

Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework

Implementation Planning Guide

**The Vision of the
District of Timiskaming Best Start Indigenous Committee
is to become a provincial leader in helping Indigenous
children achieve their social, intellectual, economic,
physical, cultural and spiritual potential.**

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For the Best Start Indigenous Committee
District of Timiskaming
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The Words that Come Before All Else are Words of Thanks

Chi Miigwech, Marcee to the Anishnaabe and Métis Ancestors of these lands for keeping their cultural teachings and languages alive and to the Elders and Wisdom Keepers in the District of Timiskaming who guide and inspire us today.

Chi Miigwech, Marsee, Merci, Thank You to all the people whose commitment, experience and knowledge helped shape the new Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework that formed the basis for this Implementation Planning Guide including:

- The District of Temiskaming Elders Council
- The District of Timiskaming Indigenous Best Start Committee
- The eight key informants for the mini-pilot success stories
- The Children’s Services Manager, District of Timiskaming Social Services Administration Board
- The Executive Director, Temiskaming Native Women’s Support Group
- The District of Timiskaming Best Start Network for their commitment to and financial support of this work.

A Note on Terminology

Throughout this Guide the terms ‘Indigenous,’ ‘Aboriginal,’ ‘Native,’ ‘First Nations’ and Métis are used interchangeably to reflect local preferences as well as terms used in the literature. The phrase “First Nations-Métis” or Anishnaabe-Métis is sometimes used in this report to acknowledge the distinctiveness of Nations in the District of Timiskaming. First Nations here refers specifically to Algonquin, Ojibwa (or Anishnaabe) and Cree. Aboriginal-Métis acknowledges organizations operated by and for all Indigenous groups as well as the Métis-led *Temiskaming Métis Community Council*.

As with the *Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework* we use the term ‘Living Document’ to affirm that the actions and timelines recommended within it are aspirational and will be adjusted and revised over time as the document is fully brought to life through the process of implementation.

**Anish gaie tolamang waiwnit tci zhiikonang
Mi waa izhichigeyeg weweni
Kesé kon fè dbon**

***What We are Doing In A Good Way*
in
Algonquin, Ojibwa and Michif languages**

The Meaning of the Words *In A Good Way*

'A *Good Way*' is a term commonly used by many First Nations and Métis to describe a way of thinking, being and doing that is rooted in Indigenous values. Although the words seem simplistic, their meaning is profound and complex taking into account inter-related elements of spirit, space, time, and relations. A *Good Way* means doing things in a principled, holistic way with kindness, caring, patience and respect – at a comfortable pace, not rushed. It means doing things when the time is right – in a seasonal sense this means plans won't interfere with hunting or trapping schedules or Pow wows or other important seasonal ceremonies.

A *Good Way* means local cultural protocols for asking and inviting, speaking and listening have been respected. It means doing things according to Indigenous ways such as Circle process, story-based oral tradition, and being inclusive: everyone is welcome and everyone has a valued place of equality in the Circle, including children and Elders.

A *Good Way* also means beginning and ending with ceremonies for Giving Thanks. These ceremonies affirm we are all related and interconnected, with sacred responsibilities to one another. Smudging, drum songs and prayers bring the spiritual into the spaces we inhabit, cleansing us and grounding us collectively in that space. Gifts are given and received, food and resources are shared, everyone pitches in, and no one is left behind.

Why Doing Things *In a Good Way* is Important

A shared commitment to doing things *In a Good Way* is essential for building new intercultural relationships based on respect for First Nations, Inuit and Métis Knowledge and inherent rights. For centuries in Canada, intercultural relations have been structured for disempowerment, inequality and assimilation. Yet Indigenous cultures survive and thrive in the District of Timiskaming and across Canada because of life-sustaining beliefs and practices such as the Seven Sacred Grandfather Teachings and the Medicine Wheel. These are the templates for thinking, being and doing, *In A Good Way*. The *Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework* is a blueprint for change. This *Implementation Planning Guide* is a tool for helping to make those changes collaboratively, and *In A Good Way*.

Caterpillar and Butterfly¹ - A Story of Significant Change



Two round-eyed caterpillar friends were living in a warm sunny meadow, crawling up and down plant stalks feeding happily on tender green leaves. Then a day came when one caterpillar couldn't find his friend. He looked everywhere and finally found her huddled deep inside a tightly wrapped blanket; the only thing visible was her large round eyes. "What's wrong?" he cried - "I don't know," she said. "I feel very different. I don't know what's happening to me but I know it will happen to you too."

Worried for his friend, the caterpillar went back to munching on leaves but his heart felt heavy. The next day he looked for her again but this time he couldn't find her anywhere. Then he too began to feel strange so just as his friend had done, he burrowed tightly into a warm blanket and waited to feel like himself again.

He was burrowing deeper and deeper when suddenly the big round eyes of his friend appeared before him shining with joy. Attached to her body were two of the most beautiful wings he could ever imagine. "Look at what's happened to me; I'm so beautiful and I can fly! And this will happen to you too - hold on tight - you will be just like me one day"

Indigenous Peoples create stories about what is observed in Nature that teach how to live *in A Good Way*. There are many versions of the Caterpillar and Butterfly story. This version teaches trust in the Great Cycle of Life and in its stages of change even though the process might feel uncomfortable or overwhelming at times. The story also teaches the importance of role models: our attitudes, feelings and experiences of change influence and inspire our children and youth to despair or to hope. Our stories are our Medicine.

¹ Special Chi Miigwech to 12-year old Emily Batisse, a member of the Matachewan First Nation in the District of Timiskaming for her beautiful illustration of this story.

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PART I

OVERVIEW: BEST START PATH TO CULTURAL-LINGUISTIC COMPETENCY

Today, there are more First Nations, Métis and Inuit children in the care of the Children's Aid Society than at the height of residential schooling. It is widely recognized that this situation is an outcome of the failure of Canada's child welfare and youth justice systems to address colonial history and the intergenerational impacts of residential schools. Yet decisions about the well-being of Indigenous children and families continue to be made by people who lack adequate knowledge about these histories and impacts. The persistence of a deficit-based approach to service provision for Indigenous families by non-Indigenous service providers is also well documented, including in the *Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework* that forms the basis for this *Implementation Planning Guide*.

Access to culturally relevant, high quality programs and services that strengthen Indigenous children and families and support their inherent right to self-determination is urgently needed. This *Implementation Planning Guide* is a **Call to Action** for service providers the District of Timiskaming to work together toward this vision. The Guide includes a number of tools that have been designed to help bridge the implementation gap between knowledge, policy, and practices in order to improve outcomes for Indigenous children and families.

The District of Timiskaming Best Start Network has demonstrated its commitment to quality, accessible services. In 2011, the Network and the Best Start Indigenous Committee² identified four strategic priorities for 2010-2014 in support of their overall vision and mandate: 1) *Access and Quality of Programs and Services*; 2) *Promotion and Awareness*; 3) *Governance and Management*; and 4) *Accountability*.

In 2013, with support from the Children's Services Manager for the District of Timiskaming Social Services Advisory Board (DTSSAB) these two committees oversaw development of an *Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework*. Creating the Framework involved significant local stakeholder consultation with Elders, parents, youth, and both Indigenous and non-Indigenous service providers. Ten priorities identified through the Stakeholder Survey have been aligned with the Best Start Network's four strategic priorities in a comprehensive, multi-sectoral blueprint for change.

The *Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework* is an **Indigenous-driven, family-oriented and community focused tool**. Its purpose is to improve relationships among service providers that work toward strengthening First Nations and Métis children and families. Anticipated outcomes are:

1. A full range of quality, culturally and linguistically responsive services for First Nations and Métis children and families is available throughout the District.
2. Greater public awareness of Indigenous Knowledge and First Nations-Métis contributions to life in the District, historically and in the present.

² This Committee is presently being restructured to an Indigenous Planning Committee.

3. Local Indigenous leadership is supported through increased employee representation in the service provider network, governance on local boards, and as cultural content specialists in programming.
4. A system is in place for service providers and educators in the District to learn from each other's promising practices through local 'on-the-ground' experience.

Access and quality of services is addressed in the Indigenous Framework through two Indigenous Service Connector positions and recommendations for mandatory systems-wide cultural competency training for service providers. Reclaiming and strengthening First Nations and Métis language and culture is foundational to the Indigenous Framework which also prioritizes culture and language training for Indigenous children and families.

Promotion and awareness is addressed through creation of an on-line, 7-minute digital story presented as a 'self-voicing' promotional tool about the *Stakeholder Survey* and Indigenous Framework. Plans also include more effective and strategic targeting of programs and services to foster families, young fathers, and parents of children with individualized or special needs.

Governance and management priorities of the Framework call for increased First Nations-Métis representation in governance and employment throughout the District. One of the first outcomes of the new Indigenous Framework is that there is now Service Connector representation on the municipal Timiskaming Shores Cultural Steering Committee. As well, a newly created Council of Elders for the District of Timiskaming is re-revitalizing the traditional role of Elders as cultural teachers and community leaders. The role of this Council is to guide implementation of the *Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework*.

Accountability is addressed in the Indigenous Framework through: a) recommendations to prioritize allocation and pooling of financial resources for implementation; b) recommendations for monitoring and evaluation; and c) a central role for the new Elders Council in implementation.

