



NORTH CENTRAL ALBERTA
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

miyo ohpikinawâsowin – Indigenous Program Indicators



UNIVERSITY
nuhelot'ine thaiyots'j nistameyimâkanak
BLUE QUILLS



IRM Research &
Evaluation Inc.

There is a void in culturally relevant indicators and processes to accurately assess the impact and value of culturally designed services provided in collaboration with Indigenous families.

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Background

miyo ohpikinawâsowin is a partnership between North Central Alberta Children's Services (NCA-CS), University *nuhelot'ine thaiyots'ï nistameyimâkanak* Blue Quills (UnBQ), and the University of Calgary – Faculty of Social Work. It is a journey of learning to serve *iyiniw* (First People, People of the Land) children, youth, and families within the beliefs and values central to *iyiniw* knowledge.

In 2012, NCA-CS began discussing how the formed outcome-based service delivery model (OBSD), now known as collaborative service delivery (CSD), could honour *iyiniw* knowledge within the Cold Lake, St. Paul, and Bonnyville offices. After several leadership meetings, a working group was formed in the spring of 2013 with the intent of developing a community-based, relational approach to practice based on theory and evidence.

The leadership group initially collaborated with Dr. Leona Makokis, *nêhiyaw* (Cree) Elder, and offered her tobacco in exchange for her guidance and wisdom. Through this process, the name of the project emerged as *miyo ohpikinawâsowin*. In the language, *miyo* means good, *ohpikiw* means to grow, and *awasow* means to warm oneself over a fire. An *awâsis* is a child – brought together, these words represent *raising children well*.

In February of 2014, a partnership between NCA-CS, UnBQ, and the University of Calgary was established and a leadership committee (referred to as the *miyo leads*) was formed. This committee consisted of Dr. Leona Makokis, Dr. David Rideout and Bonda Thompson from NCA-CS, Sharon Steinhauer from UnBQ, and Dr. Ralph Bodor from the University of Calgary.

A partnership gathering was held on June 24, 2014, at UnBQ, to ground the initiative in ceremony. Vincent Steinhauer, former President of UnBQ, and Dr. Leona Makokis led a pipe ceremony to unite the shared vision of creating better outcomes for Indigenous families. In December 2015, another pipe ceremony was held to guide members of the leadership team and working group in understanding the vital role of ceremony to working with *iyiniw* families.

In late 2015, a sub-group was established from the larger *miyo* working group and tasked with moving the collective vision into action. An implementation plan was developed that included the following objectives:

1) *kiskinotahiwew* – Cultural Navigator Position

The *kiskinotahiwew* position was developed to guide staff knowledge development through:

- providing support and guidance while working on embedding Indigenous teachings into practice at all levels;
- facilitating connection and relationships within NCA-CS, between NCA-CS and key community Indigenous helpers and community-based agencies;
- developing an ongoing Culture Calendar of social and ceremonial activities that staff and families can access;
- promoting existing training (Joining the Circle; Family Group Conferencing; Facilitating Circles) and offering more intensive training (4-day *omanitew* experiential workshop) for staff and allied partners; and
- assessing infrastructure capacity to create ceremonial space (smudging) in worksites, for staff and families (possible cultural rooms for Indigenous families).

2) Training – the experience of *omanitew*

omanitew, a four-day immersive cultural training, was initially delivered within the St. Paul, Bonnyville, and Cold Lake offices to:

- engage in a more intentional and meaningful process of training staff as opposed to the historic institutional response of “cultural awareness” or “cultural-competency” training;
- support staff towards developing an in-depth understanding of an *iyiniw* worldview through *iyiniw* values, beliefs, and teachings; and
- guide staff to practice *omanitew* – to celebrate when families enter our programs, make ceremonial space for them, and provide them with our best so they can continue their journey once they leave.

The delivery of *omanitew* training began with the St. Paul, Bonnyville, and Cold Lake offices in November 2016. Since then, *omanitew* training has been, and continues to be, delivered to

offices across NCA-CS. The training has expanded to include *omanitew* I and II with *omanitew* II first delivered in May 2018.

omanitew I explores pre-contact teachings, the history and process of colonization, the transmission of intergenerational trauma, and how to become allies. *omanitew* I provides foundational knowledge on *iyiniw* language, teachings, and ceremony – participants begin to identify how colonization has and continues to affect Indigenous communities while being introduced to ways forward within child intervention practice.

omanitew II focuses entirely on the use of ceremony in practice, including extensive worldview teachings to heal from trauma. As participants have a prior understanding of colonization, *omanitew* II is solely rooted in pre-contact teachings, allowing participants to be completely immersed within an *iyiniw* worldview. *omanitew* II provides advanced knowledge on *iyiniw* worldviews – participants experience how to facilitate healing in child intervention practice entirely within the context of language, teachings, and ceremony.

3) Improved Infrastructure

An assessment of the infrastructure within the St. Paul, Bonnyville, and Cold Lake offices was completed to:

- work towards having space and resources available to incorporate ceremony into daily practice;
- determine any structural barriers that prevent staff and families from engaging in ceremony on a regular basis;
- develop a plan to alleviate any identified barriers to allow for a shift in practice;
- purchase additional supplies to facilitate participation in ceremonies such as smudging, feasts, drumming and Circle Process; and
- encourage staff and families to participate in and attend ceremonies such as round dances, sweat lodges, and pipe ceremonies.

4) Knowledge Mobilization

As the work undertaken through *miyo ohpikinawâsowin* honors the Seven Teachings and the Natural Laws, there is a responsibility to share the knowledge gained through the project by:

- publishing a peer-reviewed journal article; and
- presenting *miyo ohpikinawâsowin* at a national child welfare or human service conference.

