employment

As outlined above, lack of access to childcare (be it daycare and/or before and after school care for kindergarten and Grade 1 children), serves as a significant impediment to Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ parents' abilities to acquire employment that will allow them to support their families, and for those Métis parents seeking to attend high school or a postsecondary institution in order to obtain an education that will allow them to access jobs to in turn support their families, an inability to access care is a primary impediment. And yet education and employment are critically necessary to the health and well-being of Métis families. As of 2006, Métis children under the age of 6 were near twice as likely to be living in a low-income family in urban areas (36%), and over twice as likely to be living in a low-income family in rural areas (20%), relative to non-Indigenous children (20% and 9% respectively).⁵⁸ The struggles facing Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ parents is evident in pre-existing statistics, the survey we conducted, and the interviews we engaged in and will be discussed later within the report. Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people do not have the luxury of refusing *any* care that comes available, and so are often dually forced to place their children in non-Métis (or at minimum non-pan-Indigenous) childcare programming. This further erodes Métis children's access to language and culture.

iv. Disability/Accessibility and ELCC

The survey we conducted, along with in-depth interviews, revealed that a number of Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ parents struggled to secure culturally appropriate ELCC programming - and ELCC programming more widely - as a result of insufficient support for children living with disabilities. Lack of accessible ELCC programming was a significant issue. The reasons for rates of disabilities among Métis children are varied (and beyond the scope of this report), it bears noting that the fracturing of Métis kinship networks that has rendered Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ parents dependant on institutional ELCC programming has particularly negative impacts on those whose children live with disabilities. In addition, systems created without a holistic approach to children and with a mind toward accessibility, further (and directly) compounds Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ parent's struggles.

While there are statistics pertaining to *Indigenous* children living with disabilities, what exists is still relatively minimal and, further, few statistics focus specifically on Métis children. This is undoubtedly an area in need of urgent future research, as the pre-existing statistics that do exist tell us that in 2006, 28% of Métis children under the age of 6 lived with a chronic condition (long-term health condition) that had been diagnosed by a medical professional.⁵⁹ Statistics geared towards older Métis children, while not directly within the scope of ELCC, nevertheless offer some indication as to challenges that Métis children may have faced under 6 years old as well. Given that most chronic health conditions and disabilities are not diagnosed in immediate order, it is fair to assume that many of those reflected in the following statistics experienced challenges earlier in life. In particular, 42% of Métis children ages 6 to 14 years old had been diagnosed with one or more serious health condition.⁶⁰ 11% of Métis children were also reported to be living with a visual impairment, a rate statistically consistent with that of First Nations and Inuit, and notably higher than that of non-Indigenous children.⁶¹ As of 2012, Métis children aged 6-11 years old were reported as living with a learning disability at rates higher than

⁵⁸ Statistics Canada – Catalogue no. 89-634-X 16. Aboriginal Children's Survey, 2006: Family, Community and Child Care. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-634-x/89-634-x2008001-eng.pdf>. See also: <https://cichpro-file.ca/module/7/section/5/page/percentage-of-metis-and-non-indigenous-children-under-6-years-living-in-low-income-families-by-rural-and-urban-canada-2005/>

⁵⁹ Smylie, Janet and Adomako, Paul. (Eds.). 2009. "Indigenous Children's Health Report: Assessment in Action." The Centre for Research on Inner City Health. <https://caid.ca/IndChiHeaRep2009.pdf>, 42.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

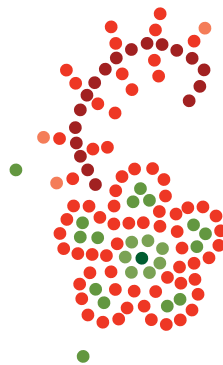
⁶¹ Ibid, 51.

off-reserve First Nations and Inuit children (12.1% vs. 11.9% and 5.9% respectively).⁶² Métis children were reported to experience higher rates of Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) (9.3%) than both off-reserve First Nations and Inuit children (8.6% and 4.5% respectively).⁶³ Meanwhile, 12.5% of Métis children were reported as living with a speech or language difficulty - a number higher than both the learning disability and ADD reported rate for Métis children.⁶⁴ Métis children were also reported as experiencing emotional, psychological, or nervous difficulties (broadly construed under mental health criteria), at a rate higher than that of off-reserve First Nations (7% vs. 6.5%).⁶⁵

As one of our interviewees reflects, even when a daycare space can be secured, there are additional hurdles that make placing a Métis child with a disability in care, difficult:

it was a lot of changes for him, and he just couldn't handle it, and he had melted down a couple of mornings. And so the daycare actually ended up kicking him out and saying that they weren't...being told they didn't have the capacity to deal with his needs, which was super bullshit. But they didn't let him come back until I got supported child development funding so he could have a one-to-one worker. So I jumped through all the hoops to get that and get on the top of the list and stuff for all that. And then once I got that funding in place, they can't find it. They can't keep a worker because there's no one who wants to work those hours. (Annie)

More distinctions-based research and GBA+ research is needed to determine the extent to which issues of accessibility impact Métis women and 2SLGBTQIA+ parent's ability to access ELCC programming.



⁶² Statistics Canada. *Table 577-0005 – Aboriginal Peoples Survey, long-term health problems (self-reported) by Aboriginal identity and sex, population aged 6 to 11 years, Canada, provinces and territories, occasional*. <https://cichprofile.ca/module/7/section/6/page/percentage-of-indigenous-children-aged-6-to-11-years-with-learning-disabilities-attention-deficit-disorders-and-speech-or-language-difficulties-by-indigenous-identity-canada-2012>

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ 6.7.4 Percentage of Indigenous children aged 6 to 11 years with emotional, psychological or nervous difficulties, by Indigenous identity*, Canada, 2012. <https://cichprofile.ca/module/7/section/6/page/percentage-of-indigenous-children-aged-6-to-11-years-with-emotional-psychological-or-nervous-difficulties-by-indigenous-identity-canada-2012/>

6. Review of Existing Gender-Based Data on Métis Early Learning & Childcare

2006 Aboriginal Children's Survey (ACS)

While there is not a large body of existing Métis-specific ELCC quantitative data, what little is available and the attending reports generated based on such data, give insight into current challenges facing Métis people in the landscape of ELCC. According to the Aboriginal Children's Survey (ACS) of 2006, at least 17% of Métis children had "non-relatives involved in raising them," with the majority being accounted for as being "child care providers or teachers."⁶⁶ Roughly half of Métis children aged 2 years old to 5 years old attended a child care program (44%), with daycare centres being the most common (40%), attending such programming for approximately 27 hours per week⁶⁷ By comparison, 80% of Métis children aged 4 and 5 years old attended a school programming (likely kindergarten programming in elementary schools). At the same time, roughly 14% of children were reported as attending child and parent programs, like "Mom & Tot" and other related programs.⁶⁸ It was not uncommon for Métis children to have more than one child care arrangement (17%) which is consistent with feedback provided by our interviewees who noted that due to work schedules, they often required multiple care providers for their children to accommodate their working hours.⁶⁹ Primary caregivers (parents or guardians) cited the need to work as the top reason for requiring access to child care. In 2006, 75% of Métis children were reported as requiring childcare in order for the parent or guardian to work.⁷⁰ In addition to work, primary caregivers cited their own attendance at school as the reason they required childcare programming for the children in their care (11%).⁷¹

Access to childcare and participation in licensed childcare programming was to some extent mediated by socio-economic factors. Métis children "whose parent had more than a high school education had greater odds of being in child care...for Métis children only, older child age was associated with increased odds of being in child care."⁷² At the same time, more Métis children in child care programming were reported as being raised in a lone parent household.⁷³ Métis parents reported at higher rates than First Nations and Inuit respondents, that they had less than a high school diploma.⁷⁴ All of this is also connected to where the ACS reported that nearly one-third of Métis children (32%) "under the age of 6 were in low-income families, compared with 18% of non-

⁶⁶ Statistics Canada. "Métis Children." Aboriginal Children's Survey 2006. ISSN: 1918-4964.

⁶⁷ Statistics Canada. "The early learning experiences of Métis children in Canada." Aboriginal Children's Survey 2006. ISSN: 89-644-X.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Statistics Canada. "Aboriginal Children's Survey, 2006: Family, Community and Child Care." Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, 2006. 89-634-X - No. 001.

⁷⁰ Table 2.9. "Reasons for using child care, Métis children under six years old who are receiving childcare, 2006." Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Statistics Canada. "Aboriginal Children's Survey, 2006: Family, Community and Child Care." Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, 2006. 89-634-X - No. 001.

⁷³ Table 3. "Odds ratios of Aboriginal children being in child care by group." Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

Aboriginal children.”⁷⁵ The majority of these lived in urban areas (36% compared to 20% low-income families with young Métis children living in rural areas).⁷⁶ While low-income parents reported being “dissatisfied” and “very dissatisfied” with their financial and housing situation, all Métis parents reported at high rates (93%) as feeling “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with “their support network (support from family, friends, or others).”⁷⁷ This demonstrates that while Métis children live in poverty at relatively high rates, kinship and community continues to be vitally important to the family units in which they live. At least some of this is also reflected in the fact that Métis children were reported as being cared for by a non-relative in lieu of a daycare centre, at rates higher than for both off-reserve First Nations and Inuit children (22% versus 18% and 12% respectively). This alludes to Métis guardians’ drawing on extended community networks for either access to formal or informal home-based daycare. Crucially, and perhaps cause for concern, is that Métis children were less likely than off-reserve First Nations and Inuit children to be in a *licensed* childcare program (68% for Métis children, versus 69% and 72% for First Nations and Inuit respectively).

The proportion of Métis children under 6 years old as reported as being in a childcare program or as being cared for by someone other than their parents, has grown steadily over time. In the ACS, as of 2006, 48% of Métis children under 6 were reported to be in such a situation.⁷⁸ While the ACS reports that as of 2006, 14% of children were in a program that taught children about pan-Indigenous “traditional and cultural values and customs,” only 6% of children were in a program that used Indigenous languages.⁷⁹ For Métis the urgency of Métis-led ELCC programming was evident as early as the 2006 ACS, whereby the survey revealed that only 32% of Métis children “had someone who helped them to understand Aboriginal history and culture.”⁸⁰ By contrast, 45% of off-reserve First Nations children and 65% of Inuit children had immediate access to someone in their lives to keep them connected to their histories and cultures.⁸¹

Survey on Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements (SELCCA)

The Survey on Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements (SELCCA) reveals that as of 2019, 60% of Métis children aged 0-5 were in childcare. This number declined in 2020 (to 55.3%), in part likely owing to the impacts of the pandemic on Métis families.⁸² In both 2019 and 2020, Métis children were represented within childcare programming at rates higher than First Nations and Inuit. In 2020, more Métis children were enrolled in childcare programming than there were among non-Indigenous children.⁸³ As revealed in Table 1 below, in both 2019 and 2020, the most common type of childcare arrangement for Métis children continues to be a daycare centre, preschool, or childcare centre. In 2020, the rates of children cared for by a relative other than their parent rose from roughly 27% to 29.2%, possibly attributable to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Métis families. While the confidence intervals offer a wide range from the lower to the upper limit, it nevertheless remains consistent that daycare centres, preschools, and childcare centres are important sites for the early learning and care of Métis children under the age of 6.

⁷⁵ Statistics Canada. “Métis Children.” Aboriginal Children’s Survey 2006. ISSN: 1918-4964.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Statistics Canada. “Métis Children.” Aboriginal Children’s Survey 2006. ISSN: 1918-4964.

⁸⁰ Statistics Canada. “Aboriginal Children’s Survey, 2006: Family, Community and Child Care.” Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, 2006. 89-634-X - No. 001.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Statistics Canada. [Table 42-10-0022-01 Use of early learning and child care arrangements for children aged 0 to 5 years, by Indigenous identity](#)

⁸³ Statistics Canada. [Table 42-10-0022-01 Use of early learning and child care arrangements for children aged 0 to 5 years, by Indigenous identity](#)

TABLE 1

Geography	Canada (map)	
Indigenous identity	Métis	
Statistics	Percentage of children in child care	
Type of child care arrangement	2019	2020
	Percent	
Daycare centre, preschool, or childcare centre (CPE) ²	52.7 ^E	48.6 ^E
Care by a relative other than parent	27.0 ^E	29.2 ^E
Care by a non-relative in the child's home	8.1 ^E	4.0 ^E
Family child care home	22.6 ^E	18.5 ^E
Before or after school program	7.5 ^E	6.4 ^E
Other child care arrangement	6.0 ^E	5.8 ^E

Symbol legend:

^E use with caution

Statistics Canada. Table_42-10-0023-01 Type of child care arrangement for children aged 0 to 5 years, by Indigenous identity

According to 2020 data, and reflected in Table 2, for those Métis children not party to any ELCC arrangement, the top reported reason is that one parent decided to stay home with their child, while maternity, paternity, or parental leave was the second most commonly reported reason for Métis children not being enrolled in a childcare program. Of significant note, however, are the factors that point to greater systemic issues that the parents of Métis children face: the cost of childcare is too high, unemployment, shortage of places or waiting list, feelings that ELCC programs are not safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Significantly, a higher proportion of Métis respondents indicated that one parent decided to stay home with the child than among non-Indigenous respondents (43% versus 36.9% for non-Indigenous respondents).⁸⁴ As we know from previous research and the role of Métis women as caregivers, it is reasonable to suggest that in such cases Métis women are more likely to be the parent who stays home with the children, causing a ripple effect towards education and employment statistics for Métis women. For those parents who reported that they prefer to “adjust work or study schedules to accommodate care needs,” the cost of childcare is often a contributing factor that is underreported in more empowered responses to how/why parents elect not to use childcare programming.

⁸⁴ Statistics Canada. [Table 42-10-0025-01 Reasons 01 Reasons for not using any child care arrangement for children aged 0 to 5 years, by Indigenous identity](#)

TABLE 2

Indigenous identity	Métis					
Geography	Canada (map)					
Population	Among children not using child care					
Statistics	Percentage of children		95% confidence interval (lower limit) ^a		95% confidence interval (upper limit) ^a	
Reasons for not using any child care arrangement	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
	Percent					
One of the parents has decided to stay home with the child	F	43.0 ^E	F	29.0 ^E	F	58.1 ^E
Maternity, paternity or parental leave	F	29.7 ^E	F	17.0 ^E	F	46.6 ^E
The cost of child care is too high	F	17.9 ^E	F	10.0 ^E	F	30.0 ^E
Unemployed	F	10.5 ^E	F	5.0 ^E	F	20.7 ^E
Child is in kindergarten	F	4.9 ^E	F	2.0 ^E	F	11.6 ^E
Prefer to adjust work or study schedules to accommodate care needs	F	4.9 ^E	F	2.0 ^E	F	11.6 ^E
Shortage of places or waiting list	F	7.0 ^E	F	2.6 ^E	F	17.3 ^E
I feel it is unsafe during the COVID-19 pandemic	..	11.6 ^E	..	5.5 ^E	..	22.7 ^E
No child care available due to the Covid-19 pandemic	..	x	..	x	..	x
Other reasons ³	F	18.3 ^E	F	10.1 ^E	F	30.8 ^E

Symbol legend:

.. not available for a specific reference period

x suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*

E use with caution

F too unreliable to be published

Statistics Canada. Table_42-10-0025-01 Reasons for not using any child care arrangement for children aged 0 to 5 years, by Indigenous identity

In surveying whether Indigenous parents had difficulty in finding access to childcare, statistics were comparable across off-reserve First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, with 34.1% of Métis respondents indicating that they had difficulty in finding childcare in 2019.⁸⁵ The difficulties parents and guardians cited was most remarkably a lack of care available in their communities (54.7%). Cost was the second most cited factor, with 48.8% reporting that a lack of affordable childcare was a prohibitive factor. A third cited difficulty faced by Métis parents and guardians (33%) was a lack of access to care that could fit their work or study schedule.⁸⁶ As reflected in Table 3, parents and guardians were also concerned about the quality of childcare available to them (25%), issues with respect to finding licensed child care (34.2%), finding care for multiple children in one space (27.2%), finding care appropriate for children with disabilities/special needs (5.8%), and notably, Métis parents and guardians struggled to find care at all during the earliest part of the COVID-19 pandemic (46.7%).

