

MANITOBA
KEEWATINOWI OKIMAKANAK INC.

PROGRAM
2024



REPORT
2025



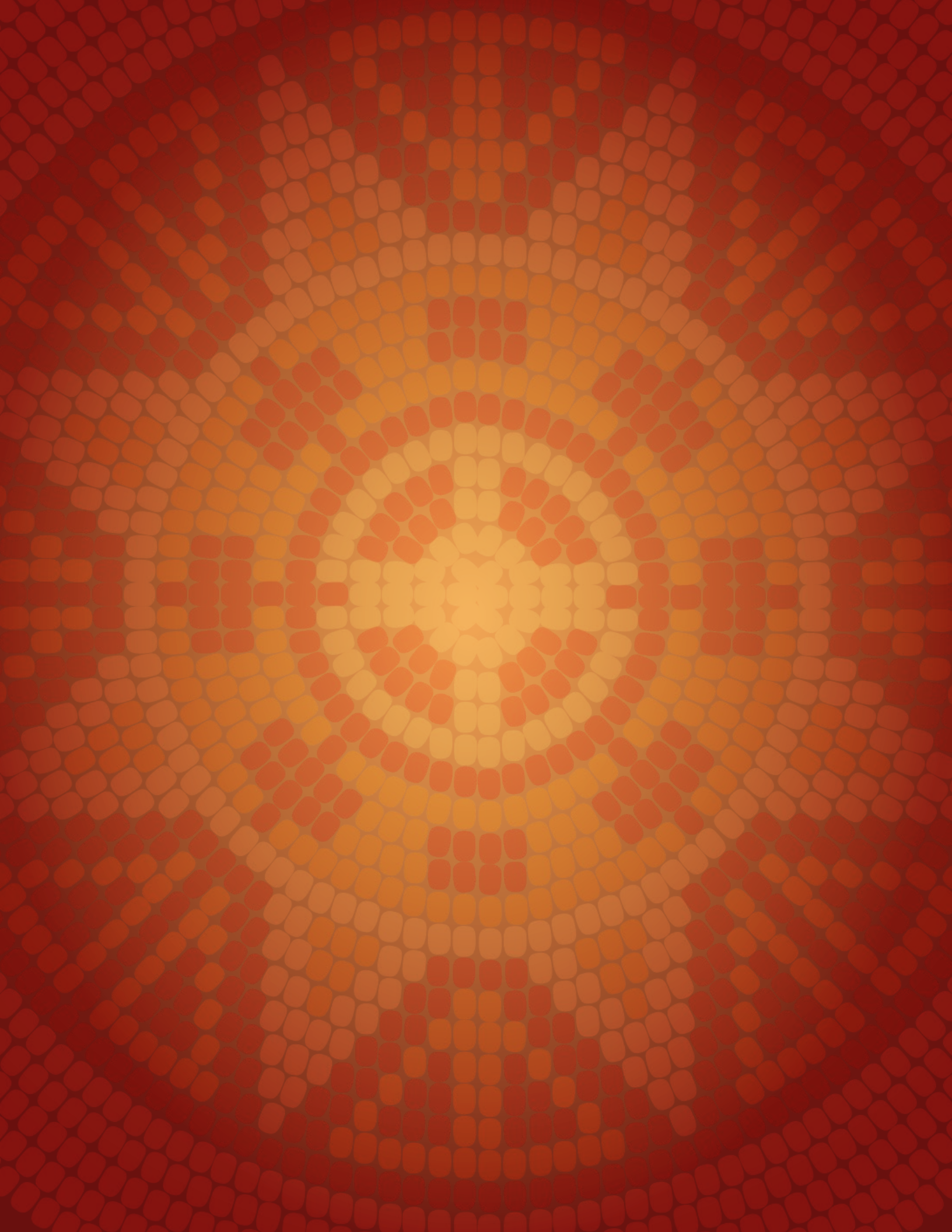


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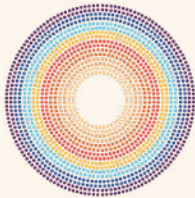
Executive Director’s Message



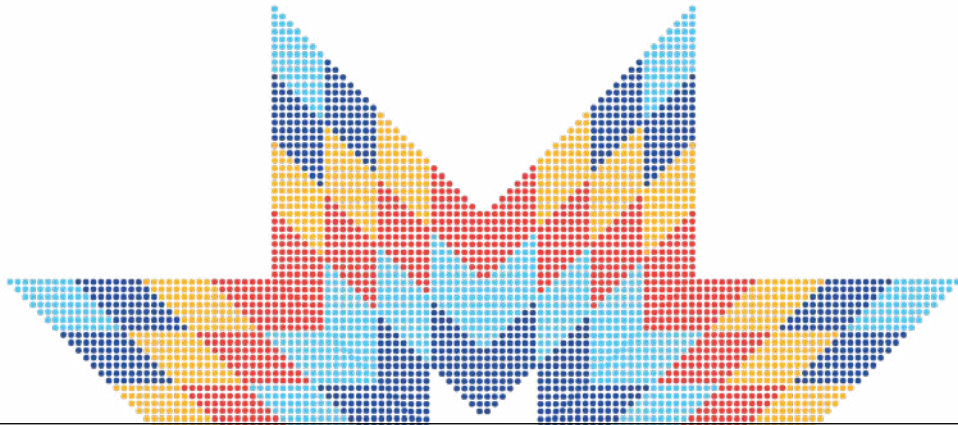
As the Executive Director, it is my honour to serve the sovereign First Nations that are a part of Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. (MKO). Each day, I am humbled by the strength, resilience, and vision of our leaders, Elders, youth, and community members. Together, we all share the sacred responsibility to protect our inherent rights, advance the well-being of our people and to preserve the strength of our Nations for generations to come.

MKO’s work is deeply rooted in the teachings and values passed down to us by our ancestors, those who came before us and laid the foundation for MKO. Guided by this knowledge, we continue to uphold the sovereignty and self-determination of the northern First Nations that we serve. While ensuring that essential support and advocacy in the areas of health, justice, emergency response, child and family well-being and other areas that improve the quality of life and well-being of northern Manitoba First Nations.

This past year has illuminated both the challenges we face and the opportunities before us. MKO leadership continue to navigate the ongoing impacts of colonial systems, climate change and economic barriers. Yet, we are also witnessing a powerful resurgence of First Nations knowledge, language revitalization, cultural pride, and community-driven innovations. MKO remains committed to walking alongside our leaders and citizens as First Nation’s remain steadfast in their rightful place, to build a future founded on strength and dignity.



I wish to acknowledge and sincerely thank the dedicated staff of MKO. Your tireless commitment, compassion, and professionalism are at the heart of our organization’s success. Whether you work directly with leadership and communities or provide vital support behind the scenes, your contributions ensure that we remain strong, effective, and responsive to the needs of MKO member Nations. I am proud to walk alongside such a devoted team.



This year, devastating wildfires forced the evacuation of numerous First Nations and impacted communities across the north. In the face of this crisis, MKO quickly mobilized to support First Nation leadership, working tirelessly to coordinate emergency response efforts and advocate for the needs and safety of evacuees. These wildfires are a stark reminder of the growing climate change crisis and its disproportionate effects on First Nations.

I extend my deepest gratitude to the Chiefs, Councils, staff, and partners who dedicate themselves every day to the betterment of your Nations. I also acknowledge the voices of our youth and the wisdom of our Elders, who guide us with hope, direction, and clarity.

As we move forward, MKO will remain a strong and united voice for the sovereign First Nations we represent. Together, we will honour the vision of the tireless advocates who came before us and empower our present, ensuring prosperity for future generations.

Ekosi, Masi Cho, Thank You.

Kelvin Lynxleg
Executive Director
Manitoba Keewatinowi
Okimakanak Inc.



Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Liaison Unit

MKO’s Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) Liaison Unit continues the important work of supporting families of missing and murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Survivors of Gender-based violence, and the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community in Manitoba. While doing this sacred work, the MMIWG Unit operates from a victim-centered, ensuring a respectful and dignified approach.

PROGRAM STATISTICS

During the 2024–25 fiscal year, the MMIWG Liaison Unit continued to receive a steady number of service requests for trauma-informed support, including emotional and cultural assistance, consistent with the previous year. The Unit remains committed to providing direct support to families while continuing to foster and strengthen relationships with community partners, advocates, and service providers across the province.

Our outreach efforts remained strong through both social media and virtual platforms, allowing the Unit to effectively share critical information with family members throughout Manitoba. The Unit also continues to liaise with organizations and agencies outside of Manitoba to assist with out-of-province requests for support, ensuring families receive coordinated and culturally safe assistance wherever they are located.

148

Total Number of Participants

544

Total Number of Interactions

(For fiscal Year April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025)

HIGHLIGHTS AND SUCCESSES

JANUARY 2025:

- The MMIWG Liaison Unit launched Rainbow Relations, a monthly 2SLGBTQQIA+ community drop-in in Thompson. Created in response to community calls for a safe and inclusive space. The gatherings promote peer support, mentorship, and cultural sharing among 2SLGBTQQIA+ families and individuals.



2020 - MARCH 2025:

- The MKO MMIWG Liaison Unit delivered the “Men and Boys Are Part of the Solution” project in northern Manitoba, supported by the Victims of Crime Grant. Through land-based, culturally rooted workshops and focus groups in 22 communities, the project engaged 120 male participants aged 10 to 66 in activities like drum making, ceremonies, and sweat lodges. It created safe spaces for men and boys to speak openly, many for the first time, and inspired several communities to start their own men’s healing circles. Despite logistical and language challenges, the project was well-received and sparked meaningful change.



FEBRUARY 2025:

- The MMIWG Liaison Unit partnered with Giganawenimaanaanig to provide health and wellness support services to families and community members as the Red Dress Alert pilot project engagement sessions launched across Manitoba. This collaboration ensured that culturally grounded, trauma-informed supports were available throughout the engagement process, helping to create safe spaces for participants to share their voices and experiences.



Balancing crisis response with systemic change requires strong partnerships with communities, service providers, and governments. Despite these challenges, the Unit remains committed to supporting families and survivors with compassion, dignity, and cultural integrity, while continuing to advocate for safer, more supportive environments.



THE PATH FORWARD

The MMIWG Liaison Unit continues to face complex challenges impacting service delivery and community engagement. A troubling rise in violence has deepened trauma and increased the demand for urgent, trauma-informed support. Resource limitations affect the Unit’s ability to meet growing service needs and sustain long-term healing initiatives. Balancing crisis response with systemic change requires strong partnerships with communities, service providers, and governments. Despite these challenges, the Unit remains committed to supporting families and survivors with compassion, dignity, and cultural integrity, while continuing to advocate for safer, more supportive environments.

MMIWG HOSTED EVENTS
(NOT ALL EVENTS INCLUDED)

- May 5th **National Day of Awareness for MMIWG2S+ / Red Dress Day** in Thompson, MB
- July 29- August 2, 2024 **Missing and Murdered Indigenous Men and Boys Healing Gathering**, in Winnipeg, MB
- July 14-19, 2024, **2nd Annual Gathering of Medicine Stones: Two-Spirit & Indigenous LGBTQIA+ Gathering**, Baker’s Narrows, MB
- In partnership with MKO Mobile Crisis Response Team and MKO Mental Wellness programs
- October 4th **Provincial Day of Awareness Walk**, Thompson, MB
- March 11-13th **9th Annual Healing Gathering**, Brandon, MB

NEXT STEPS

Our Unit will continue to uplift and support families of MMIWG, survivors of gender-based violence, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in Manitoba while moving forwards with regular activities, including hosting more workshops, events, and support groups, as well as making community visits to remote and isolated areas in Manitoba. We continue to seek additional resources and supports to expand delivery of their services and build resources for families and survivors.





First Nation Justice Strategy Program

Since the program’s establishment in 1997 The First Nation Justice Strategy (FNJS) has continued to grow and is currently home to the Community Justice Workers (CJW) Program, Indigenous Court Workers (ICW) Program, Justice Navigator Hub Program, and the Post Sentence Support Program (PSSP).

COMMUNITY JUSTICE

The FNJS continues to recognize the importance of incorporating traditional justice practices and community beliefs via community justice. These acts have included and must continue to include community participation for successful restoration of traditional justice practices and community growth. These practices will have an impact on supporting healing and harmony for individuals, kinships, and communities.

The program has witnessed momentum by incorporating First Nation and Western Justice ideologies in the communities, by means of the Healing Circles, ceremonial protocols in court, advisement/consultations, and ensuring traditional and religious items are available during court proceedings.

The Star Link initiative from last fiscal year remains important in the day-to-day operations for the program. The technology provides connectivity for program needs, to meet with clients, and training opportunities. Also, the equipment provides the opportunity for virtual court if required and will assist with the future pilot project “Lawyer Talk”.



COMMUNITY JUSTICE WORKERS

Community Justice Workers remain busy with case management responsibilities, facilitating programming, and providing support to clients, communities, and leadership. The CJW continue to grow their skill set by means of various training opportunities during the fiscal year.

Despite vacancies there are currently nine (9) community-based Community Justice Workers positions in the following First Nations and Thompson:

- 1. Chemawawin Cree Nation
- 2. Bunibonibee Cree Nation
- 3. Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation
- 4. Mathias Colomb Cree Nation
- 5. Northlands Denesuline First Nation
- 6. Manto Sipi Cree Nation
- 7. Mosakahiken First Nation
- 8. Sapotaweyak Cree Nation
- 9. Misipawistik Cree Nation

To ensure access to justice for First Nation members within the MKO region, the role of the Regional Community Justice Workers (RCJW) continues to support First Nations that are experiencing vacancies or do not have a CJW. The R/CJW continue to case manage diversion referrals from prosecution and law enforcement.

PATH FORWARD

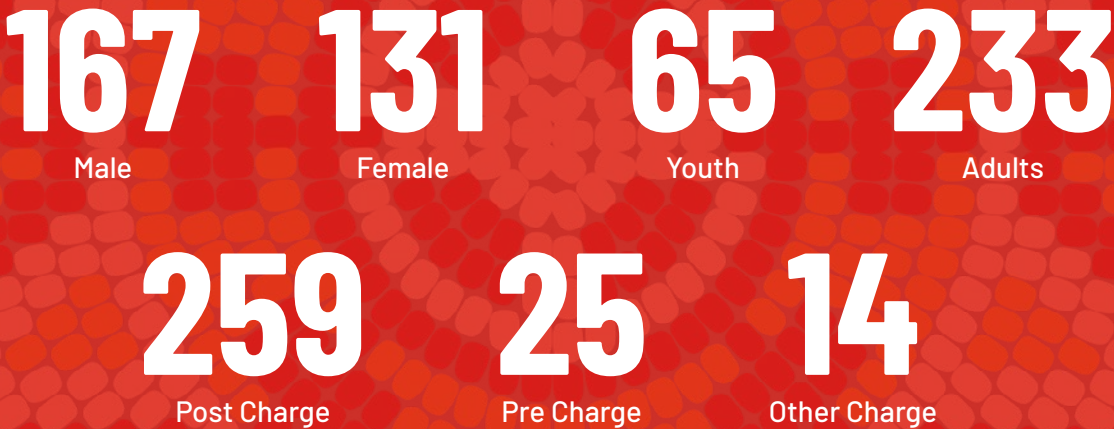
Through collective efforts the FNJS will continue to work alongside leadership, First Nations, communities, and partners on the path to a holistic model of community justice. A model that supports MKO Whole of Government Framework and MKO Safety and Justice Report recommendations. The program will also continue to support First Nations facilitate Justice Committees in their communities.



STATS

The program reported a total of 298 referrals from prosecutions (Federal and Provincial) and law enforcement (RCMP) for 2024-2025. Many of the referrals have been completed; however, some referrals remain in-progress due to a variety of reasons.

*Other Charges refers to the charge not being specified on the referral document.



Indigenous Court Worker Program

The Indigenous Court Worker Program transitioned from the Department of Justice to MKO in 2022-2023 to deliver services throughout Manitoba. The program provides culturally relevant services and supports to First Nation Peoples involved with the justice system. The transition of this program was to ensure greater access to justice and increased potential for connection to restorative justice programming.

MKO currently has three Court Workers who travel to First Nations within the MKO region and throughout Manitoba, attending court. They support not only individuals charged with offences but also with their families and communities, ensuring no one is left navigating the system alone.