5) Indigenous Program Indicators

A set of clear and measurable Indigenous Program Indicators will be developed for the purpose of:

- understanding how practice can shift to improve outcomes for *iyiniw* children, youth, and families; and
- applying a pre-post measurement/meaning/training tool to assess staff's current knowledge and gather future training opportunities.

Evaluating *miyo ohpikinawâsowin*: Indigenous Program Indicators

As these objectives have been implemented since 2015, NCA-CS has engaged in a process of evaluating *miyo ohpikinawâsowin* to understand the impact created for staff and their practice with *iyiniw* families. From March – October 2018, Leona Makokis, Ralph Bodor, and Kristina Kopp met with offices across the region to share the *NCA-CS Indigenous Program Indicators* (see Appendix). During these sessions, staff were guided in self-evaluating their existing understanding of *iyiniw* knowledge and in identifying areas for further support and training. This report provides the background on the *NCA-CS Indigenous Program Indicators* while sharing the information gathered from offices across the region.

Understanding *iyiniw* Program Evaluation

A common process in program development is to identify desired outcomes and then to measure how effectively those outcomes were achieved. It is imperative to acknowledge that terms such as “goals”, “standards”, “outcomes”, “evaluation”, and “measurement” are western worldview concepts that carry implied actions and consequences. These terms are derived from the development of evidence-based practices found in western-based research knowledge that

continue to be applied onto Indigenous communities with no consideration for their validity, reliability, and credibility (Naquin, 2008; Weaver, 2002). While this form of research and evaluation may be deemed a best practice to inform service provision, it is not applicable to an *iyiniw* context. As such, western outcomes and evaluation processes are inappropriate and inadequate for understanding the impact of *miyo ohpikinawâsowin*.

Alternately, there is growing recognition for the integration of practice-based evidence that is reflective of the extensive cultural teachings that inform Indigenous knowledge systems (Abe et al., 2018; Naquin, 2008). Within *iyiniw* program design and evaluation, understanding is captured in terms of “meaning” as opposed to “measurement”. Indigenous knowledge and wisdom are validated by their meaning and credibility to the community, which entails collective wellbeing, reciprocity, balance and good relations (Makokis et al., 2016; Wilson, 2008). These beliefs and values are taught through the practice-based evidence found in *iyiniw* teachings, ceremony, and language. Given that NCA-CS adopted a relational approach, indicators of individual wellbeing had to be re-interpreted to capture the efficacy of community-based *iyiniw* practices (Makokis et al., 2016).

Consequently, *miyo ohpikinawâsowin* is best assessed through the knowledge it is rooted in. NCA-CS is shifting away from only achieving western outcomes to viewing relationships as the outcomes child intervention staff can pursue and model with families. In ‘learning by doing’, staff can follow the teachings in their everyday interactions to seek the good life (Makokis et al., 2016). To live in balance – *miyo pimatisiwin* – is not an outcome; it is a way of being and a commitment to the teachings, ceremony, and relational accountability. The goal of *miyo ohpikinawâsowin* is to guide staff in practicing from a place of restoring personal balance, modeling that for families, and having the relational skills to help families find balance and connection. The pressure is not on the families to meet outcomes. Instead, when our relationships are strong, and we are well enough ourselves, then we can continue to grow our understanding of *iyiniw* knowledge and eventually bring families on this journey with us.

In this regard, meaning is found through evaluating one’s relationship to *iyiniw* knowledge. The *NCA-CS Indigenous Program Indicators* is a multipurpose tool used to assess balance in an individual’s life through the Circle Teachings and the four realms – mental, emotional, spiritual,

and physical. It is these realms that form the life framework for the *nêhiyaw* people. The term *nêhiyaw* can be roughly translated to “four-bodied or four-dimensional people” – hence the appropriateness of the use of the four realms in exploring the understanding of these realms by human service providers. In each of these stages of growth, there are opportunities to learn experientially from the intentional sharing of *iyiniw* teachings. Ideally, we could all work towards living *miyo pimatisiwin* with equilibrium occurring between the four human states of mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being. If disruption occurs, the resulting imbalance can be attributed to a loss of connection to community, family, oneself, and *iyiniw* practices.