⁸⁵ Statistics Canada. Table 42-10-0026-01 Difficulty finding a child care arrangement for children aged 0 to 5 years, by Indigenous identity

⁸⁶ Statistics Canada. Table 42-10-0027-01 Type of difficulties for parents and guardians in finding a child care arrangement for children aged 0 to 5 years, by Indigenous identity

TABLE 3

Geography	Canada (map)
Population	Parent or guardian had difficulty finding child care
Indigenous identity	Indigenous identity ²
Statistics	Percentage of children
Type of difficulty encountered in finding child care	2020
	Percent
Care available in your community	54.7
Affordable child care	48.8
Care that fits your work or study schedule	33.0
Finding the quality of care you desire	25.0
Finding licensed care	34.2
Qualified care provider	24.7
Care that could accommodate more than one child in your family	27.2
Care that meets your child's special needs	5.8
Finding care during the COVID-19 pandemic	46.7
Other reasons	19.0

Statistics Canada. Table 42-10-0027-01 Type of difficulties for parents and guardians in finding a child care arrangement for children aged 0 to 5 years, by Indigenous identity

The consequences Métis parents and guardians reported as a result of facing difficulties in accessing care include having to change their work schedules (32.7%), having to use multiple care or temporary care arrangements (36.7%), most significantly reducing the number of hours worked and postponing a return to work (31.4% and 34.4%), postponing or discontinuing school or training (11%), and giving up on looking for child care entirely (17.7%).⁸⁷ These are significant consequences for Métis children and their families that continue to perpetuate ongoing cycles of poverty that Métis face as a direct result of the impacts of colonization.

Among the reasons cited for parent and guardian rationale as to chosen childcare arrangement, a greater proportion of Métis respondents (relative to non-Indigenous respondents) reported that the “Characteristics of the individual providing care” was essential.⁸⁸ In some ways this reveals the significant consideration and emphasis Métis parents place on the learning environment of their young children. As Métis children under the age of 4 are less likely than First Nations (21.2%) or Inuit (22.8%) to live in a shared household with at least one grandparent (10.5%), Métis children are less likely to benefit from the immediate exposure to the intergenerational knowledge shared by living directly with their grandparents, and are more likely to enter into licensed care programming than be cared for by their grandparents, the significance of the thoughtfulness Métis parents put into searching for childcare for their children cannot be overstated.⁸⁹

Métis Representation in ELCC Work

In consideration of existing data on Métis ELCC, it is worth looking at the constitution of Métis representation *within* ELCC work. Kristyn Frank and Rubab Arim write that while ELCC programs that “focus on their community’s traditional

⁸⁷ Statistics Canada. [Table 42-10-0028-01 Consequences of having encountered difficulties in finding child care for children aged 0 to 5 years, by Indigenous identity](#)

⁸⁸ Statistics Canada. [Table 42-10-0024-01 Parent and guardian reasons for using main child care arrangement for children aged 0 to 5 years, by Indigenous identity](#)

⁸⁹ Statistics Canada. “Diverse family characteristics of Aboriginal children aged 0 to 4.” Census of Population, 2016. 98-200-X2016020.

cultural practices, identity and language have been found to act as protective factors” that enhance children’s Indigenous language abilities and pride in their cultures, there is an overall lack of trained Indigenous workers in ELCC.⁹⁰ Drawing on pre-existing research they note that cost, entrance requirements, and lack of access to suitable technology in rural and remote areas, pose the most significant barriers.⁹¹ Statistics show that Indigenous people work in ELCC at rates higher than all other jobs combined (5% vs. 4%).⁹² Represented within this, Métis make up ELCC workers at a rate of 1.6%, much less than that of First Nations (2.7%). Meanwhile, non-Indigenous ELCC’s who work in a licensed daycare, childcare program, or kindergarten classroom make up 95.1% of the workforce.⁹³

Perhaps most notable is that of Métis who responded to the 2016 Census questionnaire on ELCC, and who work in ELCC, 95.4% identified as female (vs. 4.6% identified as male respectively). Those who identified as Métis and female represented a higher proportion of ELCC workers than First Nations and Inuit (94.8% and 94.1%). This indicates that Métis women work in ELCC at higher rates than their First Nations and Inuit counterparts. The age of Métis ELCC workers tends to be far younger than that of non-Indigenous ELCC workers, with 23.1% reporting being under age 25 (versus 13.6% for non-Indigenous workers). Métis workers reported having young children in their family at higher rates than non-Indigenous workers and reported having two or more children aged 5 or younger at higher rates than the non-Indigenous respondents as well (6.4% vs. 5.9%). A significant number of Métis respondents indicated that they did not have a postsecondary education (34.3%), while only 22% of non-Indigenous workers reported that they did not have a postsecondary education. In addition, comparatively few Métis respondents live in a CMA (census metropolitan area, specifically Montréal, Toronto, or Vancouver), relative to non-Indigenous respondents. 11.8% of Métis ELCC workers stated that they live in a major CMA, while 42.7% of non-Indigenous ELCC workers revealed that they live in a major CMA. This suggests that particularly in the country’s largest cities, Métis ELCC workers are woefully underrepresented. Given the relative size of urban Métis populations, this means that many Métis children, and particularly in these areas, are unable to access culturally specific and relevant care workers.

⁹⁰ Frank, Kristyn and Arim, Rubab. “Indigenous and non-Indigenous early learning and child care workers in Canada.” *Statistics Canada: Economic and Social Reports* 1(8). 25 August 2021. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/36-28-0001/2021008/article/00005-eng.pdf?st=OFI2J8ZJ>

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

7. Survey Data

This section describes findings based on a large-scale survey we conducted. We collected 736 responses using various social media platforms. From these responses we narrowed it down to 263 individuals. We choose these individuals because they completed most of the survey. The information collected via the survey gives us a broader picture an understanding of where individuals are coming from and where the Métis community is currently residing. This survey also gives us a broader understanding of how many children may see families have as well as several other key portions of demographic information. We include small charts in this section to describe key information collected during this survey.

i. Respondent Biodata

Out of the 263 survey respondents we narrowed down to, the vast majority of people (98.9%) surveyed identify as cisgender [Table 4]. Three, however, did identify as nonbinary or 2Spirit (1.1%). The majority of respondents identified living in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia, with a greater number indicating that they grew up in Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario. The average age for the people interviewed was 31 years old.

TABLE 4

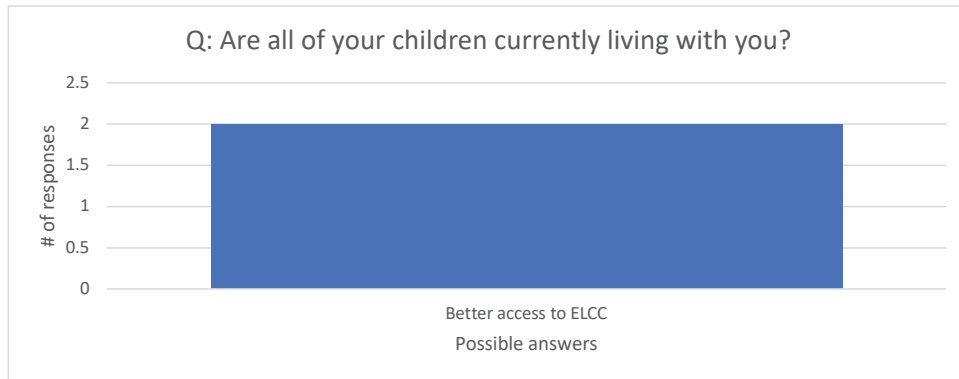
Female	260
Nonbinary or 2Spirit	3
TOTAL	263

Q: What is your gender identity?

ii. Number of Children, Average Age of Children, Living Situation

Most of the people surveyed reported that they had 1 child, with some respondents indicating that they had up to 11 children. Most respondents also indicated that the age of their children was approximately 5 years old. While we did receive some respondents who indicated that their children are older, the experiences of these community members tended to be almost identical to those who are raising young children. This provides us with some insight into the long-lasting challenges of accessing early learning and childcare for Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ parents. In addition, almost all of all the people surveyed[stated that the children currently live with them. 91.6% of respondents noted that all of their children are currently living with them. 6.8% responded that their children no longer live with them. Meanwhile 1.1% reported having custody of only some of their children. Two responded that the answer did not apply (indicating that their children are not currently living with them) [Table 5].

TABLE 5



We also asked respondents when they first became parents. The majority indicated that they became parents for the first time in their mid-20s. Most people surveyed reported becoming parents at approximately 24 years of age. One respondent reported becoming a parent at 39. The youngest age of a person surveyed becoming a parent was 17 years old.

For the people included in this study the relationship to their children was mostly that of a mother (77.2%). 14.1% identified as aunt or auntie. 6.9% of survey respondents reported not raising their children at all. The people we surveyed tended to have a traditional mother-child relationship.

TABLE 6

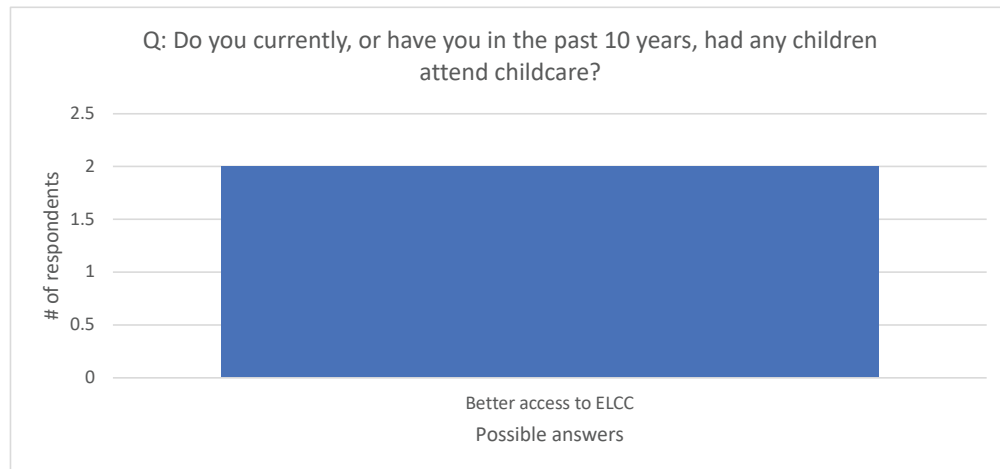
Relationship to Child(ren)	# of Respondents
Mother	205
Aunt	37
Didn't raise them	18
Cousin	1
Friend watching child for their friend	1
Grand Total	262

Q: What is your relationship to the children in your care?

iii. Access to and Experiences with Early Learning and Childcare Programming

The majority of respondents indicated that they either currently (or within the past 10 years), had a child or children who attended an early learning or childcare program (95.4%). While 3% of respondents indicated that their children had attended a program outside of this timeframe, 1.5% noted that they have a plan in place for their child(ren) to attend childcare or early learning programming [Table 7].

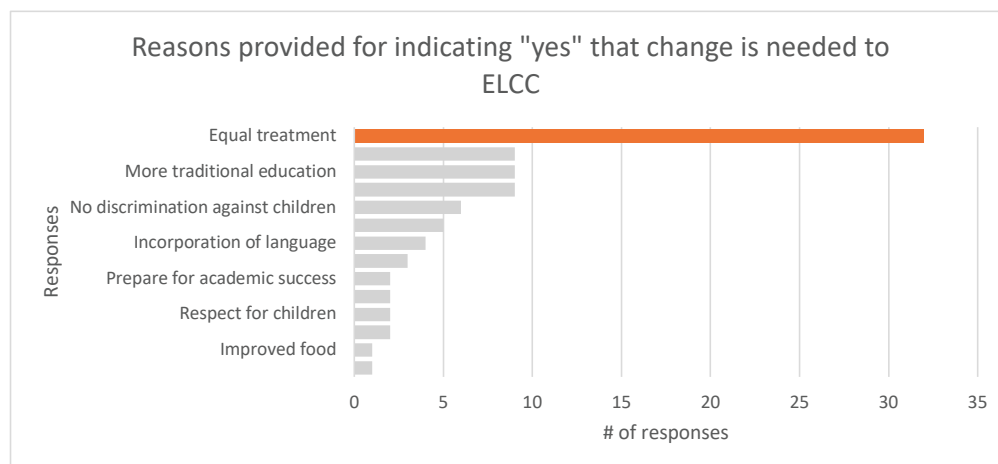
TABLE 7



For the 4 respondents who indicated that having their child in care was their immediate plans, they indicated they were currently staying home with the children for various (unstated) reasons.

Similar to the qualitative findings that will appear in the next section, an overwhelming number of respondents (61.6%) indicated that ELCC in the Métis community needed to undergo substantial changes. When asked what things they would like to see changed, most replied that they believed that both them and their children needed to receive equal treatment from daycare providers (19.8%). Of the 162 that answered yes, changes were needed, in the table below [Table 8], we highlight the most common responses:

TABLE 8



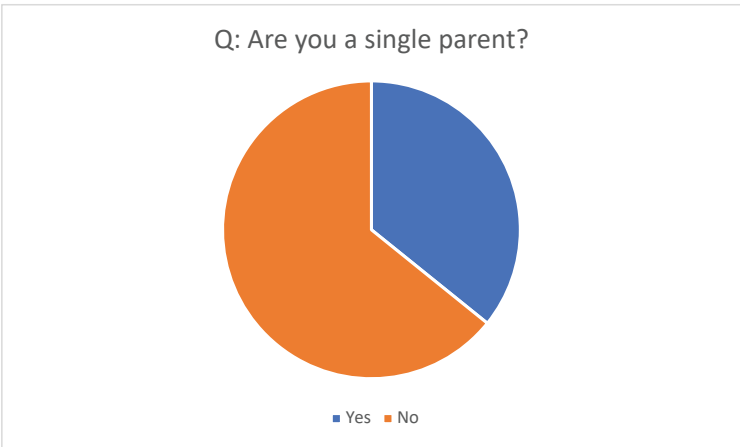
Respondents also believe that ELCC programming needs to provide better quality education to their children. Other respondents believed the childcare facilities needed to have more staff and provide more supports. A number of other individuals believe Métis children should be provided traditional education and should be guided by Métis cultural teachings and reasserted their belief that there needs to be a reduction in discrimination against Métis children and parents. Other respondents wrote that children needed more outdoor time that is not dependant on narrow definitions of “appropriate weather” (an increase in land-based learning),

training in growing their own food, more independence training, more Métis content in rural areas (beadwork and language classes from the early years), and greater funding support. While there is room for more work in this specific area, what we glean from these initial responses is that there needs to be a general improvement across all ELCC programs from Métis children and families. Only 22 individuals felt that nothing needed to change or that they were unsure what changes needed to take place.

iv. Challenges and Insights into Care

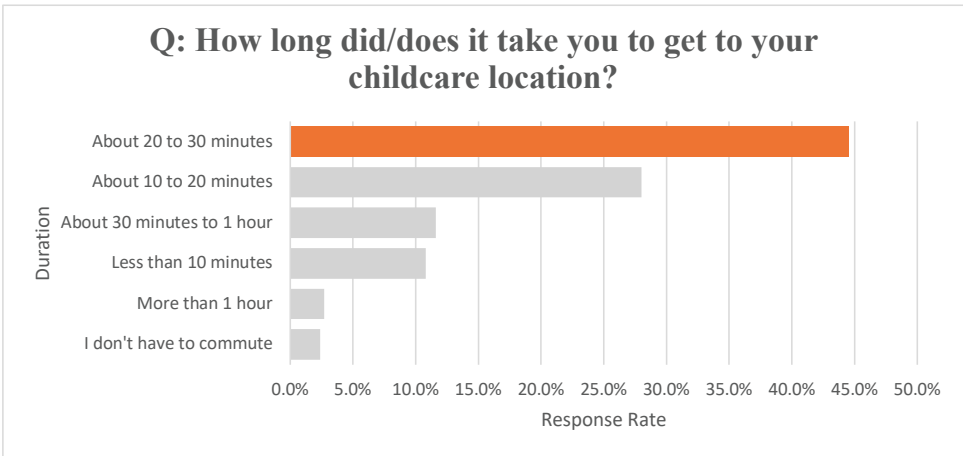
The second portion of our survey received 341 responses. The second portion of the survey provides key insights into the challenges and experiences Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ parents face when attempting to access childcare. Approximately 36% of respondents noted being a single parent while another 64% identified as being in a relationship and/or co-parenting their children (Table 9).