COURT WORKERS

Court Workers do not offer legal advice; however, they provide essential legal information and guidance in helping people navigate their situation, understand their rights, and steps people can take. The role is vital, especially for those encountering the justice system for the first time. Throughout the court process, Court Workers will simplify the legal terminology, and advocate with lawyers and the judicial system to ensure context is considered. While outside the courtroom, Court Workers stay involved with clients and they know the barriers they face in the justice system.

In their role Court Workers ensure the process respects clients identity and tradition. Cultural and language support is provided to clients; this has a huge impact on peoples experience with the justice system.. This consistent presence of Court Workers before, during, and after court helps build trust and long-term support.

STATS

For the 2024-2025 fiscal year Court Workers provided support to 4855 individuals.

4153

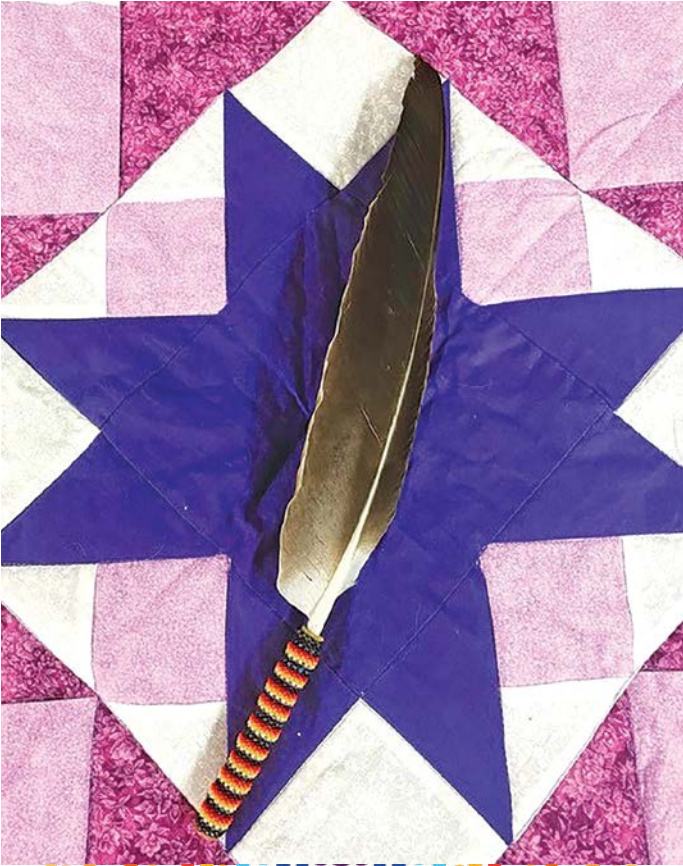
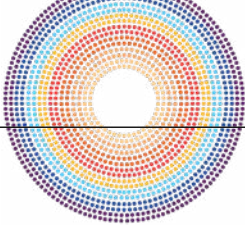
Adult Female
and Male

702

Youth Female
and Male

PATH FORWARD

The goal moving forward is to introduce Court Workers at the correctional centres, engage with youth at the future Healing Lodge in Thompson, and participate in outreach events. As well the work is foundational in creating an equitable experience for First Nation People and building a path that is grounded in both justice and culture.



Justice Navigator Hub Program

The Justice Navigation Hub aims to assist and offer guidance to individuals who are navigating the justice system and justice processes, particularly in areas of accessing services and engaging with courts. Support is available while attending court, tribunal hearings, inquests, and outside of court.

The program can include the following support but is not limited to,

- Information and Referral: provide accurate and up-to-date information on available services, programs, and resources.
- Advocacy and Support: support First Nations people in navigating complex systems and advocating for their needs.
- Community Engagement: facilitate collaborations between First Nations People, organizations, and stakeholders.
- Knowledge Exchange: share knowledge, best practices, and lessons learned across communities with individuals, families, and communities.

JUSTICE NAVIGATORS

The Justice Navigators guide individuals through the justice system and help them overcome barriers that prevent them from accessing the supports and information they need to overcome the processes and their experiences.

Navigators assist with applications to legal aid, connecting people with victim services, obtaining referrals to services (such as mediation, restorative justice). They also advocate on behalf of the clients when injustices are present.

MKO Justice Navigators include a coordinator and four positions. The positions are based in Thompson and The Pas.

PATH FORWARD

Based on the experiences from the current year we have identified the need for a presence of the Justice Navigators in custody centres and create a stronger outreach presence in the communities, potentially attending circuit court. Also, identified was the need for a resource directory that entails a comprehensive list of organizations, programs, and resources that serve First Nations.

Post Sentence Support Program

In July 2024, MKO secured funding for the implementation of The Post Sentence Support Program (PSSP) which marks a significant step forward the operationalization of the program. The goal of the program is to provide culturally responsive supports and interventions for post-sentenced individuals. The program will continue to build on the positive relationships formed with First Nations affiliated with MKO, leadership, and justice and policing stakeholders.

The PSSP will continue to strengthen its service delivery model, expand its reach across the MKO region, and advocate for systematic changes that support justice-involved individuals in their healing and reintegration journeys.

REINTEGRATION SUPPORTS

- The program will support reintegration efforts that reduce barriers to successful reintegration and promote long-term stability.
- Community-Based Support: partner with First Nation agencies, leadership, and justice stakeholders to provided wraparound services.
 - Family Reconnection: facilitate culturally sensitive supports for individuals reconnecting with family and community.
 - Resource Navigation: assist clients in accessing housing, employment, education, and health services.

PREVENTION ACTIVITIES

- The program will engage in a variety of prevention-focused initiations that aim at reducing recidivism. These activities will foster healing, accountability, and community safety through culturally grounded approaches.
- Community Engagement: collaborate with First Nation leadership and stakeholders to identify prevention opportunities for youth and adults.
 - Justice Collaboration: work with RCMP and justice stakeholders to analyze crime trends.
 - Culturally Responsive Interventions: utilize Elder and Knowledge Keeper support, engage in Healing Circles, and participate in community justice practices.

PATH FORWARD

The program will ensure Gladue principles are upheld beyond sentencing and support holistic rehabilitation. Staff will work at coordinating and collaborating with collaterals to ensure culturally interventions and supports, and aftercare for individuals.





Kakiskinawtahitonan Youth Justice Initiative 2025

In partnership with MKO and Marymound Inc., the Kakiskinawtahitonan Youth Justice initiative aims to reduce youth involvement with the Criminal Justice System (CJS). This initiative, part of MB Justice’s outcomes contract, focuses on enhancing connections to culture, language, and identity through culturally responsive interventions and reintegration support for youth and their families within their First Nation.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Program staff engage with youth in custody at the Manitoba Youth Center and in the community, facilitating activities such as traditional teachings and ceremony, medicine harvesting, preparing traditional foods, pet therapy, and life skills. Staff provide ongoing reintegration support for youth and foster relationships with MYC staff, Probation Officers, and community resources.

PROGRAM STAFF

The initiative is comprised of seven full-time staff members—five based in Winnipeg and two in Thompson. Each staff member focuses on youth and family wellness, cultural mentorship, land-based healing, and community reintegration and reunification. They develop healing plans that involve both the youth and their formal and informal support systems. Building genuine personal relationships is essential for the youth in their healing journeys, with cultural teachings forming a vital component.



“We will show you the way.”

PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Youth aged 12-17 residing in Manitoba currently in an open or closed custody arrangement with MB Justice who are sentenced to a minimum of 40 days in custody or a combination of custody and remand were eligible for the initiative.

TOTAL # YOUTH PARTICIPANTS ENROLLED AS OF JANUARY 1, 2025

A total of 50 youth were formally accepted as participants of the Kakiskinawtahitonan Youth Justice Initiative, exceeding the project’s target of 45 youth enrolled. The initiative is scheduled for wrap-up as of December 31, 2025



Police Feasibility Study Report

Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. (MKO) envisions its Nations as the safest and healthiest First Nations, supported by a fully committed and culturally responsive regional police service.

For over 22 years, MKO has worked toward establishing a self-administered First Nation police service. This effort began in 2001 with a tripartite Framework Agreement between Canada, Manitoba, and MKO.

In Budget 2021, Canada committed \$861 million over five years to support First Nations and Inuit policing and to develop a legislative framework for Indigenous policing. The MKO Chiefs in Assembly reaffirmed their support in 2022, calling for the urgent establishment of an MKO Regional Police Force and Policing Program – echoing past resolutions #2010-08-09 (“MKO Vision of Policing in the North”) and #2013-08-05 (“Support for First Nation Justice Initiative”). The Chiefs emphasized the need to fully implement the 2001 agreement to advance First Nation-led policing.

MKO has partnered to conduct a Police Feasibility Study and remains committed to working with Manitoba Justice and Public Safety Canada during this assessment process. Throughout 2023 and 2024, MKO’s Justice team collaborated with partners to meet the feasibility study deliverables and most recently, MKO expanded its efforts by launching a dedicated MKO Police Implementation and Transition Team.



TRANSITION TEAM

- Charles Wood** – Project Lead/Administrative Oversight
- Brennan Manoakeesick** – Political Advocacy & Intergovernmental Relations
- Michael Anderson** – Legislation, Research, Information & Data Collection
- Nigel Settee** – Community Liaison Support/Engagement
- Edwin Wood** – Work Plan Activities & Deliverables
- Lorraine Spence** – Administrative Support
- Jacqueline Genaille** – Policing Governance & Training Lead
- Kyla Villeneuve** – Policy & Legislation Lead
- Erik Howels** – Policing Operations & Standards Lead



MKO POLICE IMPLEMENTATION AND TRANSITION PLAN

The MKO Police Implementation and Transition Plan outlines five (5) key phases MKO will undertake to establish and operationalize the MKO Regional Police Service.

Phase 1: Envisioning the MKO Regional Police Service

Engage MKO leadership, First Nation Safety Officers, and other policing agencies across Canada to design a culturally responsive regional policing model tailored to the needs of First Nations within MKO region.

Phase 2: Current State Assessment

Evaluate existing RCMP policing services within the MKO region, including staffing, infrastructure, operations and associated costs. Identify and document gaps and additional requirements.

Phase 3: Defining the Future Model

Develop a community-centred MKO Regional Police Service grounded and aligned with First Nation values, self-governance, and culturally responsive laws.

Phase 4: Transition Roadmap

Establish a timeline and key milestones for transitioning from RCMP services to the MKO Regional Police Service, outlining implementation steps.

Phase 5: Laying the Foundation

Produce a Final Report detailing the proposed First Nation-led policing model, transition plan, financial projections, and a comparative cost analysis to support decision-making and future operations.

PATH FORWARD

The program will ensure Gladue principles are upheld beyond sentencing and support holistic rehabilitation. Staff will work at coordinating and collaborating with collaterals to ensure culturally interventions and supports, and aftercare for individuals.

ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- Bilateral Engagement (In-Community/In-Person)
- Leadership Gatherings/Forums
- Leadership Advisory Circle

KEY FRAMEWORKS TO BE DEVELOPED

- Regional Police Service
- Model
- Implementation & Transition Plan
- Transfer Agreement
- Existing Asset Condition & Remediation Assessment
- Infrastructure & Capital Assets
- Requirements Plan
- Requirements Forecast
- Transition Plan
- FNIPP Agreement



Youth Healing Lodge

In March of 2022, the Provincial Minister of Justice and MKO Grand Chief announced a partnership for the development, implementation, and operation of a Youth Healing Lodge in Thompson, MB.

BACKGROUND

The Youth Healing Lodge will connect youth with their culture, land, language and identity and will utilize traditional healing practices that are culturally responsive and appropriate to the needs of the youth, their families, and the community. It will be a place of support and healing for youth.

It is important for this initiative to provide a safe and supportive environment, the Youth Healing Lodge will help address the over-representation of First Nation youth in the justice system. It will also empower First Nations to take a more active role in the rehabilitation of their youth and promote intergenerational healing.

This partnership demonstrates the joint commitment to reconciliation and the belief in the importance of investing in the well-being of First Nation youth. The Youth Healing Lodge is a step towards creating a justice system that is more equitable, just, and culturally responsive. The success of this initiative will serve as a model for other communities across Canada seeking to address the needs of First Nation youth in the justice system.



The Youth Healing Lodge is just one step towards creating a justice system that is more equitable, just, and culturally responsive

PROGRESS

- Construction of MKO's Youth Healing Lodge commenced in 2024 at 20 Wapusk Drive in Thompson.
- The fully accessible 10-bed youth healing lodge features a shared kitchen, dining, administrative and cultural spaces on the main level
- Resident rooms, handicap accessible bathrooms and a second program and cultural space occupy the second level.
- The healing lodge is outfitted with sprinkler system, smoke and fire detection alarms, and camera system to ensure the safety and wellbeing of youth, staff and community.
- Target date for completion of construction is end of October 2025.

NEXT STEPS

- Operational & Project Agreement
- Procurement Of Equipment/Assets
- Recruitment & Hiring
- Opening Ceremony – Winter 2025
- Program Development & Licensing
- Staff Orientation & Training
- Accepting Youth Residents/Operations – Spring 2026





IRS Path Forward Project

The MKO IRS Path Forward Project, launched in 2022, supports truth-telling and healing related to the tragic legacy of Indian Residential Schools (IRS) in northern Manitoba. Now in its third year, the project continues to build strong relationships with First Nations, strengthen research capacity, provide critical support for Survivors, and advocate for the protection of Indigenous burial sites.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Guided by the MKO Regional IRS Advisory Committee—comprised of respected community leaders and Elders—the Path Forward Project is committed to advancing community priorities and empowering Survivors and their families.

Project Team

- Project Manager
- Project Coordinator
- Lead Researcher
- Project Researchers
- Logistics & Event Coordinator
- Traditional Elder
- Political Team Advisors



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & EVENTS

Community engagement remains the foundation of the Path Forward Project’s success. Over the year, we hosted and supported a wide range of gatherings, workshops, and information sessions that have fostered dialogue, built trust, and advanced the shared goal of truth and reconciliation.

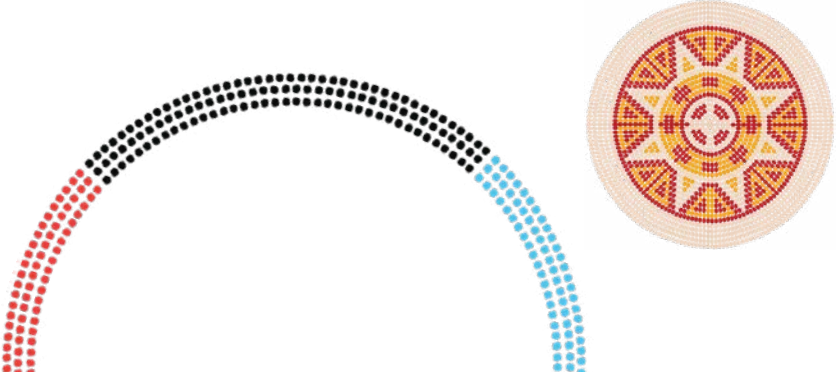
Key Engagement Highlights:

- **Four Regional IRS Advisory Committee Meetings:** Ongoing collaboration and strategic planning with regional leaders and Elders.
- **Nine IRS-related Events Hosted:** Workshops, research training, and Survivor gatherings across the MKO region.
- **Support for 10 Community-Led Events:** Financial and in-kind contributions to locally-driven ceremonies, events and gatherings.
- **Presentations at 12 Conferences/Events:** Sharing MKO’s approach and learnings on the national and international platforms.

Select Community Engagements:

- **Protecting Our Ancestors Conference (February 2024):** Over 500 participants joined in Winnipeg to advocate for legal protection of Indigenous burial sites, modeled after the U.S. NAGPRA Act.
- **Mamawitenamatowin Gathering – Cross Lake Healing (July 2024):** Supported Pimicikamak Cree Nation as Chief Monias shared ground search results revealing 187 anomalies at St. Joseph’s IRS site.
- **Researcher Network Meeting (February 2025):** MKO and SCO co-hosted Manitoba’s first network event for IRS researchers, fostering collaboration and relationship-building among community, academic, and provincial partners.

Together, we honour the children who never came home and walk the path toward healing and reconciliation.