Moving Forward: 2014-2018

To move forward with its next 4-year planning phase the Best Start Network has identified new strategic priorities for 2014-2018 as well as monitoring systems for reporting back. The Best Start Network in partnership with the Elders Council will apply the *Indigenous Cultural-linguistic Framework* in the context of these four new priorities, which are:

1. Collaboration and integration
2. Cultural and linguistic competence
3. Accessibility of programs and services, and
4. Accountability and integrity.

The District of Timiskaming is located on the ancestral territory of the Anishnaabe People. Today a significant percentage of the population in the District is First Nations-Anishnaabe (Algonquin, Ojibwe, Cree) or Métis.

This *Implementation Planning Guide and Toolkit* is designed to align with these new priorities. Partnerships are the key mechanism for implementation of the Indigenous Framework. Cultural and linguistic competence, accessibility of programs and services, and accountability and integrity are expressed in the Implementation Guide through clearly identified roles, outcomes and performance measures.

WHAT IS IMPLEMENTATION?

Thinking about Implementation in an Indigenous Context

“At its simplest, implementation can be described as the carrying out of a plan for doing something. It focuses on operationalizing the Plan – the How, rather than the What.³”

Although a great deal of knowledge has been generated in recent years about how to improve service quality toward equitable access for First Nations, Inuit and Metis children and families, outcomes have not kept pace with the knowledge. This has created an ‘implementation gap’ that perpetuates systemic barriers and poorer outcomes for Indigenous children and families.

Purpose of the Implementation Guide

The purpose of this Implementation Guide is to help bridge the gap between what is known, as evidenced through the *Stakeholder Survey*, and what needs to be done as detailed in the *Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework*, to achieve equitable outcomes for Indigenous children and families. **The Stakeholder Survey is the ‘Why’, the Indigenous Framework is the ‘What’ and this Guide is the ‘How’.**

The Implementation Guide details a comprehensive range of actions that are needed to carry out the recommendations of the *Stakeholder Survey* and Indigenous Framework. These actions address the need for significant change at multiple levels from governance to management and the frontlines, through a range of interdependent activities. It is a blueprint for change in ongoing cycles of planning, operationalizing, evaluation, and continuous improvement.

The Implementation Toolkit appended to this Guide provides practical resources to help plan and carry out activities. These tools are designed to facilitate attitudinal and practice change within a larger context of organizational and systems changes.

Values and Principles to Guide Implementation

1. Respect for and privileging of Indigenous Knowledge (ways of knowing, being and doing).
2. Commitment to post-colonial understanding and practice.
3. An ‘Indigenous community knows best’ approach.
4. Peace, goodwill, persistence, patience and humility.
5. The change that matters is on the frontline of services to First Nations-Métis children and families in the District.

³ Burke, et al, CES Guide to Implementation, 2012:2

Agencies are standing on the threshold of wanting to know how to be culturally sensitive but they're culturally blind and they didn't know that before but they know now they've been blind about our culture.

Local Elder Marcia Brown-Martel

How to Use the Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework and Implementation Guide

The Indigenous Framework is a 'lens' to examine personal, professional, and organizational capacity for First Nations and Métis inclusion. The key question is, "Do our attitudes, behaviours, policies, and practices promote equality of access and opportunity or do they reinforce social and systemic inequities"?

Use this Implementation Guide to:

- *Become more aware* of a holistic, culturally respectful approach to planning, delivering and evaluating culturally competent services for local First Nations and Métis children and families.
- *Better understand* local priorities and culture-based approaches for strengthening First Nations and Métis children and families.
- *Reflect and decide* on a plan of activities that further your own professional development and cultural competence as well as that of your program and organization.
- *Establish* effective intercultural partnerships to implement the Indigenous Framework and integrate Indigenous approaches into local programs and services.
- *Inspire others* to share their own implementation success stories throughout the District, building on local knowledge and local resources.
- *Bridge the implementation gap.*

"What's needed is communication with everyone so we're all on the same page about moving forward in a spirit of celebration and reinforcing and supporting each other because the Framework is for everybody, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal."

Local Elder Liliane Ethier

Who is the Indigenous Framework and Implementation Guide For?

- Decision-makers
- Service providers
- Educators
- Policy makers and planners (including school boards, municipal offices, and regional networks)

- Everyone

“The Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework is about sharing and we all want in our hearts to share – but that word has entirely different meanings culturally.”

Local Elder Marcia Brown-Martel

Benefits of Implementing the Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework

- Strength-based, holistic, respectful, and nourishing learning and service environments for First Nations-Métis children and families.
- Improved efficiency and coordination in the delivery of quality, holistic, culturally relevant services to Indigenous children and families throughout the District.
- First Nations-Métis peoples are engaged in decision-making as respected citizens of the District.
- The District is widely recognized as a strong, multi-culturally vibrant and fair Northern community where all citizens are able to live, work and thrive.

What is Needed for Implementation?

- Time and resources to develop each organization’s implementation action plans.
- Time and space for interagency relationship building to negotiate and develop partnership agreements.
- Designated implementation teams within each organization to guide internal plans and monitor interagency partnership activities.
- Commitment to use the Toolkit in this Guide especially for partnership agreements and conflict resolution.
- Ongoing knowledge sharing and inspiring implementation success stories.

Local Resources for Implementing the Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework

1. District of Temiskaming Elders Council
2. Temiskaming Native Women’s Support Group
3. Temiskaming Métis Community Council
4. Indigenous Service Connectors
5. Other Indigenous Service Providers

Partnerships are the key mechanism for building and sustaining capacity and a key strategy for implementing the Indigenous Framework.

Content of this Guide

- Step-by-step understanding of implementation
- Overview of priorities identified by the community/stakeholder survey
- Recommendations for actions to carry out the priorities
- Implementation Toolkit featuring resources for planning and relationship building developed in collaboration with the Elders Council and local Indigenous leaders.

THE PATH TO HERE: Widening the Lens

There is Now a Strong Global Foundation for Significant Change

1. Indigenous cultures globally and nationally are experiencing an unprecedented time of cultural-linguistic revitalization and renewal expressed through the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)*.
2. Self-Voicing: from the United Nations to local policy and planning tables Indigenous Peoples are exercising their right to speak for themselves.
3. Allies are partners in the work to decolonize and ‘Indigenize’ learning and service environments in accordance with Indigenous definitions of success.
4. New collaborative international and interprovincial relationships are based on respect for Indigenous Peoples’ inherent right to self-determination and to preservation of languages and cultures.

“We’re not on the back burner anymore.”
Local Elder Mario Batisse

A Strong Local Foundation for Significant Change Federally, Provincially and Locally

1. The *Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal Peoples in Canada* (1996) is a comprehensive, justice-based, solution-focused document setting out Canada’s responsibilities and commitments to First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.
2. *Ontario’s New Approach to Indigenous Affairs* (2005) and principles of the *Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT Framework 2007)* affirm the Ontario Government’s commitment to improving outcomes for Indigenous children and families.
3. *Timiskaming Best Start Accountability Framework* outlines its vision for culturally and linguistically inclusive services for children and families in the District of Timiskaming.

4. The local *Stakeholder Survey* laid the groundwork for the *Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework*. Development of the Indigenous Framework is itself a case study in respectful intercultural collaboration.
5. *Local Cultural-Linguistic Resources*: Elders and Language Keepers are increasingly represented and engaged at local *planning* tables in the District of Timskaming.
6. *Active Involvement of Senior Management*: Indigenous and non-Indigenous managers from key organizations are committed to moving the Indigenous Framework forward.
7. *Built-in Implementation Mechanism*: the Best Start Network is the mechanism for integrating the principles and priorities of the *Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework* through their 4-Year Strategic Plan.
8. *Efficient Use/Adaptation of Existing Resources*: local agency databases and data gathering processes can be tapped and/or adjusted as needed to evaluate implementation activities.
9. *Indigenous Oversight and Monitoring*: through the District of Temiskaming Elders Council.
10. *Learning from Local Experience and Building on Successes*: ‘mini-pilots’ carried out over the summer and fall of 2014 by local Best Start member agencies tested new partnerships in the spirit of the Indigenous Framework. Lessons learned from these pilots have been integrated into this Implementation Guide.
11. *Indigenous Knowledge Expertise and Cultural Guidance* is available locally from First Nations-Métis Elders, community leaders and service providers. They can help ensure implementation activities reflect First Nations-Métis values and cultural practices.
12. *Intercultural Interdependence and Humility*: there is increasing recognition that we need each other in to move forward. We are all part of the Circle.

“We’ve got to meet with the services. Elders have to meet with the school board and discuss what we want and the same with the court system and Children’s Aid. If we’re going to be partnering then we have to meet these people to make any decision about what we want.”

Local Elder Mario Batisse

Definition of Terms

Elders

Elders are Language and Wisdom Keepers who have earned the love and trust of community members through their extensive traditional knowledge and by role modeling the 7 Sacred Teachings of humility, respect, courage, honesty, wisdom, love and truth. We honour them through protocols such as giving Tobacco when we ask them for guidance or help and honouraria to recognize the worth of their time and expertise is equivalent to other specialists.

Colonization

Colonization is the process of taking control over lands, resources and people by removing their human rights to: self-determination and self-governance, religion, language, culture, and parenting. To justify these human rights violations, colonization constructs a stereotyped identity for Indigenous Peoples as incompetent, damaged, or 'savage' and incapable of decision-making, managing their own lands and resources and speaking for themselves.

Systemic Inequity

This is both a strategy and outcome of colonization. It refers to deeply ingrained attitudes, policies and practices that intentionally *or unintentionally* exclude Indigenous Peoples from full and equal participation in and benefits of economic, political and social life in Canada.

