



Summary of the Métis Nation–Saskatchewan Leadership Forum

held September 5, 2025, at Prairieland Park, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

*Prepared by Peacock Ink Ltd. from summaries
compiled by Diane Parsons, Carrie Peacock
and Brontë Sawada*

Table of Contents

Summary of the Leadership Forum	1
Opening Prayers	1
Welcoming Remarks	1
Plenary Presentations.....	1
Panel Discussions.....	2
<i>Mike Natomagan, Local President, Kineepik Métis Local.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Kimberley Smith, Health and Wellness Manager, Kineepik Métis Local</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Shirley Isbister, Local President, Central Urban Métis Federation Inc. (CUMFI).....</i>	<i>3</i>
Closing Remarks.....	3
Discussion Sessions.....	4
<i>“Community Safety”</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>“Mental Health and Recovery”</i>	<i>5</i>
2025-26 MN-S Operating Budget Workshop.....	5
2023-24 MN-S Audited Financial Statements.....	8
List of Attachments.....	8
Detailed Notes of the Session on “Community Safety”	A-1
Detailed Notes of the Session on “Mental Health and Recovery”	A-3

Summary of the Leadership Forum

Welcoming Remarks, Plenary Presentations, Panel Discussions, Breakout Sessions and Finance Workshop

OPENING PRAYERS

Elder Frank and Elder Rita offered Opening Prayers.

WELCOMING REMARKS

Glen McCallum, MN-S President, expressed appreciation for the Opening Prayers and emphasized the importance of remaining rooted in the continued use and learning of traditional languages. He reflected on the struggles many communities face as a result of the multi-generational impacts of residential schools and the devastating effects of the drug trade, gangs, violence, and addictions. These escalating challenges affirmed the need for research and reliable data to better understand how to support Métis communities.

The President commended attendees for their participation in the sessions, noting the importance of their feedback on resources and support services required to address community priorities. He highlighted the importance of sharing information on available programs and support services, as well as maintaining open dialogue with government to ensure programs remained responsive to the needs of Métis citizens.

Richard Quintal, Chief Executive Officer, supported the President's call for unity in addressing the serious impacts of drugs, alcohol, gangs, and violence on Métis citizens and communities. He referenced the August 2025 PMC resolution, which declared a state of emergency to respond to these community crises. The forum provided a space for difficult discussions and presentations, as well as an opportunity to develop solutions aimed at restoring hope and strengthening the well-being of future generations.

Appreciation was also expressed for recent demonstrations of collective strength, particularly the assistance provided by Regional Councils during Saskatchewan's wildfires.

Attendees were reminded that supports would be available throughout the day for those who might be affected by the forum's sensitive discussions.

PLENARY PRESENTATIONS

Ministerial Addresses on the Declaration of a State of Emergency

Brennan Merasty, Minister of Self-Determination and Self-Government, shared his personal struggles with addiction and his ongoing healing journey, which shaped his renewed understanding of the importance of rediscovering values that foster balance and strengthen a sense of purpose.

The Minister reflected on his early struggles with drug and alcohol addiction, which he used to avoid life's realities, past experiences, and unresolved personal traumas. As a result, he became estranged from his family and prioritized his substance use. After some unsuccessful recovery attempts and facing financial hardship, he sought help and was welcomed into MacLeod House, a transitional home for men recovering from addiction, where Elders encouraged him to reconnect with his Métis culture and acknowledge the source of his feelings.

Following a period of healing and recovery, and with the continued support of Elders and the President, he assumed an initial role with MN-S. Now serving in a Ministerial position, he supported the MN-S's decision to declare a state of emergency on alcohol, drugs, and violence, and to work toward developing meaningful solutions to address these crises in Métis communities.

Beverly Fullerton, Minister of Health and Mental Health and Addictions, reflected on her personal experiences surviving abuse, the foster care system, incarceration, domestic violence, addictions, and gang involvement. She acknowledged the impacts of intergenerational trauma and the loss of her young son after being denied hospital care.

During her stay in a women's healing lodge, Elders encouraged her to reconnect with her Métis identity and culture. Through daily affirmations and guidance from Elders, her healing journey began. Upon her release in 2014, she engaged with community programs, built relationships with police and service organizations, and collaborated with the Elizabeth Fry Society to support other women facing similar circumstances. Reconnecting with her family in Duck Lake and her cultural roots, she found her community during Back to Batoche and was welcomed home by President McCallum.