TABLE 9



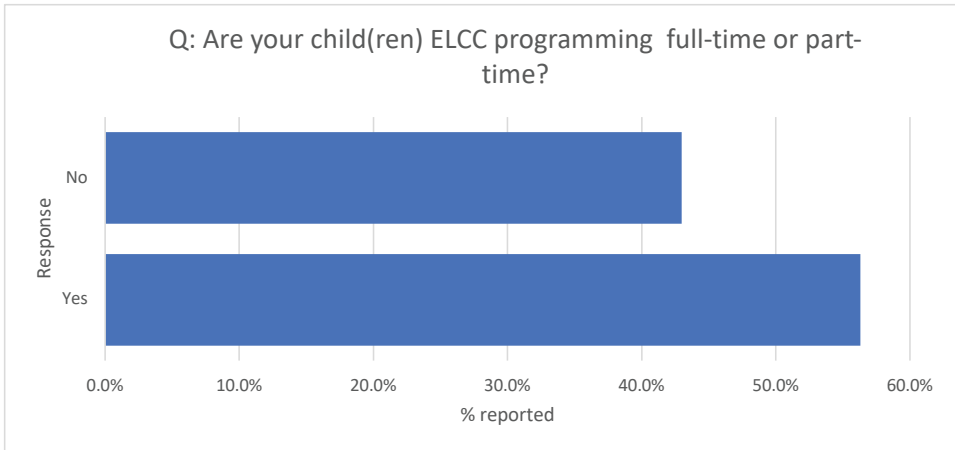
During the survey we also asked parents how long it took him to access their ELCC location. We did this to understand the distance they have to travel in order to find care for their children. 56% of the people surveyed mentioned having to travel between 20 minutes to 1-hour to access care [Table 10].

TABLE 10



Approximately 11% travel 10 minutes or less. Approximately 13% discussed having not to travel at all or traveling less than 10 minutes. We can see from these findings that accessing ELCC care takes a significant component of families' time.

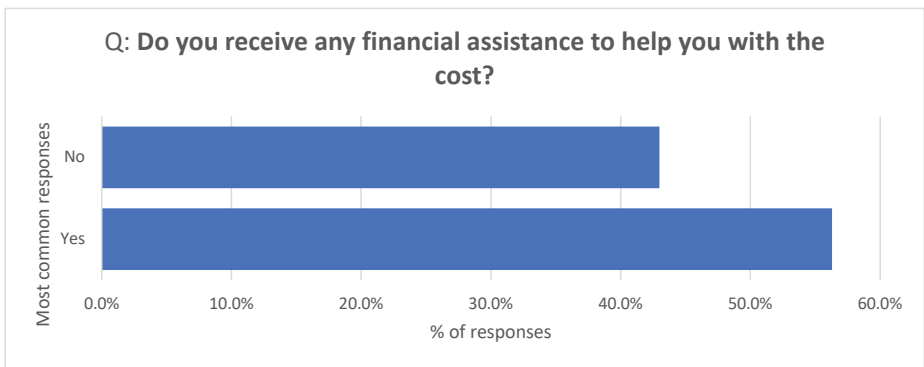
TABLE 11



Additionally, 67.9% of the people we spoke to have the children full-time ELCC programming during the day. The other 32.1% only access childcare or early learning programs on a part-time basis [Table 11].

We also asked survey participants about their financial picture, and whether they receive financial help to pay for childcare. 56.3% of the people we spoke to replied that they are receiving some kind of financial help to pay for childcare. For the most part these families receive support from the federal government in the form of a subsidy or from provincial governments. Some also receive grants or supports from city governments or regional entities. To a lesser extent, they receive support from Indigenous-based organizations and Métis organizations specifically. Some families also reported receiving support from other family members [Table 12].

TABLE 12

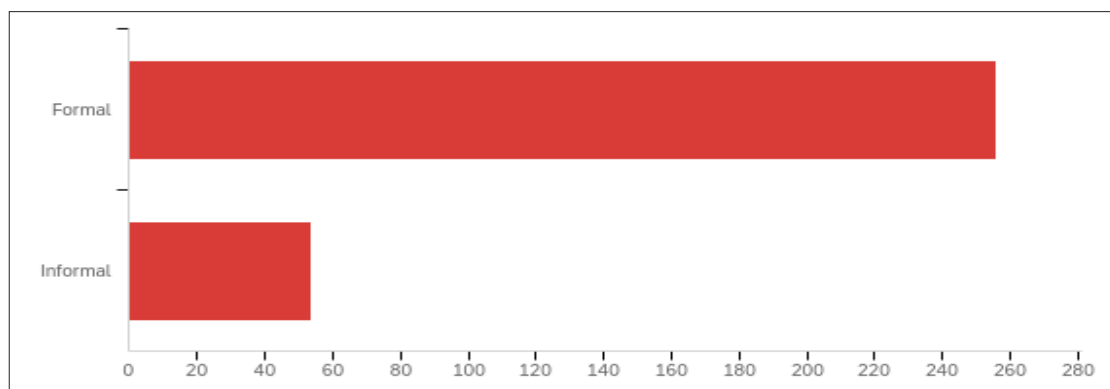


Our survey also provides insights into the location of childcare centres and early learning programs [Table 13].

TABLE 13: LOCATION OF ELCC PROGRAMS

Answer	%
Home-based	31.4%
In a church or place of worship	10.3%
In a public school	31.1%
In a private school	13.6%
College or University	1.8%
Community centre	8.5%
Public library	0.9%
Office or store front	0.9%
Other location	1.5%
Total	100%

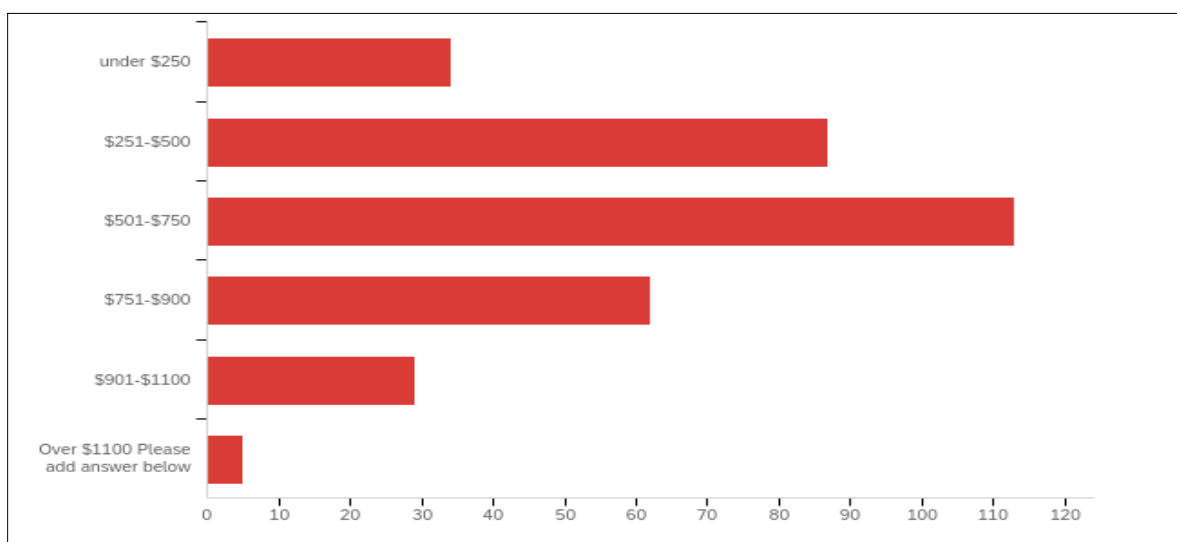
Approximately 31.4% of all service providers were located in private homes. Another 31.1% were located inside of public schools. People reported that programs located inside of private homes oftentimes had some type of government certification or someone with government certification working at the centre.

TABLE 14: IF HOME-BASED, IS THE PROGRAM REGISTERED/REGULATED OR INFORMAL?

Broadly speaking, we are unable to verify whether their home base programs were sanctioned by provincial governments and other entities with oversight power. However almost 82.6% of respondents noted that their home base care was formal and licensed. Approximately 17.4% replied that the ELCC was taking place in an informal fashion with little to no oversight. This care oftentimes comes from a family member, a friend of the family, or an unlicensed and unregistered childcare.

During the survey we also asked respondents how much they pay for childcare in a monthly basis. Not including a government subsidy or any other type of support, approximately 60% of people pay between \$251 and \$750, which varies widely by location. People living in large cities like Vancouver and Toronto pay more than \$1100 per month [Table 14]. The cost of care was also substantially higher for those that have newborn children and children in their infancy.

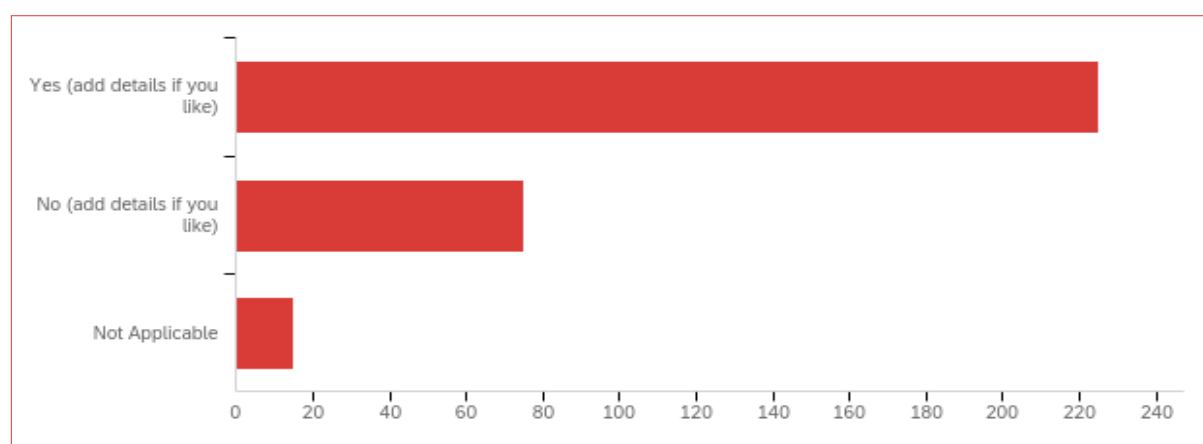
TABLE 14: HOW MUCH DOES YOUR HOUSEHOLD PAY FOR CHILDCARE PER MONTH?



It is important to note that roughly 26% of respondents pay between \$251 and \$500 per month. A small part, about 10%, pay less than \$250. It's also important to note that almost 11% of respondents pay more the \$901 per month for childcare [Table 14]. These findings are also supported by interview-based qualitative findings that note that the high cost of childcare is one of the biggest challenges for Métis families.

Aside from the excessive cost of childcare, many respondents noted that their daycare programs did not provide the necessary services or the necessary hours that they needed. Almost 24% of respondents notice that the daycare hours they received were not enough to be able to work in an adequate fashion. While 71% of respondents did say that had adequate coverage at their childcare early learning centre, the 24% who did not provide some key insights into the needs of Métis families [Table 15].

TABLE 15: DOES THE PROGRAM COVER THE HOURS YOU NEED IT TO FOR YOU TO WORK?



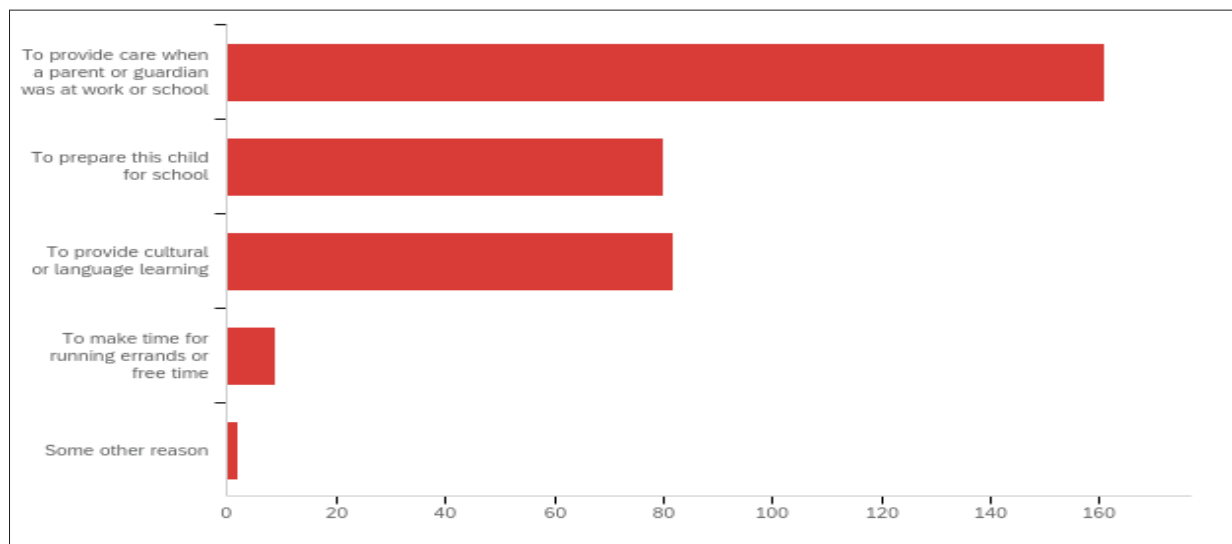
Many of the respondents shared several challenges and concerns around picking up their children. One respondent replied that the childcare available was not enough for her to work a full day (with a pickup time of 2pm). Another respondent stated that,

“Yes, but I have to work till 5:00 and need time to commute to pick up husband who helps me pick up the children from daycare since my son is a bit of a flight risk and the centre is right on busy avenue. I’m afraid he’s going to run into traffic one day. I usually work outside of office hours to finish my work and work ahead because I never know when a child will be sent home sick from day care.”