Decolonization

This is a 'whole-society' approach to removing systemic inequities by restoring human rights including rights to self-determination, culture, language, lands and resources. In an off-reserve, intercultural planning context the challenge of decolonization is to: a) change persistent, pervasive negative stereotypes of Indigenous Peoples; and b) shift from centralized hierarchical forms of decision-making to local, decentralized, participatory and consensus Indigenous models. The evidence of decolonization is that Indigenous communities and families have real control over their own lives and the issues that impact them.

Self-Determination⁴

Self-determination is the opportunity and ability to direct one's own life without the interference of an external entity.

- **For Individuals** this means the freedom and resources to make economic, health and personal decisions in the best interests of oneself and one's children based on personal and cultural values. (Individual self-determination is now considered a determinant of health.)
- **For Communities** self-determination is the ability to create an environment that supports the well-being of its members based on its values, culture and traditions.

⁴ First Nations Centre, NAHO (2007:11)

Definition of Terms, *Continued*

Implementation

To plan and carry out activities aligned with the priorities of the Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework and Stakeholder Survey recommendations.

Cooperation

A mutually beneficial relationship between service providers based on an informal agreement between organizations in which all parties share information about their services, commit to keeping each other informed and sometimes coordinate service delivery to avoid duplication. In these relationships, all parties retain their independence, identity and control of their own resources.

Coordination

Coordination refers to relationships that are a bit more formal and structured involving pre-agreed upon inter-agency policies and procedures for service delivery. Each organization still retains their individual identities but “who does what” is negotiated between the organizations on a regular basis.

Collaboration

In order to plan and undertake the joint activities required for genuine collaboration organizations must change the way they are governed and managed. Such arrangements generally require a high level of trust and preparedness for new ways of governing organizations and managing services.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

A Memorandum of Understanding is a tool that formally recognizes service delivery partnerships. It is a written agreement signed by all parties that clarifies roles and responsibilities of each partnering organization.

Action Plan

A carefully prepared and detailed chart showing the sequence of activities according to timelines and lines of accountability for each activity.

Success Indicators

These provide evidence that planned activities have achieved the outcomes and met the expectations identified by local First Nations and Métis communities through the Stakeholder Survey. Success indicators must be identified at the very start of planning activities so that evidence of success can be gathered during or soon after the activities are carried out.

PART II

IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING AND PREPAREDNESS

Implementation Barriers and Drivers

There can be many barriers to successful implementation. These include:

- Lack of stakeholder buy-in and enthusiasm.
- Inadequate planning or a disconnect between roles and responsibilities of those involved at planning levels and those responsible for carrying out the plans on the frontlines.
- Too much time is required to collect and report data or there is a perception the data collected is not relevant or creates an undue burden on the workloads of staff.
- Tools/templates for planning or data gathering are not perceived as relevant or useful or may be considered intrusive.
- Lack of precision and clarity about the financial and human resources required for implementation including the amount of administrative and program staff time required.
- Conflict due to different values, unrealistic expectations, cynicism or burnout and/or unresolved underlying issues and conflicts.
- Implementation plans with an Indigenous focus move more slowly than those of other population groups; or Indigenous needs and plans get 'lost in the shuffle'.

There are also a number of identifiable 'drivers' that facilitate the change management process needed for effective implementation. These include:

- Competency drivers,
- Organization drivers,
- Leadership drivers, and
- Relationship drivers.

Competency drivers are improvements to employee skills and abilities needed for culturally competent, quality programs and services. Organization drivers are the mechanisms that enhance and sustain culturally safe organizational, systems, service and employment environments. Leadership drivers focus on leadership strategies to overcome challenges that emerge as part of the change management process. These include changes related to decision-making, governance, and organizational functioning.

Personal relationships are essential to effective implementation of the Indigenous Framework. Trust arises through confidence in the personal and professional knowledge, skills, and

capabilities of people and organizations delivering the services. Relationships based on interpersonal and inter-organizational trust and confidence are built through:

- Proven commitment to and capacity for cultural competence
- Open, honest and respectful communications especially through the ‘bumps’
- Availability
- Discretion
- Accessibility
- Respect for each partner’s unique yet complementary strengths
- Collaborative vs., hierarchical relations, shared decision-making and consensus building
- Realistic, fair and balanced expectations of each partner’s contributions.

Lessons Learned from Local Mini-Pilots

Evaluation feedback from three local partnership ‘mini-pilots’ implemented in the spirit of the Indigenous Framework from March to September 2014 provided an opportunity to learn from on-the-ground experiences.

Essential elements of successful implementation in a local Indigenous context are:

1. **Commitment to Conflict Prevention and Resolution:** successful implementation requires a conscious shift away from historical adversarial relationships marked by Indigenous loss of control over decision-making. Respect for Indigenous autonomy in the context of collaborative decision-making is an essential element of equitable, mutually respectful relationships. The primary leadership driver in an Indigenous context is role modeling non-adversarial, conflict-resolving attitudes and behaviours that facilitate the change management process by inspiring hope.

There are bumps along the way in everything and all you must remember is that everything can be straightened.

Local Elder Mario Batisse.

2. **Respect for Cultural Differences and Privileging Indigenous Knowledge:** partnership agreements need to address cultural differences in communications, management styles, inclusion of Elders and ceremonies, and Indigenous concepts of ‘time’. Expectations of all partners need to be clearly stated and negotiated early in the partnership planning process. Indigenous Knowledge experts such as Elders must be treated as the equals of other experts.

“I don’t like any decisions at the spur of a moment. If there is an issue I have to make a decision on I won’t make the decision right away it takes me a couple of days and I’ll sleep on it and have an answer for you in a day or two.”

Local Elder Mario Batisse

3. **Indigenous Cultural Models for Leadership and Management:** Indigenous organizations based on cultural values use a highly flexible, collectivist, non-hierarchical and group-oriented management approach. They generally operate by consensus, emphasizing

holistic employee development, roles for Elders as guides and advisors, and collective learning. Standards to measure success are relationally based. Equality is evidenced through a leadership style rooted in the belief that leaders are the servants of the people.

4. **Dedicated Resources for Implementation** (human and financial): Promotion for the Indigenous Framework has been carried out through the Best Start Network, the DTSSAB and the TNWSG⁵. Funding to coordinate, support and sustain these activities on an ongoing basis needs to be clearly identified in the planning process as well as resources and funding for data collection and reporting.
5. **Nothing About Us Without Us:** local First Nations and Métis voice is essential at every stage of implementation, from planning to evaluation. There needs to be District-wide promotion of the Indigenous Framework and its outcomes by local First Nations and Métis leaders. Both the process and outcome of implementation should be self-determination. Indigenous decision-making and capacity building should be evident in all activities.
6. **Understand Indigenous Knowledge before Attempting to Use It:** Indigenous knowledge and the beliefs, customs, symbols and stories that express it are complex and **take many years to learn and understand**. First Nations and Métis symbols and practices should never be appropriated by non-Indigenous people without permission. Memoranda of Understanding and partnership agreements should include provisions to protect Indigenous intellectual property rights.
7. **When There's a Problem, Say It:** misunderstandings and miscommunications occur in every relationship. When things go wrong, someone needs to step up in a respectful, forthright manner to identify the issue of concern and propose solutions so the partnership and the work can move forward.
8. **Commitment to the Spirit of the Indigenous Framework:** while at some point partners in the mini-pilots experienced relational and/or process bumps their steadfast commitment to the Indigenous Framework and its principles inspired them to be patient. They persevered, put the focus on continual learning, and kept going.

“We don’t want to force anyone to do anything they don’t’ want to do. They have to feel comfortable and our prayers will help them to do what they need to do to follow their own path. As they get stronger they will help us when they understand who we are and the way we do things.”

Local Elder Marie Boucher

⁵ District of Timiskaming Social Services Administration Board and Timiskaming Native Women’s Support Group

Assessing Preparedness and Capacity for Implementation

The first step in implementation is to assess the capacity of the Best Start Network in terms of the above barriers, drivers and essential elements. The following chart summarizes indicators of implementation readiness and evidence for whether there is existing capacity or if this is an area for development.

The main focus of the *Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework* is intercultural relationship building and Indigenous capacity building. One indicator of implementation capacity is whether existing levels of cultural knowledge and skills are sufficient to carry out the vision. The Indigenous Framework identified a range of cultural competencies including:

- Awareness of the legacy of residential school abuse and its impacts on Indigenous families today
- Knowledge of local Indigenous approaches to child development and well-being
- Awareness of cultural differences in communications
- Knowledge of on-the-land and identity-based programming
- Commitment to post-colonial understanding and practice.

Marking Out Time for Implementation: competing priorities require a sustained commitment to implementation over the long term. Workers on the frontline should be encouraged to bring forward their ideas for meeting the vision of the Framework. Patience and time is needed to move along the learning curve at both frontline and supervisory levels; and time is needed to review, discuss and reflect on progress.

Building on Successes

Successful implementation is a strength-based process. At its best it provides an opportunity for service providers and educators to reflect on their strengths in the context of equitable access and outcomes for Indigenous children and families. Questions for reflection include:

- What are we doing now that aligns with the Framework and works well?
- What are we doing that doesn't align with the Framework and needs to be adjusted?
- How have we strengthened the role of the Elders and Language Keepers aligned with the Framework?