RESEARCH ACHIEVEMENTS

The Path Forward Project continues to strengthen its research capacity and deliver meaningful results within the MKO region:

- **Record Access & Training:** Signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR), granting researchers and community partners access to vital IRS records. Delivered training to community-based researchers, including God’s Lake First Nation and Sapotewayak Cree Nation, on accessing LAC and NCTR archives.
- **Comprehensive Research Initiatives:**
 - Investigated Sanatorium and Indian Hospital records to identify children from MKO region.
 - Cross-referenced Treaty annuity paylists and Canada census data to corroborate information on missing children.
 - Targeted research into Birtle, MacKay, Portage la Prairie, and Saskatchewan IRS sites, compiling detailed lists of children who attended or died at these institutions.
- **Building a Regional Repository:** Laid the groundwork for a centralized, accessible database for all MKO IRS-related research.

INITIATIVES AND ADVOCACY

- **Indian Boarding Homes Class Action (IBHP):** MKO coordinated and delivered in-community information sessions in high-need areas, ensuring Survivors are supported throughout the claims process.
- **Protecting Our Ancestors Initiative:** Following the success of the 2024 conference, MKO has taken on a leadership role in advocating for legislative changes to safeguard ancestral remains and sacred items. MKO now participates in the province’s GIIWE Committee to further these efforts.

ONGOING CHALLENGES

Despite progress, significant challenges remain:

- **Funding Instability:** Recent federal adjustments to the IRS Missing Children Community Support Fund threaten the sustainability of ongoing research and support services after March 2026.
- **Barriers to Records Access:** Navigating complex privacy laws and institutional protocols continues to slow research and delay answers for families.
- **Long Waits for Vital Statistics:** Critical information needed to trace missing children is often delayed, in turn, hindering timely research.

PRIORITIES FOR 2025-2026

Looking ahead, the Path Forward Project is focused on:

- **Developing a Regional IRS Research Repository:** Creating a secure, accessible database for community researchers.
- **Enhancing Public Awareness:** Launching an interactive website to share research findings, honour Survivors, and commemorate missing children.
- **Supporting Survivor Healing:** Hosting two large Survivor-centered gatherings in northern Manitoba, providing opportunities for truth-sharing, healing, and access to support services.
- **Capacity-Building for Community Researchers:** Expanding training opportunities and forming a regional task force to strengthen local research capacity.
- **Legislative Advocacy:** Advancing protections for burial sites and exploring legal options to classify IRS crimes under Canadian and international law, with guidance from Kimberly Murray, former Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools.

CONCLUSION

The Path Forward Project is rooted in the strength and resilience of Survivors, families, and communities. Through strong partnerships, meaningful engagement, and a commitment to truth and justice, MKO continues to lead in advocating for answers, accountability, and healing. This year’s achievements reflect the power of community collaboration and the importance of continuing this sacred work for generations to come.



Date	Event	Location	Type of Support
January 17th, 2024	NCTR MOA Signing Ceremony	Chiefs Assembly, Winnipeg, Manitoba	Advocacy
January 30th – February 1st, 2024	OSI National Gathering on Unmarked Burials: Northern Voices	Iqaluit, Nunavut	Advocacy, Conference Presenter
February 20th – 22nd, 2024	Protecting Our Ancestors Conference	Winnipeg, Manitoba	Co-hosted with Sioux Valley Dakota Nation
April 10th, 2024	Documentary Premiere of Return to the Falls: Elder Betty Ross Story	Winnipeg, Manitoba	Donation and In-Kind Support (Staff)
April 9th – 10th, 2024	Regional Indian Residential School Advisory Committee Meeting	Winnipeg, Manitoba	Hosted, Sponsored
May 30th – 31st, 2024	Staff Professional Development & Wellness Week	Winnipeg, Manitoba	Hosted
June 5th, 2024	Library Archives of Canada Tour and Info Session for MKO Researchers	Ottawa, Ontario	Hosted
June 10th, 2024	Research Related Workshop: Connections Between Missing IRS Children and Segregated Indian Hospitals and Sanitoriums	Winnipeg, Manitoba	Hosted
June 13th – 14th, 2024	Guy Hills Gathering & Train of Tears Meeting	The Pas, Manitoba	Survivor/Elder Sponsorship
June 18th – 20th, 2024	Mamawiwin Minohyawin: Norway House Cree Nation Survivors Gathering	Norway House Cree Nation/Kinosao Sipi, Manitoba	Donation and In-Kind Support (Staff)
June 27th, 2024	Birtle Indian Residential School Gathering	R.M of Birtle, Manitoba	Donation, In-Kind Support (Staff) and Elder/Survivor Sponsorship

Date	Event	Location	Type of Support
July 2nd – 5th, 2025	Mamawitenamatowin Gathering: Crosslake Healing Gathering	Pimicikamak Cree Nation/ Crosslake Cree Nation	Donation and In-Kind Support (Staff)
July 16th – 17th, 2024	Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation Community Visit	Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation/Nelson House, Manitoba	Hosted
July 18th – 19th, 2024	Gods Lake First Nation Community Visit	Gods Lake First Nation, Manitoba	Hosted
July 29th – 30th, 2024	Regional Advisory Committee Meeting	Winnipeg, Manitoba	Hosted, Sponsored
August 2nd – 5th, 2024	Guy Hill Indian Residential School Reunion Gathering	Clearwater, Manitoba	Donation, In-Kind Support, Survivor/Elder Sponsorship
August 7th, 2024	Every Child Matters Solidarity Ride	Brandon, Manitoba	Donation
August 27th – 29th, 2024	Ministikok Search for Unmarked Graves at McKay Indian Residential School Site	Opaskwayak Cree Nation, Manitoba	Donation, In-Kind Support (Staff)
September 11th – 13th, 2024	KTC Braiding Our Medicine Journey: Connecting Heart, Mind and Spirit Gathering	Mile 20, Highway 391 (30 minutes north of Thompson)	Donation, In-Kind Support (Staff), Elder/Survivor Sponsorship
September 30th, 2024	Orange Shirt Day in Thompson	Thompson, Manitoba	Co-Hosted with KTC
October 16th – 17th, 2024	Northern Research Network Meeting	Winnipeg, Manitoba	Hosted
October 16th – 17th, 2024	International Indigenous Research Conference	Auckland, New Zealand	Advocacy, Conference Presenter
November 25th to 28th, 2024	Staff Wellness Retreat	Winnipeg, Manitoba	Hosted
December 9th – 10th, 2024	Regional Advisory Committee Meeting	Winnipeg Manitoba	Hosted, Sponsored
January 6th, 2025	In-Community Indian Boarding Homes Class Action Info Session	Opaskwayak Cree Nation	Co-Hosted
January 15th-16th, 2025	In-Community Indian Boarding Homes Class Action Info Session	Manto Sipi Cree Nation	Co-Hosted
February 19th – 20th, 2025	MKO & SCO IRS Researchers Network Meeting	Winnipeg, Manitoba	Co-Hosted
February 25th to 27th, 2025	10th Annual Repatriation Conference	Marksville, Louisiana	Advocacy, Conference Presenters
March 10th – 11th, 2025	Regional IRS Advisory Committee Meeting and Wellness	Winnipeg, Manitoba	Hosted, Sponsored
March 12th-13th, 2025	Path Forward Project Writing Retreat & Strategic Planning Workshop	Winnipeg, Manitoba	Hosted



Family First Nation Secretariat

The Family First Nation Secretariat, under the guidance of the MKO Chiefs-in-Assembly, plays an important role in advocating for and supporting First Nation leadership on child and family matters. The Secretariat’s primary focus is to support First Nations in exercising jurisdiction over child welfare and assisting in law-making.

FIRST NATIONS OF NORTHERN MANITOBA CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES AUTHORITY (NORTHERN AUTHORITY)

Under provincial legislation, the Northern Authority is responsible for managing the provision of child and family services (CFS) to persons who are members of or identify with northern First Nations in Manitoba through seven First Nations CFS Agencies. The management and affairs of the Northern Authority must be directed by a board of directors. MKO is responsible for appointing the board of directors of the Northern Authority. As of March 31, 2025, the board includes the following members:

- **Denise Packo** - representative of Cree Nation Child and Family Caring Agency – Chair
 - **Theresa Yetman** - representative of NCN Family and Community Wellness Center – Member
 - **Dr. Sydney Garrioch** - representative of Nikan Awasisak Agency – Member
- **William G. Lathlin** - representative of Opaskwayak Cree Nation Child and Family Services – Member
 - **Nick Saunders** - representative of Kinosao Sipi Minisowin Agency – Member
 - **Walter Spence** - representative of Awasis Agency of Northern Manitoba – Member
 - **Mike Muswagon** - representative of MKO – Member
 - **Kelvin Lynxleg** - representative of MKO – Member
 - **Vacant** - representative of Awasis Agency of Northern Manitoba
 - **Vacant** - representative of Island Lake First Nations Family Services

Provincial Child Welfare Reform

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

The Manitoba Child and Family Services Leadership Council was established in 2003, and its role is to provide a forum to discuss issues related to child and family services. Members include representatives of the Government of Manitoba and Indigenous political organizations,including MKO, the representative is Grand Chief Garrison Settee.

On April 19, 2024, the Leadership Council held a meeting to discuss a roundtable session with First Nations leadership regarding Nations exercising jurisdiction over child welfare, as well as the future role of the Leadership Council. The Leadership Council is expected to meet quarterly.

MANITOBA ROUNDTABLE ON RESTORING JURISDICTION IN CHILD WELFARE

On May 13, 2024, Families Minister Nahanni Fontaine, hosted a Roundtable in Winnipeg with First Nations leadership on restoring jurisdiction in child welfare.

At the event, the *Relationship Declaration for First Nations Child Welfare Jurisdiction* was signed by Premier Wab Kinew and Minister Fontaine, as well as many of the Chiefs in attendance. The Declaration represents a commitment on the part of Manitoba to transfer jurisdiction over child welfare to First Nations.

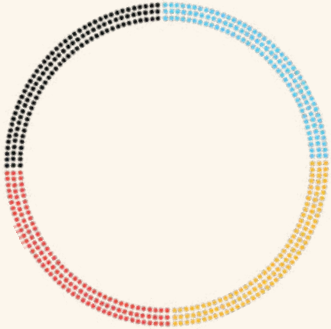
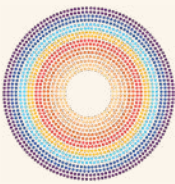
NEW LEGISLATION SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS JURISDICTION

On October 1, 2024, Minister Fontaine proclaimed the remaining provisions of Bill 32, An Act Respecting Child and Family Services (Indigenous Jurisdiction and Related Amendments). This means that the changes related to new service agreements (family support, kinship care, customary care, and voluntary care) are now in force.

On November 7, 2024, Minister Fontaine announced that Bill 38 – An Act Respecting Child and Family Services (Indigenous Jurisdiction and Other Amendments) was proclaimed and came into effect. Through Bill 38, The Child and Family Services Act, *The Child and Family Services Authorities Act* and *The Vital Statistics Act* are amended to recognize Indigenous jurisdiction, and support the implementation of the federal law, *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*.

EXPANSION OF CHILDREN'S DISABILITY SERVICES ON-RESERVE

On January 21, 2025, Minister Fontaine met with Chief David Monias, on behalf of Grand Chief Settee, to discuss the establishment of a working group to advise on the expansion of the Children’s Disability Services program to children living on reserve. It was agreed the working group will be comprised of representatives from various stakeholders, including MKO. The first meeting of the working group was to be called in May 2025.



Federal Child Welfare Reform

LONG-TERM REFORM OF FIRST NATIONS CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES AND JORDAN'S PRINCIPLE

In October 2024, the First Nations-in-Assembly rejected a draft Final Agreement on long-term reform of the First Nations Child and Family Services program and called for a new approach to long-term reform negotiations, led by a National Children's Chiefs Commission (NCCC). Since December 2024, the NCCC has been working to (1) establish itself, (2) bring Canada back to negotiations and (3) develop negotiation positions aligned with the direction provided by the First Nations-in-Assembly.

As appointed by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC), Chief David Monias of Pimicikamak Cree Nation is representing Manitoba. The NCCC held its first in-person meeting in January 2025.

To support the NCCC and the Manitoba Commissioners, the Manitoba First Nations Expert Technical Table was established on March 26, 2025. The Technical Table meets weekly and is comprised of representatives of MKO, AMC, the Southern Chiefs' Organization, the Northern Authority, the Southern Network, and First Nations child and family services agencies.

CAPACITY-BUILDING FUNDING

In July 2020, Canada committed \$542 million over five years to implement *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*, including \$425 million over five years for capacity-building funding for Indigenous nations.

In March 2021, ISC invited proposals to help Nations prepare for jurisdiction over child and family services.

In the 2024–25 fiscal year, the Secretariat supported four MKO Nations in technical and administrative aid.

- Northlands Denesuline First Nation
- Barren Lands First Nation
- O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation
- Sapotaweyak Cree Nation

As of March 31, 2025, Canada extended funding for two more years. The Secretariat continues to assist MKO Nations with proposal development upon request.

MKO FAMILY LAW TEMPLATE

During the past year, the Secretariat continued to make the MKO Family Law Template available to First Nations to support the development of exercising jurisdiction over child welfare and assist in law-making. The template law can be customized by each Nation to reflect their values and beliefs and cultural practices.

CONCLUSION

The work of the Secretariat is integral in supporting the efforts of the MKO leadership to transform child and family services, advocating for the rights and well-being of First Nations children, youth and families. As MKO continues to navigate the complexities of the provincial and federal CFS systems, the Secretariat's support and guidance will remain vital in ensuring the cultural values, rights, and needs of First Nations are respected and upheld.

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Harvester Program

The Harvester Program is making significant strides in promoting food sovereignty and empowering First Nations to hunt, harvest, and share food in a sustainable way. This year, we have seen remarkable success in community engagement, collaboration, and resource delivery, all of which have strengthened local food systems and cultural practices.

COMMUNITY-DRIVEN ENGAGEMENT AND PLANNING

At the heart of the Harvester Program are the ten participating First Nations, each led by a dedicated Program Coordinator. Monthly harvester meetings have become a cornerstone of our approach, providing ongoing opportunities for engagement and collaboration. These sessions bring together coordinators, Councillors, Elders, and First Nations citizens to collectively plan, strategize, and address community-specific needs.

Our engagement approach is tailored so each community receives support and resources that align with its distinct traditions and priorities. This focus on meaningful, ongoing dialogue has fostered strong relationships and allowed the Harvester Program to respond quickly and effectively to emerging needs.



We are excited to continue this journey together, supporting First Nations on the path to food sovereignty and cultural renewal!

PROGRAM TEAM

The success of our community engagement initiatives is led by the dedication of our core team:

- **Larry Flett**-Program Manager
- **Maryssa Halkett**-Project Coordinator
- **Grace Masse**-Program Coordinator
- **Tiffany Martens**-Administrative Support

PARTICIPATING FIRST NATIONS

The following First Nations are currently participating in the Harvester Program:

- Barren Lands First Nation
- Bunibonibee Cree Nation
- Gods Lake First Nation
- Mathias Colomb Cree Nation
- Manto Sipi Cree Nation
- Marcel Colomb First Nation
- Northlands Denesuline First Nation
- Sayisi Dene First Nation
- Shamattawa First Nation
- York Factory First Nation



INNOVATIVE SUPPORT AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Our approach emphasizes both capacity building and tangible resource support. Capital investments have included boats, motors, off-road vehicles, docks, storage containers, butcher shops, camera equipment, drones, ammunition, and other essential hunting and fishing supplies. These resources have directly enabled harvesters to continue their traditional practices safely and sustainably.

Community visits have proven invaluable in building relationships and providing hands-on support. Activities such as community tours, food shipments, proposal development, food assessments, and bulk ordering of supplies and ammunition have been met with high participation and enthusiasm.

A major highlight is the introduction of Lab-On-Chip technology, which will revolutionize food safety by allowing immediate, on-site testing of harvested animals. This empowers First Nations to manage their own food safety and data, further reinforcing sovereignty.

