



# Anishinaabewin Nikayaa Nkoobnigay



## Orange Standard Conference 2024



Boozhoo,

On behalf of the Bimaadzwin Team, Miigwetch to everyone who participated in the January 16 and 17, 2024 Orange Standard 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference. It was an honor to design this conference in a way that would assist you in giving your feedback and advice on community engagement for moving forward with the redesign of the Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services.

Your participation, reflections, respect, and honesty regarding Anishinaabewin Nikayaa Nkoobnigay (Our Anishinaabe way of raising our children), where families and communities have the united responsibility for the well-being of our Nations' children and youth was awe-inspiring.

Our team has acquired the deepest admiration for conference participants who so eloquently explained that the answer for ensuring their Nation's child, youth and family wellbeing lies with practicing the Anishinaabe culture, traditions, principles, and teachings.

We further extend our appreciation to those who, as part of their job or as a volunteer, gave us a hand in the conference planning, implementation, and follow up.

Over the time in which we worked on this conference, we pushed ourselves to be of the same mind as those who would attend. This means for everything including this report to be clear and understandable. Therefore, if you have any questions about this report, you can contact Haley Bissaillion or Carrie Tabobondung.

Miigwetch,

Isadore Day, CEO Bimaadzwin



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## Conference Summary

**NCFS Designation and the NCFS Strategic Plan.** Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services (NCFS) currently provides services in the Sudbury, North Bay, and Parry Sound districts, and it has provided 24/7 child and family services for the Anishinaabe First Nations situated in that catchment area since 2019. NCFS was designated on April 1, 2021. The NCFS board of directors and management then engaged in a strategic planning process.

**Decolonization.** The NCFS April 2021 designation allows the Anishinaabe to reclaim jurisdiction over child welfare services. For that reason, the resulting NCFS strategic plan includes decolonization steps for redesigning Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services, where Anishinaabe cultural values, beliefs, and principles are deeply rooted in the services and ensure that the care of children and youth is the responsibility of family and community.

**Strategic Plan Vision.** This NCFS strategic plan continually addresses the present-day underpinnings and historical colonization impacts on the Anishinaabe. Consequently, the strategic vision is *to build a robust and healthy future for Anishinaabe children, youth, families, and communities.*

**NCFS Strategic Redesign Phases.** The NCFS Indigenous Child Wellbeing service redesign includes the following phases: Phase I: Develop the framework. Phase II: Community Engagement. Phase III: Evaluation.

**Anishinaabewin Nikayaa Nkoobnigay; The Orange Standard.** In Phase I, Anishinaabe Elders named the Orange Standard "Anishinaabewin Nikayaa Nkoobnigay," it translates in English to: "Our Anishinaabe way of raising our children."

**Phase II: Community Engagement.** The Orange Standard Working Group, Niijaansinaanik Staff, and Anishinaabe community members representing Magnetawan, Wasauksing, Shawanaga, Henvey Inlet, Dokis and Wahnapiatae First Nations, which are within the Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services (NCFS) catchment, gathered for two days at the Delta Hotel in Sault St. Marie, Ontario on Tuesday, January 16, 2024, and on Wednesday, January 17, 2024. The attending community members discussed and advised on the strategic efforts for Community Engagement regarding the NCFS Indigenous Child and well-being services re-design moving forward.

**Conference Objectives Day 1.** Ensuring Cultural Protocols; Participants' Introductions and Gathering Expectations; Using Understanding **the Anishinaabe phrase** "Anishinaabewin Nikayaa Nkoobnigay"; Messages to Be Sent to Future Generations **Using Pictographs**; Setting the Story Board Path towards "Anishinaabewin Nikayaa Nkoobnigay" the Anishinaabe Way of Raising Our Children.

*To hear the community voice so we can move forward; That everyone here has a clear vision of what the Orange Standard is and how we will move forward. It's a good feeling to see how far we have come as a group and proud to talk about how we will move forward." – Community Member*



**Conference Objectives Day 2.** Icebreaker: Diversity Bingo; Identify, Understanding the Current Childcare Reality and Defining Future Childcare from an Anishinaabe Lens; An Adult and Elder Discussion and a Separate Youth Group Discussion Re: Community Engagement; Conference Evaluation; Ensuring Cultural Protocols.

## Conference Results:

**Participants' Expectations.** Conference participants shared their expectations for becoming familiar with, understanding, contributing to, listening to, and learning more about the Orange Standard. People looked forward to hearing from everyone, especially youth, about what needed to be done to move the Orange Standard forward and improve the lives of children, youth, and their families. The message for not rushing this community-based process began in this group sharing.

**Pictograph Messages to Future Generations.** Conference participants shared the meaning of their pictographs (in a drawing or a painting) with the large group. Explanations included the *importance of family unity and community harmony to children thriving. Participants often drew a family circle around the child and provided protection, love, patience, and guidance.* Most pictographs indicated *the significance of the medicine wheel circle, people as a part of the circle of life; the importance of traditional ways such as ceremonies, naming, clans, storytelling, and its interpretation, the Seven Grandfather teachings, the medicines and keeping cultural traditions alive that teach children and youth sustenance in nature and by use of the land. E.g., Hunting, fishing, and gathering syrup.* Some shared their childhood experiences with *the lack of a support system, growing up in foster care, being part of the 60's scoop, and being a residential school survivor.* They shared that these experiences taught them the importance of practicing their culture and following the Red Road.

