



Métis Commission for Children and Families of B.C.

June 26, 2012

CRITIQUE OF MCFD STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL DIRECTIONAL PLAN 2012/13 – 2014/15

Purpose: The purpose of this briefing note is to provide information on how the Métis Commission for Children and Families of BC (MCCF) and the Métis child and family service providers play a key role in many of the 9 Key Result Areas set out in the Ministry for Children and Family Development's Operational and Strategic Directional Plan 2012/13 – 2014/15. This note also provides commentary on the incongruence between the underlying philosophy of economic efficiency evident in the Operational and Strategic Directional plan, and matters of child welfare in general. Finally, this note illustrates the potentially disastrous implications of MCFD's action plan for Métis children and families.

Overview:

- The Plan notes that MCFD's work is "heavily dependent on people – including a wide range of professional, cultural, advocacy and service delivery perspectives" → Does this not include MCCF and service providers? How can MCCF and service providers operate effectively without adequate funding?
- The Plan highlights 3 strategic themes: (1) achieving service excellence; (2) achieving operational excellence; and (3) pursuing continuous learning and growth; these themes are linked to 9 Key Result Areas → MCFD needs the unique perspective and human resources offered by MCCF in order to address (1) and (2), but MCCF needs sufficient funding in order to operate optimally
- The Plan highlights the need for services that are effective, client-centred, accessible, safe and appropriate → MCCF contributes to each of these points through court notifications analysis, research and policy analysis; as well, MCCF aids MCFD in helping to provide culturally safe services to Métis children and families
- A "key area of focus" for MCFD in the coming years is improving outcomes for Aboriginal children in care → how will they achieve this without understanding the unique identities and needs of Métis children and families?
- Overall, the MCFD needs MCCF and service providers in order to achieve many of the Key Result Areas outlined in the strategic plan. How is this possible, however, if MCCF and service providers are not adequately funded?

MCCF's contribution to the Key Result Areas (KRAs) and potential concerns:

(1) Key Result Area 1: Consistently Provide Effective Helping Relationships

- The premise of this KRA is that "the safety and well-being of a child or youth [is] paramount"
- MCCF and service providers play an essential role in ensuring the safety of Métis children by ensuring culturally safe services and knowledge are available to Métis children and families
- Further emphasis placed on keeping children with families, and on the role of extended families; MCCF is in a position to advocate for extended family placements for Métis children
- Finally, KRA 1 emphasizes the importance of cultural identity and the involvement of Aboriginal communities in planning; MCCF is the legislated representative community for Métis children



Métis Commission for Children and Families of B.C.

and families in BC, and should therefore be at the forefront of any dialogue/welfare regarding Métis child welfare

- Concern for MCCF: without adequate economic support from MCFD, how will MCCF and service providers have the capacity to ensure Métis children/youth are safe and cared for in a culturally appropriate manner?

(2) Key Result Area 2: Develop and Deliver Superior Service Capability Across Six Service Lines Through Well Designed and Managed Services Linked to a Client Focused Service Delivery System at the Provincial, Regional and Local Community Levels

- KRA 2 emphasizes the importance of quality child and family services that are continuously reviewed and improved upon; collaboration across MCFD offices and between MCFD, DAA's and contractors; and prevention and early intervention
- MCCF contributes to KRA 2 by researching and reviewing culturally appropriate child and family services and evaluating relevant policy and legislation; by ensuring service providers' accountability through analysis of court documents; and by developing culturally specific quality assurance measures
- Additional contributions to KRA 2 include collaboration with service providers through the development of protocol agreements and ensuring culturally safe services are provided at a child's point of contact with MCFD
- Concern for MCCF: consistent and sufficient funding is needed for MCCF and service providers in order to maintain and expand collaborative activities

(3) Key Result Area 3: Practical Evidence Informed Policies, Service Standards & Practice Guidelines Drive Service Design and Delivery Excellence

- MCCF plays an integral role in KRA 3 through research and policy analysis and informal evaluation of service availability through court notifications analysis
- Additionally, MCCF contributes to the improvement of practice guidelines by providing feedback on AOPSI, MCFD practice guidelines from a Métis perspective and developing evidence based practice guidelines appropriate to the Métis context, such as the QA Framework (2011)
- MCCF data collection (done through analysis of court documents) has illustrated MCFD's failure to comply with CFCSA re: notifying MCCF and has facilitated the development of solution based papers
- Métis service providers meetings provide additional opportunities for sharing effective practices and therefore contributing to evidence based policies and practice guidelines and

(4) Key Result Area 4: Develop LEAN and Flowing Value Streams Across All Service Lines to Allow Clients to Receive Effective Services as Needed

- This KRA focuses more on streamlining the activities of service providers; key points are standardization and quality assurance, again with regard to service provision
- MCCF can, however, support Métis service providers in quality assurance activities, by providing research and policy analysis; analysis of court notifications; and other human resources support that service providers do not have



Métis Commission for Children and Families of B.C.