MKO FUNDING ALLOCATION FOR TRADITIONAL FOOD INITIATIVES

- **Support for Traditional Harvesters:** Funding for both new and existing harvesters to sustain traditional practices.
- **Community Gardening Projects:** Five new small-scale gardens established, promoting household food production.
- **Elder Food Support:** Distribution of traditional game and fish; meal programs delivered to homes and care facilities.
- **Family and School-Based Programs:** Traditional foods provided to families and schools, supporting land-based learning and cultural camps.
- **Food Distribution Logistics:** Efficient winter road and air deliveries ensured reliable access to traditional foods in remote First Nations.

RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

- Secured funding for a pilot food assessment project in Manto Sipi and Bunibonibee Cree Nations, in partnership with Nuleaf Inc. and Contract Evolve Consulting.
- Successful delivery of Food Bank shipments to First Nations supported by Second Harvest, R.A. Distributors, and Simplot.
- Creation of a winter video in Bunibonibee Cree Nation, showcasing food sovereignty efforts and celebrating community achievements.

LOOKING AHEAD: NEW FOOD DISTRIBUTION CENTRE IN THOMPSON

In partnership with Sobeys, the MKO Harvester Program is developing a new Food Distribution Centre in Thompson, with the agreement finalized in spring 2025 and the centre set to open in early 2026. This facility will further enhance food access and distribution for northern First Nations.

CONCLUSION

The Harvester Program's community engagement efforts have created lasting positive impacts, strengthening food security, revitalizing traditional practices, and building capacity for First Nations to lead their own food sovereignty initiatives. The collaborative spirit, innovative approaches, and strong partnerships established this year pave the way for even greater success in the future.



MKO Jordan’s Principle

We view Jordan’s Principle as a vital commitment to ensuring that First Nations children receive the essential services they need without delay or discrimination. This principle, named after Jordan River Anderson, highlights the urgent need for equitable access to health, education, and social services for First Nations children across the MKO region.

OUR COMMITMENT TO JORDAN’S PRINCIPLE

Child-Centric Approach:

Jordan’s Principle is fundamentally about prioritizing the needs of children. It mandates that the government of first contact must provide services based on the individual needs of each child, considering their unique cultural backgrounds and historical disadvantages. This is not merely a policy; it is a legal obligation that we expect the government to uphold.

Access to Services:

MKO advocates for the immediate and comprehensive access to services for First Nations children, whether they reside on or off reserve. This includes health care, educational support, and social services. The principle is designed to eliminate bureaucratic barriers that have historically delayed or denied access to necessary services.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

Despite the legal framework of Jordan’s Principle, we are encountering significant challenges in its implementation:

Bureaucratic Delays:

Many families are experiencing long wait times for service approvals. Reports indicate that requests can take several months to process, leaving children without critical support. This is unacceptable, as every day of delay can have lasting impacts on a child’s well-being.

Policy Changes and Funding Issues:

Recent changes in funding policies have raised serious concerns. For instance, programs that were previously funded under Jordan’s Principle are now being cut or delayed, jeopardizing the services that children rely on. We have seen instances where families are left without reimbursement for essential services, creating additional financial burdens.

Advocacy for Accountability:

MKO continues to actively advocate for transparency and accountability in the administration of Jordan’s Principle by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC). It is crucial the federal government communicates clearly about any changes to policies and funding, ensuring that families are not left in the dark about their rights and available services.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND OUR CALL TO ACTION

In 2025, we are calling for immediate reforms to ensure that Jordan’s Principle is effectively implemented. MKO demands that the federal government:

Streamline Processes:

Simplify the application and approval processes to reduce wait times and ensure that no child is left waiting for essential services.

Protect Funding:

Guarantee that funding for Jordan’s Principle remains stable and sufficient to meet the growing needs of First Nations children. This includes honoring previous commitments and ensuring that all eligible expenses are reimbursed.

Engagement:

Foster meaningful engagement with First Nations to understand their needs and experiences. This collaboration is essential for creating effective solutions that truly serve our children.

Jordan’s Principle is not just a legal obligation; it is a moral imperative. At MKO, we are committed to fighting for the rights of First Nations children and ensuring that they receive the care and support they deserve. We will continue to advocate for the necessary changes to uphold the spirit of Jordan’s Principle and to protect the future of our children.

MKO Post-Majority Support Services

At MKO, we recognize the critical importance of supporting our youth and young adults as they transition into adulthood. The MKO Post-Majority Support Services (PMSS) program is designed to provide comprehensive, voluntary support tailored to the unique needs of First Nations youth, aged 18 to 25, who are aging out of the child welfare system or have already done so.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Holistic Support:

Our primary goal is to promote holistic positive outcomes for First Nations youth and young adults. This includes addressing various aspects of their lives, such as housing, food security, employment, mental health, wellness, addiction support, and fostering healthy relationships.

Culturally Appropriate Services:

We are committed to delivering services that are culturally relevant and respectful of our traditions and values. This approach ensures that our youth feel understood and supported in their journey toward independence.

CHALLENGES

While the MKO Post-Majority Support Services program is a vital resource, we face several challenges in its implementation:

Awareness and Accessibility:

Many eligible youth may not be aware of the services available to them. Increasing awareness and ensuring that these services are easily accessible is crucial for maximizing participation.

Resource Limitations:

As demand for support services grows, we must ensure that adequate resources are allocated to meet the needs of our youth. This includes funding for housing assistance, mental health services, and employment programs.

Coordination of Services:

Effective service coordination is essential for providing comprehensive support. We strive to connect youth with the appropriate resources, but navigating multiple systems can be complex and overwhelming.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND OUR VISION

In 2025, we are actively working to enhance the Post-Majority Support Services program by:

Expanding Outreach:

We are implementing outreach initiatives to engage with youth and inform them about the available support services. This includes community events, workshops, and partnerships with local organizations.

Strengthening Partnerships:

Collaborating with other service providers and community organizations is vital for creating a network of support. By working together, we can offer a more integrated approach to meeting the diverse needs of our youth.

Feedback and Improvement:

We are committed to continuously improving our services based on feedback from the youth we serve. Their insights are invaluable in shaping programs that truly meet their needs and aspirations.

At MKO, we believe that every young person deserves the opportunity to thrive as they transition into adulthood. Through the MKO Post-Majority Support Services program, we are dedicated to empowering First Nations youth and young adults, ensuring they have the support and resources necessary to build successful and fulfilling lives.



The Mobile Crisis Response Team

The Mobile Crisis Response Team (MCRT), now in its eighth year of service delivery, continues to provide the unique brand of mental health care to our Relatives from the 63 First Nations in Manitoba.

We continue to build relationships with other crisis response teams, wellness teams, community-based workers, and foster growth in our goals of delivering our unique brand of training to First Nations in the development of their own crisis response teams.

It is the support we receive from our program partners within MKO that contributes to the overall model of “The Whole of Government Response”. Through collaboration and teamwork, the MCRT has been successful in providing coordinated support for our citizens.

During the 2024–2025 year, the MCRT launched new initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality and accessibility of care for Manitoba First Nations.



- 2024-2025 INITIATIVES
- Developing and testing a professional electronic database for secure confidential information storage.
 - “Train-the-Trainer” for Community-Based Crisis Team Development Training. Empowering First Nations by providing the training materials and Certificates of Completion.
 - Ensuring two Intake Coordinators are answering calls at MCRT.
 - 3rd Annual Gathering of Medicine Stones, a 2SLGBTQIA+ gathering in Northern Manitoba.
 - Thompson Pride March and Event, a collaboration of MKO programs.
 - Exploring updating the MCRT section on the MKO Website to have more resources, self-assessment tool, team information, and a crisis toolkit, ensuring quick access for the public
 - MCRT Inaugural Wellness Leave July and December 2024.

THE LEADERSHIP INTENSIVE PROGRAM

The Asper School of Business and the University of Manitoba offer a Leadership Intensive Program each year for aspiring leaders to build upon their capacity and enhance their natural leadership skills.

The MCRT had 3 staff members graduate from this program:

- 2024 Greg Fontaine, Program Manager
- 2025 Trudy Stevenson, Crisis Response Training Coordinator
- 2025 Trevor Sinclair, Intake Coordinator

STATE OF EMERGENCY & EVACUATION SUPPORTS

Since 2017, the MCRT has been ready to assist First Nations with their displacement during evacuations.

We attend all sites where our Relatives are to provide care and advocacy of special needs such as:

- Health
- Dietary
- medical distress
- referral to acute mental health care

2024/2025 Fiscal Year, MCRT had a presence for support for all the First Nations that evacuated due to natural disasters, such as forest fires.

CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT: COMMUNITY-BASED CRISIS TEAM DEVELOPMENT TRAINING

The MCRT and Mental Wellness Program of MKO co-led a Training Project which offers capacity enhancement for crisis team development training for First Nations.

Our approach to community care is to assist First Nations with empowerment in their ability to deliver quality care from their First Nation and community workers.

Our team has developed a curriculum of training which employs the same unique brand of care and approach to crisis response and crisis stabilization. We train First Nations utilizing the same approach to crisis response which is uniquely rooted in each First Nations customs and traditions.

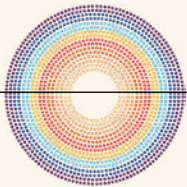
MCRT WELLNESS LEAVE

At the recommendation and guidance of our Elder Gloria Kejick, Crisis Care Coordinator, the MCRT took a mandatory rest in July of 2024.

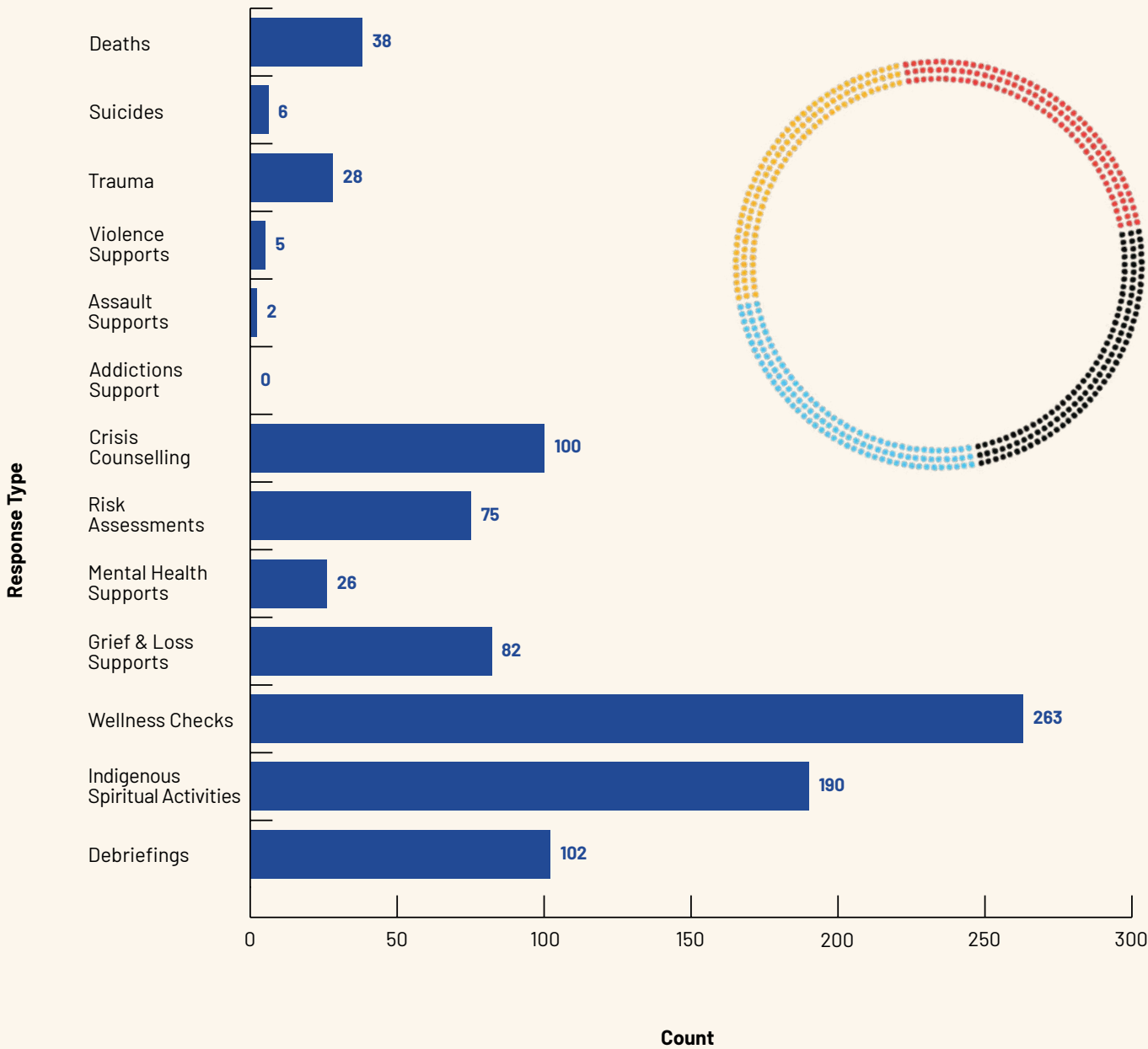
For the first time in 7 years, the MCRT took pause to reflect, rest, and rejuvenate our Spirits. This was a very successful wellness leave for MCRT as we provided care for our mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being. Recognizing the importance of maintaining staff wellness in such a demanding role, the MCRT will now be taking a dedicated mental wellness leave on a yearly basis. This annual pause ensures our team remains healthy, resilient, and able to continue providing high-quality support to the 63 First Nations.

MCRT STATISTICS





CRISIS RESPONSE TYPES





Indigenous Mental Wellness Teams

Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. (MKO) Mental Wellness Teams (MWTs) Program supports culturally appropriate, community-based mental health services for First Nations in northern Manitoba. Managed by the Mental Wellness Program Manager, the program advances health advocacy, supports Treaty rights, and promotes increased First Nations sovereignty over health systems. MKO’s leadership and staff provide direct advocacy in complex, high-impact cases and participate actively in organizational and community governance.

MKO currently funds seven MWTs, representing:

- Keewatin Tribal Council
- Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council
- Swampy Cree Tribal Council
- Interlake Reserves Tribal Council
- Southeast Resource Development Council
- West Region Treaty 2 & 4 Health Services
- Quest Health Services

These multidisciplinary teams deliver services such as trauma-informed care, land-based healing, early intervention, crisis response, aftercare, and care coordination, integrating both traditional and mainstream practices.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- Objective:**
- Enhance mental wellness by improving access to comprehensive, culturally safe, and community-rooted services, addressing gaps in the care continuum.
- Goals:**
- Foster collaboration between clinical professionals and community experts.
 - Encourage First Nation-led, culturally defined mental wellness services.
 - Support self-determination and improve health outcomes through community engagement and capacity-building.



2024-2025 INTERIM REPORT & PROGRAM SUCCESSES

Service Delivery:

The interim report documents administrative and service delivery data from nine MWTs, including team composition, services provided, number of clients supported, and demographics. The program is coordinated with First Nations Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB) and follows reporting guidelines aligned with community workplans.

Collaboration with MKO Mobile Crisis Response Team (MCRT):

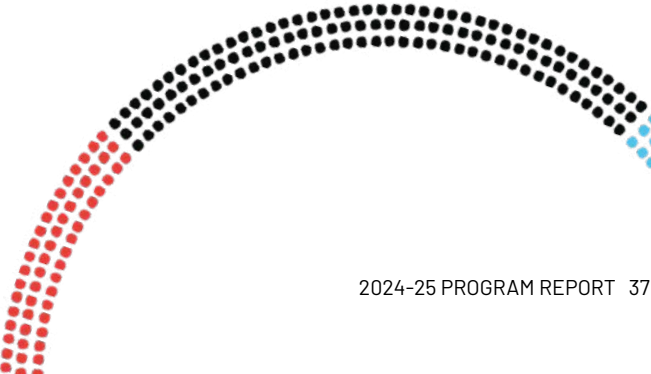
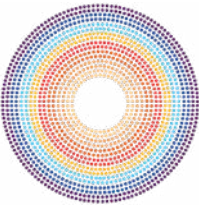
The MWTs work closely with MCRT, which serves 63 First Nations. Joint initiatives include frontline and community training, trauma-informed care, and crisis response, building local capacity to address emergencies effectively.

CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT:

- Community-Based Crisis Team Development Training was delivered, focusing on:
- Establishing and operating crisis teams
 - Community resource mapping
 - Role definition and crisis protocols
 - Skills development, self-care, and applied learning through scenarios

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:

- **New Administrative Assistant:** Enhanced operational efficiency of the MWT program.
- **Annual MWT Breaking Bannock and Barriers Gathering:** First held in April 2025, this event fostered collaboration and knowledge-sharing among teams.
- **2nd 2-Spirit & Indigenous LGTQQIA+ Gathering:** July 2024 event provided safe, culturally affirming space for 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.
- **MKO 2SLGBTQQIA+ Steering Committee:** Launched to ensure inclusivity and representation in mental wellness initiatives.
- **“No Thanks, I’m Good” Campaign:** Continued wellness and harm reduction campaign extended through February 2025.
- **Tracia’s Trust:** Ongoing advocacy and community supports addressing sexual exploitation and human trafficking.
- **Gendered Impacts of Hydro Development:** Collaborative research (currently on hold) on hydro development’s impact on Indigenous women and communities.



SUCCESSIONS:

MWTs have strengthened culturally appropriate programming, particularly for youth and land-based healing, while building partnerships rooted in Indigenous knowledge and community needs.

Next Steps for Mental Wellness

- **Whole-of-Government Response:** Improve coordination and clarify roles across MKO health and wellness programs.
- **MKO Mental Wellness Website:** Develop a centralized platform for resources, services, and community updates.
- **Mental Wellness Database Project:** Build a data system to track services, outcomes, and changing community needs.
- **Harm Reduction Network Collaboration:** Work with the First Nations Harm Reduction Network of Manitoba to address substance use, develop new programs, and monitor emerging trends.

OPIOID AGAINST THERAPY (OAT) & HARM REDUCTION:

Harm reduction is central to MKO’s public health approach, aiming to minimize the negative impacts of substance use with compassion and respect. Strategies include:

- Naloxone training and distribution
- Sterile supply access (syringes, pipes)
- Safe consumption and overdose prevention sites
- Opioid Agonist Therapy (OAT) with medications like methadone or buprenorphine

INDIGENOUS HARM REDUCTION:

A decolonized, culturally grounded approach acknowledges the impact of colonialism, racism, and trauma in substance use. It emphasizes:

- Cultural reconnection and ceremony
- Healing through relationships with land, community, and spirit
- Systemic advocacy for equitable access

OAT & HARM REDUCTION OBJECTIVES:

- Reduce substance-related harms and deaths
- Provide trauma-informed, culturally safe care
- Strengthen community response capacity
- Support recovery by blending clinical and cultural approaches

GOALS:

- Improve health outcomes and reduce opioid-related harm
- Promote dignity, self-determination, and holistic wellness
- Foster partnerships with Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and community organizations
- Address systemic barriers to mental health and substance use supports

CONCLUSION

MKO’s Mental Wellness Teams have made substantial progress in advancing culturally appropriate, First Nation-led mental health and harm reduction services across northern Manitoba. By prioritizing collaboration, capacity-building, and Indigenous knowledge, the program continues to empower First Nations on their journey to wellness and self-determination.



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NIHB Client Navigator

The Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) Client Navigator supports First Nations clients in accessing federal health benefits provided through Indigenous Services Canada (ISC). These benefits include medical transportation, dental and vision care, prescription medication, and other essential health supports. This role helps ensure that clients receive timely, respectful, and equitable care by guiding them through complex systems and advocating for their needs.

There is currently a total of seven NIHB Client Navigators across Manitoba. These positions are hosted by various Tribal Councils and organizations to ensure regional and community-specific support:

- 1. Manitoba Keewatinow Okimakanak Inc. (MKO) has two Navigators each based in Winnipeg and The Pas.
- 2. Southern Chief’s Organization (SCO) has two Navigators.
- 3. Southeast Resource Development Council (SERDC) has one Navigator.
- 4. Four Arrows Regional Health Authority has one Navigator.
- 5. Keewatin Tribal Council (KTC) has one Navigator.

Each Navigator is responsible for providing advocacy and community-based NIHB navigation services within their respective regions.

CORE RESPONSIBILITY

- Provide individual client support for NIHB benefits and appeals
- Collaborate with health authorities, ISC, and tribal councils
- Attend meetings with stakeholders and participate in program development
- Provide education and awareness to First Nations and healthcare staff about the NIHB program
- Identify and report systemic issues affecting access and quality of care

ONGOING ENGAGEMENTS

- Monthly meetings are held with Manitoba NIHB Client Navigators and Transportation Referral Unit (TRU) to coordinate service delivery and address shared challenges and concerns from leadership and clients.
- Community meetings attended on request to share NIHB program information and listen to community concerns.
- Quarterly or as-required meetings with the Northern Regional Health Authority (NRHA) Committee to discuss operational issues affecting clients.
- Ongoing communication with AFN Health Sector regards to NIHB issues affecting First Nations across Canada.

KEY ACTIVITIES AND MILESTONES

- Participated in ISC led meeting to introduce the new Navigators Four Arrows, SCO, KTC, and SERDC.
- Participated in ISC’s Accommodation Solicitation Review with Navigators from SCO, MKO, and Four Arrows.
- Attended AFN NIHB Conference in Whitehorse to receive national updates and share regional concerns.
- Presented to 32 Indigenous staff at Seven Oaks Hospital; focused on how to support families during hospitalization and to identify community-based resources.
- Met with Northern Regional Health Authority (NRHA) to discuss Medical Transportation issues, which include delayed pick-ups, unanswered calls, and lack of meal support for escorts while at Thompson General Hospital.
- Conducted site visit with ISC for hotel evaluation of two hotels, Burntwood Hotel and Econo-Lodge, did not meet ISC standards and were not approved as service providers. ISC recommended and requested that the NIHB Navigator’s input in reevaluating the accommodation’s eligibility be provided as needed.
- Delivered comprehensive orientation to the new NIHB Client Navigator in The Pas.
- Conduct hospital visits to clients when required or conduct wellness checks.
- Provide administrative and support to MKO Medical Transportation Program to improve services for our clients, families and relatives.
- Provide ongoing support to Sakihewin Advocacy Unit at TGH.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

- Strengthening support for clients and families during hospitalization by visiting the client or the escort when request.
- Improved cross-agency communication with better delivery service.
- Ensured community voices were part of key ISC decisions (e.g., accommodation reviews).
- Supported new Navigator integration and capacity building in the North.

IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES

- Long wait times and limited responses from Medical Transportation continue to hinder clients in transit when they are waiting for services.
- Communication barriers between referral teams and hospitals.
- Inconsistent meal support for client escorts in hospital settings.
- Lack of clarity on some accommodation standards.
- Connect, support and advocate for children and families who require support from Jordan’s Principle as policies and service evolve to avoid any denials or delay of accessing services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish clear, responsive communication channels with transportation providers.
- Continue involving Navigators in all stages of accommodation reviews.
- Expand Navigator training and cross-organizational collaboration.
- Advocate for culturally safe, community-driven improvements to NIHB policies.

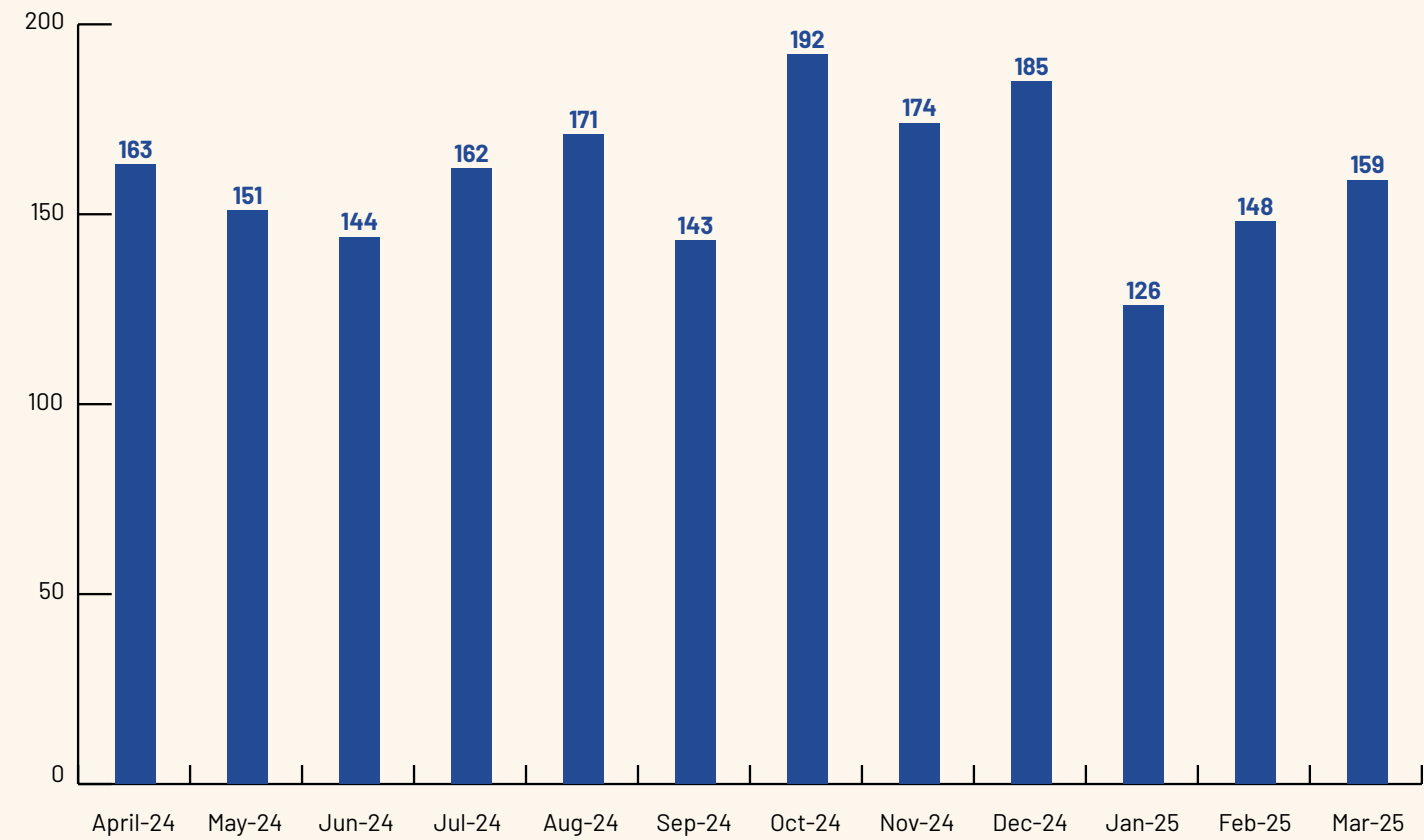
CONCLUSION

MKO NIHB Client Navigators frequently set up information booths at events throughout Manitoba and have posters, pamphlets, pens, and business cards that are available to help you stay updated and you will have contact numbers for the Navigators in your region.

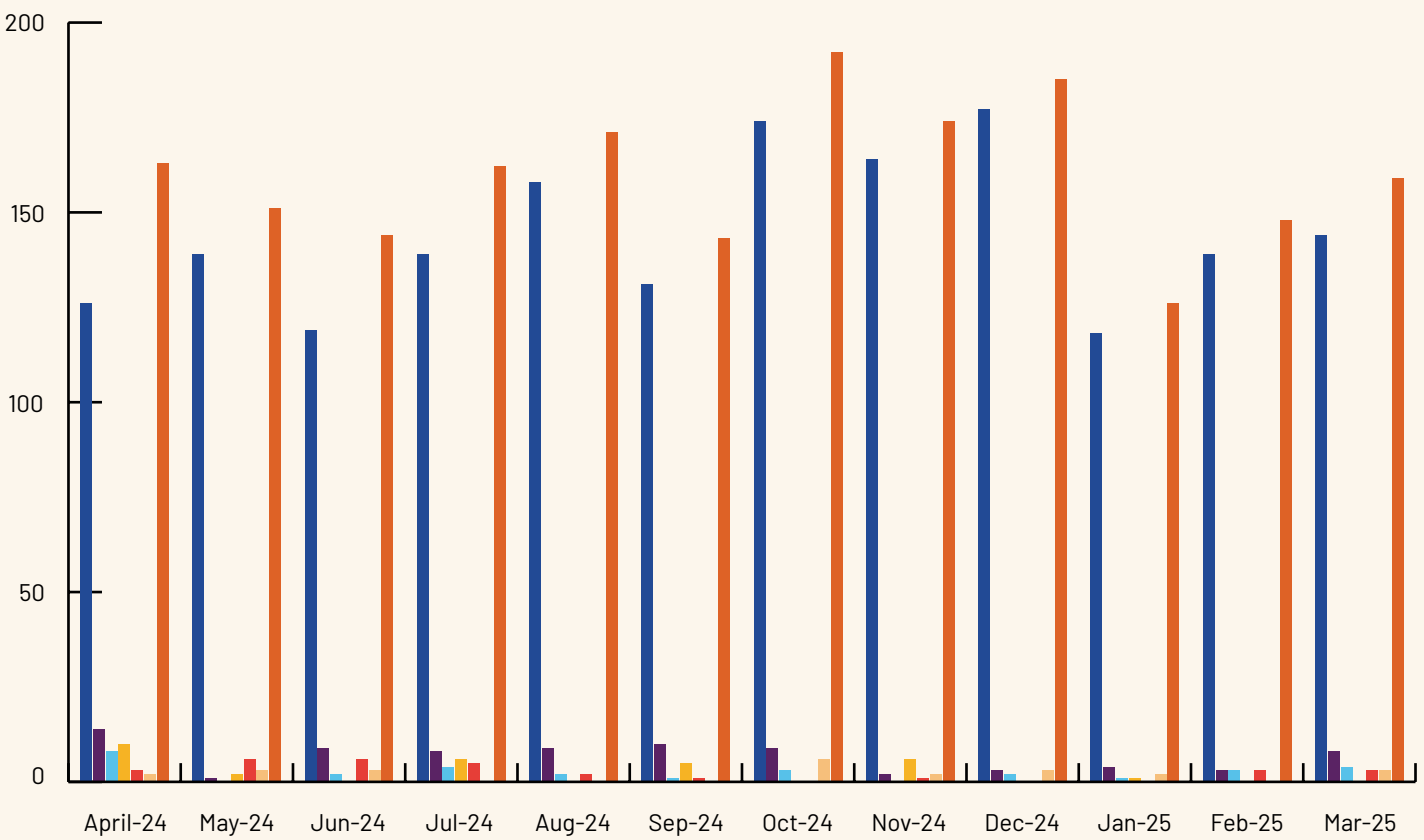
The NIHB Client Navigator plays a vital role in improving access to healthcare services for First Nations clients. Ongoing engagement with leadership, community members, and government agencies is essential to addressing barriers and strengthening the NIHB program.

The total number of MKO members that were provided advocacy for the year is 1,918

CLIENT NAVIGATOR ADVOCACY
STATISTICS FOR 2024/25:



CLIENT NAVIGATOR SERVICES
PROVIDED UNDER NIHB 2024/25:



	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25
MedTrans	126	139	119	139	158	131	174	164	177	118	139	144
Dental	14	1	9	8	9	10	9	2	3	4	3	8
Vision	8	0	2	4	2	1	3	0	2	1	3	4
ME&S	10	6	0	6	0	5	0	6	0	2	0	3
Drugs	3	6	6	5	2	1	1	0	0	0	3	0
MH	2	3	8	0	0	0	5	2	3	1	0	3
Total	163	151	144	162	171	143	192	174	185	126	148	159



Medical Transportation Unit

The 2024–2025 fiscal year marked a period of significant growth and service expansion for the MKO Medical Transportation Unit. Building upon a successful program launch, the Unit transitioned to full operational capacity, providing coordinated medical transportation services to First Nations patients in both the Thompson and The Pas regions. Throughout the year, the Unit strengthened staff capacity, enhanced service delivery, and remained committed to meeting the evolving needs of clients and communities.

CORE SERVICES

1. In-City Transportation Services – Thompson, MB (24/7)

- Provides around-the-clock in-city transportation for approved Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) clients who are traveling to or through Thompson, MB, to access medical care and treatment.
- Note: This service excludes all NIHB-eligible clients residing on-reserve in one of the eleven Keewatin Tribal Council (KTC) member communities, who continue to access Thompson In-City Transportation Services through KTC.