The second respondent shares her general anxieties around picking up her children from childcare. This involves the possibility of her partner running into traffic or a child becoming sick and needing to go home. Although only 24% of respondents noted the childcare hours were not enough to fill their childcare needs, this is an ongoing theme within our qualitative findings, and is one that should be addressed moving forward.

During this survey we also asked respondents their main reasons for accessing ELCC programming. The majority of the people surveyed stated that they needed childcare or early learning programs to be able to go to work (48%) [Table 16]. To a smaller extent some parents believed the childcare will prepare their children for school.

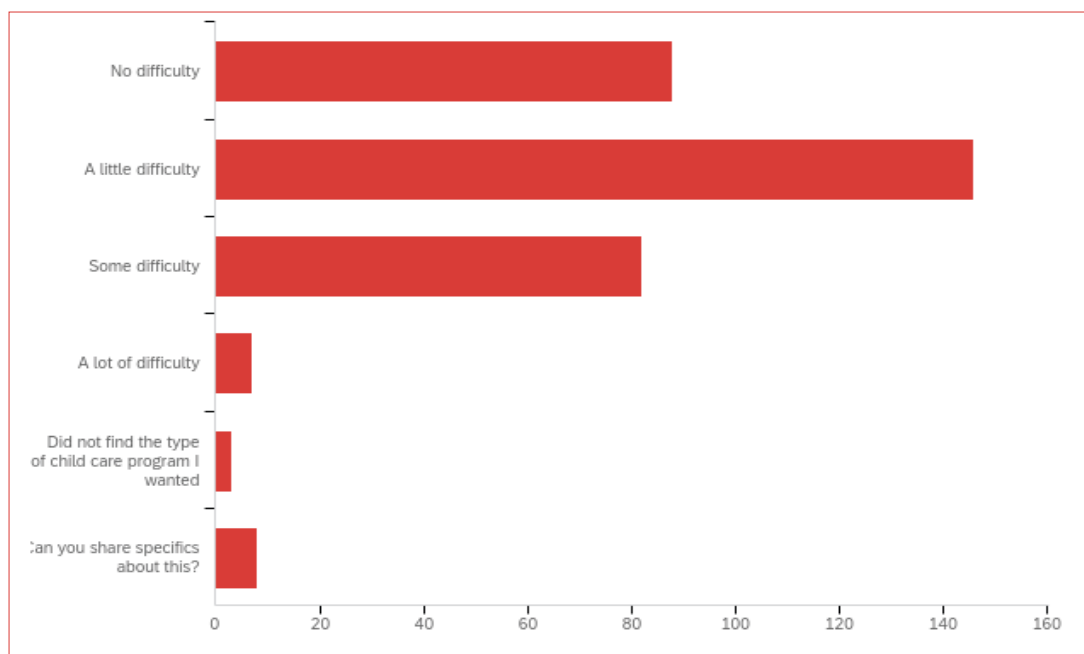
TABLE 16: WHAT IS THE MAIN REASON YOUR HOUSEHOLD WANTED ACCESS TO CHILDCARE?



Approximately 25% of respondents enroll their children in childcare so they can learn about various cultures and languages [Table 16]. This included the desire for their children to learn about Métis culture and language during the childcare process.

We also asked survey respondents whether they experienced issues in accessing ELCC programming. Approximately 71% indicated that they experienced some difficulty in access care [Table 17]. 42% noted that it was a little bit difficult, 25% described the process as somewhat difficult, and 2% indicated that it was extremely difficult [Table 17].

TABLE 17: HOW MUCH DIFFICULTY DID YOU HAVE FINDING THE TYPE OF ELCC PROGRAM YOU WANTED FOR YOUR CHILD(REN)?



Many people surveyed also shared added insights into the challenges of accessing childcare for their children:

I'm sure I never would have found care if I didn't have family working at the centre my kids are in. Not one other daycare centre called me back when I called to inquire for childcare. I phoned at least 15 centres in my area when I first found out I was pregnant and then again, I phone them all when my baby was born. No one got back to me. I was fortunate there was space at my sister's centre, and they allowed us to get in since they knew us. (Anonymous)

Most programs will turn away children with identified special needs under the guise that the program cannot meet the child's needs. (Anonymous)

There were no programs that checked all the boxes (Anonymous)

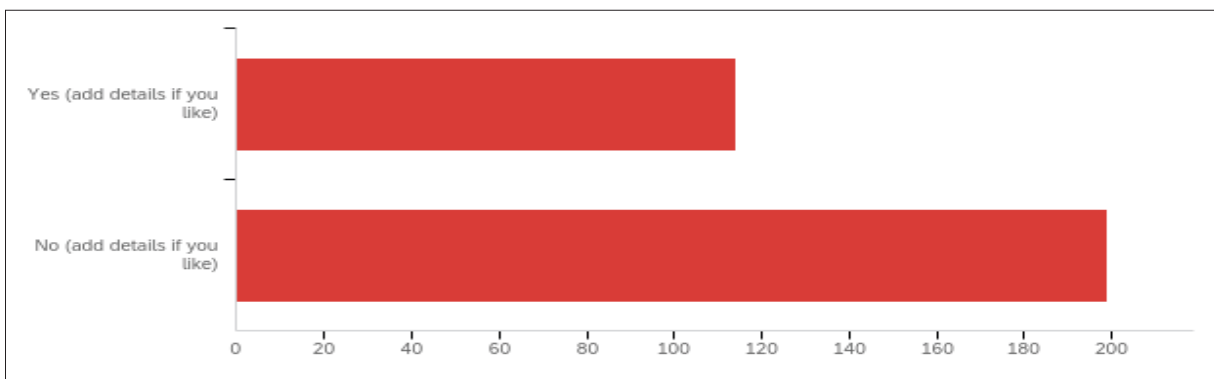
Prior to the Métis facility opening, it was incredibly challenging finding a facility with spaces. None of the facilities before this one did cultural programming, one required caregivers to pack 3 lunches for a day for kids to choose from, and the other wasn't wiping the child properly, leaving him with frequent rashes. When the Métis facility opened, Métis children are prioritized, and a high standard of care is provided. (Anonymous)

The narrative provided by respondents give researchers and policymakers key insights into the challenges of accessing childcare for the Métis community. One of the respondent notes that she was only able to access

care because her sister worked at an early learning centre. Another respondent noted that none of the childcare programs provided the type of care and quality care that she was looking for. Yet another respondent noted the poor treatment she received because she has a child with special needs. The final respondent also discussed the poor-quality childcare she was receiving and the additional challenges she had and finding the care she needed. These anecdotes and the statistics gathered provide important insights into the challenges of accessing childcare for the Métis community as a whole.

The issue of providing services to Métis children with disabilities and special needs is also an important one. A sizeable number of survey respondents - 36% - identify a need for childcare or an early education program that provides special education services. The most common challenges for children were accessing services for those with autism, intellectual disabilities another developmental delays, findings consistent with the pre-existing data discussed earlier regarding Métis children's accessibility needs.

TABLE 18 - DOES/DO YOUR CHILD/CHILDREN HAVE A DISABILITY THAT REQUIRES SPECIALIZED CHILDCARE AND ACCESSIBILITY PROGRAMMING?



There are increasing numbers of Métis children that need access to special education services. However, finding childcare and early learning supports for children with special needs is increasingly difficult and becoming harder as rising numbers looking for quality childcare and early education increases.

Building on these findings, our survey also provides insight into the specific challenges Métis families experienced attempting to find childcare.

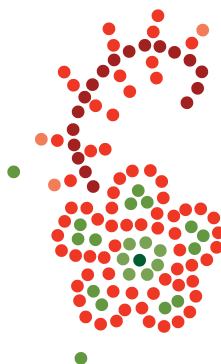
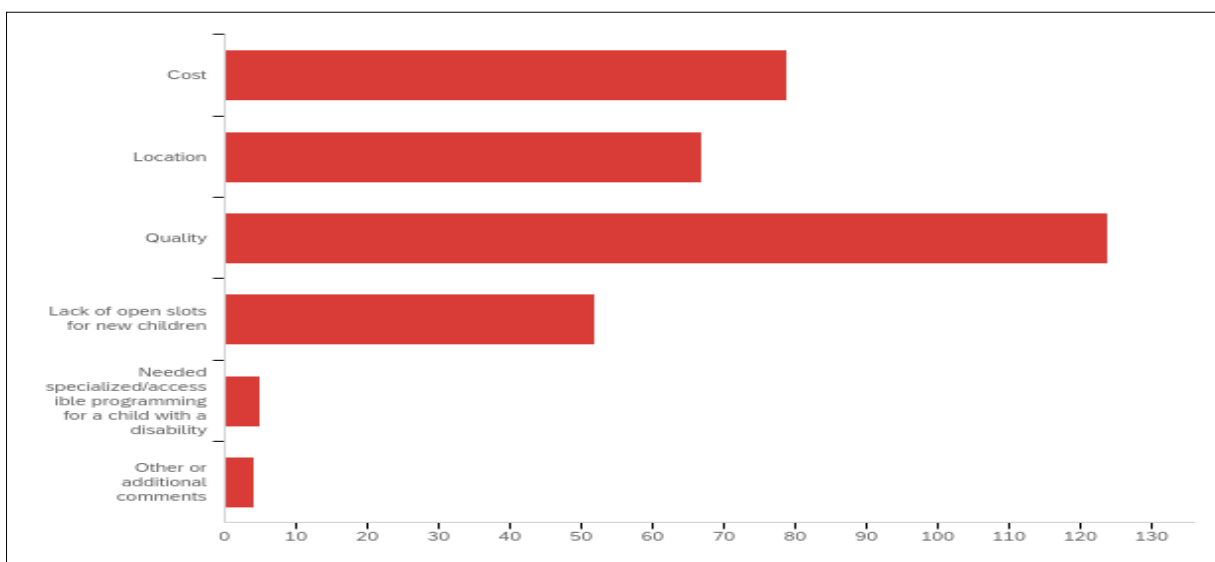


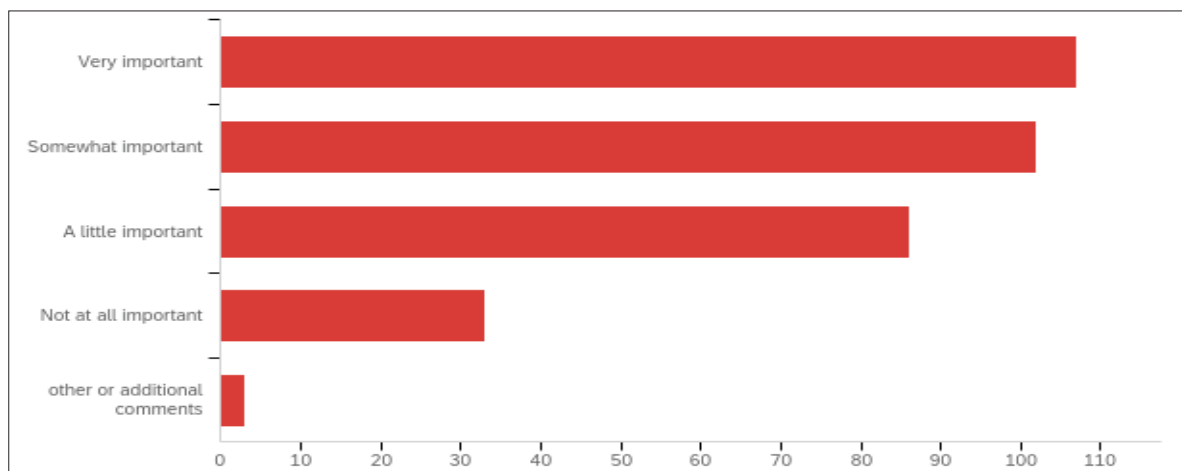
TABLE 19: WHAT WAS THE MAIN REASON FOR THE DIFFICULTY FINDING CHILDCARE OR EARLY CHILDCARE PROGRAMS?



As our other findings have already pointed out, the biggest challenge was finding quality childcare. 37.5% of respondents cited this as the largest challenge for them. 23.9% believe cost was the biggest challenge and the biggest issue in accessing ELCC. 20.2% of people believe that location was also a large barrier. A further 15.7% of individuals believed the lack of open spots for new children represents the biggest challenge, while 1.5% note the lack of availability of specialized/accessible programming for a child with a disability [Table 19].

An overwhelming proportion of the responses we received noted that Métis cultural teachings and services were extremely important to them. Approximately 63% of respondents replied that is important to them that ELCC programming teach about Métis specific content and language. Another 26% believe these teachings were a little important for their children. This means that approximately 99% of the respondents surveyed felt that Métis culture and language should be a central part of ELCC programming [Table 20]. Those respondents who indicated that Métis-specific content was not at all important were focused on gaining access to *any* programming, prioritizing access over a wish for culturally relevant ELCC programming.

TABLE 20: IS IT IMPORTANT TO YOU THAT THE PROGRAM TEACHES MÉTIS-SPECIFIC CONTENT?



Some respondents were able to share detailed feelings about the importance of Métis matey culture in ELCC:

"Métis heritage in my case has always felt like it is something to be hidden. My family never really celebrated their heritage. I'm not sure why this is." (Anonymous)

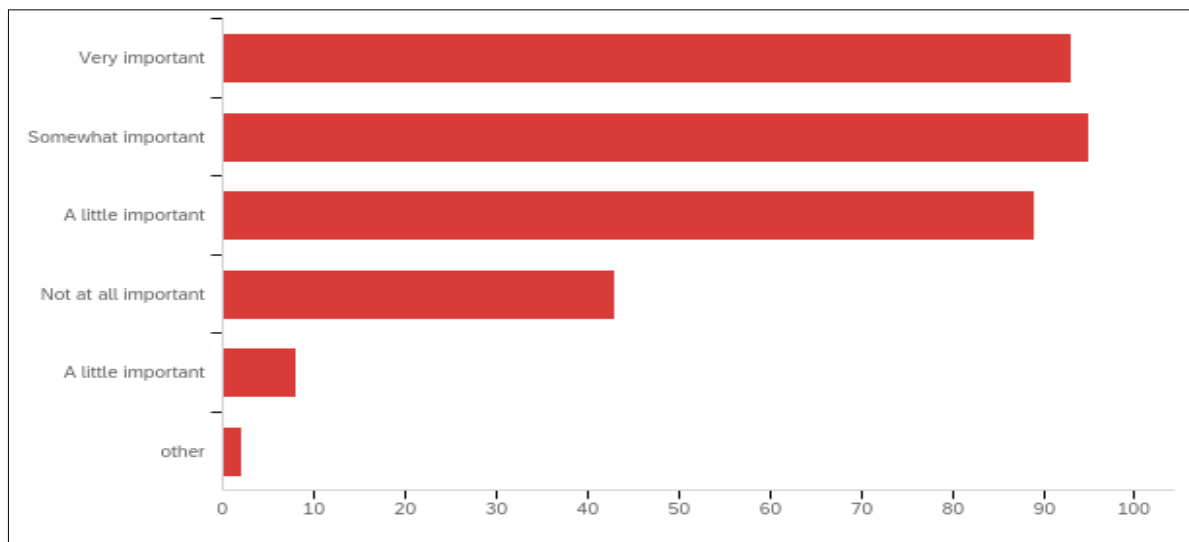
"A balance of Métis content with other...like learning to read and write in both Métis and English" (Anonymous)

"None available when my kids were in Daycare. I'd love to see it available for my grandchildren" (Anonymous)

The people here, share their feelings about the importance of Métis cultural teachings in childcare and early learning. It is clear from these narratives and from 99% of respondents that Métis culture and language should be incorporated into childcare centres and early learning facilities period.