CHECKLIST: INDICATORS AND EVIDENCE OF IMPLEMENTATION CAPACITY

Indicator	Evidence of Capacity
1. Stakeholder consultation and buy-in to the Indigenous Framework priorities	Stakeholder Survey Report
2. Leadership and Planning	Elders Council, Best Start Network, DTSSAB, Partner agencies commitment to the Indigenous Framework; Stakeholder Survey
3. Financial and Human Resources	Dedicated financial and human resources allocated to the Indigenous community for implementation of the Framework;

	resources to implement most activities to be determined through a joint planning process that pools contributions.
4. Commitment to Conflict Prevention and Resolution	Evidence to date is on a case-by-case basis as illustrated through mini-pilots; adoption of Conflict Resolution policy by the Network and partner agencies.
5. Implementation Teams and Partnerships	To Be Developed in accordance with the Implementation Guide and Toolkit
6. Implementation Plans	Implementation Guide and Toolkit
7. Staff Capacity and Cultural Competency	Evidence gathered through baseline assessment of current staff skill levels, development of Training Plans and Co-Training partnerships.
8. Organizational Support	To Be Determined; DTSSAB for technical and monitoring support.
9. Supportive Organizational Culture	Partially evidenced through Stakeholder Survey; partnership agreements.
10. Communication	Communications Plan and Tips in Toolkit
11. Monitoring and Evaluation	Existing Network mechanisms using Implementation Evaluation Plan and Tools
12. Learning from Experience	Success Stories and Implementation Evaluation promote continuous learning

Five-Steps To Implement the Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework

The Indigenous Framework is a comprehensive ‘whole-community’ plan for improving services to First Nations and Métis children and families. Implementation of the Framework will be based on specific, targeted activities aligned with identified priorities in partnership with service providers and other stakeholders.

Action Plans

1. Integrate the Indigenous Framework into Best Start Network 4-year plans.
2. Integrate the Indigenous Framework into existing Best Start member agency workplans.
3. Identify performance indicators for chosen activities aligned with Indigenous Framework priorities.
4. Identify opportunities for partnerships.
5. Integrate monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms, and timelines aligned with the Implementation Evaluation Plan.

Step-by-Step Process Required for Implementation

1. Assess the capacity and preparedness of each agency and the Network as a whole.
2. Conduct baseline evaluation: establish knowledge of the current situation.
3. Develop an action plan for improvement activities.

4. Negotiate and develop partnership agreements.
5. Carry out activities.
6. Monitor progress and collect information on performance indicators; evaluate the impact of activities; share progress and evaluation reports.
7. Sustain the planning and review cycle for continuous improvement.

Examples of Collaboration for Implementing the Indigenous Framework

Collaboration and partnerships allow programs and services to operate beyond the boundaries of their sectors and individual agency mandates. As a result services are more comprehensive, holistic and client-centered. Collaboration is especially important for providers located outside the District of Timiskaming who provide services in the District. Some examples of collaboration include:

- a) Information and knowledge sharing.
- b) Interagency referral and bridging.
- c) Interagency case management.
- d) Co-locating services and resources where they are most comfortable and accessible for First Nations and Métis families.
- e) Co-delivery of holistic programs and services from outreach and engagement to intake and assessment and case management.
- f) Co-delivery of staff development and training.
- g) Co-delivery of cultural and community events.
- h) Co-delivery of communications and media plans.
- i) Resource pooling.

Questions to Consider When Developing Memoranda of Understanding (MOU)⁶

- Who are the partners? Who needs to be here?
- What does each partner bring, i.e. who is the administrative specialist, who is the content specialist, etc. based on their cultural knowledge and expertise?
- What is the arrangement? (i.e. sub-contracting, joint programming or staff training, co-location, etc. as above)
- What is the project and its purpose?
- How long is the agreement going to be in effect? (i.e., six months, one year?)
- Who will manage the day-to-day business of monitoring and maintaining the MOU?
- How will partners exit from the agreement if things are not working?
- Is there a clear understanding of each partner's risks and responsibilities?
- What will the decision making process be, and who will be included in that process; will decisions be by consensus?
- Will any parties be paid in the venture and if so, what is the payment schedule/details?
- Where will the project be located and which partner will be housing the staff?
- What is the plan for marketing the project in terms of logos, web-sites, and who will speak on behalf of the partnership; who will get top billing?

⁶ Refer also to the partnership development tools in the Toolkit

- What is the process for safeguarding Indigenous Knowledge and intellectual property (use of graphics, symbols, etc)?
- What is the process for bringing new partners into the project?
- What process will be used if changes need to be made to the agreement?
- What is the procedure for handling complaints and resolving conflicts?

Implementation Roles and Responsibilities

1. Role of the District of Timiskaming Elders Council and Resource Team

The District of Temiskaming Elder’s Council was established for Indigenous Elders to assume their traditional role in cultural-linguistic leadership and inter-generational learning. The Elders Council is comprised of a core group of local, respected Elders from each First Nation and the Métis Council who act as a Resource Team for the District in collaboration with other local Wisdom Keepers. Members of the Elders Council bring significant experience and knowledge of Treaty and other negotiated agreements including Métis rights, child welfare and governance. The role of the Elders Council and their Resource Team in implementation is to:

- Support the education system including curriculum and local content, professional development for teachers and staff; and cultural/linguistic education for students from day care to post-secondary.
- Provide approval of and guidance for research projects and determine if the proposed approaches and activities are: a) ethical, and b) beneficial. OCAP⁷ Principles and research partnership agreements will inform this process.
- Provide support to families including cultural-linguistic education, and cultural interpretation for learning and behavioural assessments.
- Provide support to programs and services including cultural and linguistic training.
- Provide linguistic services.
- Conduct ceremonies and provide spiritual guidance.

“All the Elders have to pull together and see to it they listen to us and we are heading in the right direction.”

Local Elder Mario Batisse

2. Role of the Indigenous Planning Committee (in development)

The Best Start Indigenous Committee was a sub-committee of the Best Start Network tasked with ensuring local Indigenous knowledge and a culture-based approach informed the design of services for First Nations and Métis children. The vision of this Committee was to ensure Indigenous children realize their full social, intellectual, economic, physical, cultural and spiritual potential. This Committee is presently being restructured into a new, larger Indigenous Planning Committee that will provide a mechanism for exerting the inherent right of self-determination and self-voicing of local First Nations and Métis issues and concerns. The anticipated role of this committee in implementation is to:

⁷ Ownership, Control, Access, Possession

- Plan, facilitate, implement, manage, monitor and co-ordinate the delivery of programs and services from a cultural worldview and in accordance with the Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework.
- Advocate and be a voice for the needs of local First Nations, and Métis children and their families.
- Work in collaboration with the Best Start Network toward aligning their annual goals and workplans in accordance with the Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework.

3. Role of the District of Timiskaming Best Start Network

The Best Start Network is composed of member agencies that provide services to children 0-12. Their role is to:

- Identify opportunities for collaboration between organizations.
- Facilitate, coordinate and monitor collaboration and partnerships.
- Identify strategies and opportunities that will enhance efficiency and effectiveness in order to better meet the needs of children 0-12.

Best Start Network efforts are focused on becoming a provincial leader in helping children realize their social, intellectual, cultural, economic and physical potential so that they are ready and eager to achieve success in school and afterward.

The Best Start Network is well positioned to learn from the most promising practices of its members and to use its own relationships, structure and accountability mechanisms to ensure implementation of the Indigenous Framework. The Network demonstrates its commitment to implementing the *Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework* through a “lead-by-example” approach and by facilitating the unity of all partners toward sustained dialogue, action and continuous learning.

4. Role of the Indigenous Service Connectors

The role of the Indigenous Service Connectors is to work within an Indigenous approach and worldview to support local children and families in accordance with the mandate and objectives of the Best Start Network and the Indigenous Framework. This includes:

- Sharing knowledge and information about local First Nations-Métis cultures and languages.
- Acting as a cultural resource for children, families and service providers.
- Facilitating equitable access to a full range of quality services for Indigenous children and families.

5. Role of Senior Managers

The specific roles and responsibilities of senior managers will be detailed through each partnership agreement and Memorandum of Understanding. Their role overall is to promote and support the Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework by dedicating financial and human resources to planning, implementation and evaluation processes aligned with their agency

mandates. Senior managers are accountable for ensuring their agency provides equitable access to quality programs and services for Indigenous children and families.

6. Role of Local Municipal Councils and Boards of Education

The role of local governance councils is to familiarize themselves with, promote and support the Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework. This includes public awareness activities that: a) promote intercultural appreciation, and b) provide opportunities to increase Indigenous representation in governance and employment. Local Municipal Councils and Boards of Education are accountable for ensuring equitable access to quality services and education that meet the needs of Indigenous children and families in their jurisdiction.

7. Role of the District of Timiskaming Social Services Administration Board (DTSSAB)

Although the DTSSAB is moving from a coordination role to a monitoring role, the organization has a strong inherent responsibility as a local leader to demonstrate its own commitment to the Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework. This means leading by example in implementing recommendations related to governance, employment and accountability. The DTSSAB is accountable for ensuring equitable access to quality social services that meet the needs of Indigenous children and families in their jurisdiction.