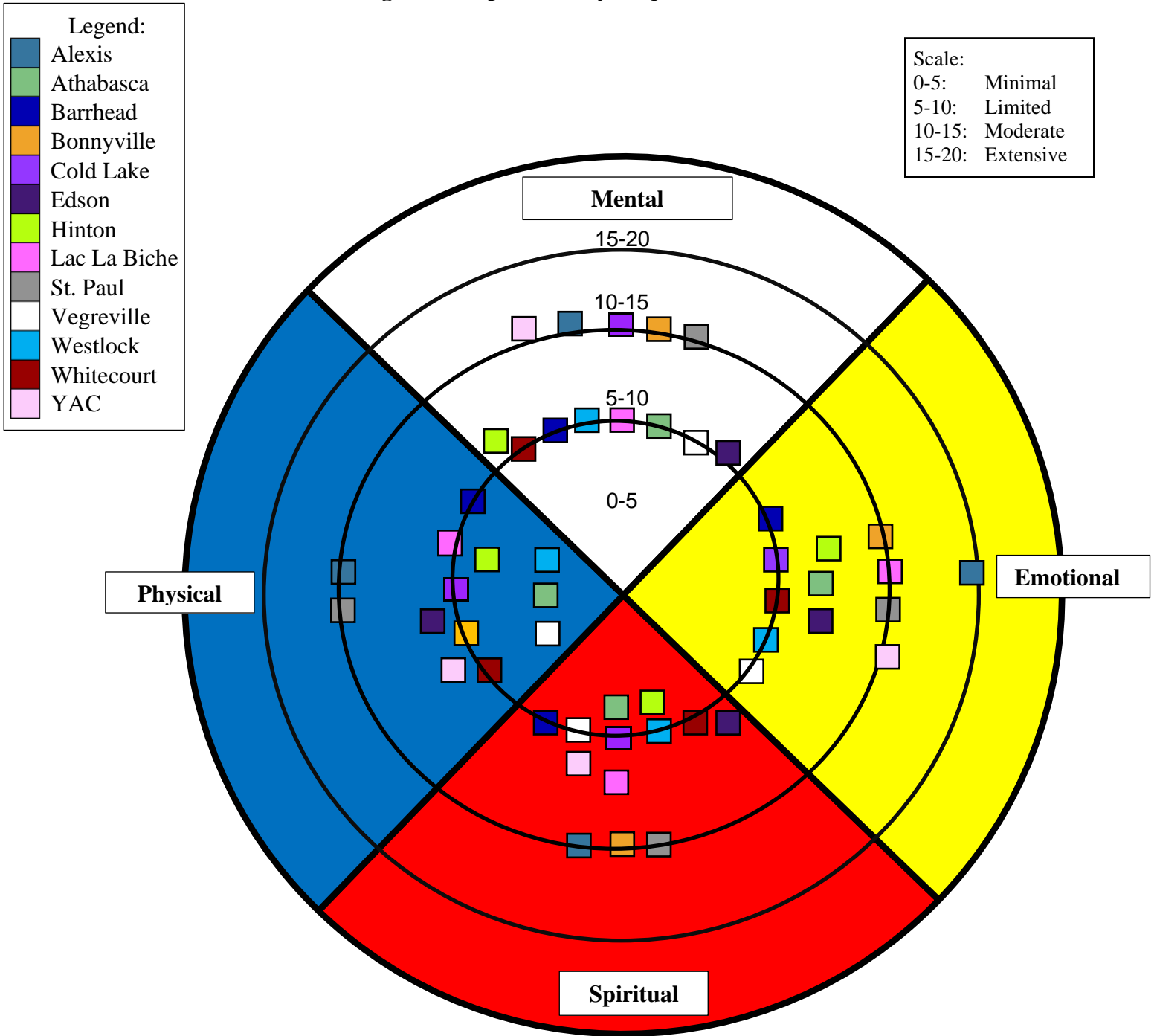
In using the *NCA-CS Indigenous Program Indicators* to self-assess their own mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual wellbeing, caseworkers have begun to identify how they can work towards achieving balance within themselves. *iyiniw* knowledge is transmitted by knowing and doing – when staff live the teachings in their everyday interactions, they can move towards modelling *miyo pimatisiwin* (Makokis et al., 2016). During this reflection, staff often realize what they do not know and identify teachings that can further their learning. Additionally, this relational assessment measures the balance and harmony staff can strive to create within themselves and exemplify in practice.

Engagement: NCA-CS Indigenous Program Indicators Sessions

The following sections provide detail on the information collected from the sessions held with offices across the region. The structure of these sessions included a brief overview of *miyo ohpikinawâsowin* and the *NCA-CS Indigenous Program Indicators* before staff were guided to self-assess their understanding of each realm (mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical).

Afterwards, staff totalled their score for each of the respective dimensions and plotted them on the Circle diagram. The average scores for each office were compiled on a cumulative Circle diagram to capture the influence of *miyo ohpikinawâsowin* across the region (see p. 8 – Regional Snapshot of *miyo ohpikinawâsowin*). Commonalities found within and across the offices were identified to propose recommendations and potential training opportunities that can support the continued implementation of *miyo ohpikinawâsowin* in NCA-CS.

Regional Snapshot of *miyo ohpikinawâsowin*



Note: There was a tendency for some offices to score a lower understanding or involvement as they received more in-depth, immersive training on *iyiniw* knowledge and practices.

Regional Data Scoring Tables

Alphabetical by Site – High to Low Realms Regional Average

Office	Emotional	Mental	Spiritual	Physical	Overall Average	Completion
Alexis	16	15.5	12.2	11.5	13.8	4
Athabasca	9.2	7.9	7.5	7.3	7.9	10
Barrhead	9.4	8.6	7.8	8.4	8.5	5
Bonnyville	12	10.2	9.2	7.7	9.8	9
Cold Lake	10	9.4	9.2	7.1	8.9	7
Edson	13.1	13.4	9.1	8.4	11.0	7
Hinton	10	8.8	8	6.4	8.3	5
Lac La Biche	11.6	9.5	10	7.6	9.7	6
St. Paul	14.75	14.25	14	13.2	14.0	4
Vegreville	9.1	7.6	6.8	6.3	7.5	6
Westlock	8.2	8	6.7	5.8	7.2	7
Whitcourt	12.8	12	11.5	9.8	11.5	6
YAC	10.7	11	9.2	9	10	4
Regional Average	11.29	10.47	9.32	8.37	9.88	80