Respondents also shared how important having a program that is Métis-run was for them and for their children. 57% of the people surveyed believe that it is important to have a childcare and early learning program run by Métis people and for Métis children

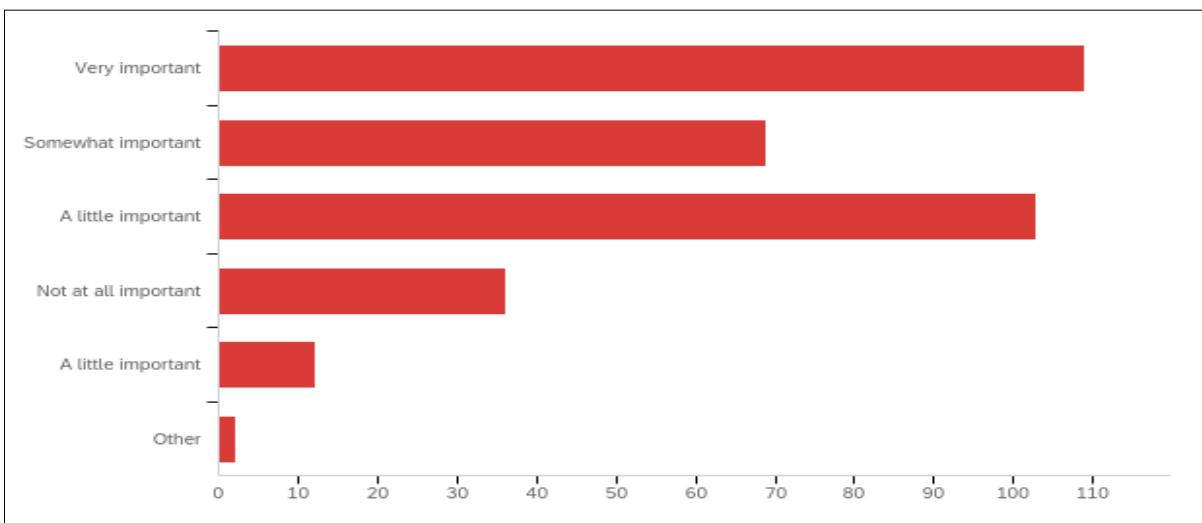
TABLE 21: IS IT IMPORTANT TO YOU TO HAVE A PROGRAM THAT IS MÉTIS-RUN (I.E. LED BY MÉTIS EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS AND/OR ADMINISTRATORS).



Another 27% felt that this was at least a little bit important to them and it would be something they would like to see in the future [Table 21]. Respondents also added that they would like to see a variety of land-based teachings incorporated into childcare centres - especially those with a Métis focus.

Finally, we asked respondents how they felt about a pan-Indigenous ELCC, if a Métis specific one was unavailable. Most respondents were in full support of this idea.

TABLE 22: IF A MÉTIS-RUN CHILDCARE PROGRAM WAS UNAVAILABLE, IS IT IMPORTANT TO YOU THAT YOUR CHILD BE ABLE TO ACCESS AN INDIGENOUS-LED CHILDCARE PROGRAM, EVEN IF PAN-INDIGENOUS IN FOCUS?



For example, over 32.9% of respondents felt this was very important while another 20.9% felt it was somewhat important. Approximately 31.1% of people surveyed believed that it was a little bit important for their children to have access to Indigenous-based ELCC programs [Table 22]. Taken as a whole, we can see how important Métis teachings, language and culture is to women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ parents in the Métis community when accessing ELCC.



8. Interview Data

Information from our qualitative research findings provided a dynamic inside look into the experiences of Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ parents in attempting to access ELCC programming.

i. Racial discrimination

Many of our participants reflected on family stories and their own lived experiences with respect to racism and discrimination when thinking about ELCC programming. Racism and discrimination was a part of their daily lives as Métis, whether through stories told about other family memories, or in their own or their siblings' experiences in schooling. These experiences shaped our interviewees' perspectives about all levels of education, and it led interviewees to assert that awareness and respect for Métis people and culture is central to ELCC programming:

...there was no culture for me growing up...and my grandpa, because he was a darker skinned Metis, the Indian agent, would sit outside my great-grandparents house and he would say to them, if your kids come over onto the road, I'm taking the family to school. They're coming. They're coming to residential school. And you know, nobody heard about that until my cousin...told me, and I'm sitting there going no way. So, for me, the ideal thing for my kids is learning about that stuff now. And so, for me, I want to see a more culturally sensitive environment for childcare (Katrina)

60s and 70s growing up in Edmonton...my little...my little brother was actually tied up, tied down on a fence and dirt kicked in his face from some little white boys...and you could see the dirt streaks and tears fell on his face...I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry...being...dirty little Indians, which wasn't a great, big, huge thing (Wendy)

Both Katrina and Wendy reflected on traumatic experiences of state-engineered, institutional racism, and the effects of interpersonal, overt racism. For Sandy, the effects of racism permeated their own childhood on a deep level:

My mother was the same way, to tell me, "You don't have to tell anybody your Native, you know." Just trying to save the child from the racism. Yeah, that's the way I saw it. Who was trying to save your child from discrimination? (Sandy)

Participants in Graham and Davoren's study, that parents often feel like non-Métis led educational institutions lack awareness about Métis people and the Métis Nation, and that children often encountered various forms of overt racism and racist microaggressions. Racist microaggressions most often manifested in the fact that even on school days devoted to learning and education about Métis, interviewees like Katrina learned that little

was offered to her children about Métis. Katrina also noted that the burden has been on her, throughout her children's time in daycare and schooling, to actively work to bring Métis materials and resources to the classroom. To draw from one of Graham and Davoren's participants, Métis parents feel that the responsibility then falls to them to "educate the educators."⁹⁴

ii. Issues of affordability

The people included in this study described the huge expense that was involved with paying for childcare and early learning programs. The prohibitive cost of childcare was also reflected in the quantitative part of our findings. The people we spoke to described this as one of the biggest hurdles to accessing ELCC programming. While federal and provincial subsidies were available, these were oftentimes minimal, and not enough to cover the costs associated with childcare.

At the end of the day. You know, a lot of the challenge was financial. It really made me feel like it was that I would have to sacrifice my mental health. Mm-Hmm. Because it was so expensive, well, and sometimes honestly like I'd come home and, you know, nothing was running because the power was cut... So definitely it made me feel inadequate just not to have all the money to pay for it (childcare), no matter how much I was working, no matter how educated I was, it definitely made me feel like that was my inadequacy as a mother. It was not making enough money (Sandy)

when you know you're only bringing in what the government gives you for maternity leave and you still have, you know, a child, they're required to eat. My family requires, I still have to keep the heat on for my child. You know, we have the clothes and diapers and that. So I felt very stressed. I decided like I had to continue my studies or I defer. I drop out. And, you know, I stay at home with him. But even so, what the government gives you for maternity leave is not enough to survive off of, especially when your other partner is a full-time student as well (Sammy)

And no, I did it myself [with no subsidy]. My husband and I you know there was no extra funding or, you know, we need to help us... we'll be here on our own. (Mimi)

The people we spoke to all discussed having issues paying for childcare and early learning programs. The financial strains were multidimensional and did not just affect people's bank accounts or bottom line. For example, Sandy discussed the psychological strain that paying for childcare placed on her. She always prioritized paying for care first and she oftentimes did this at the expense of paying other bills like heating, hydro, and water. While she is a university educated person, and working a full-time job, she stated that she could never make enough given the extremely high cost of care. Sammy and Mimi also share similar sentiments. While they prioritized paying for childcare, other necessities like food and diapers still needed to be covered. For many of the women we spoke to, they were able to find subsidy for childcare, however it was seldom enough. Mimi and her husband attempted to pay for childcare alone because they could not access any kind of government or Indigenous-based subsidy. As a whole, narratives around financial strain paint a bleak picture - for Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ parents, no matter how much you work, or how much education you have, paying for childcare is extremely difficult.

iii. Subsidy Need and Barriers/Challenges to Access

Accessing subsidies for childcare was an overwhelming theme with the people we spoke to. Respondents addressed several issues related to accessing subsidy. First, interviewees noted that accessing these funds was extremely difficult.

⁹⁴ Graham and Davoren, 21.

On many occasions, the people we spoke to only found out about these supports through Informal means like a friend a family member. This included accessing supports from every level of government including libraries, schoolboards, non-profit organizations and Métis (and other Indigenous) organizations. Given that many of these programs existed on a “first come first serve” basis most of the people including this study were not able to access these supports.

Some schoolboards have subsidy programs. I have to, you know, it's not common knowledge that they have a childcare subsidy... I only knew that through, you know, participating in communication as my position on council. And so I think it's just, you know, and asking people like, you identify and, you know, I think we need to go further... identify as Indigenous or Inuit or Métis and then, you know, maybe letting them know of the different subsidies (Sammy)

there should be more funding for it and they put the funding in other programs that I don't fully believe should probably have as much... And they just take away from our children. But I mean, our children are what's going to create this world, hopefully to continue to create this world. So I don't know why they keep taking the funding away from them... Yeah, I don't know why they get more funding than us up there (another town) but they do so. I mean, we used to have the program here, but they cancelled it because they allocated the funding elsewhere... I just think our children deserve the funding over anything (Mimi)

Two women quoted here share their experiences accessing a subsidy for childcare. As Sammy notes, she was only able to access the local subsidy because she's a part of a high-profile committee and her respective town. Mimi also accesses the subsidy in this very same way through her informal networks. However, she noted that the funding for this subsidy was redirected to another town and away from her community. One interviewee, Katrina, reflected at length on the challenges in accessing subsidies:

I texted everybody who I know...who had kids, and I said, “You need to get the applications in because if you don't, you're going to find out about this when they post it and it's already going to be full. Yeah. And that's the same way with the childcare stipends...It took me about three months to hear back from them that I had got a spot. So, then here's what happened...this one was over the summer. I ended up... so I got their before and after school care, but I did not get the daytime care. They had no place in their daycare program during the summer holidays, so I ended up having to get a babysitter for that. So, then the nation put me on their childcare stipend so I could get so much money for the babysitter, probably a babysitter for the month. That's great.

But then I called them, and I said, “Listen, now that the summer is over, they're going back to school. They're going to be going to the before and after school care program.” And they pulled my funding. I'm really pissed off about it, because they said, “Well, we had to...And now that you're...you're going into this other pool for having organized care. We have to pull you out of that, that funding and there's no funding available because they're already capped out. So unfortunately, you're going to be paying out-of-pocket for it if we can't help you.”

And I'm like, “So I should just pull my kids out of before and after school care if I'm looking for the money, which at this point I'm not looking for the money. But if I was looking for money to pay for stuff when I needed to, I would probably have to pull my kids out of out of school care, right?” Yeah. And hope I find

a babysitter for them, which wouldn't be guaranteed. So, I can see that if I was a really low-income household that I would, I would struggle with that decision (Katrina)

Katrina also reflects on a couple of distinct problems - the problematic structure of program funding and that of a lack of access for northern and rural Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ parents. As Katrina discusses, she received approval for a subsidy for before/after care during summer holidays, but **not** for during the day. This means she had to pay for both a daytime babysitter **and** the amount not covered by the subsidy for extended care. When she notified her Métis Nation office that she would need continued access to before/after school care when schooling resumed in September, her funding was canceled and she was told that she would have to be transferred to a different funding pot - one that was already at its cap for the coming year. The fact that Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ parents lack knowledge/experience with complex funding envelopes can have devastating impacts for them and their Métis children.

Secondly, Katrina reflects that Métis living in more southerly and/or urban locations where programming initiatives that originate often have greater access. By the time Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ parents living in northern and/or rural areas learn of subsidies and other funding supports, they have already reached their funding cap. To a large extent all of the women who spoke to said something very similar: getting access to subsidies for childcare is close to impossible. This on many occasions due to a lack of funding or an inability to access subsidy as a whole.

iv. Lack of access to ELCC programming/spaces

Accessing ELCC spaces was also a huge challenge for the people included in our study. Accessing care included a series of challenges apart from quality of care and the cost of accessing services. For example, people included in the research discussed extremely long wait lists and having to commute great distances to access care:

I guess more accessibility. Like, I think it's...it's hard to find childcare. I know my daughter. It took her a little bit... [The first babysitter] like she's got two kids now and the first babysitter she had, I don't know if you know, was as good a babysitter with kind of a baby in there for the money and not so much for the kids then (Mary)

The nearest [Indigenous led] one would have been in [another city]. So that would have been, you know, during rush hour, like in the morning...about an hour from where we were. The place we found...it was still 30 minutes away (Veronica)

Yes, and they're at full capacity all the time...everywhere around here is fully like you can't, you have to go on a waitlist. So for my oldest, he went in first...And then from my youngest, he was four months old when he went in and I was waitlisted before he was even born...So I knew I was going to need childcare for him, so needed to get on it right away. But yeah, there's not. There's not a daycare in-home or a center anything around here that you can just call up...They wanted me to put my kids up into two different centres, which were like on the complete opposite end of the city (Mimi)

...before I had my newborn, my work changed, my work schedule changed and I was no longer able to pick my son up from school. He was in school part time last year, and I was supposed to be leaving early to go pick him up. And my work was no longer allowing that, so I had to try and find before and

after school care for him. I see there was...there was nothing available for his age. He was four years old, turning five and there was nothing available. Everybody there was a big, long waiting lists ...He might get in for September and there were no guarantees of anything (Violet)

It became even harder for kindergarten because school days are shorter. We thought we'd get a break then. When we tried...to find before and after school care...we were....we were told that the waitlist was over a year long. And it was almost half the cost of the daycare (Veronica).

Finding childcare regardless of the cost was a huge challenge for the people we spoke to. Many women and 2SLGBTQIA+ parents included in the study discussed having to wait multiple months and up to a year to access childcare. For women and 2SLGBTQIA+ parents who were aware of this challenge, they placed their child on a wait list before they were born. For others, who attempted to find care shortly after giving birth, they found almost all places were constantly at capacity and not accepting more children. When there were daycare spots available there were often very far away from people's homes or jobs. As Veronica reflects, this problem was not resolved when their child entered primary school. They not that they continued to have problems with access and with cost. This finding adds another layer to our understanding of the challenges Métis people face when accessing ELCC programming.

v. Issues in accessing accessible ELCC program for Métis children with disabilities/accessibility needs

Families with special needs also encountered a unique set of challenges when accessing daycare. For many women having a child with a disability was a double-edged sword. While initially the diagnosis provided additional supports, day cares were often reluctant to take on these new students and the unique challenges.