- MCCF has also developed a QA framework – which entailed extensive research within the community – which could contribute to KRA 4
- Concern for MCCF: what will be the implications for Métis service providers and Métis children and families as a result of standardized practices? This fails to make space for, and actually cuts out, the need and importance of culturally specific services.

(5) Key Result Area 5: Deliver Excellent Human Resource, Information and Cost Management

- KRA 5 emphasizes the importance of strong human resources and systems for managing information and costs
- There is no elaboration on this point in the document, which is concerning given the possible implications for MCCF and Métis service providers of future action taken with regard to this KRA
- Nonetheless, MCCF contributes to KRA 5 by maintaining a skilled workforce that is able to contribute to research and policy analysis and assessment of court notifications for Métis children; additional contributions include the development of an in-depth HR, Board, and new employee manual templates (distributed to service providers); this facilitates cost by preventing duplication of resources and supports standardization within the Métis context; the templates increase the availability of information and excellent HR within our organizations; an in-depth workplace safety program has been implemented at MCCF and is shared with service providers.

(6) Key Result Area 6: Drive Collaborative Partnership Toward Strong Service Delivery and Practice Research and Learning Excellence

- KRA 6 emphasizes the importance of “relevant research” and “collaborative knowledge development work”; MCFD intends to “scale up” these activities in the coming 18 months
- MCCF has contributed to “strong service delivery” through the development of a Métis service delivery framework; MCCF continues to maintain the human resources and expertise required to contribute to “relevant research” and, through protocol agreements, collaborates with service providers in a way that facilitates information sharing and Métis research development
- Concern: how will MCFD ensure Métis interests are represented in their efforts to develop evidence based practices? How will they work with MCCF to ensure services are culturally appropriate and research is relevant? Finally, why hasn’t MCFD engaged with MCCF to utilize work that has already done (by MCCF) on/for Métis communities?

(7) Key Result Area 7: Continuously Improve Understanding of Client and Community Needs

- KRA 7 emphasizes engaging with clients to facilitate the development of evidence informed practice
- MCCF has the human resources to contribute to client engagement strategies; in the past, this has been realized through the completion of a QA framework (2011), which illustrates strategies for client engagement; more funding, however, is needed in order to commit the available resources to realizing these strategies
- MCCF continuously works towards understanding community needs by consulting with community members and Métis Elders; establishing protocol agreements with service providers; analysis of court notifications for Métis CIC; and research and policy analysis



Métis Commission for Children and Families of B.C.

- Potential concern: how will the Métis community be represented in community engagement strategy? Moreover, why hasn't MCCF been engaged by MCFD to facilitate this process?

(8) Key Result Area 8: Attract, Develop and Retain a Fully Engaged and Skilled Workforce

- KRA 8 emphasizes promoting a culture of employee health and well-being; creating and maintaining a diversified workforce; continuous learning
- MCCF contributes to KRA 8 by requiring a Bachelor's degree or, more often, a Master's degree to work with MCCF and supports protocol agreement holding organizations to do the same; MCCF also assists protocol agreement holders in the development of job postings and descriptions, as needed
- A potential concern for MCCF is the question of what/whose standards are used to determine how "engaged" or "skilled" MCFD's workforce is? The problem being that MCFD's standards/measures may not align with the standards/measures necessary to recognize the unique identity/needs of the Métis community
- Also, the professional mentorship discussed in this section is very problematic: if more seasoned MCFD workers are unaware of Métis culture, how will newer social workers learn about it? i.e. Social workers that have been with MCFD for extended periods of time may not be familiar with Métis culture; if they are to then mentor newer employees, the lack of recognition of the unique identities and needs of Métis CIC is perpetuated

(9) Key Result Area 9: A Well Coordinated, Executed and Led Organizational Strategic and Operational Performance Management and Quality Assurance System that Drives Service Excellence

- KRA 9 emphasizes performance measurement and quality assurance in all aspects of MCFD operations and practice
- MCCF practices quality assurance by assessing court notifications for Métis CIC and engaging with MCFD/DAA social workers; future QA activities proposed in MCCF QA implementation plan; additionally, MCCF has developed and is in the process of disseminating a QA framework, which entailed extensive community research; finally, MCCF - along with Métis service providers in attendance at service provider meetings - has developed templates for operational development specifically geared towards the unique criteria laid out in the delegation process
- Potential concern: how will MCFD ensure quality services are provided to Métis children and families and that they are culturally appropriate; also, what indicators will be used and what will be the implications for Métis children and families?