Minister Fullerton later assumed a position at the MN-S, where she was able to use her voice to advocate for Métis citizens, identify barriers, and strengthen connections with communities. Now serving in a Ministerial role, she commended MN-S's declaration of a state of emergency in response to the escalating crisis of addiction and violence, and its commitment to developing solutions that honour Métis people with kindness, compassion, and resilience.

PANEL DISCUSSIONS

John Lagimodiere, Facilitator, introduced the following panellists:

- Shirley Isbister, Local President, CUMFI
- Mike Natomagan, Local President, Kineepik Métis Local
- Kimberley Smith, Health and Wellness Manager, Kineepik Métis Local

Panellists were invited to respond to the following questions:

- What key issues are your organizations facing with families?
- What initiative has had the biggest impact in your area?
- What partnerships or programs have helped to reduce community harm?
- If you could give one message to leaders about helping in the community, what would it be?

Mike Natomagan, Local President, Kineepik Métis Local

In 1979, a Fifth Estate episode titled "[The Drunken Indian and the Dry Road Back](#)" highlighted the severity of alcoholism in the community of Pinehouse; at that time, only five residents were considered sober. In response, Recovery Lake was established in 1987, about 20 kilometres south of the community, to provide a community-led program supporting lasting recovery through culturally relevant approaches. Today, 20 to 30 community members still gather on the land weekly, while others continue to face the dual struggles of substance use and homelessness.

Recovery Lake has had a significant impact in the area, drawing strength and blessings from the land and the community. Partnerships, including with SaskHousing and other agencies, remain essential to meeting community needs. Affordability is an ongoing challenge in the North, although some progress has been made through the construction of energy-efficient tiny homes to provide stable housing. Over the past 12 years, graduates have been monitored to track their progress, and for the small percentage who struggled, additional supports were provided to help them obtain a driver's licence, housing, and employment.

Kimberley Smith, Health and Wellness Manager, Kineepik Métis Local

For more than 37 years, the [Muskwa Lake Wellness Camp](#) near Pinehouse has provided community-led, culturally grounded addictions treatment. Operated by Kineepik Métis Local #9, the program follows a

holistic approach that integrates land– and culture–based interventions with community support to promote long-term wellness.

The program recognizes that the effects of intergenerational trauma extend beyond addictions. Residential school survivors were often denied the experience of healthy parenting, which disrupted the parent-child attachment and contributed to cycles of helplessness, homelessness, and addiction, while limiting the capacity of families and communities to change.

Muskwa supports the basic needs of community members, enabling them to focus on healing. Prevention programs focus on reconnecting with nature and relearning language. The Reclaiming Our Community (ROC) program brings groups together to support others, with referrals received from across the province, including from MacLeod House. In addition to addictions treatment, aftercare services are available to assist with housing and employment. Muskwa operates in partnership with the community and differs from other provincially funded programs.

Some communities cannot access available program funding due to limited knowledge of the funds available and application processes. Programs should be accessible in all communities, not only urban centres, to ensure that individuals supported in cities can return home and continue receiving necessary services.

Shirley Isbister, Local President, Central Urban Métis Federation Inc. (CUMFI)

CUMFI provides support to families facing critical challenges, including addiction. Saskatoon is experiencing a growing crisis, with an estimated 1,500 people currently experiencing homelessness. While addiction was once primarily associated with alcohol, it now increasingly involves drugs such as crystal meth and opioids. Prolonged substance use can have severe health impacts, including psychosis. Those living on the streets often face overlapping struggles with addiction, mental health issues, and theft. Undiagnosed mental health conditions reinforce cycles of addiction, as substances may provide a temporary sense of feeling “normal”. In addition to MacLeod House, transitional housing programs offered through CUMFI provide supported living for men and families in recovery.

Once individuals complete their treatment program, they can transition to supported living homes where families can be reunited, including children returning from foster care. While some may relapse during the process, their children are not re-apprehended, as the program provides in-house care while parents return to detox.

Focused efforts are needed to provide housing and treatment options for those who seek them, while continuing to care for and support those who do not. It is critical that leaders take time to understand the needs of their communities and citizens.

The Facilitator extended thanks to the Panellists for providing information on the programs and services offered by their organizations and for their ongoing commitment to supporting Métis citizens and communities.

CLOSING REMARKS

Minister Fullerton thanked the Panellists for their feedback and confirmed that the MN-S’ declaration would press for direct community supports, including funding for Locals who best understood the needs of their citizens. Meetings were being arranged with representatives from the provincial health and justice systems, while Canada was being urged to recognize addictions and violence as rights-based issues that required critical attention.