**Existing Childcare System in 3-D Mapping.** Eight conference participants shared their 3D Maps depicting the existing child and family services system and what needed to change. The eight presentations *further detailed the need for childcare services to revert to the culture and traditions, to have families and caretakers encircle children to ensure family and child wellbeing.*

**The Existing Childcare System in 4-D Mapping.** Identified all system players. *Then, system players who increased movement to the Orange Standard were assigned plus signs.* These were: Child Advocate, Mom, Dad, Youth, Leadership, NCFCS, Grandparents, Parents, Industry, Elders, Mental Health and Addictions Counselors, Cultural Knowledge Keeper, First Nations, Assembly of First Nations (AFN), and Education.

*Identified system players and aspects that decreased movement toward the Orange Standard were assigned minus signs.* These were Fall between the cracks, gaps, Government, Police, Drug Dealers, Human Traffickers, and Hospitals.

*Some identified system players were assigned a plus sign and a minus sign, meaning they could increase and decrease movement toward the Orange Standard.* These were: Front Line Workers, Chief and Council, Youth, Funders.

**Community Engagement Agenda Feedback.** *The Community Engagement Process Pace.* Participants emphasized that *to be community-based, this process requires a community pace* to allow people to

*"I was as at the first conference, and I look forward to this meeting. People's question: "What is the Orange Standard" The answer is: It's within you, your community, your culture, you're your language." – Community Member*



grow, learn more, understand the Orange Standard meaning, and heal through discussion of personal problems. *More community sessions* are required to capture all community members' voices. *Safety*. The process needs to slow down and make people feel comfortable, since talking in a circle is scary for some; fear is about being judged or labelled. Therefore, *do not rush the process and explain to funders*.

*Agenda Activities, Scheduling, and Community Attendance.* Feedback highlights are: To include Dr. Melanie's teachings; Communities can make their agendas; Schedule gathering dates and times that meet community members' availability; Find ways to allow for youth and community workers attendance; Mandatory attendance for crucial community partners and stakeholders.

*Community Engagement Challenges.* Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services (NCFS) has a negative reputation with some community members who hold hatred and anger towards NCFS and feed community gossip—confusion between NCFS and the Orange Standard.

*Respect.* is needed for each other and especially for elders and *ceremonies*. Participants often discussed the Sunrise Ceremony early scheduling; Some recommended adding or replacing it with an all-day Sacred Fire burning and holding a circle ceremony later in the morning.

*Communications and Promotion.* It is needed to increase community attendance and capture everyone's voice at these community gatherings using technology, newsletters, community information boards, Zoom, and community publications. Send the message: "We need everyone involved."

*Moving Forward with Hope.* Participants recommended supporting community leaders who, in their role as leaders, can, in turn, help the community. The present-day existence of support organizations for youth will open doors. Dr. Melanie provided a way for us to gain perspective on how we can change the existing childcare system. We must build bridges with the Justice system—opportunities for learning from each other and moving beyond negativity.

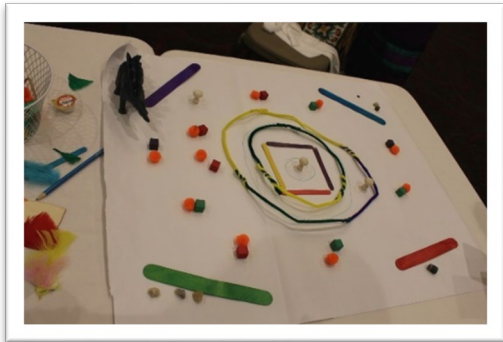
**Youth Feedback.** *Hold a Youth Conference for the Orange Standard* with more activities geared towards youth that are hands-on and interactive and that will help them understand the Orange Standard. Have youth assist youth in understanding more of the orange standard. *Young people want to feel heard, secure, and confident to speak.* Youth were enthusiastic about having just the elders and youth in their gathering. *Communications.* Use Facebook to communicate with all community groups and target youth with social media such as Instagram. *Survey the young people* to get suggestions for upcoming events; include a better variety of gift cards and prizes. Youth require *better funding* to live. Change the age range that defines youth eligibility from 12 to 30 years.

**Ensuring Cultural Protocol.** The Batchewana Chief Mark McCoy was invited to welcome and make some opening remarks encouraging conference participants in their efforts to decolonize their child and family services. Perry McLeod-Shabogestic and elders facilitated the conference opening and closing ceremonies.

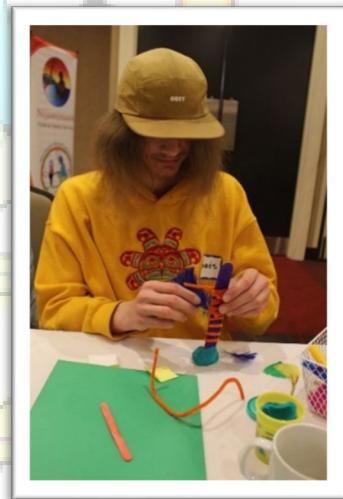
**Conference Evaluation.** Twenty-five conference participants completed the evaluation and gave an average of 8/10, indicating satisfaction with their experience. Evaluation comments said that participants enjoyed the large group sharing and discussions. Some suggested they needed more time in the future because Anishinaabe is a storyteller. Survey respondents especially enjoyed the youth's vital voices, and they also gave further recommendations on conference logistics.

**Conclusion.** Overall, the conference exercise results show that the Anishinaabe inherently know that their culture and traditional ways are how they can achieve the decolonization of their existing Childcare System. They also know how to make this happen from an Anishinaabe individual, family and community perspective. Which is achieving unity at family and community levels by collectively listening, learning, understanding, respecting all, and healing so children within their circles can thrive.





3D Mapping Activity



4D Mapping Activity







Pictograph Activity



# Miigwetch

For more information and community updates contact:

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