Concerns with Analysis of Operational and Strategic Directional Plan (Section 3):

- Overall, analysis focuses on economic efficiency, supported by standardization, measurement, evaluation, "parental choice", performance, "efficiencies and economies of scale", etc.; viewing child welfare issues through such an economic lens has the potential to value quantity over quality, and to influence procedure in such a way as to maximize cost-effectiveness vs. making decisions that are in the best interests of the child/family
- Emphasis on "simplification", "standardization"; implications for Métis children include loss of Métis identity through a standard pan-Aboriginal approach



Métis Commission for Children and Families of B.C.

- This section also notes the importance of the Integrated Case Management (ICM) system to improving management of CIC cases; yet there have been notable issues and concerns with this system, such as the system being cumbersome and resulting in serious errors, such as missing case information; a major concern for MCCF is the optional Aboriginal identification screen
- Pan-Aboriginal approach to “Aboriginal Service and Outcomes”; focus on measurement and outcomes; these outcomes are not relevant to Métis culture and do not reflect the long-term well-being of (Métis) CIC; not a strengths-based approach
- Continual reference to the need to strengthen and support Aboriginal communities; how do funding cuts play into this?
- ECD and childcare services are analyzed with the same economic approach: strong emphasis on evaluation → we need to be aware of the measures used to evaluate and determine whether these are effective/appropriate for Métis children and families; focus on “parental choice”, standardization, quality highlight the economic efficiency approach used in this plan, and seem to take precedence over quality and recognition of the unique needs of many children and families utilizing MCFD funded services
- CIC services: focus on improving outcomes: according to whose/what values/measures? Also states that there has been a move away from “crisis management” → can we at MCCF attest to that, given the high number of late court notifications received?
- Importantly, how does MCFD intend to improve upon past attempts at improving outcomes for CIC using a child-centred approach? The CFCSA (1996) emphasized this approach, yet we continue to see cases where the needs/wants of the child are not considered in the decision-making process. How does MCFD propose to ensure that the best interests/desires of the child are heard, especially given their inability to adhere to this philosophy in the past?”

Concerns with Action Plan (Section 4):

- Focus on outcomes and reporting out (according to values that don’t align with Métis culture) could result in further loss of Métis identity and “missing” Métis children; move towards efficiency may mean social workers choosing the fastest route, not the most appropriate; from experience, social workers are already facing high caseloads, and the perception is that cultural planning requires too much time; further moves towards efficiency may exacerbate this issue
- Implementing standard practice across all MCFD/DAA/contracted agencies only exacerbates loss of Métis identity and inadequate time spent on cultural planning; also, ignores regional, community and other variations implicated in child welfare issues; finally, how does MCFD propose to implement the standardization of practice when decision-making has been decentralized?
- Eg. page 61: Key Action: re: master list of services that is reviewed annually with regard to demand → focus on quantity not quality especially concerning for Métis children and families in remote regions; Métis children represent a minority of the population (although are overrepresented in MCFD); how will a focus on demand affect services to Métis CIC? Specifically, how does MCFD propose to ensure that services to Métis CIC are maintained, and indeed expanded, given that Métis CIC represent the minority of the CIC population?
- Action plan does not seem to focus at all on prevention (eg. Aboriginal focus is all about permanency planning and adoption → what about preventive services?)



Métis Commission for Children and Families of B.C.

- Aboriginal services focus on “harmonization”, “streamlining”, specifically with regard to AOPSI → implications for Métis children; AOPSI is already inappropriate for the Métis context; who will be determining what this will look like?
- Exceptional (i.e. difficult) cases may be left by the wayside because of the time commitment required to manage them
- Performance appraisal of front line staff → those that are the most efficient will be praised, while those that do what is right may be punished; for Métis CIC, this may mean less time spent on cultural planning