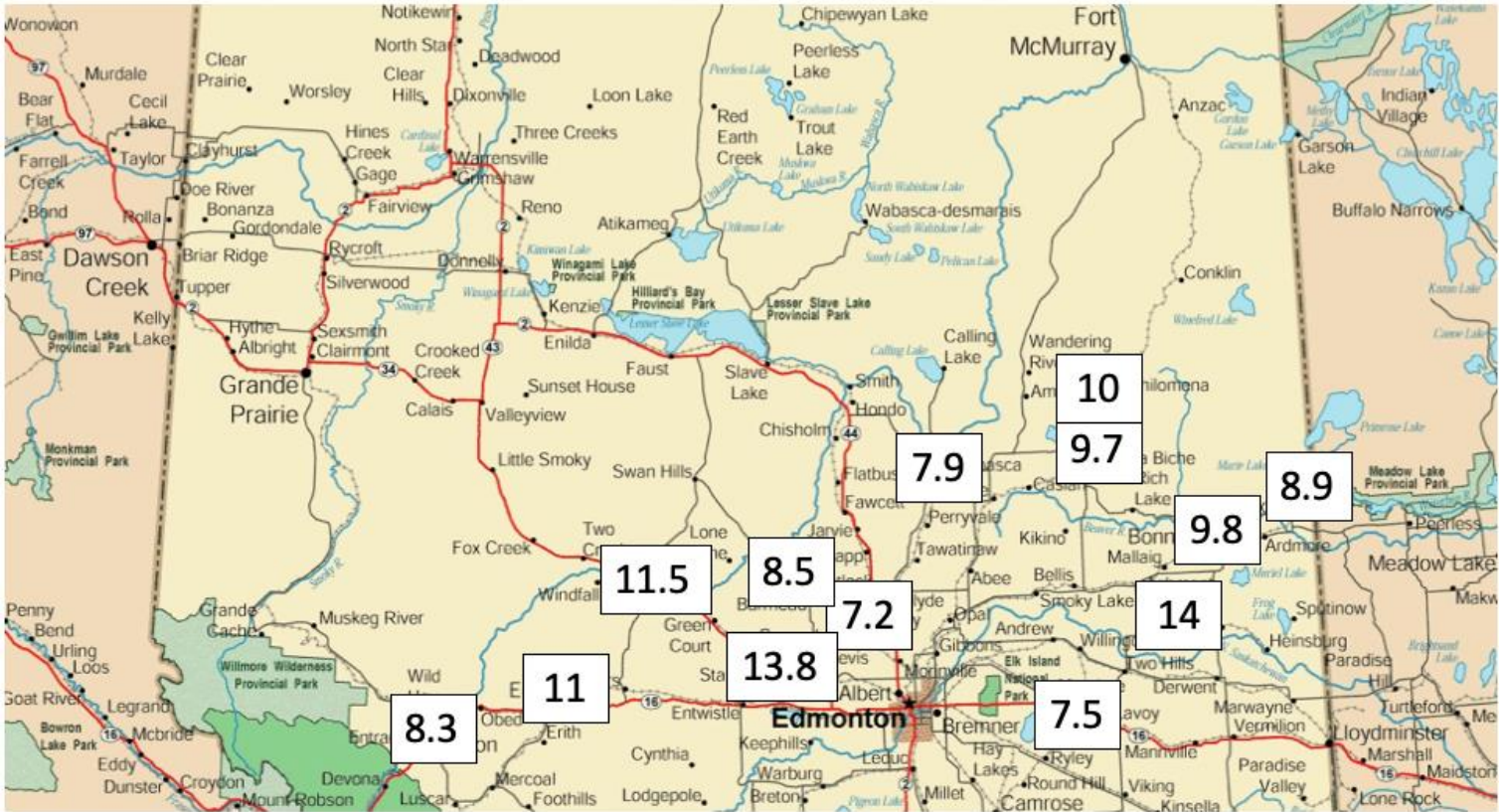
Low to High – Overall Average with Site

Office	Emotional	Mental	Spiritual	Physical	Overall Average	Completion
Westlock	8.2	8	6.7	5.8	7.2	7
Vegreville	9.1	7.6	6.8	6.3	7.5	6
Athabasca	9.2	7.9	7.5	7.3	7.9	10
Hinton	10	8.8	8	6.4	8.3	5
Barrhead	9.4	8.6	7.8	8.4	8.5	5
Cold Lake	10	9.4	9.2	7.1	8.9	7
Lac La Biche	11.6	9.5	10	7.6	9.7	6
Bonnyville	12	10.2	9.2	7.7	9.8	9
YAC	10.7	11	9.2	9	10	4
Edson	13.1	13.4	9.1	8.4	11.0	7
Whitecourt	12.8	12	11.5	9.8	11.5	6
Alexis	16	15.5	12.2	11.5	13.8	4
St. Paul	14.75	14.25	14	13.2	14.0	4
Regional Average	11.29	10.47	9.32	8.37	9.88	80

Low to High by Realm with Site

Office	Emotional	Office	Mental	Office	Spiritual	Office	Physical
Westlock	8.2	Vegreville	7.6	Westlock	6.7	Westlock	5.8
Vegreville	9.1	Athabasca	7.9	Vegreville	6.8	Vegreville	6.3
Athabasca	9.2	Westlock	8	Athabasca	7.5	Hinton	6.4
Barrhead	9.4	Barrhead	8.6	Barrhead	7.8	Cold Lake	7.1
Cold Lake	10	Hinton	8.8	Hinton	8	Athabasca	7.3
Hinton	10	Cold Lake	9.4	Edson	9.1	Lac La Biche	7.6
YAC	10.7	Lac La Biche	9.5	Bonnyville	9.2	Bonnyville	7.7
Lac La Biche	11.6	Bonnyville	10.2	Cold Lake	9.2	Barrhead	8.4
Bonnyville	12	YAC	11	YAC	9.2	Edson	8.4
Whitecourt	12.8	Whitecourt	12	Lac La Biche	10	YAC	9
Edson	13.1	Edson	13.4	Whitecourt	11.5	Whitecourt	9.8
St. Paul	14.75	St. Paul	14.25	Alexis	12.2	Alexis	11.5
Alexis	16	Alexis	15.5	St. Paul	14	St. Paul	13.2
Regional Average	11.29	Regional Average	10.47	Regional Average	9.32	Regional Average	8.37

Overall Average by Approximate Geographic Location



Analysis of Each Office in the Region

Alexis

The Alexis office scored themselves higher than most offices in NCA-CS. In the mental, spiritual, and physical realm the Alexis office indicated a moderate (10-15) understanding and an extensive understanding (15-20) in the emotional realm. The Alexis office seems to have an in-depth understanding of the role of relationships to their practice with *iyiniw* families. Notably, one caseworker scored themselves as having a moderate understanding of cultural teachings and ceremonial practices but commented that there are “*limited teachings and cultural knowledge about Alexis and the Stoney Nakoda ways of knowing and living*”. Another staff member shared that “*there are very limited cultural supports and resources within our area*”. This suggests that while the Alexis office has an understanding of *iyiniw* teachings and practices, this understanding needs to be contextualized to reflect the ways of knowing specific to their area.