I think that because we know I'll say it was, if anything, because I accept daycare. That's how they were identified in time for us to be able to have subsidized preschool. So only because he was in the first day home and the lady was just opening the book as she was studying early childhood development. If she would not have been in that setting, I would have not realized that there was anything different. Having just one child, so on and amongst the other kids there, that's how he got the support that he needed. So he got a diagnosis for Tourette syndrome fairly early on to get any support that he needed or to give us his parents some insight on how to help manage. So had he not been in daycare? You know, I think that we would have had a lot more challenge. So that's another reason why I hope that at some point there's like equal access to it for every child and not about the parents, but it should be about the children having equal access to it the same way they have equal access to school. (Sandy)

So they actually, because of she has some behavioral issues, they were going to kick him out of childcare because of them. So, I actually had to provide a lot of written documents and assessments in order for them to let him stay...He's autistic...he does qualify for an aid and respite care and stuff like that. Yeah, the government have come into the care, they care for him. And for that, he qualifies. He qualifies for the childcare to provide extra care for him to have so little care just for himself while he's there. But they don't have any funding left to give (Mimi)

Sandy and Mimi Provide two opposite perspectives on having a child with special needs. Sandy for example, was able to access additional resources to pay for childcare and other classes for her son

after he was diagnosed with the disability. Mimi had the opposite experience. The daycare where her son was attending attempted to expel him because of behavioral issues linked to autism. Once diagnosed, she applied for other supports via the federal and provincial government. However, funding to provide resources to children with special needs had run out in her province. Given this, she was unable to access these added supports. Having children with special needs made finding care even more difficult. Additionally, neither of these women were able to access disability related supports through an indigenous based organization. The urgent need for further research in this area, and for further targeted support, cannot be overstated.

vi. Importance of traditional teachings, knowledge, and language for children

The Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people we interviewed, along with the survey respondents, echo what Graham and Davoren write with respect to their interviews with Métis parents on the parent-child relationship. Graham and Davoren note:

The importance of raising children in a way that exposed them to Métis culture/traditions and ensuring they were raised to have a sense of pride in their Métis identity was frequently identified as a parenting priority. Activities such as hunting, participation in community and family gatherings, learning or passing down a traditional language, being exposed to traditional teachings, and spending time on the land were just some of the activities that were cited as being important components of positive Métis parenting.⁹⁵

Given that more and more Métis families are becoming dependent on early learning and childcare programs, their children spend the majority of their days in either home daycares, centre-based daycares, or kindergarten classrooms with non-Métis teachers and caregivers. Yet fostering land relations are essential from the earliest years because as one Métis parent states in the report issued by Graham and Davoren:

You have to ground yourself in the earth and I really do believe that feeling that connection spiritually, and perhaps physically on occasions, is definitely an important factor; feeling like you're from the land... We are Indigenous peoples; we're not something that came later. We are Indigenous, we were here and I think that's it.⁹⁶

Further, language is directly connected to traditional knowledge and culture, and is an area of central importance to ELCC for Métis children. Given that a child's linguistic abilities are formed in the early years, the lack of exposure to Michif and other Indigenous languages spoken by Métis families, and at a young age, is highly detrimental. As one respondent in Graham and Davoren's study reflects: "to inherit that skill and that knowledge that's so embedded in language...Language is so fundamental to your worldview."⁹⁷ Whereas prior to the imposition of colonial policies and the disruption of Métis family life, children would learn languages in the home and through conversation with family members, Métis children today spend the bulk of the day separated from their parents and dependent on (largely) non-Indigenous caregivers to develop their language skills. In ELCC programs that run in English and/or French, whether at the preschool or kindergarten levels, the lack of Métis language exposure contributes to the further move towards the extinction of Métis peoples' traditional languages.

⁹⁵ Graham and Davoren, 18.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

The participants noted that “learning about Métis culture and transitions” was central and essential to any Métis child’s education, with “Elders and traditional knowledge holders” seen as “being important to educating Métis both inside and outside of formal school settings.”⁹⁸ In addition, Graham and Davoren outline that Métis parents reported that land-based learning or “learning on and from the land” and “recovering and passing on traditional languages” is essential.⁹⁹ Yet one of the biggest challenges they encountered was a lack of Métis cultural teaching in their childcare locations. Respondents noted that they did not have access to Métis teachings as children and saw this same dynamic playing out with their children and grandchildren. Caretakers felt it was extremely important to pass down Métis teachings to their children, but they received no help from their children’s daycare and early learning facilities. Additionally, none of the people we interviewed had met a Métis teacher or early childhood educator.

I found it really hard to leave a small child...it was actually a little bit triggering to send my child to the daycare for the first while, and there wasn't really an avenue to talk about it or feel supported in that. And I didn't really like the preschool system. They have their own experience and approach, and their thinking is like, it's better for the kids if you just drop them off and leave. (Mary)

(we need) definitely something at minimum that is like...But like what they have in Toronto, in the bigger cities, it would be great to have something like that. I mean, where the numbers warranted...But I also think if I'm OK with, you know, my child having a balance of learning about teaching and making content with other Indigenous kids, like as long as there is some kind of balance there, I would be OK with that. But I mean, if I lived in a place where you know, the numbers warranted it and it would have enough kids, yeah, then that would be great for us to be able to, you know, put our kids in a childcare where they grew up with our (Métis) traditions and culture and values...And I thought it was interesting because it's a very multicultural daycare. And they're conscious inclusion of as many cultures as I think they have represented working there or in the student population...So like when you would walk in the daycare, they would have “Welcome” in all these different languages. But there were no Indigenous languages, no welcome. (Veronica)

You know, growing up...I'm 34, but growing up, like, I didn't know anything about my culture...I'm just kind of starting to learn just now my age, and it's important for me to be able to pass that information on to my children. So, you know...it's important for everybody to be aware of the culture [at daycare] (Violet)

Mary shares her experiences leaving her child at a typical daycare. While the services provided were adequate, they did not have a focus on Indigenous culture or traditions. Given this they often instructed Mary to “leave right away” even if her child cried and screamed. She found this extremely triggering given her and her family’s experiences with trauma. Veronica reflected on the existing daycares of First Nations-specific childcare but not Métis specific care. She, like Violet, felt that Métis teachings were completely integral to raising her child. However, her daycare did not provide these teachings. Given this she had to teach her child about Métis culture on her own. Additionally, she noted the discrepancy between the various cultures represented in her child’s daycare. While this location embraced multiculturalism, it did not provide access to any Indigenous cultures. Mary, Veronica, Violet, and the other women we spoke to discuss the importance of childcare locations providing Indigenous cultural teachings and Métis specific teachings as a whole.

vii. Impacts on Métis women and 2SLGBTQIA+ parent’s health and well-being

Challenges with childcare affected women in various ways. Many noted that these challenges negatively affected their mental and physical health. Given the cost of childcare the women we interviewed worked over 40 hours a week.

⁹⁸ Graham and Davoren, 21.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

Interview participants like Katrina noted that they were working 3 different jobs to cobble together enough working hours to make ends meet, living in an area with few opportunities for stable, full-time employment that would accommodate her need for childcare based on a 9-to-5 workday. The extent to which Métis women and 2SLGBTQIA+ parents must work meant that this left little time to spend time with their children or take care of themselves.

Oh, so you kept me out of the loop socially too with my friends, because sometimes there just wasn't even enough cash to put in the car, to drive across town to go visit somebody. So things like that. I mean, it's OK now that maybe it was me, the way I felt... Well, it makes me feel sometimes it was really depressing, quite frankly, to be working so hard and have so little to show for it (Sandy)

You know, so I think that it has affected me in a way I worry about different things that I probably never would have worried before. (Sammy)

The women in these narratives describe the spillover effects of their challenges accessing childcare. For many, the exorbitant cost of paying for these services meant that they became increasingly isolated. They had no money to visit friends, go out for a meal, or engage in social activities outside of the home. Yet kinship, visiting, and social relations are centrally important components of a Métis person's health and well-being.

viii. Challenges with respect to employment

In addition, given the constraints of childcare many women experienced trouble in the workplace as well. While employees were initially understanding that parents might have to leave early, they eventually became frustrated and would ask Métis women and 2SLGBTQIA+ parents to find alternatives that did not involve leaving work early.

Oh, it was difficult. I mean, I've got my work putting pressure on me to, you know, if I hadn't been pregnant and going on maternity leave, I think they would have possibly even terminated me. I don't know if I couldn't have made that work (Violet)

Respondents like Sammy, describe the all-around heightened anxiety around working a job, dropping off their child and picking them up on time. These challenges negatively affected the experiences of Métis' women physical and mental health. This is one of the many understudied repercussions of childcare challenges have for the women we interviewed and other Métis women.

ix. Perspectives and feelings about lack of support

Overall the people included in this research did not feel supported when raising their children. Despite the existence of some help via provincial governments and federal entities as well as indigenous based organizations the woman we spoke to largely felt on their own When it came to finding care for their children. We asked, "do you feel supported" and respondents shared the following:

I felt very unsupported ...if you don't have your extended family around you... then you don't feel supported in that way. I don't have access to my extended family and then the like, the support that you look to orient you from Indigenous organizations, like we don't even have any, uh, we don't have a friendship center where I work. We don't have any like Métis organizations where I live. So you're just kind of on your own and you can feel kind of just like floating out there without any sort of cultural base or support. (Veronica)

...yeah, yeah, for sure. So having a child and in a small town, I don't have family here or anything like that. I'm like I have coworkers, but I only knew them for two years prior to keeping that need. So...I don't really have a great social support to fall back on here. (Sammy)

I think it would have been nice to have a little bit more just because we didn't have family. Thank goodness it was a two-parent household. So, you know, there were some days when it was a struggle between, you know, work your tired, all the household responsibilities and goals and whatnot, and then the kids, if they're having bad days or if they're sick. So it would have been nice, some little bit more support (Mary)

No, I did it myself. My husband and I, you know there was no extra funding...we need to help us. We were here on our own. We saw...we were on our own (Nena)

The people included in this study generally felt unsupported as parents and in the larger process of looking for childcare and early learning options for their children. Respondents largely attributed this to a lack of family support. They also discussed living away from the Métis homeland which meant there was less family support, less access to the culture, and less support from Métis community in general. Respondents also noted that they received little to no support from both government organizations and entities and from Indigenous based services in their respective region. The lack of indigenous based services was particularly acute for those living in areas with significantly less members of the Métis community and Métis specific organizations. For the most part women did not feel supported. However, if they did it was based on informal supports by family. However, women who did not have family in the area struggled more compared to their peers.

x. Perspectives on Métis-specific ELCC programming

One of the central themes that emerged was Métis women and 2SLGBTQIA+ parents' desire for a Métis specific early learning and childcare programs. Métis respondents also discussed having these locations be open to all Indigenous children. However, they wanted the content and teachings to be focused on Métis culture. When we asked, "how do you feel about Métis specific childcare?" the people we interviewed shared the following:

Oh, I think it's a good idea (Sandy)

I think it probably would be nice, because then they would get the cultural teaching...and I think it's also about inclusion, whether you're Métis, First Nations or Inuit (Mary)

That would be great. However, like, I don't want my child to feel excluded, but you know what I mean? Like, I don't know, be like, oh, if he's only just with Métis people like, I think it's supposed to be like an inclusive thing. Um, I see I had the benefit of, you know, attending a conference where the Early ON programming offered daycare for my child and it was Métis-specific with a Métis-specific cultural activity (Sammy)

I think that would be wonderful, because then they could teach them a lot of things...So that they can do you know they're going to be do some of the languages and certainly learn about the culture (Nena)

The individuals included in this study demonstrated their support Métis specific childcare and any learning programs. They cited their desire for children to learn about Métis culture and language. Many of the people we spoke to reflect on the fact that they did not have this opportunity to learn about their culture growing up. And that as a whole, they have to teach children about their Métis heritage and practices on the individual basis which can be very challenging given modern-day constraints.

Parents also noted that they wanted these programs to be available to all Indigenous children and in some cases the children of settlers. Given Wendy's experiences as discussed earlier, she felt that it was particularly important that ELCC programming be multicultural, so that other children can learn to develop respect for Métis:

...the only way I can describe to you, I think I don't agree with it because I think it's unfair. I think children are children and children learn from us. Mm-hmm. And what they see is what they learn. And if you keep little Native children all to their own without seeing Black people or white people or Chinese people, you know it's so...(Wendy)

We can see from Wendy's impassioned perspective that for some Métis it remains important that Métis children learn alongside non-Métis kids. Violet likewise expressed a similar sentiment:

...I think so because, you know, racism purposes, it's important for everybody to be aware of the cultures, not just meeting, but other cultures. Canada is a multicultural society (Violet)

However, even for those who expressed hesitation with the notion of Métis-exclusive ELCC programs because of the impacts of racism (and the potential for deepening anti-Métis racism), the desire for Métis-specific content was important, the people we spoke to were hyper aware of excluding individuals in need, especially other Indigenous children. At the same time, however, at least one interviewee reflected on their struggle to access Métis-specific preschool education because they felt that both status and non-status Indians (First Nations) were prioritized:

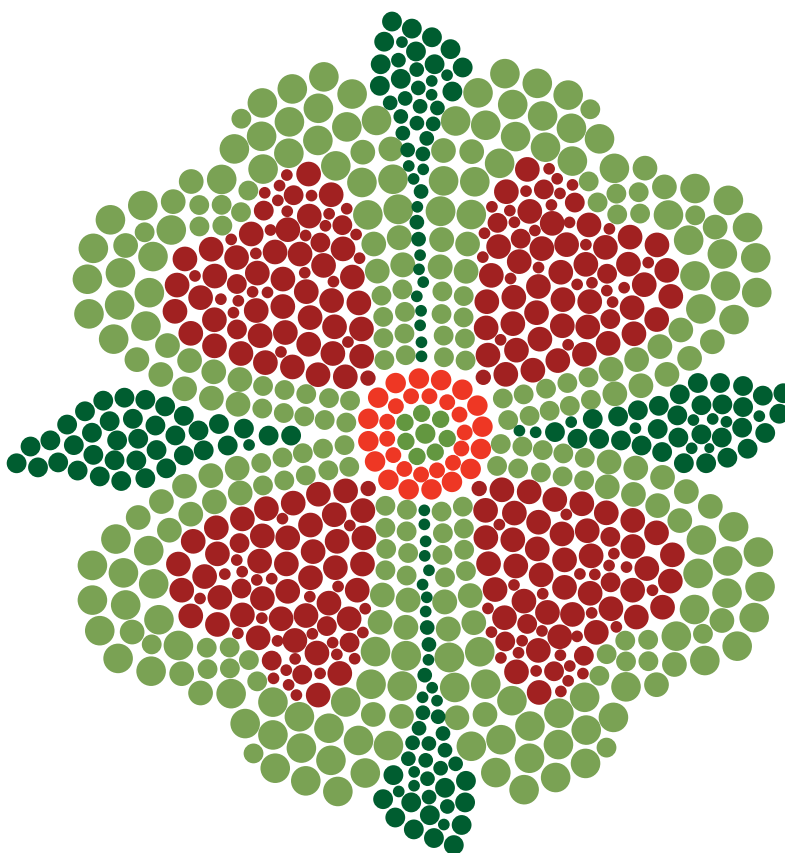
That's what it was with the [Metis] Child and Family Services in Calgary. They all...they had the preschool. And every time I went in, it was all status and non-status Indians, and I'm the only person with, you know, Metis background. I brought my lineage. I carry in all my information and know we need to prioritize these people above you. And the thing is, your status, your status. You know, you have program and I know you have programs and services for you, but it just feels like that [Metis] people were so forgotten (Katrina)

Katrina's observation that programs created for Métis often fill up with status and non-status Indians (First Nations) before Métis can register their children, echoes what Métis interviewees reflected on in our housing project research. As with housing programs for Métis that were often at capacity in assisting First Nations peoples, so, too, do ELCC programs with an open-access policy reach capacity that ends up excluding Métis children. For Katrina, while they do not want to see **any** Indigenous child without care, they expressed confusion that First Nations generally have more programs available to them and those programs exclude Métis, while Métis programs are open and inclusive, leading to, in fact, the further exclusion of Métis.

xi. Interviewees suggestions for improvement

The woman we spoke to make a series of suggestions for how to improve early learning and childcare for Métis children and families. The first and perhaps the most overarching theme was the need to include Métis culture and language into these programs. All of the woman we spoke to noted that there were no Métis teachings or Métis educators at their childcare facilities. While some women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ parents were able to advocate for some cultural teachings and Indigenous-based learning, it oftentimes rested on them solely to make these changes happen or organize cultural events. Additionally, these suggestions were not always well received. The people we interviewed described the need for a Métis specific subsidy program to help families and children. They noted that a well-funded subsidy for Métis families would alleviate some of the enormous fees associated with childcare. The people we spoke to noted that the cost of childcare was simply unsustainable. And that there was a need for systematic and structural change to make accessing childcare affordable for Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ parents, and for other marginalized families as a whole.