2. Medical Transportation Referral Services – Thompson, MB (24/7)

- Offers 24/7 medical transportation referral services for approved NIHB clients traveling to or through Thompson, MB, for medical care and treatment.
- Note: NIHB-eligible clients residing on-reserve in KTC member communities continue to access these referral services through the Keewatin Tribal Council.

3. After-Hours Medical Transportation Referral Services – The Pas, MB

- Provides after-hours medical transportation referral services for all NIHB-eligible clients accessing services in The Pas, MB, between 4:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. Monday to Friday, as well as 24/7 coverage on weekends and holidays.
- Note: During regular working hours (8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., Monday to Friday), clients in The Pas contact Cree Nation Tribal Health Services for medical transportation referrals.

STAFFING

Core Team Growth:

- The team launched in April 2024 included six staff members.
- By March 2025, the team expanded to ten, including additional drivers and dispatch personnel, to meet increased service demands.

Training & Development:

- Regular orientation and cross-training sessions were provided.
- Specialized training included MTRS/CITRIX systems, wheelchair lift operations, and customer service protocols.
- Bi-weekly meetings with First Nations Inuit Branch (FNIB) and Non-Insured Health Branch (NIHB) ensured up-to-date knowledge of regulations and best practices.

OPERATIONS AND KEY MILESTONES

Program Launch & Expansion:

- Official service began May 9, 2024, handling live calls for MKO medical patients and their escorts.

Uninterrupted Service:

- Remote operations were initiated in June following a temporary office flood, ensuring no disruption in services.

Service Enhancements:

- Via Rail account and updated Perimeter/Calm Air credentials established for seamless flight bookings.
- Medvan service with dedicated drivers launched in February 2025, offering consistent patient and escort transport across northern Manitoba.

Fleet & Logistics:

- Drivers equipped with safety gear and trained on specialized equipment.

- Fueling accounts and DOT permits established for reliable operations.

Facilities & Technology:

- Office renovations and phone issues required flexible approaches; remote work systems implemented effectively.
- IT upgrades included new phone lines for improved call reliability.

OUTLOOK FOR 2025–2026

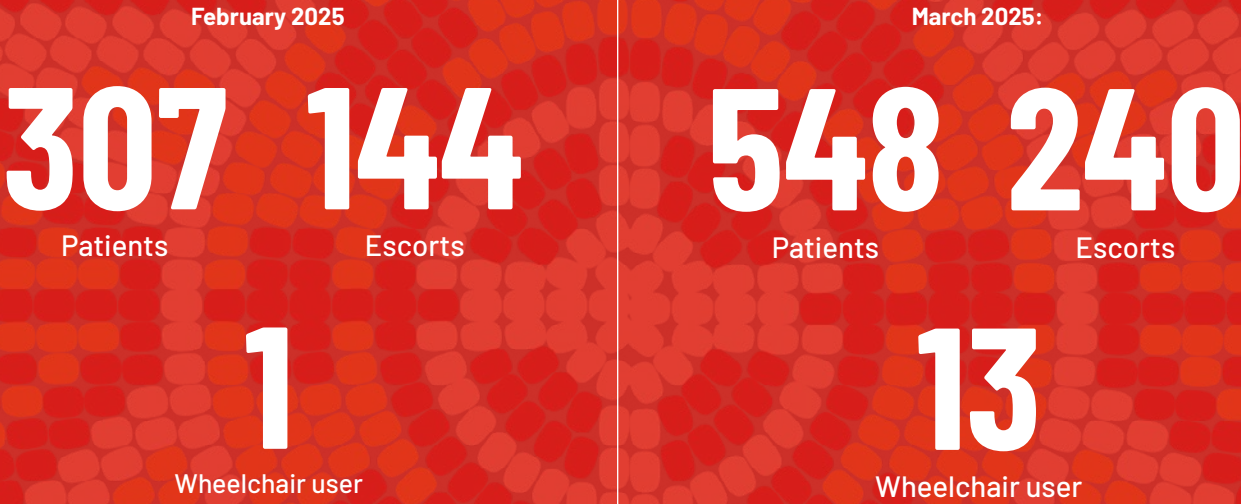
- **Service Expansion:** Plans to extend Medvan operations to 24/7 as staffing allows.
- **Technology Upgrades:** Finalize improvements to the phone system and explore new scheduling software to enhance efficiency.
- **Staff Development:** Continue advanced training opportunities and driver certification programs, including First Aid and specialized transport training.

CONCLUSION

By providing 24/7 in-city transportation and medical referral services in Thompson and after-hours referral services in The Pas, the MKO Medical Transportation Unit remains dedicated to meeting the unique healthcare access needs of First Nations citizens across northern Manitoba. Through continued collaboration, capacity-building, and service innovation, MKO is committed to supporting the health and well-being of its member communities.

SERVICE METRICS

Medvan Pickups (Patients / Escorts / Wheelchair):



Earlier months primarily involved call coordination and flight bookings; detailed transport metrics were not recorded.



MKO Wellbriety Centre

Since opening our doors in July 2023, the MKO Wellbriety Centre has become a cornerstone of community wellness and support in Thompson, Manitoba. Operated through strong partnerships with the City of Thompson and other key stakeholders, the Centre is located at 504 Princeton Drive in a spacious facility that allows space for around 100 people. In contrast to the previous Thompson Shelter, which could only serve 24 individuals per night, the Wellbriety Centre offers expanded services and a “No Turnaway” policy, ensuring that no one in need is left without support.

VISION FOR THE WELLBRIETY CENTRE

The Wellbriety Centre is currently operating out of one of three buildings on the site, but MKO’s vision extends much further. Guided by First Nation values of love, respect, and compassion. MKO envisions building a “village” where relatives, many of whom are dealing with the impacts of colonialism and systemic barriers that have contributed to homelessness, addictions, and mental health challenges, can find holistic support as they journey on their paths of healing. This community-focused vision emphasizes connection, belonging, and wrap-around care, recognizing that every individual deserves a safe and supportive environment as they transition and heal.

MKO continues to assess the needs of relatives, particularly First Nations citizens from the MKO region, who require additional support to navigate and transition into Thompson, especially given the lack of transitional housing and supports that are available in other urban centres. In response, MKO is currently renovating one of the Polaris buildings to create transitional housing and will work to build capacity within the City of Thompson to ensure the necessary supports and resources are available to our relatives. Evidence shows that with wraparound care, individuals are more likely to achieve their goals and experience a greater sense of security and connection to the community.

SERVICE HIGHLIGHTS AND IMPACT

Emergency Shelter and Meals:

- 25 emergency mats and 45 beds available nightly (actual usage often exceeds this due to high community need).
- Over 32,782 meals served and 34,106 sleep accommodations provided (18,008 mat sign-ins and 16,098 beds assigned).

Citizens from 21 of the 26 First Nations within the MKO region have accessed services from the Wellbriety Centre.

Harm Reduction & Managed Alcohol Program Supported by KIM:

- 11 individuals enrolled in the Managed Alcohol Program to reduce risk for those living with chronic alcohol use disorder.
- Distributed 4,076 safer drug use and condom kits to community members

Holistic Wellness Approach:

- Residents have access to daily enrichment activities, life skills development, and land-based healing opportunities.



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

The success of the Wellbriety Centre is rooted in strong collaboration with local organizations, MKO programs, and community partners:

City of Thompson:

- Provides the facility, covers utilities, and supports maintenance. Community Safety Officers collaborate with Wellbriety staff for outreach to encampments.

Reaching Home Manitoba:

- Funding for hygiene items, clothing, land-based activities, and art supplies.

Training and Health Partners:

- Canadian Mental Health Association and Eaglewood offer ongoing training/workshops for staff and residents.
- Shared Health provides monthly “Tea and Bannock” STBBI testing and quarterly TB clinics.
- Manitoba Harm Reduction Network and Workplace Education Manitoba deliver education and job skills programs.

Medical and Social Supports:

- Clarke’s Pharmacy offers medication management, immunization clinics, and health education.
- Thompson General Hospital supports social work and discharge planning.
- Keewatinohk Inniniw Minoayawin (KIM) supports the Managed Alcohol Program and operates a primary care clinic and counseling services on-site.

Community Organizations and Donors:

- MAPS (Men and Boys are Part of the Solution), Thompson Baptist Church, Thompson Neighbourhood Renewal Centre, R.A. Distributors, Vale, Sysco, MB Harvest, Women and Gender Equity Canada, and ET Blades all contribute vital resources, food, clothing, and program support.

COLLABORATION WITH MKO PROGRAMS

The Wellbriety Centre benefits from the ongoing support and collaboration of other MKO programs:

- **MMIWG:** Funding for a counselor and craft supplies.
- **IRS Program:** Funding for land-based healing activities.
- **Traditional Healer Program:** Weekly on-site presence connecting residents with Elders, cultural teachings, nourishing traditional foods, and cultural room mural creation.
- **Food Bank and Harvester Program:** Donations of food and commercial kitchen equipment enhance meal programs and food security.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Community Outreach Program:

- A new initiative is being developed to extend harm reduction supplies, supports, and resources to individuals in the wider community, including those living in encampments, aiming to increase access and divert individuals to safer environments.

Transitional Housing:

- Renovation of one of the Polaris buildings is underway to create transitional housing, with the goal of building a true healing village in Thompson that embodies First Nation values and offers comprehensive, wraparound care.

Staffing and Support:

- The Centre employs a full team of addiction support workers and health care aides, ensuring comprehensive physical and mental health support.

Daily Programming:

- Residents engage in a variety of daily activities, ranging from enrichment and cultural events to life skills development, supporting holistic wellness and recovery.

CONCLUSION

Through strong partnerships, a commitment to “No Turnaway” service, and a holistic, culturally grounded approach, the MKO Wellbriety Centre has become a vital resource for individuals and families in Thompson and surrounding First Nations. Guided by a vision to create a healing village rooted in First Nation values, MKO is leading the way in addressing homelessness, addiction, and mental health—while honoring traditional ways of healing and supporting every individual’s journey to wellness and community connection.





Food Bank/TUAS

The MKO Food Bank, operating under the Urban Initiatives Program, provided critical food security to both First Nations and non-First Nation residents of Thompson. A total of 4,510 hampers were distributed to First Nation citizens, while 339 hampers supported non-First Nation residents. Additionally, 958 infant support packages were provided with support from Jordan's Principle. The food bank received numerous generous donations from local businesses such as Safeway, Walmart, and Simplot, and partnered with organizations like Harvest Manitoba and the School District of Mystery Lake. Notably, a \$59,182.40 grant from Food Banks Canada was an extra boost in supporting our relatives in need at the Wellbriety Centre.

THOMPSON URBAN ABORIGINAL STRATEGY (TUAS) HIGHLIGHTS

TUAS, received an additional \$88,000 in funding in January 2025, which supported a variety of cultural and community events. These included the Orange Shirt Day gathering with over 400 attendees, the Thompson Winterfest featuring family-friendly activities, and National Indigenous Peoples Day celebrations. TUAS also facilitated moccasin-making workshops and cultural teachings in local schools, reaching over 240 students. These initiatives fostered cultural pride, community engagement, and intergenerational learning.



4,510

Hampers were distributed to First Nation citizens

339

Hampers supported non-First Nation residents

958

Infant support packages were provided with support from Jordan's Principle

COMMUNITY IMPACT AND ENGAGEMENT

The MKO Food Bank and TUAS programs exemplify strong community collaboration and cultural revitalization. With the help of volunteers, schools, and local organizations, the programs not only addressed food insecurity but also strengthened cultural identity and community bonds. Events like the Family Dance Party and Orange Shirt Day brought families together in celebration and remembrance, while ongoing partnerships ensured sustainable support.

FOOD BANK STAFF

- Gina Spence** – Food Bank Supervisor
- Pierre Sinclair** – Intake & Food Packaging Worker
- Nolan Spence** – Youth Navigator
- Kaleb Halcrow** – Food Package & Delivery Worker

TUAS also facilitated moccasin-making workshops and cultural teachings in local schools, reaching over 240 students. These initiatives fostered cultural pride, community engagement, and intergenerational learning.

DONATIONS AND VOLUNTEERS:

- Safeway Thompson: \$10,000 towards Christmas Hampers, staff helpers to package and distribute 700 Christmas hampers,
- Walmart Thompson: food donations totalling 400 lbs of meat, dairy and nonperishable products.
- Family Foods Thompson: Food donations totalling 150 lbs of nonperishable and dairy items.
- On going support and donations from Harvest Manitoba with Monthly donations of Soup, nonperishables, cereal, baby milk, fresh salads, etc.
- Assiniboine Credit Union: \$2500 cheque towards MKO Food Bank operations
- Simplot: Donation of on-going fries distributions for food packages. Donation of full trailer of fries for community distribution in December 2024.
- VALE: Donation of food
- Mystery Lake School Division Staff/Students: Hamper packaging and distribution
- Deerwood Elementary School: Donation of food
- R.D Parker Collegiate, SOS Program: Donation of food and warm clothing item for MKO Food Bank and Wellbriety Centre
- Gardewine: Donation of time and trailers kept at food bank
- R.A Distributing: Donation of space to keep fries cooled
- Lutheran United Church: Donation of time for deliveries of hampers and making of 100 bread loaves for elders.
- NCN Flames Hockey team: Donation of time for Christmas Hamper Distribution
- MKO Harvesters Program donating freight to have fries shipped to the MKO Food Bank
- Mr. Joe and his grandson with a cash donation of \$500.00
- February 26, 2025 – 3840 lbs of bread donated and distributed to community
- March 18, 2025 – Safeway/Sobey’s Donated \$25,000 in gift cards to food bank.

PARTNERSHIPS AND GRANTS

- Partnership with Safeway Thompson, Walmart Thompson and Family Foods Thompson
- Partnered with **School District of Mystery Lake** for hampers and volunteers. Food Bank gave back by donating hampers to the 6 elementary schools and the high school
- March 2025: School teachings at Burntwood, Westwood and Wapanohk
- **Grant: Northern Capacity Grant through Food Banks Canada:** a total of \$59,182.40 was awarded with the following going towards; \$32,2664 for food; \$20,000 to MKO Food Bank staffing; \$6,518.40 to Wellbriety Centre support
- Grant: (northern Capacity Funding through Food Banks Canada) Hire ongoing support worker (Kaleb) from June to October. Received additional funding to keep Kaleb on until June 2025.



Secured Certificate of Indian Status Program

The MKO Status Card Program was launched in January 2021, in collaboration with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) to establish this essential initiative to meet the growing need for accessible status card services for First Nation citizens within the MKO region.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The MKO Status Card Program is currently staffed by two dedicated team members:

Crystal Halcrow, Supervisor

Tannis Henderson, Intake Clerk

Both staff members are Commissioners for Oaths and have recently completed Certified Integrity Document Officer (CIDO) training. This certification enables them to verify key documents, such as birth certificates, for treaty registration purposes.

Previously, applicants were required to mail in their original long-form birth certificates along with their treaty applications. Thanks to the CIDO training, staff can now verify and photocopy these documents on-site, allowing the original documents to be returned immediately to the applicants, streamlining the process and enhancing document security.

SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE MKO STATUS CARD PROGRAM

The MKO Status Card Program staff assist members with a variety of essential services, including:

- Completing applications for the Secure Certificate of Indian Status (SCIS) card
- Submitting new registrations and amendments to treaty status
- Supporting new applicants impacted by the Bill S-3 amendment to the Indian Act, which has expanded eligibility for treaty registration

In addition to status-related services, staff also:

- Help members order birth certificates
- Advocate for and assist with issues related to Manitoba Health cards, Vital Statistics, and other forms of personal identification

The program is committed to ensuring that MKO citizens have the support they need to access and maintain their legal identity documents.

MKO STATUS CARD PROGRAM ANNUAL SUMMARY (APRIL 2023 – MARCH 2024)

Between April 2023 and March 2024, the MKO Status Card Program supported **2,381 participants** who accessed services for a variety of needs, including:

- New, renewal, and replacement applications for the Secure Certificate of Indian Status (SCIS)
- New treaty registration applications
- Amendments to existing treaty status

Of the total participants, **277 were new registration applications**, including **207 children** and **70 adults**.