In regard to areas for future learning, most staff members expressed interest in learning Kinship Mapping. A caseworker specifically acknowledged that “*genograms are important to connect with more family*” but they “*still want to learn about Kinship Mapping*”. Other staff members desired to receive teachings on the rites of passages found within the Turtle Lodge Teachings.

Athabasca

The Athabasca office indicated that they had a minimal (0-5) to limited (5-10) understanding of *iyiniw* knowledge within the mental, spiritual, and physical dimensions and slightly higher, limited (0-5) to moderate (5-10), understanding in the emotional realm. Many of the staff members acknowledged that they have yet to receive extensive training on *iyiniw* worldviews and intend to participate in Joining the Circle and *omanitew*. While many caseworkers identified the importance of ceremony, one reported that “*I can understand how ceremony helps, but without experiencing, I don’t think my understanding will improve*”. Similarly, another staff member shared that “*I understand how it [ceremony] is healing and the importance, but [I] need more learning and exposure to ceremony and [cultural] events*”.

The Athabasca office is seeking foundational knowledge of *iyiniw* worldviews, teachings, and practices. Given that there is a lack of foundational knowledge within this office, caseworkers

were interested in receiving a variety of teachings. Some of these included Kinship Mapping, Indigenous parenting practices, the Turtle Lodge Teachings, the Tipi Teachings, ceremony for healing, Circle Process, Relational Accountability, and medicine picking.

Many caseworkers communicated that they require more support to move towards integrating *iyiniw* knowledge into practice. One staff member explained that they are open to learning but have “*no connection to an Elder*” and are “*not sure about presenting protocol*”. Another caseworker articulated that they “*do not know what it means to present cloth/tobacco, how to ask [or] who to ask*” and that “*the materials are not on site*”. This reflects an additional need to establish relationships with local Elders while creating a culturally-supportive infrastructure within the Athabasca office.

Barrhead

Within the Barrhead office, the average score among staff was a limited (5-10) understanding of *iyiniw* knowledge across the mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical quadrants. The staff members unanimously conveyed that they need more teachings and are open to future learning opportunities. In this session, many caseworkers realized the depth of *iyiniw* teachings and practices, with one staff member emphasizing that they wanted “*to learning everything [being] said: Kinship Mapping, Willow teachings, ceremonies, parenting... The more [the facilitator] talks the more I'm aware of what I don't know*”.

It was noted that the Barrhead office has a “*lack of access to Elders*” and “*needs more relationships to know more local traditions and protocols*”. Although a staff member wanted to become fully supportive of *iyiniw* ceremony and practices, they are “*unaware of what [their] being supportive of*” and asked, “*what do I need to do to be more supportive*”. It can be inferred that the Barrhead office is looking to acquire foundational *iyiniw* knowledge to begin forming relationships with local Elders and communities.

Bonnyville

The Bonnyville office assessed themselves as having a moderate (10-15) understanding of *iyiniw* ways of knowing within the mental, emotional, and spiritual realms. This is a higher score compared to most of the offices across NCA-CS. However, the Bonnyville office indicated a

limited (5-10) understanding within the physical dimension which is a common score among other offices. As Bonnyville was one of the first sites where *miyo ohpikinawâsowin* was implemented, most staff noted that they have participated in *omanitew* I as well as *omanitew* II.

A staff member shared that *“I am comfortable with smudging and sweats, pipe ceremonies, but there are some ceremonies I do not know the protocol on”*. They further explained that they *“love the seven Grandfather teachings to use in life and in work”* and *“the biggest thing I try to do is to offer participation in ceremony, connection to Elders, and using Circles.”* The Bonnyville staff commonly acknowledged the effects of colonization, Residential Schools, and the Sixties Scoop and iterated the connection between healing and ceremony.

Despite having an understanding of *iyiniw* worldviews that is higher than most offices in NCA-CS, the Bonnyville office consistently reflected that there is *“always growing in this area”*. A staff member affirmed this in stating *“I have some knowledge, but I need to learn more to say I understand”*. There was a differentiation made between being aware of the teachings as opposed to knowing the depth and meaning behind them. The Bonnyville office indicated that they require more in-depth training on Kinship Mapping, the Turtle Lodge Teachings, and Indigenous parenting practices. In regard to the physical dimension, where there was a lack of understanding, staff are interested in learning the Tipi Teachings and participating in medicine-picking and hand games.