Given the multiple challenges we described here, many of the people interviewed had to make difficult choices about childcare. The first, was deciding to put off work as a whole. Participants noted that they would be losing money by going to work given the high price of childcare. Others depend on informal means of childcare. This included a friend or family member or an informal childcare facility that often existed in someone's home. Other simply resigned themselves to accepting subpar childcare. This included places who would not follow provincial regulations for providing care to children. Additionally, the most common theme reflected in the interviews was a deep sadness, concern, and frustration at the absence of Métis cultural teachings and educators.



9. Environmental Scan

Until very recently, there has been a significant absence of culturally appropriate ELCC programming for Métis children, with greater emphasis placed on First Nations cultures within ELCC initiatives. While some work has been undertaken to address this, notably through various provincial developments under the banner of the Métis Nation Early Learning & Child Care (ELCC) Accord, signed by the Métis Nation and the Canadian federal government in 2019, there is still a great deal of work to be done, as what is currently in place is nowhere close to sufficient to meet both the need and demand for Métis ELCC programming. In the following section we review Métis-specific ELCC initiatives, many of which have been furthered by the terms and funding associated with the Accord. While there are pan-Indigenous ELCC programs, as interview participants reflected, they were often inaccessible, as interviewees felt they prioritized First Nations families and culture. Further, within each province we examined there are other initiatives and programs offered by respective Métis organizations that dovetail with ELCC programming, but that are not directly a part of the core needs we have identified with respect to childcare programming. Programs and initiatives such as pre- and post-natal support, and related cultural programming, while important, are nevertheless outside of the scope of this scan as not directly implicated in the formal/institutional educational journey addressed within the reach of ELCC.

Ontario

The Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) offers a Child Care Subsidy Program to families in where one family member is a registered member with the Métis Nation of Ontario, residing within Ontario. MNO channels funding to childcare centres (and in some cases private childcare providers) on behalf of eligible families. The program provides Métis families with financial support in order to access childcare services, with amounts of aid determined by the specific needs of individual families.¹⁰⁰ The program thus offers financial assistance to families based on the financial picture of families. The program is limited, however, in that subsidy amounts are also contingent on the number of families who apply in any given year. The program is geared towards families with children aged 0-4 attending childcare centres, and families with children aged 4-12 who may need before and after-school childcare programming. If families are applying for more than one child, they must submit separate applications for each child. In cases where the applicant is looking for subsidy for a private childcare provider (such as an unlicensed home-based provider), the provider must be approved by MNO. In the case of a home-based provider, applicants must submit references for their preferred provider and complete an unlicensed childcare form. With respect to the average coverage rates provided for unlicensed or in-home care, the MNO covers various per day amounts based on the child's age. Additionally, for families with multiple children, families will receive reimbursement based on the age of the youngest child plus 10% per child for the remaining children. Funding is also based on provincial and regional averages that are reviewed annually. As of the time of this report, the program is at full capacity and is accepting waitlist applications.

¹⁰⁰ *Child Care Subsidy Program*. (2022, June 20). Métis Nation of Ontario. <https://www.metisnation.org/programs-and-services/education-training/early-learning-and-child-care/child-care-subsidy-program/>

The Child Care Stipend Program was created by MNO to financially support Métis families. This program is based on the COVID-19 Child Care Support Program that was implemented to help families that could not access childcare services.¹⁰¹ It offers fixed payments for parents who need childcare support but do not have the resources to access them. Families with children that are ages 0-4 (and unable to attend school) receive a \$150/week stipend, while families that require before or after-school care for their school-aged children (4-12) receive a stipend of \$50/week.¹⁰² The program is also available for holidays or days when schools are not open, providing a stipend of \$150 per family.¹⁰³ The Child Care Stipend Program allows Métis parents an opportunity to offset some of the costs associated with childcare. As with other programming, at least one parent or child must be a part of the Métis Nation of Ontario and the family must live in Ontario.¹⁰⁴ The parents must be working, in school, or have medical concerns. Therefore, if there is a stay-at-home parent in the situation, they will not meet the program's requirements.¹⁰⁵ Although stipend amounts and conditions are included on the MNO website, little information is provided on how the stipend works on a case-case basis especially for extended childcare needs. Once an applicant is set up, they can remain in contact with an Early Learning and Child Care program coordinator if any childcare situation changes. Furthermore, according to the MNO website, the review process for eligibility takes about 3-4 weeks and those approved will receive notice through email. While the program seeks to cover childcare needs, there is no guarantee for reimbursement of already paid external childcare expenses. Thus, during the time a family applies for the program and gets approved, coverage is not guaranteed. As with the Subsidy program, at the time of writing this report, the program is at capacity and only accepting registrants for the waitlist.¹⁰⁶

As part of the Early Learning and Child Care Program, the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) offers the Extra-Curricular Reimbursement Program. Its main purpose is to support Métis families with young children by helping Métis families cover extra-curricular fees and extra-curricular equipment for their children.¹⁰⁷ It works as a reimbursement program; therefore, it does not pay extra-curricular fees in advance. This means parents must be able to pay all fees upfront and then provide receipts as proof of purchase in order to receive reimbursement from the MNO. This program is exclusively first come, first served program with a set maximum for funding available. Applicants are able to apply multiple times as long as funding is available. To qualify for this program, the child must be between the ages of 0-12, must reside in Ontario and either the parent or child must be a citizen of the Métis Nation of Ontario. It is important to note that the reimbursement amount is based on each child's year of birth and funds are not transferrable between children. Families must apply for each child separately. Additionally, there are various limitations in terms of the equipment covered by the program. While the program seeks to reimburse extra-curricular, it solely covers mental and physical activities. Thus, after school educational supports or school tutors are not covered by this program. Families can only be reimbursed for receipts dated between April 1, 2022, to March 15, 2023, since this is a relatively new program and has set funding limitations. As of October 2022, the program has now closed as the maximum allocation has been reached.

¹⁰¹ "Childcare Stipend Program." *Métis Nation of Ontario*. 20 June 2022. <https://www.metisnation.org/programs-and-services/education-training/early-learning-and-child-care/child-care-stipend-program>

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ *Extra-curricular reimbursement program*. Métis Nation of Ontario. (2022, August 11). Retrieved October 18, 2022, from <https://www.metisnation.org/programs-and-services/education-training/early-learning-and-child-care/extra-curricular-reimbursement-program/>

MNO also offers an Education Support Advocacy Program with a more expansive mandate, offering help to families with children from kindergarten to grade twelve. The program aims to enhance the learning and educational experiences of school-aged Métis children.¹⁰⁸ It offers organized Zoom sessions to help families support their children on their educational journey. It offers support in the following areas: Attendance, Suspensions, Social isolation, Individual Education Planning, Behavioural Planning, Specialized placement for children with exceptionalities, Mental health or learning disabilities, Communications with the school, and Reaching academic potential. The program's Parent Education Workshops are a series of both educational and interactive sessions that take place throughout the school year. Having this resource tailored to guide parents and caregivers into advocating for their child's education can have significant long term community effects as its meant to support parents through the challenges that may arise within Métis children's experiences with public education. This program takes place over Zoom and is free for those who would like to take part. To qualify for these resources, a member of the family must be a part of MNO, there must be a child in kindergarten to grade twelve, must register online through email, and they must have access to the internet. They must therefore be comfortable navigating in a digital environment. The Education Support Advocacy Program, although not a childcare service, provides parents with guidance when a child requires additional support in school. It is also worth noting that the program is open to grandparents who may be guardians of their grandchildren. Since this program runs solely as an online tool, the access to these resources is very limited.¹⁰⁹

Alberta

The Metis Nation of Alberta (MNA) Children and family services department focuses on providing culturally appropriate opportunities for Metis Families to develop and maintain strong connection with community, programs, and services. The Oskaya Ayamichikewak Young Readers Program helps to maintain the culture of storytelling in the Metis community and to build a foundation of learning and literacy for Metis readers of age four years old or younger.¹¹⁰ To receive a book every month, parents/guardian applications or children must be an MNA citizen to register for the young readers program. While there are a number of cultural programming and educational support initiatives, such as the Oskaya Ayamichikewak Young Readers Program, we were unable to find Métis-specific ELCC programs, such as daycare/preschool or before/after school offerings. We were also unable to identify any Métis-specific, targeted subsidy or stipend programs at the time of this report. In 2021, however the Rupertsland Institute (RLI) a non-profit organization that is affiliated with MNA, issued a proposal to create an early learning education and childcare training program guided through a Métis expert focus group. The focus group would help guide the development of ELCC for Métis children.¹¹¹ In 2020, RLI announced a \$1.48 million endowment to help support Métis citizens entering into studies related to early learning and childcare at Alberta post-secondary schools. According to the press release the purpose is to “create a body of maintain professionals to provide ELCC services to Métis citizens across Alberta.”¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ *K-12 Education Initiatives*. (2022, October 10). Métis Nation of Ontario. <https://www.metisnation.org/programs-and-services/education-training/k-12-education-support/>

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ “Oskaya Ayamichikewak Young Readers Program.” *Métis Nation of Alberta*. 2022. <https://albertametis.com/programs-services/children-family-services/oskaya-ayamichikewak-young-readers-program>

¹¹¹ “Request for Proposal.” *Rupertsland Institute*. 2021. https://www.rupertsland.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Expert-Focus-Groups_FINAL.pdf

¹¹² Rupertsland Institute announces new funding, including two new endowments, for Métis post-secondary students in Alberta. *Canadian Newswire*. 29 October 2020. <https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/rupertsland-institute-announces-new-funding-including-two-new-endowments-for-metis-post-secondary-students-in-alberta-802974886.html>.

Fort Chip Métis Local 125, however, has been involved in a partnership with local First Nations to build a licensed daycare. The community had been without a formal daycare for 5 years.¹¹³ Care had previously been offered through a day home provider, with the ability to accept no more than 6 children. The licensed daycare centre would, by contrast, be able to register up to 40 children. For Métis women and 2SLGBTQIA+ parents, the consequences of the lack of accessible childcare have often meant, as we have previously written, a disappearance from the formal labour force.

Although outside of the scope of our focus in this report, it bears mentioning that daycare programs have been established or are in development on Métis settlements - such as East Prairie, Elizabeth, and Fishing Lake. Fishing Lake Métis Settlement is home to the Lil Sash Daycare for children ages 0-5.¹¹⁴

Metis Calgary Family Services (MCFS), as an independent non-profit Indigenous organization (formed in 1992), has expanded to offer ELCC programming. They provide a parenting support - Native Network Parent Link Center, which is a government funded initiative that aims to focus on early development from ages 0-6 in Alberta. The goal of the MCFS is to offer parenting programs that support services such as nutrition programs, baby needs, clothing donations, and ensuring children are developing appropriately. They also offer a Little Turtle Preschool program which is free of cost for Indigenous children aged 3-4 years, and it consists of time with elders, storytelling, and drumming. As it requires children to be potty trained, it is presumably akin to a part-time/shorter drop-off program, rather than a full-time daycare centre.¹¹⁵ Further research would need to be undertaken to ascertain its precise structure. MCFS also does offer childcare centres within the City of Calgary. In particular, it operates the pan-Indigenous focused Little Sundance Early Child Centre and is licensed to care for 70 children between the ages of 19 months and 12 years (including before/after school age care).¹¹⁶ Little Sundance offers Indigenous-centred programming that includes drumming, storytelling, and exposure to Indigenous languages - such as Michif, Blackfoot, and Cree. However, as of 2018, only approximately half of the children in attendance were Indigenous children.¹¹⁷ MCFS also operates the Little Métis Early Learning Centre in north Calgary the program also is a part of the province is \$25 a day network. Both daycares prioritize Indigenous culture and education within their operations.

Saskatchewan

The Metis Nation of Saskatchewan (MN-S) announced a large investment in early learning and childcare totaling up to 15 million dollars.¹¹⁸ The MN-S plans to invest \$15 million in ELCC, centred around five programs. The first program involves the creation of a childcare subsidy similar to what MNO offers. The childcare subsidy program would channel \$5.4 million to eligible Métis families, allowing them to access up to \$300 per month, per child, to offset the costs of childcare. The MN-S Child Care Subsidy program offers financial support to Métis families

¹¹³ Malfbeuf, Jamie. "Northern Alberta community getting its 1st daycare in 5 years." *CBC News*. 27 December 2021. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/fort-chipewyan-daycare-five-years-1.6294632>

¹¹⁴ "PAMINÂWASOW [LOOK AFTER CHILDREN]." *Fishing Lake Métis Settlement*. nd. <https://flms.ca/our-people/lil-sash-daycare/>

¹¹⁵ "Parenting Support - Native Network Parent Link Centre." *Métis Calgary Family Services*. nd. http://mcfs.ca/development/?page_id=354

¹¹⁶ "Services." *Métis Calgary Family Services*. nd. <http://mcfs.ca/services.html>

¹¹⁷ "Indigenous programming at affordable child centres." *Alberta Government*. 14 June 2018. <https://www.mmi-wg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/59.-Indigenous-programming-at-affordable-child-centres.pdf>

¹¹⁸ "Métis Nation-Saskatchewan Supports Families with a Ground-Breaking \$15 Million Investment," *paNOW*, July 28, 2022, <https://panow.com/2022/07/28/metis-nation-saskatchewan-supports-families-with-a-ground-breaking-15-million-investment/>.

currently registered through the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan registry. The program provides support to eligible families with children under the age of 12, who attend either a registered childcare, or a before and after school program. Families must provide proof of enrollment in the form of a letter from their childcare provider or early learning program and are eligible to receive \$300 monthly. The funding received under this program must be reported to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), and parents are provided with an annual T4A form by MN-S for the total amount paid each year. Métis families must apply twice a year to access the subsidy.¹¹⁹

The second program identified by MN-S, is the Early Years Accessibility Grant program. Through this grant program, MN-S will offer eligible Métis families up to \$5000 per year for children aged 0-8, who have particular accessibility needs and require specialized support.¹²⁰ Applicants need to have proof of need from a licensed physician or other medical professional, and will be able to access support for medical, therapeutic, and aid costs, such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, behavioral therapy, specialized orthopedics and technology aids, adaptive clothing or specialized nutrition support.¹²¹

MN-S also committed to the further expansion of its MN-S Early Learning Language programs, which offer language programming to Métis children and families in Heritage Michif, Northern Michif, and French Michif, and Cree. In addition MN-S announced a Community Enhancement Grant that would make up to \$50,000 available to Métis locals to aid in the development of language programming, engagement with elders, and land-based learning for children ages 0-8. In addition to such programming MN-S also created a backpack program a cultural program similar to that seen in other Métis Nation affiliates.¹²² The expansion of language programming by MN-S is significant and corresponds directly with some of the concerns raised by our interview participants about lack of access to early learning and childcare programs in Métis languages. The expansion of language programming in Saskatchewan for kindergarten aged children indicates an important pathway to addressing the staggering loss of Métis languages. According to MN-S its language programming now reaches through all 12 MN-S regions in the province and is offered in 17 schools, reaching over 600 children and families. While it is not clear whether these children are specifically Métis, it is assumed that a sizeable number would be.¹²³

About 1.5 million dollars was allocated in the Early Learning Backpack Program (also known as the Buffalo Learning Program). This program was designed for children who are between 0-13 years old. This program was created with the intent of enhancing early literacy while also promoting of Metis pride and culture through the distribution of cultural resources. As with other Métis Nation members, MN-S developed a backpack program containing cultural activity kits, books, school supplies and a t-shirt for older kids.¹²⁴ Younger children (specifically children under 5) will receive supplies such as baby blankets. While programs like this are welcomed

¹¹⁹ Child Care Subsidy Program,” Métis Nation Saskatchewan, accessed October 20, 2022, <https://metisnationsk.com/elcc/childcare/>.