The launch of a Community Health and Wellness Grant for Locals would help support initiatives that promoted wellness and strengthened community connections for MN-S citizens. The grant would also

assist those impacted by violence, addictions, and even wildfires. Eligible projects for grant funding could include mental health education, suicide intervention training, mental health first aid, community gatherings, support groups, wellness summits, and cultural or creative initiatives. Locals would be encouraged to develop innovative approaches to address mental health and violence-related issues in their communities.

The MN-S was finalizing the application form for Locals to access the low-barrier grant, which could be available within 7 to 10 days. Support would be available to assist Locals in accessing the grant.

Minister Merasty confirmed that declaring a state of emergency would enable the MN-S to make a real difference for Métis communities. He noted that if drug dealers could quickly reach communities, then so too could programs to support recovery. When individuals struggling with addiction were in despair, they needed to know that help was available. He reminded attendees that approaches in Saskatoon may work in the city but may not be effective in other communities. The Kineepik Métis Local was commended for shaping its programs based on local realities, and other communities must do the same.

DISCUSSION SESSIONS

Separate and concurrent discussion sessions were then held to provide delegates with an opportunity to exchange ideas about priority issues facing Métis communities. Delegates were encouraged to exchange ideas, solutions, and perspectives. The sessions focused on the following topics:

1. Community Safety
2. Mental Health and Recovery.

The ideas and opinions shared were gathered to assist the MN-S in shaping policies, legislative actions, and planning future initiatives for Métis citizens.

Below are summaries of the discussion sessions held September 5, 2025. *(Detailed notes of each of the session are attached).*

Community Safety

Facilitated by Billie Jo Natomagan, Director, Planning and Priorities, Brennan Merasty, Minister of Self-Determination and Self-Government, and Mike Natomagan, President, Kineepik Métis Local

The session on “Community Safety” focused on the state of emergency arising from drugs and violence, emphasizing the need for funding and support, the promotion of Indigenous-led initiatives, the exploration of innovative solutions, and meaningful engagement with youth.

It was confirmed that distinction-based planning should be prioritized and community safety enhanced, with a request to develop funding proposals and to advance this work, including a collaborative conference with government on programming and funding.

Below are some of the comments offered by participants during this session:

- It is essential to obtain funding and to establish partnerships in order to provide adequate support
- Focus is needed on law enforcement and justice, including RCMP shortages, a lack of culture and sensitivity training, high incarceration rates, and the need for a Métis judiciary
- Métis communities face isolation, limited resources, cultural barriers, and insufficient youth engagement, requiring timely, culturally appropriate support across all communities.

Mental Health and Recovery

Facilitated by Kailene Gudjonson, Manager, Mobile Outreach, Beverly Fullerton, Minister of Health and Mental Health and Addictions, and Shirley Isbister, President, CUMFI

The session on “Mental Health and Recovery” focused on gathering feedback to support Métis-led reforms in the delivery of mental health and recovery services, with the intent to achieve more meaningful outcomes.

It was confirmed that incorporating natural and traditional healing into mental health and recovery treatment, grounded in Métis culture, while providing remote, nature-based recovery centres, would help to promote healing and foster reconnection with Métis identity.

Below are some of the comments offered by participants during this session:

- The foundational values of Métis culture, including family, identity, and cultural practices, should form the basis for approaches to mental health
- Recovery should include reconnecting to culture, nature, and traditions, while ensuring the provision of safe and supportive spaces
- Natural healing practices and medicines should be integrated into treatment approaches.

After the Discussion Sessions concluded, participants reconvened for the 2025-26 MN-S Operating Budget Workshop and presentation on the 2023-24 MN-S Audited Financial Statements.

2025-26 MN-S OPERATING BUDGET WORKSHOP

Matthew Vermette, Chief Operating Officer, and Echo Qin, Director of Finance, reviewed the proposed 2025-26 MN-S Operating Budget, with comparative data from the 2024-25 fiscal year. It was confirmed that the PMC had approved the 2025-26 MN-S Operating Budget for presentation at the MNLA. Additional comments were offered on:

- A Carry-Forward Analysis by Ministry, Annual Operating Expenses and Capital Expenditures from 2020-21 to 2025-26, and data regarding grants to Regions, Locals, citizens, and external parties
- A review of Projected Key Outcomes and Budgets for each MN-S Ministry
- The federal government as the primary funding source, with clearly defined mandates governing the use of grant resources
- Projected deficits in the operating and capital budgets which were offset by carry forward transfers, resulting in a balanced budget for 2025-26.