APRIL 2024-MARCH 2025

Month	Number of clients assisted/applications
April	227
May	212
June	266
July	270
August	227
September	161
October	312
November	116
December	68
January 2025	189
February 2025	154
March 2025	179

To improve accessibility and outreach, the Status Card Program team also traveled to six communities and events to provide on-site services:

- **Leaf Rapids** – April 23–24
- **Wellbriety Centre ID Clinics** – May 22 & July 3
- **Urban Treaty Payment Event, Winnipeg (RBC Convention Centre)** – June 10–14
- **KTC Jordan's Principle ID Clinic** – August 8
- **Gillam/Fox Lake Cree Nation** – October 15–16
- **TRCC (Thompson Regional Community Centre) ID & Financial Access Event** – October 11
- **R.D. Parker Collegiate ID Clinic** – November 6

These outreach efforts reflect MKO's commitment to ensuring that First Nation citizens across the region have equitable access to SCIS services.

INCREASED DEMAND FOLLOWING BILL S-3

With the passage of **Bill S-3**, the Indian Act governs Indian status in Canada and defines eligibility for registration, which grants access to specific rights, services, and benefits. Bill S-3, along with earlier amendments, has addressed long-standing sex-based inequities in the registration process, particularly those that historically disadvantaged the descendants of women. As a result, generations of First Nations people impacted by sex-based discrimination dating back to 1869 are now entitled to Indian status.

As a result of this legislative change, many First Nation citizens are now eligible to apply for status, and many are turning to MKO for guidance and support. Indigenous Services Canada has also been referring applicants directly to the MKO Status Card Office, recognizing the program’s capacity to provide culturally informed and accessible assistance throughout the application process.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

In addition to status card and birth certificate assistance, SCIS staff also supported First Nation members in completing applications for the **First Nations Drinking Water Settlement** and **Indian Day School** claims. This added support ensures that members can access the compensation and recognition they are entitled to through these important settlement processes.

BIRTH CERTIFICATE ASSISTANCE

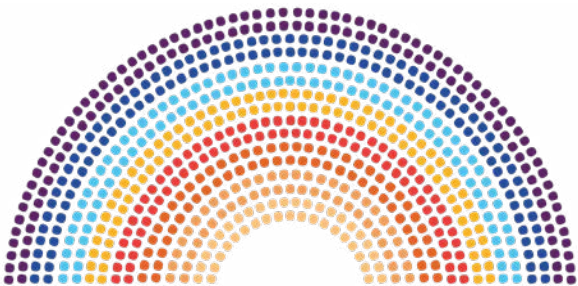
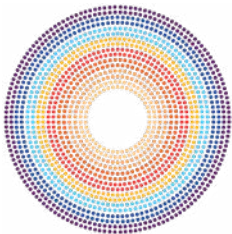
The MKO Status Card Program, in partnership with the MKO ISET Program, supports members in obtaining their birth certificates which is a critical step toward accessing employment and training opportunities.

By covering the cost of birth certificates, the ISET Program removes significant financial barriers and supports members seeking to secure jobs and pursue further education or training.

Status Card Program staff assist clients in completing the necessary paperwork, including the ISET Participant Information Form (PIF) and the birth certificate application form. This hands-on support ensures that members can successfully access the services and benefits available to them.

From April 2024 to March 2025, the Status Card Program and ISET assisted 69 members in obtaining their birth certificates, demonstrating the impact of this collaborative initiative.

Month	# of clients
April	17
May	27
June	7
July	21
August	5
September	13
October	10
November	26
December	8
January 2025	21
February 2025	12
March 2025	28
Total	195





Indigenous Skills & Employment Training Program

The Indigenous Skills & Employment Training Program (ISET) team continues to work with 13 Sub Agreement Holders (SAH) providing support in delivering Employment & Training programs as well as the First Nation Inuit Child Care Initiative (FNICCI). The primary focus has been to continue to provide training and resources to staff in First Nations.

ISET TEAM:

- Jaye White** – Program Director
- Bev Cameron** – Finance Manager
- Dolcey Campbell** – Program Coordinator (First Nation Inuit Child Care Initiative)
- Sylvia McKay** – Program Coordinator (Employment & Training)
- Carolyn Peckford** – Program Coordinator (Employment & Training)
- Marlon Wilson** – ARMS Support Coordinator
- Miranda McPherson** – Receptionist/Finance Clerk
- Tasha Girouard** – Receptionist/Intake Clerk – Thompson



The following capacity building training was delivered to sub-agreement holder staff between October 1, 2024 and March 31, 2025:

- Annual Operational Plan (AOP) training – Employment & Training (E&T) Coordinators/Directors
- December 3 & 4, 2024 – 18 E&T Coordinators/Directors complete Annual Operational Plan (AOP) training – FNICCI
 - February 11 & 12, 2025 – Nine Daycare Directors completed

Accountability & Resource Management System (ARMS) training:

- July 3 & 4, 2024 – 8 E&T staff attended
- October 29 & 30, 2024 – 7 E&T staff attended
- February 25 & 26, 2025 – 2 E&T staff from SFN attended
- March 18 & 19, 2025 – 5 E&T staff attended
- April 15 & 16, 2025 – 16 E&T staff attended
- Ongoing ARMS support by ISET staff as requested

Digital Literacy (Nation Innovation)

- May 21 – 23, 2024 – 13 SAH staff completed

Excel Associate (Nation Innovation)

- September 10 – 12, 2024 – 25 SAH & ISET staff completed
- November 5 – 7, 2024 – 12 SAH staff completed

MKO ISET Advisory Committee –Resolution #2023-08-09 – approved ISET program utilization of deferred revenue to develop and implement community-based training projects. The advisory committee is made up of 7 Councillors from ISET Sub-Agreement Holders to provide guidance and grassroots input for reviewing and approving community-based project. First meeting was held on January 16, 2025, developing terms of reference and request for proposals and project approval process.

MKO ISET Policy Development Committee – First meeting held December 5th, membership includes 5 Employment & Training Coordinators/Directors and ISET team members. Drafting Terms of Reference, developing a policy and procedure manual to guide Sub-Agreement Holder staff in the day-to-day delivery of ISET programming.

Employment Insurance Benefits Information System (EIBIS) access – Currently, there are 3 ISET staff and 2 SAH E&T Coordinators/Directors that have security clearance and training to access EIBIS.

MKO ISET Strategic Plan – Indigenous Leadership Development Inc. facilitated the strategic planning process with the MKO ISET team. The strategic plan, finalized in the fall is a living document and will carry through to the end of the current agreement.

In community Financial and Activity Monitors for 2023/24 fiscal year continued in the spring with 3 additional community monitors being completed.

PARTNERSHIPS:

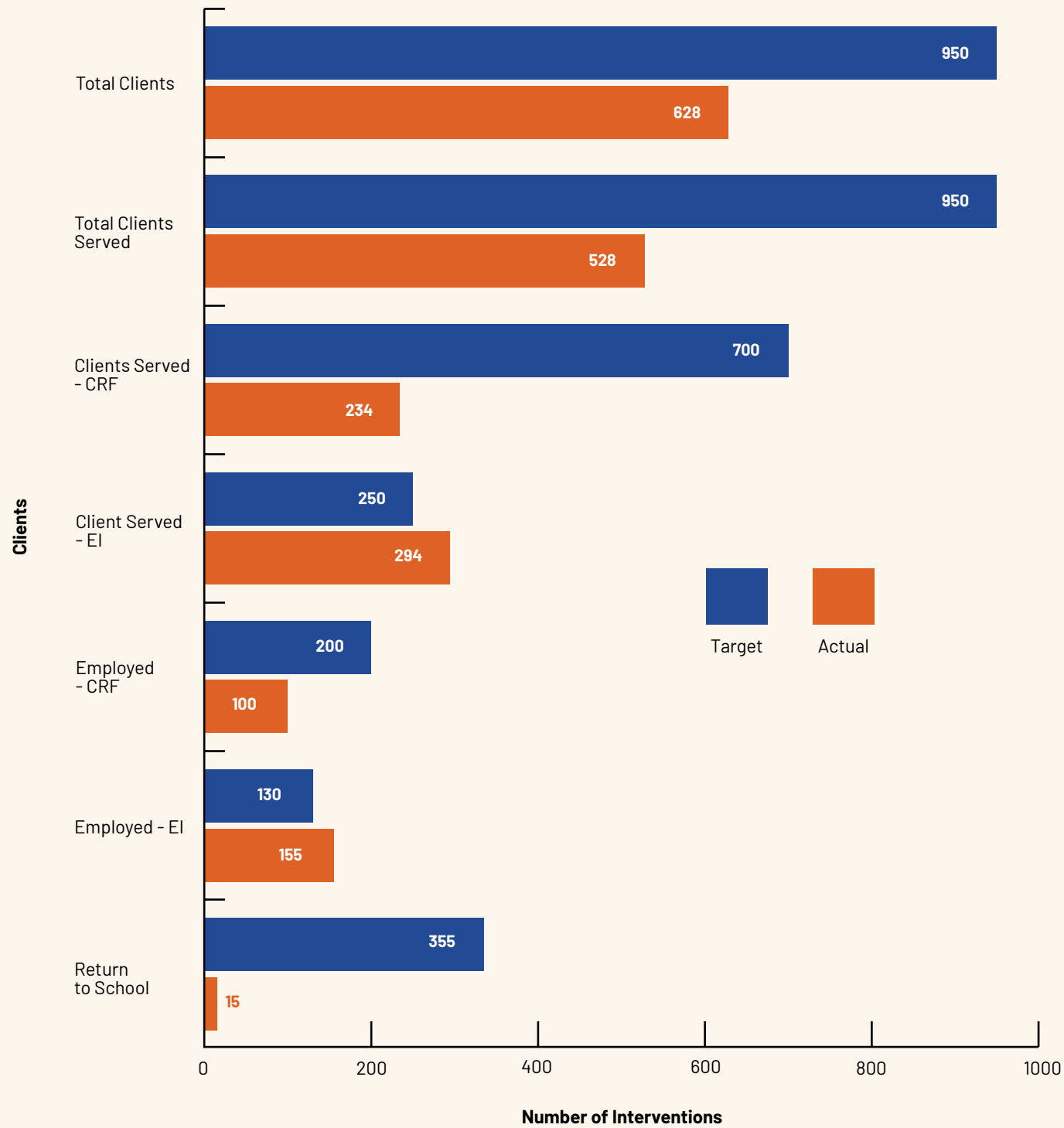
MKO SCIS office – MKO ISET provides funding for MKO First Nations members to acquire necessary identification documents (ID) for employment and training needs – 195 community members assisted (double the previous year).

Outland Youth Employment Program – 6-week summer employment camp – open to all youth from First Nations within the MKO region.

Continuing to meet with training institutions regarding bringing training into community

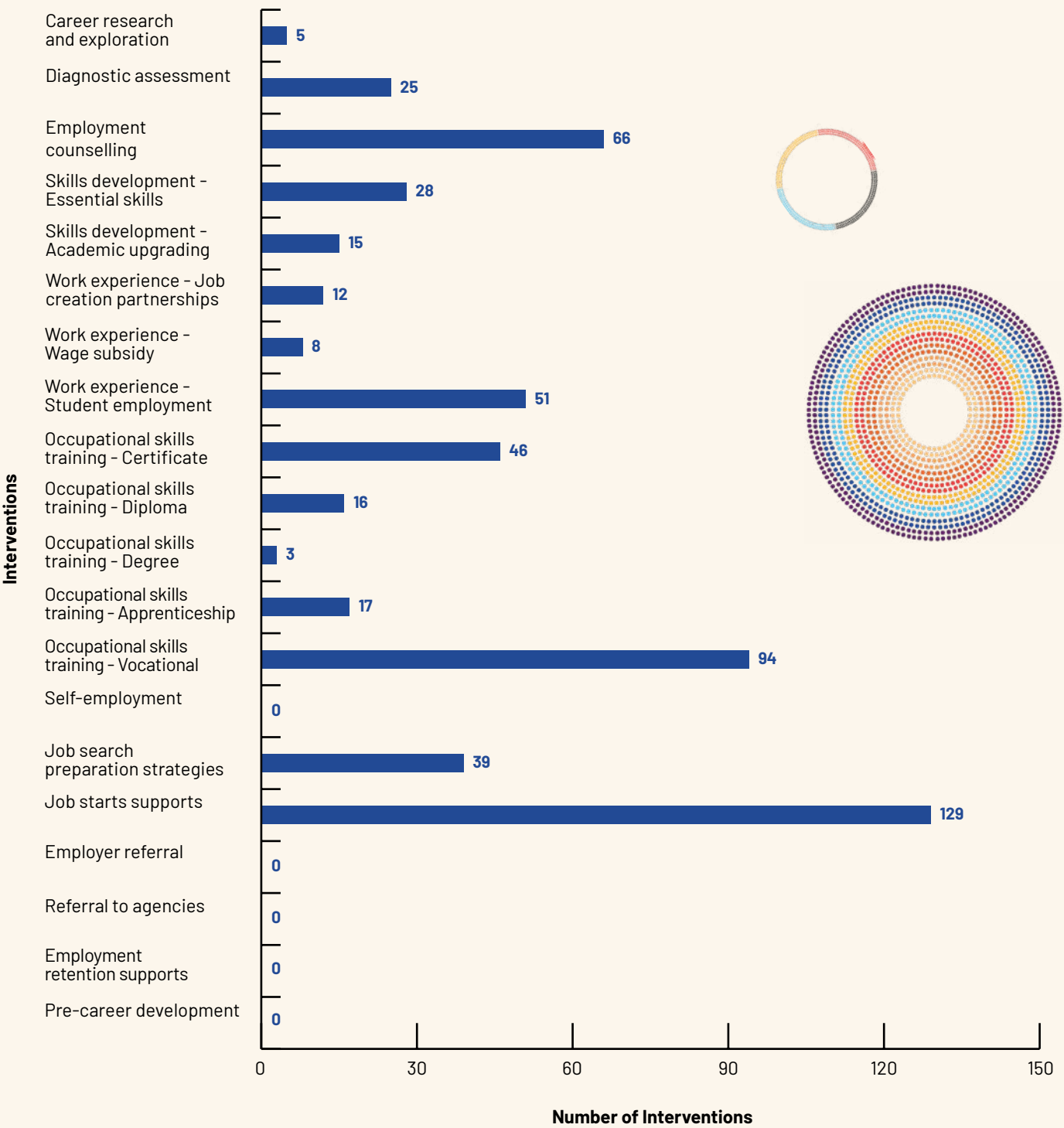
- Manitoba Construction Sector Council** – continued discussions regarding bringing trades training modules to our communities to train community members and create opportunities for employment.
- University College of the North** – continued discussions regarding bringing training into our communities, starting with training that will build capacity in community.
- IDFusion Software** – building capacity through mentorship in IT
- Royal Roads University** – discussions regarding training and capacity building for the ISET team and SAH staff, RRU has submitted a proposal for funding for the training through Future Skills Centre.
- Workplace Education Manitoba/Essential Skills Manitoba** – LIFT program working with communities
- Indigenous Services Canada** – proposal for funding to provide Water & Wastewater Operator Level 1 training for community members interested in a long-term career, working with Royal Roads University to provide the academic upgrading portion and RRC Polytech to provide the 5 modules to complete the certification.

ISET TARGETS VS. ACTUAL 2024-25



A total of 554 interventions were completed between April 1, 2024 and March 31, 2025.

INTERVENTIONS BY TYPE -2024-2025



First Nations Inuit Child Care Initiative (FNICCI) – Urgent Repairs & Renovations – some movement in completing approved repairs and renovations, due to the lack of contractors in some communities as well as a shorter winter road season, we have been referring those communities to Ininev Limited Partnership to access contractors.



Traditional Healer Program

The Traditional Healer Program is a year-to-year initiative with funding provided by the Non-Insured Health Benefits Program for support and operations of the MKO Traditional Healer Program.

Traditional Indigenous medicinal practices with ceremonies have been shown to be highly effective in the healing of the body, and spirit. Time-honored protocols have provided the comfort of incorporating language and Indigenous teachings which are fundamental in supporting holistic wellness.

When viewed through the lens of Western medicine, traditional healing may differ from the biomedical model, which often focuses on physical symptoms and medication-based interventions. In contrast, Indigenous traditional healing embraces a holistic approach that nurtures the spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical well-being of individuals.