Commitment to a Collective Vision and Effort

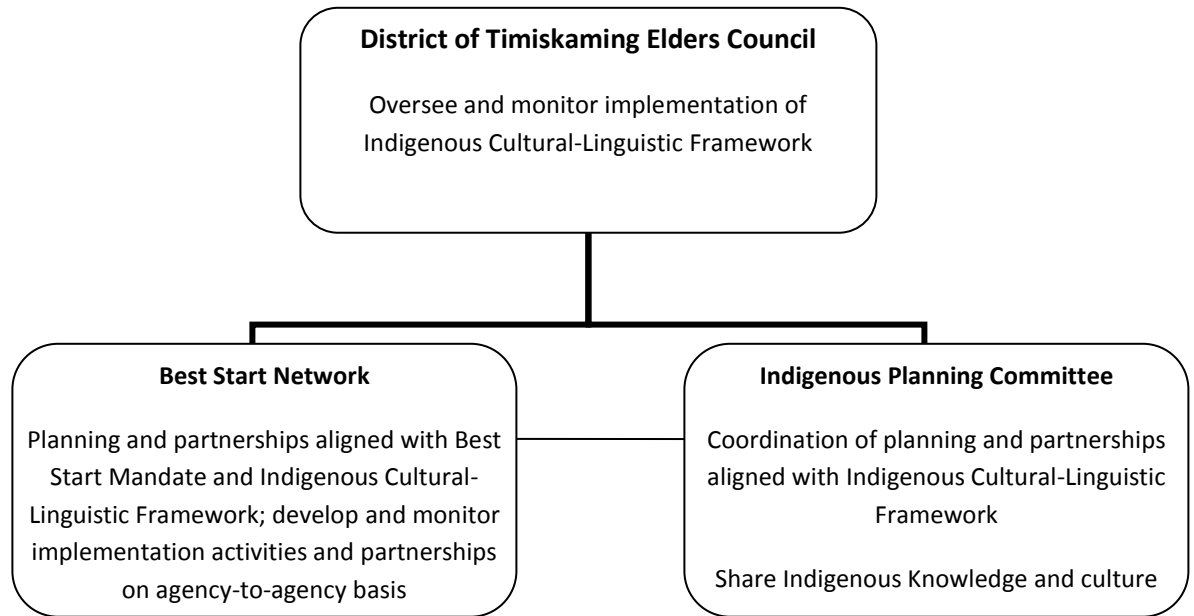
Collectively all of the above groups and individuals share responsibility within the District for implementation of the Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework. Some are already leaders in developing intercultural projects and have built relationships of respect, confidence and trust with each other. Others will be forming partnerships with local Indigenous organizations and people for the first time as a result of the Indigenous Framework. Collectively, it is important to:

1. Joyfully co-create new knowledge upon which to base shifts in practice.
2. Take a managed, strategic approach to coordination and integration of quality, culturally relevant services for local First Nations and Métis children and families.
3. Align activities with the Spirit, objectives and performance measurements of this Implementation Guide.
4. Accentuate the role of local Elders.
5. Regularly share information about successes to sustain the momentum...

“We need to guide this process with mainstream because they have an erred understanding of us that they keep trying to build on. They have to empty their cup and begin learning again. They are basing their decisions on what they learned in Grade 9 History and we need to start over again to build a useful relationships and we need to decide what parts of our tradition and culture we need to share so they understand who we are and that they’ve overstepped their authority.”

Local Elder Marcia Brown-Martel

Accountability Chart



The Foundation for new relationships is the Seven Sacred Teachings: Humility, Honesty, Respect, Love, Courage, Wisdom, and Truth

Implementation Toolkit

There are enormous differences in implementation capacity from agency to agency throughout the District. Therefore the Toolkit is designed to support a range of stakeholders from Boards of Directors to managers, frontline workers, Elders and community leaders. Taken together, the Implementation Guide and Toolkit can help to move the *Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework* from vision into action, generating a *culture of collaboration* throughout service delivery networks. Users of this Guide are invited to use whichever tools best suit their purposes and available resources.

Implementation Toolkit				
Tools for System Change	Tools for Education and Training	Tools for Inclusive Service Environments	Tools for Building Partnerships	Tools for Evaluation and Feedback
Policy for Serving Indigenous Children and Families	Practice Tips to Enhance Communications	Checklist for Assessing Service Environments	Partnership Negotiation Tips	Complaint Data Summary
Sample Indigenous Employment Policy	How to be an Ally of Indigenous Peoples	Features of Aboriginal and North American Management	Building a Memorandum of Understanding	Complaint Procedures

		Schemes		
Elders Council Commitments for Working Together	Conflict Resolution Tip Sheet	Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Self-Assessment Tool	Checklist for Partnership Protocols	Implementation Action & Performance Measurement Table
Best Start Indigenous Committee Terms of Reference	Implementation 'Cheat Sheet'	Examples of Activities, Strategies & Tools Aligned with the Framework	Sample MOU Partnership Agreement Template	
	Media Plan		Sample Partnership Agreement and Accord	
			Guidelines for Researchers	

PART III

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Re-Capping the Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework

Guiding Principles of the Indigenous Framework

Seven principles were identified through the stakeholder survey to guide the *Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework*:

1. **Respect:** for Indigenous cultural beliefs and practices about holistic child development and extended family roles in child rearing; respect for Indigenous models of leadership and governance.
2. **First Nations and Métis community-driven:** local solutions for local concerns; roles of Elders in reclaiming culture and language.
3. **Equitable access** to cultural and linguistic services for First Nations and Métis children and families aligned with the Best Start vision.
4. **Strength-Based:** the emphasis is on building from family and cultural strengths versus compensating for deficiencies.
5. **Families are Involved/Engaged** in the life of their communities and schools.
6. **Roles for Elders** at all levels of the Framework from planning to implementation and evaluation.
7. **Local Expertise** guides planning, implementation and cultural education.

These principles resonate strongly with those of *Ontario's New Approach to Aboriginal Affairs* (2005), principles of the *Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT Framework 2007)* and principles of the *Timiskaming Best Start Accountability Framework*.

Priorities of the Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework

Areas of Priority Identified Through the Stakeholder Survey
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the Capacity of Indigenous Service Providers: for leadership and collaboration; partnership models that enhance Indigenous capacity are needed. • Increase Indigenous Representation in Governance and Employment: through designated seats in governance and planning bodies, recruitment and retention strategies for First Nations and Métis employment, and valuing Indigenous people in planning and service environments.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications, Outreach and Support to Families: more emphasis on health promotion and harm prevention-reduction especially for FASD and post-partum depression, more support for “individualized” needs children and non-Indigenous foster parents; more innovative promotion of existing services; support and role models for young fathers. • Public Education/Engagement: through tools and strategies to reduce racism by promoting intercultural understanding and appreciation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Education and Training: mandatory for all service providers and educators who work with Indigenous families and a coordinated, modular cultural competency training plan; language and culture training for children and families from local Elders. • Access to Resources/Tools: especially culturally appropriate assessment and referral tools, procedures to involve extended family/Elders in child assessments, and protocols for accessing local First Nations and Métis cultural-linguistic resources and resource people. • Partnerships with Schools and Support Services: Indigenous Elder and community involvement in schools and services to provide cultural-linguistic content and cultural interpretation. • An Urban Community Centre: a physically inclusive space where First Nations and Métis families from the District gather together in community and where the public and service providers can come together for Indigenous cultural immersion.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability for Cultural Competency: mechanisms to address the gap between cultural competency policy and implementation. • Adequate Financial Resources: a financial plan to implement the Indigenous Framework so the burden does not continue to fall on under-resourced Indigenous-Métis organizations or community volunteers to facilitate systems change. • Monitoring and Evaluation Plan based on the criteria developed for this Framework.

ACTION PLANNING: THE PATH FORWARD

Implementation of ten priorities of the Indigenous Framework aligns with the four new Best Start Network strategic priorities as follows.

1. Collaboration and integration
2. Cultural and linguistic competence
3. Accessibility of programs and services, and
4. Accountability and integrity.

How the Implementation Guide Aligns with Collaboration and Integration

- First Nations and Métis involvement in decision-making through the local Council of Elders and plans for increasing the level of Indigenous representation in employment and governance.
- New partnerships with schools and support services are generated through the Action Planning Template and Implementation Toolkit.

How the Implementation Guide Aligns with Cultural-Linguistic Competence

- Language and ceremony express Indigenous cultural identity; children and families need opportunities to re-learn their languages and cultural practices that were taken away through generations of residential schooling.

“In order to heal we have to teach our ‘Indians’ how to be ‘Indians’ again. Our people got very sick from colonization and we have to help our people get well again and teach them who they are and we have enough resources today to do this”

Local Elder Marilyn Chevrier-Wills

- Mandatory cultural competency training and skills is essential for all employee position descriptions and performance appraisals for service providers working with First Nations and Métis families.

Develop a phased-in, modular, cultural competency continuous learning plan with topics prioritized by the stakeholder survey including: a) contemporary impacts of residential schooling and the 60s Scoop, especially related to levels of distrust and adversarial attitudes toward education, social services and ‘professionals’; b) loss of parenting skills and need for parenting supports for families who are often the first in many generations to be raising their own children; c) cultural differences in parenting styles; d) differences in communications that impact on early assessment; and e) listening skills in an Indigenous context.

Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework

How the Implementation Guide Aligns with Accessibility of Programs and Services

- Implementation of the Indigenous Framework will help First Nations and Métis parents to reconnect with traditional parenting practices through intergenerational and on-the-land programming experiences.
- Communications, Outreach and Holistic Support to families of children with individualized needs, young fathers, foster parents, post-partum support, and more innovative promotion of existing services will increase accessibility especially for underserved groups.
- Access to Culturally Appropriate Resources and Tools: especially for assessment and referral and will encourage the involvement of Elders and extended family.