Cold Lake

The Cold Lake office ranked themselves higher in the mental realm with a moderate (10-15) understanding in comparison to the limited (5-10) understanding delineated in the emotional, spiritual, and physical quadrants. There was a constant theme that staff are aware of the various teachings, but they do not understand the teachings well enough to share them with families. One caseworker noted that *“I understand it [the teachings], but I am not confident in sharing it”*. Another staff member explained, *“I feel I can connect but I would like to connect on a more personal level and engage and immerse myself further in order to better assist myself with my practice”*. This suggests that the Cold Lake office values the ‘role of self’ in practicing *iyiniw* teachings and ceremony. This continues to be reflected in the following statement:

I do smudge on my own and ask for help from my Grandmothers and Grandfathers. I also attend sweats for guidance. I have participated in a number of ceremonies; however, I would like to attend more and learn more about different ceremonies, such as a Tea Dance, Adoption Ceremony, Give Away, Night Lodge. I do understand the importance of ceremony; healing for our families; ourselves.

The Cold Lake office seems to desire an in-depth understanding of *iyiniw* knowledge through creating a personal connection to *iyiniw* practices. Staff members universally expressed the need for more experiential learning opportunities related to Kinship Mapping, the Turtle Lodge Teachings, the Tipi Teachings, and medicine-picking. Staff members also acknowledged that they practice within *nêhiyaw* and *Dene* communities – while they have gathered some *nêhiyaw* knowledge, they lack an understanding of *Dene* teachings.

Edson

The Edson office indicated that their staff had a limited understanding of *iyiniw* knowledge (5-10) in the mental, spiritual, and physical realms and a slightly higher limited (5-10) to moderate understanding (10-15) in the emotional realm. The Edson staff acknowledged that they have a more in-depth understanding of the history of colonization and the impacts of intergenerational trauma, but they lack an understanding of pre-contact *iyiniw* teachings with regard to ceremony, language, and land-based healing within the mental, spiritual, and physical realms. The Edson office provided few comments other than indicating that they would like to participate in *omanitew*, Kinship Mapping Training, and receive the Tipi Teachings and Turtle Lodge Teachings.

Hinton

The Hinton office assessed themselves as having a limited (5-10) understanding in the mental realm, a limited (5-10) to moderate (10-15) understanding in the emotional realm, and a minimal (0-5) understanding in the spiritual and physical realms. The Hinton office provided minimal comments; however, staff members indicated that they would like to participate in kinship mapping training. Another staff member specifically marked that they would like to receive the Tipi Teachings.

Lac La Biche

The Lac La Biche office had a variety of scores ranging from a moderate (10-15) understanding in the emotional realm, a limited (5-10) to moderate (10-15) understanding in the spiritual realm, and a limited (5-10) understanding in the mental and physical realms. This office did not provide any comments, other than one staff member who identified an interest in Kinship Mapping.

St. Paul

The St. Paul office scored themselves as having a moderate understanding (10-15) across the mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical dimensions which is higher than most offices in NCA-CS. Staff members acknowledged that their relationships with local resources, including UnBQ, Native Counselling Services of Alberta (NCSA), Mannawanis Friendship Centre, and the various Band Designates, has enhanced their practice. One caseworker shared that they often collaborate with *“NCSA and Elders to facilitate talking circles with families”*

Despite being connected to local organizations, the St. Paul office described their understanding of *iyiniw* practices as a *“working knowledge”* and various staff members stated that they *“would like to understand more”*. Staff noted that they have participated in Joining the Circle but are interesting in attending UnBQ’s Culture Camp and *omanitew* training. There was also a desire to receive teachings on Circle Process, Kinship Mapping, and the Turtle Lodge Teachings.

Vegreville

The Vegreville office indicated that they have a limited understanding (5-10) in the mental, emotional, and spiritual realms and a minimal (0-5) understanding in the physical realm. The staff members provided few comments other than sharing *“it would be helpful to know these [Turtle Lodge Teachings] and the difference between what BSW have been taught”*. In addition to the Turtle Lodge Teachings, interest was stated for learning Kinship Mapping and the Tipi Teachings.

Westlock

The Westlock office identified a limited understanding (5-10) in the mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions and a minimal (0-5) understanding in the physical dimension. Staff members consistently acknowledged that while they understand the importance of *iyiniw*

teachings, they “do not know enough to apply it to practice”. For example, one staff member has “some knowledge of protocol but little comfort or access to Elders or even knowing who is an Elder”. Another shared that “I have been blessed to receive some teachings, but I still have very little comfort sharing with the little knowledge I have”. This suggests that the Whitecourt office is looking to expand their understanding of *iyiniw* knowledge through learning by direct practice. Staff members noted that they have participated in Joining the Circle and hope to attend *omanitew* as well.

As this office progressed through the indicators, one staff member shared that “every time I attend training or connect in conversation with Indigenous peoples, I learn something new and I realize I know little or nothing about [it]”. As the Westlock office has yet to develop a foundational understanding of *iyiniw* knowledge, staff marked a number of teachings that they hope to receive. These teachings included Kinship Mapping, Indigenous parenting practices, the Turtle Lodge Teachings, Circle Process, ceremony for healing, the Tipi Teachings, hand games, and medicine-picking.

Whitecourt

Within all of the realms (mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical), the Whitecourt office had a limited (5-10) understanding throughout. Staff commonly disclosed that they understand the importance of *iyiniw* knowledge, but do not know how to practice and support it. Specifically, one staff member relayed that they do “not have own knowledge or use [of ceremony] but [are]aware of the importance”. As such, the Whitecourt office is seeking experiential and foundational learning on *iyiniw* knowledge and practices. In regard to certain teachings, the Whitecourt office was interested in learning Kinship Mapping, Indigenous parenting practices, the Turtle Lodge Teachings, ceremony for healing, medicine-picking, and hand games.