¹²⁰ “Accessibility Grant Program,” Métis Nation Saskatchewan, accessed October 20, 2022, <https://metisnationsk.com/elcc/accessibilitygrant/>.

¹²¹ “Accessibility Grant Program Guidelines,” Métis Nation Saskatchewan, accessed October 20, 2022, <https://metisnationsk.com/elcc/accessibilitygrantguidelines/>.

¹²² “MN-S Invests \$15 Million in Métis Locals, Families, and Children.” *Métis Nation Saskatchewan*. 23 July 2022. <https://metisnationsk.com/2022/07/23/mn-s-invests-15-million-in-metis-locals-families-and-children/>

¹²³ “MN-S Language Program Expands Throughout Saskatchewan.” *Métis Nation Saskatchewan*. 20 September 2022. https://metisnationsk.com/2022/09/20/mn-s-language-program-expands-throughout-saskatchewan/?fbclid=IwAR0qiO8z2JbhLMhnyzdCQkIOFpurpVCVEFfuai1gatElpP3-0G_6gaWVDMk

¹²⁴ Backpack Program,” Métis Nation Saskatchewan, accessed October 20, 2022, <https://metisnationsk.com/elcc/backpack/>.

by the interviewees we spoke to, as previously discussed the primary focus/area of concern we repeatedly received feedback regarding was around accessibility and affordability of early learning and childcare spaces. Cultural programming is undoubtedly important, but merely filled gaps in the need for culturally appropriate care programs. at least some of this need is demonstrated in MN-S' creation, in 2020, of a COVID-19 emergency childcare bursary program, that would provide one-time payment of up to \$500 per Métis child, to a max of \$2500 per Métis family, to support Métis Nation Saskatchewan families with emergency childcare needs.¹²⁵

British Columbia

Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) has made notable strides with respect to the development and expansion of ELCC initiatives in the province. In April 2021, MNBC announced \$16.6 million for the expansion of ELCC programming and services.¹²⁶ This expansion is often twinned with housing initiatives, such as those we detailed in our housing report, and that are directly connected to the creation of urgently needed Métis-led childcare spaces.¹²⁷ In September 2021, MNBC purchased land in Kamloops to begin its work on building integrated housing, childcare, and office centres.¹²⁸ In October 2021, MNBC released information regarding plans to build “housing for Métis families, a Métis child care centre, and office space for the North Island Métis Association (NIMA).”¹²⁹ In November 2021, MNBC announced similar projects in Surrey (\$6 million) and Saanich (\$2.2 million).¹³⁰ When announced, the plan for both projects is that they would include early learning and child care space, along with office space for the MNBC local offices. The \$2.2 million Saanich project was directly funded in-part through the ELCC Accord, and MNBC's acting president indicated that integrated housing and childcare centres would be a priority for MNBC across all regions. Caitlin Bird, the then-acting president of the Métis Nation Great Victoria chapter issued a statement that “the vision is to create a space where Elders can connect with young people in the childcare centre as well as families and other community members.”¹³¹ MNBC and the Aboriginal Head Start Association of British Columbia partnered to open the Island Métis Childcare Centre in 2022. The Centre provides free childcare for Métis, First Nations, and Inuit families.¹³² Through the Aboriginal Head Start Program, families are able to access affordable childcare that caters to children's cultural needs. They offer programs for children ages 0-2 and children ages 3-5. The Infant and Toddler program (0-2) is able to care for 8 children at a time, providing them with learning that follows the Six Components of AHS (culture, language, education, health promotion, nutrition, parent & family involvement).¹³³ Their Pre-Kindergarten Program (3-5) provides children with various learning opportunities, developing their motor skills, self-image, and problem-solving abilities. They achieve these goals by offering the children culturally specific programming that allows

¹²⁵ “Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC).” Métis Nation-Saskatchewan. nd. <https://metisnationsk.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/7.-ELCC-Funding-Application.pdf>

¹²⁶ “MNBC Invests \$16.6 Million in Early Learning and Childcare.” Métis Nation British Columbia. <https://www.mnbc.ca/news/mnbc-invests-166-million-early-learning-and-childcare>

¹²⁷ “Our ancestors would be proud of us” 2022, 57.

¹²⁸ Peters, James. “Métis Nation BC buys downtown Kamloops property for \$3.8M, plans housing project.” CFJC Today. 25 September 2021. <https://cfjctoday.com/2021/09/25/metis-nation-bc-buys-downtown-kamloops-property-for-3-8m-plans-housing-project/>

¹²⁹ Campbell River Staff. “Métis Nation of BC to build below-market rental housing for Métis families in Campbell River.” *Vancouver Island Free Daily*. 28 October 2021. <https://www.vancouverislandfreedaily.com/news/mtis-nation-of-bc-to-build-below-market-rental-housing-for-mtis-families-in-campbell-river/>.

¹³⁰ Atkins-Baker, Megan. “Metis Nation targets families with rental housing, childcare project in Saanich.” *Saanich News*. 9 November 2021. <https://www.saanichnews.com/news/metis-nation-targets-families-with-rental-housing-childcare-project-in-saanich/>.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Island Métis Childcare Centre. Island Métis family & community services society. 2022. <https://metis.ca/island-metis-childcare-centre/>

¹³³ Ibid.

them to engage in their culture while addressing their developmental needs.¹³⁴ The Infant and Toddler programs are at capacity and operate with a waitlist, while at the time of writing this report, the Pre-Kindergarten Program has limited spaces remaining. We are unable to assess at this time what proportion of children in attendance are Métis, and whether the Centre makes a significant contribution to addressing childcare needs for Métis families. A similar project was announced in 2021 for Terrace, BC, following the \$850,000 purchase of “half an acre of land.”¹³⁵ In June 2022, MNBC hosted community engagement sessions with the Fort St. John Métis Society regarding plans for create a similar Métis childcare centre and housing project on properties MNBC purchased from the City of Fort St. John in 2021.¹³⁶ The commitment to integrated spaces comes closed to taking a holistic approach to addressing the interrelated crises of housing, poverty, lack of access to childcare, and cultural loss. Given that the urgent need to/for addressing these issues are present within this report, MNBC's approach provides a promising pathway in their ELCC work.

These initiatives are undoubtedly commendable and represent path-paving strides in addressing the ELCC needs of Métis children and their families. Some of the projects are not, however, without issue. In the first instance, as programs necessarily open to all Indigenous peoples, there appear to be no mechanisms in place to ensure that the need of Métis children and families are addressed. As reflected by our interviews in both this project and within our housing research, Métis women and 2SLGBTQIA+ parents noted that even programs designated for Métis often full up with other Indigenous peoples, before they are able to gain access. At the same time, they noted that First Nations-centered programs, particularly those for status First Nations, were exclusive and did not cater to Métis. A second concern lies wherein projects with integrated MNBC office spaces are built within the housing/childcare centre project. Our prior research tells us that without further research needs to be undertaken with Métis women and 2SLGBTQIA+ people with respect to their feelings on this particular construction plan, as it remains to be seen whether people will find it desirable to have integrated (presumably) politically-oriented offices in such proximity to childcare spaces and their homes.¹³⁷ For Métis women and 2SLGBTQIA+ parents with negative experiences with institutional structures and with political organizations, this has the potential for bringing up feelings among them that they and their children are being “monitored” or “observed.” Particularly for those Métis families who have had to deal with interventions from institutionalized child apprehension (protective) services, distrust may breed discomfort in such environments. This is potentially triggering and re-traumatizing and may act as a deterrent for those who might otherwise need access to such childcare and housing supports. Further research would be required to determine how decisions were made with respect to the inclusion of office space and if this is something that is responsive to the wants and needs of the most marginalized of the community.

MNBC also offers a range of ELCC cultural learning programs through its Métis Family Connections - Early Years initiative. It gives families access to early childhood development programs and learning opportunities. This is the entryway for Metis families to access other programs for financial support and childcare resources such as the Learn with Louis newsletter, and the Imagination Library.¹³⁸ The Métis Family Connections allows Metis families to connect with others, and access information about events for families and cultural resources. With respect to

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Link, Rod. “Métis purchase land for Terrace housing project.” 1 February 2022. <https://www.terracestandard.com/news/mtis-purchase-land-for-terrace-housing-project/>.

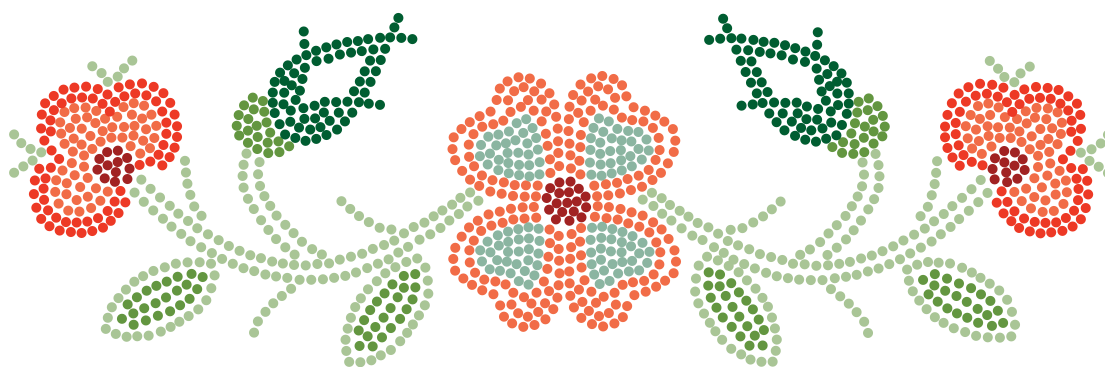
¹³⁶ Foster, Shailynn. “MNBC, FSJ Métis Society seeking feedback on housing and child care project.” *Energeticcity.ca*. 8 June 2022. <https://energeticcity.ca/2022/06/08/mnbc-fsj-metis-society-seeking-feedback-on-housing-and-child-care-project/>

¹³⁷ “Our ancestors would be proud” 2022.

¹³⁸ “Education: Early Learning K-12.” Métis Nation British Columbia. 2022. <https://www.mnbc.ca/work-programs/ministries/education-early-learning-k-12>

more targeted programming, MNBC also offers the Miyoopimatishihk (Wellbeing) Program, which offers financial support for Metis families with children under 8 years old and who have particular accessibility needs. The Miyoopimatishihk (Wellbeing) Program provides financial support to families with Métis children who may require “respite care, speech therapy, assessments, specialized equipment, mental health supports.”¹³⁹ Applicants must be a verified MNBC citizen, registered in the Métis Family Connections Program, and must complete an application form. The funding is issued according to the fiscal year (April 1-March 31), and approved applicants are able to receive up to \$5,000 per year, per child (with no family maximum).¹⁴⁰

In addition to targeted funding for Métis children with disabilities/accessibility needs and that can support Métis children in their ELCC journey, MNBC also offers a Métis Child Care Benefit Program that helps “families with Métis children birth to 12 years” to gain the childcare and support they need.¹⁴¹ This program focuses on Metis families in British Columbia as it serves to ease financial struggles associated with childcare costs. Applicants to the Métis Child Care Benefit Program are required to be an MNBC citizen, must be registered in MNBC’s Métis Family Connections Program, and must have applied for the Province of British Columbia’s Affordable Child Care Benefit program and childcare provider form.¹⁴² Eligible applicants will receive up to a maximum of \$500 per child, per month, for care with either a Licensed or License-Not-Required Child Care, and the amount is calculated on a monthly basis. For a Licensed Preschool, eligible applicants may receive up to \$12.50 per day, calculated on the basis of a daily rate.¹⁴³ In addition to a regular school years benefit program, MNBC also offers the Métis Winter and Spring Break Supplement, through their Métis Child Care Navigation and Support Program. Families with Métis children (ages 4-12), may apply for an receive a maximum of \$500 (in total) per child of additional funding for the school year.¹⁴⁴



¹³⁹ “Miyoopimatishihk (Wellbeing) Program.” Métis Nation British Columbia. 2022. <https://www.mnbc.ca/work-programs/programs-services/miyoopimatishihk-wellbeing-program>

¹⁴⁰ “Wellbeing Program FAQs.” Métis Nation British Columbia. nd. <https://www.mnbc.ca/sites/default/files/2022-07/Wellbeing-FAQs.pdf>

¹⁴¹ “Métis Child Care Benefit Program.” Métis Nation British Columbia. 2022. <https://www.mnbc.ca/work-programs/programs-services/metis-child-care-benefit-program>

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

10. Recommendations

There is an urgent need to address funding gaps, Métis-specific programming gaps, and Métis-led ELCC initiatives is ever more urgent to ensure that the call for this is being met. The absent or insufficient funding and support of such programming, amidst the pressures on Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ parents to continue taking part in the wage labour economy, is tantamount to pushing for the further assimilation of the Métis Nation.

LFMO recommends that the Government of Canada:

1. Fund the generation of further distinctions-based and gender disaggregated data collection regarding Métis early learning and childcare
2. Fund research that offers localized and in-depth analysis of the links between Métis experiences of oppression in historical and contemporary contexts and the effects on Métis early learning and childcare
3. Include Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ parents at tables, working groups and work undertaken to understand Métis-specific challenges with early learning and childcare needs
4. Commit to long-term, systemic change by putting in place Métis specific funding and supports for the construction of Métis early learning and childcare centres across the Métis Nation homeland
5. Commit to creating more Métis specific early learning and childcare programs. This includes engaging in consultation work with Métis families from the ground up, taking into account the system disadvantages they face
6. Commit to the expansion of short-term early learning and childcare solutions for Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ parents, with an expanded focus on immediate assistance for Métis girls, women, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, and their children, fleeing domestic violence and abuse
7. Provide funding to all Indigenous based organizations for the provision of Métis-specific services
8. Provide immediate additional funding for focused education and training support for Métis ELCCs, including full scholarships, living expenses, and housing supports
9. Develop targeted, permanent subsidized Métis-specific daycare programming that is responsive to, and reflective of local costs of living, housing, etc.
10. Develop targeted, permanent subsidized Métis-specific daycare programming and funding for Métis families who have children with disabilities and other special needs
11. Give back Métis land and commit funding for the rebuilding of historic Métis communities, particularly in the areas identified in this Report whereby the communities have suffered, and continue to suffer, greatly as a result of harmful government programming

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