How the Implementation Guide Aligns with Accountability and Integrity

- The values and guiding principles, evaluation plan, performance measurement chart and template for memoranda of agreement contained in this Guide and Toolkit are key mechanisms for accountability and integrity.
- The DTSSAB will continue its role in monitoring and guiding implementation of the Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework.
- The District of Timiskaming Elders Council has a central role ensuring accountability and integrity throughout the implementation process.

“Just the presence of an Elder creates comfort and clarity and the presence of the Medicines because what we’re doing is role modeling calmness and well-being for children and families. Children who were taught this when they were young will always come back to it.” “The same calmness and clarity is need for staff because service environments are stressful and negotiating partnerships can be stressful.”
 Local Elders Marie Boucher and Marilyn Chevrier-Wills

Action Planning Template

The template below is a **key document in planning for change** because it details the actions required to implement priorities of the Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework. It is designed to identify roles and responsibilities, establish timelines and actions, identify budget implications and funding sources, and decide how progress will be tracked. The template was developed based on successes and challenges identified through the mini-pilots.

The purpose of the template is to assist with preparation of action plans. It is generic enough that any agency, subcommittee or group can adapt it to their needs. Activities should be identified and then partnerships created to carry them out based on each agency’s mandate, resources and priorities. Implementing the *Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework* will not be a linear, orderly process and this template is not intended as a guide for the chronological order of activities -that is for each agency or group to decide based on their own resources and needs.

Action	Lead Person	Timeframe (start/end date)	Budget/Funding Source	Progress
Preparation for Implementation				
1. Establish an internal implementation team or committee				
2. Review the Indigenous Framework, Stakeholder				

Survey, Implementation Guide and Toolkit, and UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples				
3. Conduct self-assessment for baseline evaluation (including identifying prior activities in the spirit of the Framework)				
4. Agree on scope and extent of activities for a 1-4-year timeline				
5. Assess where Indigenous Framework priorities and planned activities fit into current agency plans				
6. Match activity to available resources				
7. Assess whether planned activities require internal policy or procedure change				
Relationships and Respect				
8. Engage with the District of Timiskaming Elders Council to involve them in plans				
9. Celebrate dates of cultural significance to local First Nations-Métis communities				
10. Seek input at earliest stages from local First Nations-Métis to determine areas for relevant policy and practice shifts including co-management model for any partnerships with Indigenous providers				
11. Create social media hub for online dialogue and to promote local governance and employment opportunities				
12. Actively promote local First Nations-Métis pathways to				

employment and leadership				
13. Seek input from First Nations and Métis partners to ensure any participation in cultural practices and use of cultural symbols/imagery is respectful (i.e. to avoid appearance of tokenism, pan-Indianism)				
14. Identify creative and fun ways to bring staff together for relationship and trust building				
Systems Change				
15. Review operational and/or policy directives relevant to the improvement strategies				
16. Work with HR managers to add Indigenous cultural competency to agency job descriptions and postings				
17. Review with HR managers a culturally customized process for recruiting and retaining Indigenous employees				
18. Review with Board president or ED a culturally customized process for Indigenous representation on Boards and Committees				
Indigenous Cultural Competency Training and Education				
19. Establish requirements for Board, staff and volunteer training based on internal assessment results				
20. Develop training plan and allocate training resources (including resource pooling)				
21. Identify self-paced online training resources aligned with				

staff positions				
22. Identify modules for group training and options for local First Nations-Métis trainers				
23. Identify/establish partnerships for interagency staff/board training				
24. Establish a system for assessing how effectively the knowledge and skills are being applied in practice for each position receiving training				
25. Develop and carry out training plan with timelines (including pre/post self evaluation forms and processes)				
26. Actively promote the training plan and continuous learning to staff and board				
27. Establish a system for internal and external reporting on the positive impacts of training and continuous learning on access and quality of services, governance, and accountability				
28. Assess need for supplementary training materials aligned with agency mandate				
29. Establish a system for updating internal training tools and resources available to staff				
Monitoring, Evaluation and Feedback				
30. Review existing program and project management models and data collection processes; revise if required to reflect Indigenous Framework.				
31. Ensure supervisors, managers and frontline workers observe				

and record implementation impacts; share observations re progress with partners				
32. Use Client satisfaction Talking Circles to gather Stories of Significant Change				
33. Use Perception Surveys for senior managers, frontline workers and service partners to identify emerging issues				
34. Establish overall system for reporting evaluation results regularly; set annual targets for continuous improvements to service environments and staff practice shifts				
35. Publicly recognize and reward staff innovation in culturally competent practice and intercultural partnerships				

PART IV

MONITORING AND EVALUATION PLAN

There needs to be a strong evaluation component to ensure new knowledge and increased sensitivity translates into management and frontline practice shifts.

Stakeholder Survey

The *Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework and Implementation Guide* mark a new era in planning and service provision for Indigenous children and families in the District of Timiskaming. The evaluation methods and tools in this section are designed to align with the Framework’s unique vision.

The *District of Timiskaming Best Start Network* recognizes and fully supports the need for local service improvements. Some members have already undertaken activities to implement changes identified in the *Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework*. This planning body is well positioned, in cooperation with the newly established District of Temiskaming Elders Council, to take a leadership role in coordination, monitoring and evaluation of implementation activities.

It is most important that indicators to measure progress reflect local Indigenous community standards and expectations for success. The Indigenous Framework identifies ten priorities and benchmarks for change that matter deeply to local First Nations and Métis. The monitoring and

evaluation tools in this Tool Kit are designed to ensure each agency is able to measure progress ways that are meaningful to the First Nations and Métis families they serve.

Improvements in service access and quality require diligent monitoring and evaluation to determine what is and is not working. Monitoring and evaluation is also essential to identify impacts of progress toward more equitable resource allocation as well as the extent to which interagency partnerships contribute to more equitable outcomes for local Indigenous children and families.

Many “best practices” in the literature of implementation have been developed for non-Indigenous populations. But without a cultural ‘lens’ implementation strategies often fail and in the process overburden small under-resourced organizations by overloading them with reporting requirements for data that turns out to be irrelevant. Also, when data collection processes are not sufficiently funded, sometimes the expedient option is to recruit participants whose feedback is most readily available instead of participants who are harder to reach and often most in need of the programs and services.

The indicators of success identified in the Performance Measurement Table (Appendix B) were developed in collaboration with the Council of Elders and members of the Best Start Indigenous Committee. Taken together these indicators and the stories of *Most Significant Change* (MSC) method described below form the basis for evaluating implementation of the Framework.

In addition to the indicators detailed on the Performance Measurement Table each agency should also identify its own indicators for evaluation of board/staff training and professional development activities aligned with their mandate and service plans.

Understanding the Scope of the Evaluation

The first step for member agencies of the Network is for each to conduct a baseline evaluation that realistically assesses where the agency is at in terms of the ten Indigenous Framework priorities. Self-assessment surveys should be used before, during, and after each activity to assess progress and determine whether activities have resulted in the improvements anticipated. Specifically the evaluation should include:

- Reviewing the number and scope of prior Indigenous interagency partnerships, their outcomes, lessons learned and elements of the partnership most effective in promoting shifts in practice.
- Reviewing/assessing the impacts of previous staff training and development specifically with respect to their impact on improvements to access, equity and service quality.
- Seeking feedback from Indigenous clients and Indigenous service providers about the impacts of access and service improvements seen through their work with children and families as a result of implementation activities.
- Gathering data about the number of Indigenous board members and employees at each member agency.

- Facilitating ongoing discussions among staff of member agencies as well as the Network as a whole to: a) assess the scope of activities undertaken and their outcomes, and b) to share lessons learned as part of the collective commitment to change.

Evaluation Approach

The evaluation approach recognizes the importance of both qualitative and quantitative information. The qualitative method is based on adaptation of the “*Most Significant Change*’ (MSC) method⁸. This method gathers success stories of significant change from the field: what was done by whom, why, what led to the change, and the outcomes. These stories are then interpreted by designated stakeholders and staff during in-depth discussions about the value and sustainability of the reported changes. **The advantage of this technique is that it keeps the focus of evaluation where it matters most – on improvements and positive impacts at the frontline of programs and services to Indigenous children and families.**

Advantages of a qualitative story-based I to assessing the effectiveness of improvements to access and quality of services:

- It aligns with local First Nations-Métis preferences for a more natural and informal approach to knowledge sharing through the oral tradition of storytelling.
- It aligns with an Indigenous preference for assessing improvements based on multiple indicators that reflect local community standards and cultural relevance such as: dreams, visions, what is heard, seen and felt.
- It aligns with an Indigenous preference for evaluation based on the interconnectivity of family and community collective well-being vs. individual impacts. Specifically it seeks to identify ways in which connections to family, community, culture, and language have been strengthened.
- It is concerned with impacts that can be seen on the frontline of service delivery vs. quantitative data lacking in context ,substance or relevance to the community.
- It levels the evaluation playing field by making the stories, observations, experiences and realities of Indigenous children, youth, families and Elders equally significant as those of ‘professionals’.
- People are often touched by, recall and learn from stories to a greater extent and depth than they are touched by, recall and learn from statistics.
- It is strength-based and favours information that focuses on success. This is a shift in evaluation models that have been long been biased toward deficit.

⁸ Davis and Dart (2005).