Youth Assessment Centre (YAC)

The staff at the Youth Assessment Centre (YAC) indicated that they had a moderate understanding (10-15) in the mental and emotional realms and a slightly lower limited (5-10) to moderate (10-15) understanding in the spiritual and physical realms. Various staff from YAC shared that they are incorporating *nêhiyaw* teachings, ceremonies, and language into their programming, but they expressed that this somewhat challenging as YAC is a locked residential

facility. One staff member acknowledged that they would like “*deeper healing ceremonies... what resources do we have, what’s available, access to Elders, and agencies that have teachings*”. Another staff member shared that they desire “*more connections, training, cultural camps*”.

A constant theme among the YAC staff was that they had “*knowledge of [iyiniw teachings] but not extensive by any means, not practiced that much.*” These statements indicated that while the YAC staff has developed an understanding of *iyiniw* teachings they are looking for more support with implementing *iyiniw* teachings, ceremonies, and language into practice. The YAC staff marked a number of teachings they are hoping to receive and implement into their program, including *nêhiyaw* language classes, Kinship Mapping, Creation and *wesâkecak* Teaching Stories, Willow Teachings, Turtle Lodge Teachings, Tipi Teachings, and land-based cultural camps.

Recommendations and Future Directions

Through gathering what was shared from various offices across NCA-CS, the following recommendations are being proposed to support the ongoing development of staff’s knowledge and involvement with *miyo ohpikinawâsowin*.

1) Continued Implementation of *miyo ohpikinawâsowin* across NCA-CS

As staff’s knowledge and involvement with *iyiniw* knowledge and practices varied across the region, it is imperative to continue to implement *miyo ohpikinawâsowin* through:

- promoting the role of the *kiskinotahiwew* to ensure staff are aware that this a support and resource they can access collectively as an office, or individually on a case-by-case basis;
- continuing to offer Joining the Circle and *omanitew* I so staff across the region can develop a foundational understanding of *iyiniw* teachings and practices;
- offering *omanitew* II to support staff in transitioning from a foundational to advanced knowledge of *iyiniw* worldviews in understanding healing within the context of *iyiniw* language, teachings, and ceremony; and

- establishing a culturally supportive infrastructure across NCA-CS to alleviate barriers to accessing Elders, presenting protocol, and smudging as a team or with families.

2) Expanding Training Opportunities

In addition to the training already being provided, it is recommended that NCA-CS support the delivery of Kinship Mapping. This training will guide staff towards understanding how children are viewed in an *iyiniw* worldview while providing extensive teachings on Kinship terms and the associated sacred roles and responsibilities. Staff will also learn the Turtle Lodge Teachings within Kinship Mapping and how healthy child, family, and community development is sustained through various ceremonies in each stage of development.

3) Support Further Experiential Learning

Most offices across the region requested to receive a number of teachings through further experiential learning. As offices typically scored themselves higher in the mental, emotional, realms, and lower in the spiritual realms and physical realm, it is recommended that NCA-CS begin to support staff development through ‘learning by doing’ within this area. This could include participation in a number of ceremonies, along with medicine-picking, Indigenous hand games, ceremonial feasts, assembling a Tipi, and making a moss bag or swing. These experiential learning opportunities can be delivered as a form of relationship-building and self-care within NCA-CS or they can be extended to families providing staff with opportunities to learn alongside families.

4) Integrating the ‘Role of Self’

Staff members across the region indicated that they wanted to be more supportive of *iyiniw* knowledge and practices. However, staff disclosed that there is a lack of resources and connections to local Elders or cultural supports to facilitate this. In addition to requesting more access to these resources, staff acknowledged that they lack confidence in seeking these supports and implementing *iyiniw* teachings into practice.

It should be emphasized that the ‘role of self’ is integral to learning, being supportive, and creating these relationships. It is recommended that the *kiskinotahiwew* continues to provide

links to community and cultural connections, but staff's confidence and integration of self is paramount to continued engagement with these resources. Staff should be guided to further understand that learning happens through doing and relationships are created by continuously doing. A willingness to learn and follow protocol, engage in ceremony, and continuously participate will heighten staff's learning along with their collaboration with the *kiskinotahiwew* and local cultural supports and community resources.

Summary

The implementation of *miyo ohpikinawâsowin* in NCA-CS has increased staff's understanding and involvement with *iyiniw* practices as indicated by the ability to identify “*what they know*” while understanding “*what they don't know*”. This level of awareness, in itself, is an immense shift that reflects the recognition of *iyiniw* knowledge within NCA-CS. The increased desire to receive *iyiniw* teachings through “*doing the learning*” further displays staff's commitment to *miyo ohpikinawâsowin*.

NCA-CS is creating a new path for service-delivery that can provide an example of groundbreaking work to other regions of Children's Services. The influence of *miyo ohpikinawâsowin* within this area is a testament to the continued commitment and support of NCA-CS leadership. The program evaluation team appreciated the opportunity to visit offices across the region and the support shown in the creation of this report.

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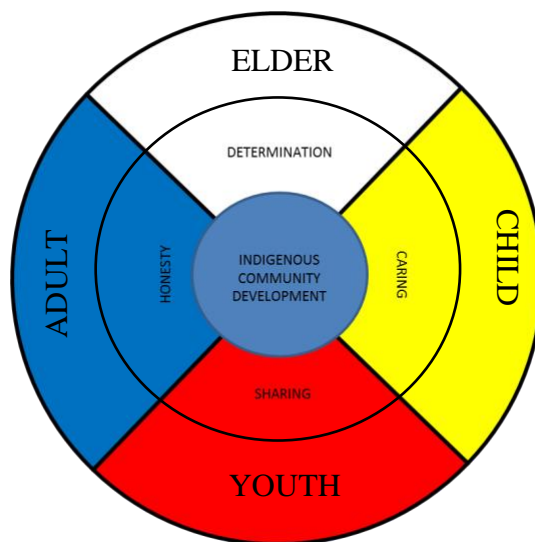
Appendix: NCA-CS Indigenous Program Indicators

There is a void in culturally relevant indicators and processes to accurately assess the impact and value of culturally designed services provided in collaboration with Indigenous families.