The MKO Traditional Healer Program is guided and strengthened by a board of Ceremonial Healers and Knowledge Keepers, who provide cultural direction and ensure that ceremony and traditional practices remain central to the program. Through this collaborative approach, MKO honours and supports traditional ways of healing as essential to the health and wellness of First Nations citizens.

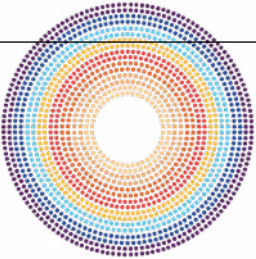
MKO TRADITIONAL HEALER PROGRAM STAFF:

- Shyanna Lynxleg** - Program Manager
- Aileen Spence** - Administrative Assistant
- Charmain Clipping** - Medical Transportation Coordinator

MANITOBA INDIGENOUS CULTURAL SOCIETY

Established in August 2018 at a provincial Traditional Healers Gathering as an advisory committee of Traditional Healers, and Indigenous Knowledge Keepers, which inform and give direction on ceremonial protocols and guidance on ceremonies, with traditional healing processes to the MKO Traditional Healer Program.

A gender balanced 10-member body of Traditional Healers from the five First Nations (Cree, Denesuline, Oji-Cree, Ojibway, and Dakota) in Manitoba that safeguards the cultural ways, medicines, and ceremonial protocol practices. The MICS assists and guides with the implementation of effective, efficient, and accessible Traditional Healer services to the 63 Manitoba Nations.



CREATING SPACE FOR HEALING

The MKO Traditional Healer Program, and the Manitoba Indigenous Cultural Society (MICS) in collaboration with Shared Health and Health Science Centre are preparing to announce the development a Traditional Healing Clinic within the Health Science Centre in Winnipeg, MB.

The Traditional Healer Program also provided support to renovate a building outside the Wellbriety Centre to be used as a ceremonial space for residents. We are proud to help ensure that all our relatives have access to meaningful ceremonial opportunities on their healing journeys.

MKO TRADITIONAL HEALER PROGRAM IN THE COMMUNITY

The Traditional Healer Program, in partnership with Terrance Thomas, Traditional Healer provided a wide range of ceremonial teachings and ceremonies:

- Networked with First Nation organizations in Winnipeg to provide information and provide contact information to access THP supports and information
- THP information and posters provided to all 63 First Nations in Manitoba
- Traditional drum group lessons for youth and adults
- Cultural presentations at the RD Parker Collegiate High School
- Cultural activities with elementary schools
- Wellbriety Centre healing and teachings
- Tea-Time with Terrance at the Heritage North Museum
- Medicine harvesting
- Land-Based healing activity
- Healing culture camp for youth
- Sundance camp
- Indigenous Veterans Day ceremony event
- Women's tipi teachings.
- MKO staff cultural reconnection.
- Produced a video with Elders and Knowledge Keepers on history of traditions & healing ceremony
- Healing and teachings with White Wolf Women Drummers
- Teachings and making ribbon skirts and ribbon shirts
- Moose Hide Campaign RDPC High School presentation

PROGRAM INITIATIVES

- NCI-FM & The MKO Traditional Healer Program, Terrance Thomas
- Manitoba Indigenous Cultural Society-NCI-FM Radio Show
- Bringing The Spirit to the North Gathering-Thompson MB, August 2024
- Building The Spirit Bundle Gathering-Thompson MB, March 2025
- Traditional Medicines-On Site Thompson Office
- MICS meeting with Tom Lindsey Speaker of the Manitoba Legislature Assembly regarding "How the Legislature can be more reflective of Indigenous culture"
- Uplifting the Spirit of the Land & the Language Gathering, August 29-30, 2025

NEXT STEPS

- Uplifting the Spirit of the Land & the Language Gathering, August 29-30, 2025.
- To continue to provide support project-based traditional healing initiatives that serve the 63 First Nations.
- Continue to advocate additional funding for healers, and medical transportation with a specific lens on patient travel and accommodation amounts to reflect the inflated costs of gas, accommodations, and meals.
- The THP will continue to work closely with other MKO programs to ensure that services are coordinated in holistic manner and strengthening support for community members across all areas of wellness.



Staff

POLICITAL TEAM

- Garrison Settee** – MKO Grand Chief
- Kevin Carlson** – Assistant to Grand Chief
- Dorothy Smith** – Executive Assistant to Grand Chief
- Brennan Manoakeesick** – Director of Intergovernmental Relations
- Brenda Wood** – Chief of Staff
- Lorraine Spence** – Executive Assistant to Chief of Staff/Director of Intergovernmental Relations
- Jill Macyshon** – Communications Officer
- Candice Schneider** – Social Media Coorindator
- Anita Murdock** – Senior Environmental and Climate Action Analyst
- Mary Jayne Armstrong** – Senior Health Analyst
- Lucas Edmond** – Policy Analyst

ADMIN & SUPPORT STAFF

- Kelvin Lynxleg** – Executive Director
- Pierce Beardy** – Office Support
- Shawna Flett** – HR Manager
- Carmen Genaille** – Receptionist/Administrative Assistant
- Virginia Goulet** – Executive Assistant
- Damien Lynxleg** – Researcher/Document Clerk
- Miranda McIvor** – HR Coordinator
- Elaine Paisley** – HR Coordinator
- Phyllis Throne** – Thompson Office Manager

FAMILY FIRST NATION SECRETARIET

- Colin Kinsella** – FFNS Senior Policy Analyst/ Acting Secretariat Director

JORDAN’S PRINCIPLE & POST MAJORITY PROGRAM

- Gurpreet Khosa** – Jordan's Principle & Post Majority Support Services Program Manager
- Victor Alvarenga** – Jordan's Principle and Post Majority Support Services Administrative Assistant
- Liezl Rodriguez** – Jordan's Principle and Post Majority Support Services Date Entry Clerk
- Rena Simard** – Post Majority Support Services Case Manager
- Lacey Foure** – Jordan’s Principle Case Manager (Thompson)
- Jordan Big George** – Family and MKO Driver

MMIWG

- Oliver Veuillot** – MMIWG Interim Director
- Chenaya Smith** – MMIWG Administrative Officer
- Cade Anderson** – MMIWG Traditional Support Worker
- Dee North** – MMIWG Intake Coordinator
- Dennis Murdock** – MMIWG Land Based and Cultural Coordinator
- Christine Sawatzky** – MMIWG Community and Community Service Liaison
- Francis Budd** – MMIWG Community and Community Service Liaison
- Jason Fiddler** – MMIWG Administrative and Wellness Administrator
- Margaret Billard** – MMIWG Community and Community Service Liaison
- Mary Linklater** – MMIWG Community and Community Service Liaison
- Marie Ballantyne** – MMIWG Grandmother
- River Johnson** – MMIWG 2SLGBTQQIA+ Coordinator
- Stacey Sayese** – MMIWG Community and Community Service Liaison (Team Lead)
- Stephanie Landerr** – MMIWG Community and Community Service Liaison
- Allyson Fournier** – MMIWG Gender Based Violence Coordinator

JUSTICE

- Melissa Brown** – Justice Program Manager
- Charles Wood** – FNJS Director
- Miranda Mcpherson** – Justice Administrative Assistant
- Nigel Settee** – Justice Navigator
- Shania Mckay** – Justice Navigator
- Mina Munroe** – Community Justice Worker
- Stacey Rockwell** – Regional Community Justice Worker
- Sylvia Mckay** – Justice Triage Coordinator
- Mary Ann Colon** – Indigenous Court Worker – Thompson Sub-Office
- Elizabeth Bear** – Indigenous Court Worker – The Pas/OCN
- Crystal Roulette** – Regional Community Justice Worker – Winnipeg Sub-Office
- Darren Sayies** – Regional Community Justice Worker – Thompson Sub-Office
- Deborah Patchinose** – Community Justice Worker – Chemawawin Cree Nation

YOUTH JUSTICE

- Nitanis Leary** – Kakiskinawtahitonan Youth Justice Coordinator
- Roger Thomas** – Cultural Mentor – Winnipeg Sub-Office
- Melanie McKay** – Family Wellness Navigator – Winnipeg Sub-Office
- Kimberly Osborne** – Youth Engagement and Wellness Navigator – Winnipeg Sub-Office
- Ovide Mcleod** – Youth Justice Land Based Healing & Wellness Mentor
- Randy Dick** – Land Base Helper – Winnipeg Sub-Office

COMMUNITY SAFETY & WELL-BEING PLANNING PATHWAYS PROJECT

- Jolene Mosiondz** – Community Safety Coordinator – Winnipeg Sub-Office
- Hunter Beardy** – Community Engagement Coordinator – Winnipeg Sub-Office

POST-SENTENCE SUPPORT PROGRAM

- Abigail Church** – Post Sentence Support Coordinator – Nisichawayasihk Justice Building

MKO REGIONAL POLICE FEASIBILITY STUDY

- Jacqueline Genaille** – Police Service Advisor
- Edwin Wood** – Strategic Management Officer
- Kyla Villeneuve** – Senior Policy and Program Analyst

MOBILE CRISIS TEAM (MCRT)

- Greg Fontaine** – Mobile Crisis Response Team Program Manager
- Charles Harper** – Intake Coordinator, Mobile Crisis Response Team Member
- Gloria Kejick** – Elder, Crisis Care Coordinator
- Nicole Settee** – Mobile Crisis Response Team Administrative Assistant
- Theresa Beardy** – Crisis Response Training Assistant
- Trevor Sinclair** – Intake Coordinator, Mobile Crisis Response Team Member
- Trudy Stevenson** – Crisis Response Training Coordinicator
- Ace Campbell** – 2SLGBTQ+ Crisis Response Team Member

- Brenda Macumber** – Mobile Crisis Response Team Member
- Candace Clemons** – Mobile Crisis Response Team Member
- Cortney Hudson** – Mobile Crisis Response Team Member
- Kristi Fiddler** – Mobile Crisis Response Team Member
- Mitchell Saunders** – 2SLGBTQ+ Crisis Response Team Member
- Nelson Mckay** – Mobile Crisis Response Team Member
- Sharon McIvor** – Mobile Crisis Response Team Member
- Shauna Sutherland** – Mobile Crisis Response Team Member
- Sonya Nepinak** – Mobile Crisis Response Team Member

INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL PATH FORWARD PROJECT (IRS)

- Naomi Clarke** – Indian Residential School Project Manager
- Stan Manoakeesick** – Indian Residential School Research Advisor
- Kayla Sinclair** – Indian Residential School Logistics Event Coordinator
- Glennis Berens** – Indian Residential School Researcher
- Alexis Lamirande** – Indian Residential School Project Coordinator
- Kayla Andrews** – Indian Residential School Logistics Event Coordinator
- Kayla Shaganash** – Indian Residential School Project Research
- Kimberly Murray** – Indian Residential School Special Advisor
- Phillip Michel** – Indian Residential School Elder

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

- Ashley Desrosiers** – Emergency Management Program Manager
- Kaitlynn Brightnose** – Regional Emergency Coordinator
- April Wastesicoot** – Regional Emergency Coordinator
- Yahnel Tait** – Regional Emergency Coordinator

FINANCE

- Agnes Dantouze** – Finance Manager
- Selena Hunter** – Payroll & Benefits/Finance Administrator
- Courtney Gazandlare** – Accounts Payable Officer
- Kristen Tsessaze** – Accounts Payable Clerk
- Patsy Reid** – Payables Clerk
- Sherry Smith** – Accounts Payables and Visa Reconciliation

INDIGENOUS SKILLS EMPLOYMENT
TRAINING PROGRAM (ISET)

Jaye White - Indigenous Skills Employment Employment
Program Director

Bev Cameron - ISET Finance Manager

Dolcey Campbell - ISET Program Coordinator

Tanisha Clarke - ISET Program Coordinator

Marlon Wilson - ARMS Support Coordinator

Krista-Leigh Evans - ISET Receptionist/
Administrative Assistant

Tasha Girouard - ISET Receptionist/Intake Clerk

HARVESTERS PROGRAM

Larry Flett - Harvesters Program Manager

Tiffany Martens - Harvesters Administrative Assistant

Grace Masse - Harvesters Program Coordinator

Maryssa Halkett - Harvesters Program
Project Coordinator

TRADITIONAL HEALER
PROGRAM (THP)

Shyanna Lynxleg - Traditional Healer Program Manager

Charmain Clipping - Traditional Healer Program
Administrative-Assistant

Jae-Leign Nazzie - Medical Transportation Coordinator

Aileen Spence - Cultural Support Helper

MEDICAL TRANSPORTATION

Margaret McIvor - Medical Transportation
Refferal Supervisor

Trisha Spence - Medical Transportation Coordinator

Roxanne Flett - Medical Transportation Driver

Renee Redhead - Medical Transportation Refferal Coordinator

Nicole Nattaway - Medical Transportation Referral Coordinator

Paris Robsinson - Medical Transportation Referral Coordinator

Konway McIvor - Medical Transportation Driver

Bernadine Sinclair - Medical Transportation
Refferal Supervisor

Gayla Gazandlare - Medical Transportation Coordinator

Jae-Leign Nazzie - Medical Transportation Coordinator

Jaime Young - Medical Transportation Driver

Madison Merasty - Medical Transportation Coordinator

Delaney Kennedy - Medical Transportation
Refferal Coordinator

IDENTIFICATION INTAKE;
SECURE IDENTIFICATION
INDIAN STATUS CARDS (SCIS)

Crystal Halcrow - Secure Indentation Indian Status
Card Intake Supervisor

Tannis Henderson - Secure Indentation Indian Status
Card Intake Clerk

MENTAL WELLNESS PROGRAM

Renee Linklater - Mental Wellness Program Manager

CUSTODIAN

Melvin Halkett - Maintenance and Facilities Worker

Alex Keeper - Custodian

Brianna Aubut - Custodian

Jody Breland - Custodian

Peter Dumas - Custodian

URBAN INITIATIVE PROGRAM;
FOOD BANK

Gina Spence - Food Bank Supervisor

Pierre Sinclair - Food Bank Intake Worker

Kaleb Halcrow - Food Package and Delivery Driver

Nolan Spence - Youth Navigator

NIHB CLIENT NAVIGATORS

Bernice Thorassie

Senior Client Navigator - Wpg

Wendy Prince - NIHB Client Navigator - The Pas sub-office

WELLBRIETY CENTRE

Danielle Jenner - Coordinator

Mike Girouard - Assistant Coordinator

Jessica Uribe - Addictions Support

Ruby Johnson - Addictions & Mental Wellness Support Worker
& Wknd Supervisor

Rachel Pronteau - Sabe

Michele Genaille - Wellness Mentor & Counsellor

Cathee Helgason - MAP/Harm Reduction Worker & Daytime
Shift Supervisor

Melinda Blacksmith - Health Care Aide

Linda Fitzner - Health Care Aide

Nehmat Warring - Health Care Aide Support

Norma Nepton - Hifis Data Coordinator

Mike Linklater - Cook

Nathan Girouard - Safety Monitor

Melanie Beardy - Head Cook

Deka Sheikh- Evening Custodian

Barry Longboy - Outreach Worker/Driver

Katie Ledger - Safety Monitor

Kyle Paynter - Shift Manager

Anab Sheikh- Daytime Custodian

Johannes Peters - Safety Monitor

Melvin Richard - Safety Monitor

Joyce Grier - Safety Monitor

Bill Pronteau- Safety Monitor

Jimmy Muskego - Shift Manager

Tyrone Linklater - Safety Monitor

Nelson Cook - Safety Monitor

Rochelle Blacksmith - Safety Monitor

Rochelle Scott - Safety Monitor

Reggie Anderson - Safety Monitor

Sandeep Singh - Safety Monitor

Raj Singh - Safety Monitor





**Stay connected with MKO
on social media:**

-  www.facebook.com/MKONorth
-  [Instagram: @MKO_North](https://www.instagram.com/MKO_North)
-  [LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/company/manitoba-keewatinowi-okimakanak](https://www.linkedin.com/company/manitoba-keewatinowi-okimakanak)
-  [Twitter: @MKO_North](https://twitter.com/MKO_North)
-  [Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNclKBqeMG2HHVELtduwbbQ](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNclKBqeMG2HHVELtduwbbQ)

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