The advantage of a quantitative approach based on data collection is that it is most useful in determining the extent to which levels of Indigenous representation in governance, decision-making, and employment is increasing among the member agencies of the Best Start Network.

Most Significant Change Methodology: Learning from Stories

This method should be used to gather evidence of significant changes that have occurred at all levels whether: through partnerships or representation on the Best Start Network, the new Indigenous Planning Committee or the Elders Council; through changes experienced by individuals in their professional practice; and for families who have experienced changes at the frontline of service delivery.

Stories that capture changes arising from new awareness of Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing should be prioritized. The process for gathering the stories will depend on the resources of each agency. Some may choose to audio or video tape the stories and then edit them down to share orally. Others may choose to record the stories, transcribe the audio and summarize the story into a 1-page written document or simply summarize highlights of all stories that have been collected.

Participant stories should be collected by those closest to the frontline using the simplest and least number of questions, for example,

*“What would you tell other parents about this program based on what you have experienced?”
(Probe for how they or their children have changed for the better based on being able to access this service and what is it about the program that led to these changes?)*

A question for implementation partnerships and network, committee and Elders Council members could be,

“The purpose of the Framework is to bring about shifts in knowledge, attitudes and practice. What shifts have occurred for you and what difference has it made for the Indigenous children and families you serve?” (Probe for what led to these changes in knowledge, awareness, or practice, i.e. where they due to improvements in governance and management, accountability or training?)

The experience of collectively interpreting these stories through in-depth discussion among service providers is itself a process of continuous learning. Stories of significant change should be integrated into existing Best Start Network, Indigenous Planning Committee and Elders Council meeting agendas so that evidence of change becomes an ongoing, integral feature of the work and a continual reminder of the vision for the Indigenous Framework.

Instruments for Client Consent and Confidentiality

Existing client consent and confidentiality forms and procedures for each agency should be used for evaluation activities.

Other Criteria for Evaluating Implementation of the Framework

1. **Post-colonial Approach:** post-colonial theory examines the impacts of Western racial and cultural superiority and the oppression of Indigenous Peoples by all social institutions. Post-colonial practice creates space for Indigenous Peoples to define and speak for themselves and restores their inherent right to self-determination. These are crucial elements in effective evaluation of the Framework.
2. **Indigenous Community-Knows-Best:** at the end of the day the community is where innovation and creativity are generated and where people are most aware of what is and what is not working. Feedback on the effectiveness of Framework activities and decision-making about further activities needs to be community-focused.
3. **Respect and Relevance:** means that each activity aligns with the spirit, values and priorities identified through the *Stakeholder Survey* and Framework and respects Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing.
4. **'Harmonized' Effectiveness:** measures the extent to which activities support the vision in a way that harmonizes and interconnects the various components of the Indigenous Framework. For example, assessing whether and in what ways intercultural relations have improved, and to what extent those improvements have contributed to outcomes such as increased cultural safety in learning/service and employment environments.

*One example is a 'success story' of a Francophone-Indigenous partnership that began with co-planning for culturally inclusive social events and expanded into Indigenous representation in governance. 'Success' is when opportunities for intercultural communication and knowledge sharing in public and service spheres are broadened – a rippling out effect happens because people make shift to **living** the Indigenous Framework. This is a clear example of how to inspire a 'whole-community' approach to significant change.*

5. **Efficiency and Two-Way Accountability:** this means using the most practical and efficient methods to measure whether the human and financial resources invested are making an appreciable difference to service access and quality.
6. **Impact:** identifying both positive and negative changes resulting from the activity whether intended or unintended and considering those factors without judgment, as part of new learning and continuous improvement.
7. **Sustainability:** assessing the likelihood of the benefits continuing on after the activity or funding for the activity has ended.

"You have to learn to work with all kinds of people and have respect, to have the Seven Grandfather Teachings and be humble. You have to listen and you will have it quicker if you

don't have an argument. The Teachings of the Seven Grandfathers will help you and if you can control that you have everything."

Local Elder Marie Boucher

Questions to Guide Individual Agency Evaluations of Implementation Activities

The following questions are most crucial to each agency's ongoing self-assessment process.

- What changes have been made to our service's approach, environment, policies and/or procedures as a result of the Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework?
- What evidence do we have that these changes improved access, service quality and relevance for local First Nations and Métis children and families?
- How many First Nations and Métis people do we employ in our organization and in which positions?
- What cultural competency training have we provided or accessed for our staff and who attended?
- What practice and/or policy shifts happened as a result of this training?
- What is the cost/benefit of participating in intercultural partnerships toward implementation?
- How many First Nation and Métis children and families access our services, which programs/services do they use most and what is their level of satisfaction?
- How do we involve First Nations-Métis parents in decision-making about our services and what has been the impact of that involvement on our organization?

The tools provided in this Implementation Guide and Toolkit were developed in collaboration with local Elders and Indigenous community leaders. They are meant to help promote accountability within the system for policy and practice improvements. The *Implementation Action and Performance Measurement Table* clearly details from an Indigenous perspective, what is needed to move the Indigenous Framework from knowledge to practice.

Assessing the Toolkit

This *Implementation Planning Guide and Toolkit* are *living documents* that are meant to grow and change with use. The Toolkit should be evaluated on a bi-annual basis by members of the Best Start Network and the Indigenous Planning Committee using 3 simple questions: Which Tools Worked Best, Which Didn't Work, and How Can the Tools and the Implementation Guide be Improved? The Network should also invite Toolkit evaluation feedback from agencies and organizations in the District at large and use it for continuous improvement of the tools.

KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

This *Implementation Guide and Toolkit* should be shared with service delivery partners and potential partners, educators, municipal planners and the wider community. Some considerations include:

- Where/How best to make announcements.

- All Board members and managers of partner organizations, school board representatives, and school principals should be provided with a copy of the Indigenous Framework and Implementation Guide along with a covering letter welcoming them to integrate these as appropriate into their strategic planning process.
- The 2-page Implementation ‘cheat sheet’ and link to the digital story should be distributed widely throughout the District and posted on all Best Start member websites.
- A phased-in partnership process for a media strategy specific to the Indigenous Framework should be included in the Best Start 4-Year Strategic Planning process.

An effective communications plan is a key strategy for sharing successes and new information about culturally relevant resources and services for First Nations and Métis children and families throughout the District.

Ad Hoc Communications Plan Working Group

A standing subcommittee or Communications Working Group should be established comprised of representatives from the Best Start Network Indigenous Committee and the Council of Elders. Ad hoc working groups are an effective knowledge sharing strategy because they:

- invite the participation of those interested and competent in innovative communications without a long-term commitment of time
- utilize local community/Elder expertise
- promote efficient and resourceful use of local professionals
- bring together sectors, experts and community people who may not otherwise have opportunities to work together toward a common vision.


The Communications Working Group could be tasked with creating new resources to promote the Indigenous Framework among parents, educators and service providers. In accordance with the Framework the priority should be on outreach that enables parents and other providers to access culture-based assessments that help meet learning and behavioural milestones for healthy development.

Innovative Outreach Formats Targeting Parents:

- Bookmarks distributed by local schools, bookstores and libraries.
- Parent information flyers for day care and health centre waiting rooms and for grocery stores to include in grocery bags.
- ‘Human Libraries’ where Elders, culturally competent child specialists and community leaders can be ‘signed out’ at events where parents learn about healthy holistic child development.

Regular communiqués and wide distribution of progress updates will ensure the implementation process for the Indigenous Framework is transparent and accountable to the community.

Ideas for Sharing Implementation Results

- Distribute implementation news updates to the media, member organizations and potential partners.
 - Share results and success stories from the frontline at Best Start Network meetings.
 - Make PowerPoint presentations for potential partners at municipal offices, funders, and potential supporters.
 - Involve parents, Elders and youth in sharing their stories.
 - Share results with other northern service provider and cultural groups.
 - Celebrate successes through awards and other ceremonies.
- 

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APPENDIX A

Implementation Success Stories Inspired by the Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework

The following success stories were identified by members of the Indigenous Best Start Committee. They are examples of how the Indigenous Framework can be used to inspire significant shifts in practice. Our hope was to learn from on-the-ground experiences of people and organizations that had tested out or ‘piloted’ changes in real time settings. Specifically we wanted to learn what activities were undertaken, what changed, what helped make those changes happen, what were the successes and challenges, and what was learned through intercultural partnerships. The information was gathered through 8 key informant interviews representing 3 pilot projects.

1. The HealthSteps Project: a partnership to promote Indigenous inclusion in a Diabetes prevention project for the District).
2. Le Centre culturel ARTEM: a partnership to promote First Nation and Métis inclusion in intercultural social events sponsored by the francophone cultural centre for the wider community.
3. Timiskaming Native Women’s Support Group (TNWSG) and the District of Timiskaming Social Services Administration Board (DTSSAB) collaboration to recruit and hire for the position of *Indigenous Service Connector*.

1. Story of the HealthSteps Project

Who They Are:

HealthSteps is an evidence-based research initiative of the Canadian Diabetes Strategy and the Department of Family Medicine at the University of Western Ontario. They received a 1.5 million PHAC⁹ grant to “customize” the HealthSteps Diabetes prevention program for rural and remote communities.

What They Did:

This story began when the Executive Director of the *Great Northern Family Health Team* received funding to implement the ‘HealthSteps program. A Métis frontline worker from the TNWSG who was present at the meeting where the project was announced informed them of the new *Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework* and offered to bridge the research project to local Indigenous communities.