The development of these indicators was necessary as Indigenous teachings and practices are often excluded from evaluation processes. Although there is a growing recognition for the value of culturally relevant services, evaluation processes typically do not capture the impact these services have on Indigenous families.

It is imperative that history be acknowledged as the source of the negative circumstances that Indigenous families now find themselves in, and it is necessary to create ways of understanding that have meaning and are value-based in an Indigenous worldview. The *Indigenous Program Indicators* are a means to demonstrate balance in an individual's life through the Circle Teachings and the four realms (Mental, Emotional, Spiritual, and Physical).

In each of these stages of growth, there are both opportunities to learn experientially and from the intentional sharing/teaching from others. Ideally, one would move through life in a balanced fashion, with equilibrium occurring between the four human states of mental, emotional, spiritual and physical wellbeing – *miyo pimatisiwin*. If disruption occurs, the resulting imbalance can be reflected in a loss of connection to the community, their family, within themselves, and Indigenous practices.



<u>Mental Realm</u>	<u>Minimal Involvement or Understanding</u> <u>(1)</u>	<u>Limited Involvement or Understanding</u> <u>(2)</u>	<u>Moderate Involvement or Understanding</u> <u>(3)</u>	<u>Extensive Involvement or Understanding</u> <u>(4)</u>
1. I understand kinship concepts and practices. Some examples are: kinship mapping (family history) parenting practices, knowledge of child and family teachings, extended family, relational accountability.				
2. I have an understanding of the Canadian history of Indigenous people in the world and how the history may impact the families I serve. Some examples are: pre/post European contact, Residential Schools, the 60's scoop and local history.				
3. I can help share with the families I serve from an Indigenous perspective when it comes to parenting. Some examples are: Circle teachings of balance, harmony, and inclusiveness; relationships, roles and responsibilities.				
4. I understand and can rely on cultural teachings and practices to make choices if I am faced with a problem or feel troubled.				
5. I understand the importance of Indigenous Languages. (Example: language classes, hearing or speaking with elders or cultural people who speak their language, or through storytelling/social events.				

<u>Emotional Realm</u>	<u>Minimal Involvement or Understanding</u> <u>(1)</u>	<u>Limited Involvement or Understanding</u> <u>(2)</u>	<u>Moderate Involvement or Understanding</u> <u>(3)</u>	<u>Extensive Involvement or Understanding</u> <u>(4)</u>
1. I understand Indigenous teachings. Some examples are: morals and values, caring for sacred items, sacred self-care, sacred teachings, relational accountability and creation stories.				
2. I have an understanding of the impacts of inter-generational trauma on survivors of Residential Schools, individuals, families and communities, and how it affects the families I serve.				
3. I have an understanding about the resources and supports available to help process any impact of inter-generational trauma for the families I serve. Some examples are: Elders, agencies.				
4. I understand and support the importance of connections to Indigenous families, communities and ancestors.				
5. I understand the Indigenous perspective of community-based child rearing and understand the families' responsibilities to nurture the gifts children bring with them.				

<u>Spiritual Realm</u>	<u>Minimal Involvement or Understanding</u> (1)	<u>Limited Involvement or Understanding</u> (2)	<u>Moderate Involvement or Understanding</u> (3)	<u>Extensive Involvement or Understanding</u> (4)
1. I understand how participation in ceremonies facilitates healing for the families I serve and can relate by being involved in cultural social events and ceremonies. Some examples are: Pow Wow, smudging, pipe ceremonies, sweat lodge ceremonies, and Inuit or Métis ceremonies.				
2. I understand and use Indigenous practices or approaches that have been taught or modeled to me in my practice. Some examples are: conflict resolution, child-rearing, gender roles, etc.				
3. I feel I can connect with Indigenous teachings to assist myself within my practice and the families I serve. Some examples are: Turtle Lodge teachings, Willow teachings.				
4. I use some of the following to address family and parenting concerns: Sharing Circles, teachings, counseling through Elders, presenting protocol (cloth, Tobacco) to an Elder in Ceremony.				
5. I have been involved in Indigenous teachings and ceremony led by an Indigenous mentor or teacher (Example <i>omanitew</i>)				

<u>Physical Realm</u>	<u>Minimal Involvement or Understanding</u> (1)	<u>Limited Involvement or Understanding</u> (2)	<u>Moderate Involvement or Understanding</u> (3)	<u>Extensive Involvement or Understanding</u> (4)
1. I understand the importance of personal health. Some examples are medicine picking, personal hygiene, Indigenous games				
2. I understand the importance of my physical environment. Some examples are: what “home” means from an Indigenous worldview, tipi teachings, the physical state of my home, housing.				
3. I have an understanding of Indigenous parenting practices. Some examples are: the moss bag, Naming Ceremony, Willow teachings, the swing, nurturing and attachment				
4. Do you live by reciprocity, relational accountability and <i>omanitew</i> teachings within your practice? Have you learned about them and use them? Examples; finances, hunting, rent, food				
5. I understand and support the ceremonies and teachings that enhance the human journey. Some examples are the Turtle Lodge Teachings and Feasts and Feast Teachings				

Under each dimension (Mental, Physical, Emotional, Spiritual) please indicate each score from the questions above. For example, if you scored a 1 on each question (Minimal Involvement or Understanding) under the Section “Mental Realm”, that would be a total of 5. You would shade in the 5 in the quadrant under mental. If you scored 16-20 in all four realms, this demonstrates equilibrium occurring between the four human dimensions of emotional, physical, spiritual and mental well-being.