What Changed?

- First the project activities and budget was ‘Indigenized’ to include roles and honouraria for three Elders.

⁹ Public Health Agency of Canada

- Next a partnership was created with the TNWSG to flow funds for part-time Indigenous project staff. The staff role was to bridge the project to local First Nations and Métis communities and help carry out project activities as ‘Coaches’ (the community capacity-building element of the grant and program activities). Although the funds for staff came from the project budget, the TNWSG maintained full control over project staff recruitment and hiring.
- Extra time was built into programming activities for Elders, ceremony and storytelling.
- Programming was adjusted to include information about traditional diet and on-the-land physical activities and for inclusion of participant’s children.
- Wording was changed to eliminate culturally unacceptable terms and questions about body image that were considered ‘shame-based.’

What Made These Changes Possible?

- The research team was flexible and open to learning how their HealthSteps program and approach could be adjusted to better meet community need; they wanted their program to influence positive change.
- The local Métis frontline worker who bridged the program is a trusted community member.
- There is a high level of commitment in the community to improve family health.
- The leadership was there to do whatever needed to remove barriers and empower the people at the frontline– “it doesn’t have to be perfect and we never set out for it to be perfect”.

“We changed our style and lightened up a lot. Some people on our team are very structured and organized and they needed to know that things were going to happen. So we struggled with that and tried to adjust our program management approach to make it less stringent and more flexible.”

Key Informant, Research Team

In Their Own Words: What Was Learned From the Partnership

- *Research Team:* The ‘learning together’ concept was extremely valuable and a real example of collaboration. This was the first opportunity to implement the program in Native communities and also in rural settings so we very much wanted to learn about the community and challenges. And every time I coached a person I learned about the ceremonies and meetings from Elders. What we heard back was that the participants learned a lot that they can include in their jobs and also about personal health strategies and new ideas for personal health.
- There is now awareness that budgets need to meet the unique requirements of the Indigenous community.
- It’s only through experience you learn what you feel in your heart and you have to go back to the end goal which is the kindergarten rules: do unto others, be respectful and share.

What Was Learned From an Indigenous Perspective

- Indigenous partners were expected to educate researchers about cultural differences during the course of the project instead of it being a prerequisite for the work or a paid service.
- Lack of awareness of cultural differences in standards for body type and weight between urban White researchers and Native northern people resulted in unintentional body shaming of participants.
- Researchers should be knowledgeable about cultural differences from the get-go so that budgets, activities, tools and language is appropriate vs. expecting communities to work around the challenges imposed by inadequate funding, time and tools.
- All tools (project management, evaluation, communication, and programming) should be developed with Indigenous input during the preparation phase, not readjusted at the last minute for implementation.

“We have to believe that we can make a difference and we have to keep on trying.”
Key Informant

2. Story of Le Centre culturel ARTEM

Who They Are:

Le Centre culturel ARTEM is a non-profit organization that promotes Francophone arts and culture in the District of Timiskaming through ongoing activities and seasonal events such as the annual Christmas Village and Taste of the North.

What they Did:

A francophone business leader in Timiskaming Shores became aware of the *Indigenous Cultural Linguistic Framework* and recommended closer ties between francophone and First Nations-Métis communities. They invited a Métis member of the Indigenous Best Start Committee to help organize First Nations-Métis participation in Taste of the North, an annual fall food and intercultural festival. This led to the Métis member being invited to sit on Le Centre culturel Board of Directors with a more direct role in governance and leadership.

What Changed?

- Local First Nations-Métis cultures, crafts people and services are now showcased in annual Christmas Village and Taste of the North festivals.
- The promotional logo for cultural events now inclusive of First Nations-Métis languages and culture.
- First Nations-Métis “voice and influence” is now part of the Board’s governance and strategic planning processes.

What Made these Changes Possible?

- Trust in the people you're building relationships with is essential. "It's easier to have the trust with people you've come to know; often you don't have the occasion to meet the Aboriginal community."

In Their Own Words: What Was Learned From the Partnership

- Francophone and First Nations-Métis have a lot in common in terms of struggling for cultural-linguistic recognition, respect and equity in the District.
- There is more respect for the "huge struggles" First Nations-Métis face for their right to be educated in their culture and language.

Challenges:

- Plans to continue the partnership through combined celebration of St Jean Baptiste Day and Aboriginal Day was rejected by Canadian Heritage as they do not accept joint proposals for funding. This is an area for advocacy around policy change to promote intercultural understanding and community building.
- The ten recommendations of the Indigenous Framework should be available in French and distributed to Le Centre culturel members.

"People want to be inclusive but they don't know how to get the people to sit on their board - but there is openness there."

Key Informant

3. Story of the Indigenous Service Connector Employee Hiring

Who They Are:

The Executive Director of the Timiskaming Native Women's Support Group (TNWSG) and the Children's Services Manager for the District of Timiskaming Social Services Administration Board (DTSSAB) jointly oversee two Indigenous Service Connector positions using a shared management model. Indigenous Service Connectors are a cultural resource for families and service providers in the District aligned with the mission and strategic objectives of the Best Start Network and Best Start Indigenous Committee.

What They Did:

First, they created an ad hoc hiring committee comprised of both managers, a respected local Elder and a local cultural resource person. Each partner contributed resources based capacity: the DTSSAB covered financial costs and supplied interview screening tools.

What Changed?

- This marked the first time an Elder was included on a hiring committee for the DTSSAB.

- The job description was reviewed and revised to align with the *new Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework*.
- When the first round of interviews did not result in a preferred Indigenous candidate and a consensus decision, the commitment to both was reaffirmed and the process was expanded to a second round.

What Made These Changes Possible?

- Local Elders were actively involved in developing the *Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework*; this established a strong precedent for their continued involvement.
- A priority of the Framework is to increase Indigenous representation in employment and governance. The two partners are recognized community leaders who are role models for finding creative solutions to implementation barriers.

“I see more people listening to us. When we were doing the hiring there was an understanding when I talked and when I say something he listens. When you know that, you know things will get better and I know it’s a slow process and we’re just getting starting with the Elders.”

Local Elder Mario Batisse

What Was Learned From the Partnership

- Prior agreement about qualifications for the position and interview questions needs to occur so that Indigenous experience, knowledge and practice is privileged equally with that of Western education and so grassroots qualities are privileged equally with ‘sophistication’ and ‘professionalism’.
- Cultural difference in terminology is important. For example, concepts like “sophistication” feel exclusionary to those with a “grassroots” orientation.
- Clear, open, honest and transparent communications from start to finish and a pre-determined process would help ensure differences are put on the table and resolved in a respectful yet timely way so each partner feels they have been a valued part of the decision-making process. Although it can be frustrating these are essential learning opportunities.
- Interpersonal behaviours and communications need to *consciously shift* from historically oppositional relationships to a ‘culture-of-collaboration’.
- There can be tension between an Indigenous practice of non-interference and a Western practice of constructive feedback; this needs to be put on the table at the onset. “There is a responsibility to share cultural differences with the non-Aboriginal person because we don’t know what we don’t know; now that I know I’ll be conscious of it and that’s what builds mutual trust and respect”.
- A checklist for intercultural hiring committees and a template on roles, responsibilities, process and principles of affirmative hiring is needed so it’s clear to everyone.

“There was a greater understanding of the importance of the Indigenous cultural base and the particular knowledge and skill set attached to that cultural base. There was a conscious effort to make sure we aligned with the Indigenous Framework and the need for this position to be an Aboriginal Ambassador with a sufficient knowledge base on how to navigate things and what to present while not making assumptions – to live and model the true contemporary culture vs. a ‘Hollywood Indian’ stereotype.

Key Informant

Lessons Learned from the Mini-Pilots/Success Stories

Two of the stories show that it’s still widely assumed that the standards and values established by and for the mainstream are transferrable to Indigenous contexts. This is taken for granted even though evidence repeatedly shows they are not a good fit with Indigenous standards and values, which deserve equal consideration and respect.

Relationships of trust were crucial to the success of each of these stories. Shifts in attitudes, behaviours and practice occurred as a result of:

- a) unwavering commitment to the Indigenous Framework
- b) willingness to keep going even through the bumps and frustrations
- c) staying open and flexible
- d) Speaking up when there is a problem.

“Nowadays there is a thirst and a quest and an appreciation for this knowledge of Indigenous practice so if you have it, bring it on because people want to hear about it.”

IMPLEMENTATION TOOL KIT

1. Sample Policy for Serving Indigenous Children and Families in the District of Timiskaming
2. Indigenous Cultural-Linguistic Framework Self-Assessment Tool
3. Implementation Action and Performance Measurement Table
4. Examples of Activities, Strategies and Tools Aligned with Best Start Four Areas of Focus
5. Checklist for Partnership Protocols
6. Checklist for Assessing Service Environments
7. Practice Tips to Enhance Communications in a Northern First Nations-Métis Context
8. Conflict Resolution Tip Sheet
9. How to Be an Ally of Indigenous Peoples
10. Guidelines for Researchers
11. Features of Aboriginal and North American Management Schemes
12. Sample Indigenous Employment Policy
13. Partnership Negotiation Tips
14. Building a Memorandum of Understanding: Questions to Start the Dialogue
15. Sample Template for Partnership Accord and Agreement
16. Sample Memorandum of Understanding (includes roles of managers and staff)
17. Complaint Data Summary
18. Complaint Procedures Chart
19. Media Plan