Discussion

Participants were invited to share questions and comments (Q/C), and the presenters provided responses (R), as follows:

Q/C: Please expand on the operating and capital deficits. Also, are monies earmarked for certain programs, or is there any flexibility, as Métis Locals are crying for governance money?

R: *The financial statement shows a deficit because current-year expenses exceed revenues, with a reported negative balance of \$132 million after capital expenditures. However, this figure does not reflect the full picture, as many funds are carried forward from previous years under long-term agreements. Much of the carry forward is designated for multi-year capital projects, such as child care facilities and community centres, with funds spent in stages as construction progresses. When these carry forwards are included, the overall budget balances to zero, confirming that MN-S is operating with a balanced budget despite how the numbers may initially appear.*

Q/C: Is “deficit” the accounting term that should be used?

R: *A deficit means expenses exceed revenues in a given period, but when prior-year carry forward funds are applied, it balances to zero. Métis*

Q/C: How is funding provided to school divisions through the education budget? Local Presidents are often unaware of how these funds are allocated or used. We need to be involved in planning and decision-making to ensure the funding supports cultural promotion and the needs of our young population.

R: *The Early Learning Language Program has been in place for five to six years, with MN-S partnering with about 16 school divisions and 20 classrooms across the province to support pre-school and kindergarten. Funding covers teachers, cultural staff, and materials, ensuring young children have access to language and culture-based education in every region. Funds are also provided to the school division in Île-à-la-Crosse.*

Q/C: Do MN-S Ministries have a 10-year carry forward, or is it just certain projects?

R: *Most large ministries (such as Housing, Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC), Health, and Education) operate under multi-year government contracts that allow funding to be carried forward until the contract ends. Once a contract expires, any unused funds must be returned to the funder. Grant terms can range from 1 to 10 years. The Canada-Métis Nation Accord, started in 2019 for 10 years, gives flexible funding for areas like Housing and ELCC. This lets the Métis governments move money around to better plan over time.*

Q/C: We need greater flexibility for Locals to carry over funding for programs like the Community Enrichment Grant (CEG) Program. The current winter-only timeline creates significant challenges in planning, hiring staff, securing supplies, and delivering high-quality programming. Adverse weather conditions sometimes force cancellations, particularly in rural communities. Allowing an extended timeframe would enable us to offer programs, such as summer cultural activities for children.

R: *The CEG Program is allowing for carry over in this current year. Connect with the Education Department and they can help you.*

Q/C: Have the audited financials and budget received proper PMC approval, with minutes documented, so they can be presented as legal resolutions at the MNLA?

R: *The Minutes and video from the March 2025 PMC meeting confirm that the operating budget was passed at a valid meeting. While there had been a technical issue with the 2023–24 Audited Financial Statements, a subsequent vote was held, and that vote is now properly recorded, ensuring everything is in order for the MNLA.*

Q/C: There has been an increase in post-secondary funding, and it would be great if Locals could apply to use some of it for summer internships, such as hiring education students, to build Local capacity and support programming.

R: *MN-S can review the small portion of post-secondary funds that are not earmarked for Gabriel Dumont Institute, with a potential follow-up discussion in November 2025.*

Q/C: How much interest revenue was generated last year and how much is projected in the 2025-26 budget?

R: *In 2024-25, the interest revenue was approximately \$2.7 million, and those funds were used to support the Registry's operations, which is self-funded to maintain its independence. For 2025-26, we have budgeted conservatively for \$900,000 because we cannot predict interest rates. These funds will be applied to the elections budget, which is overspent due to higher than anticipated costs. If actual interest income exceeds projections, the additional funds can be used as a more flexible source of revenue.*

Q/C: Local Presidents need clear authority and goals, along with control over MNLA resources to fulfill their responsibilities.

R: *Governance dollars for the MNLA currently come from a fixed, unrestricted fund of about \$9 million, which covers events and government operations. This funding structure has remained unchanged for several years. However, a new fiscal financing agreement with the federal government is expected in 2026, aiming to better reflect the true costs and capacity needs of Locals and the MNLA. As part of this process, consultations will be held with Locals to assess what resources are needed to effectively run Local governments and the MNLA, with the goal of improving future funding arrangements.*

Q/C: Could you clarify how the federal government determines the amount of funding allocated to the MN-S? Additionally, how does MN-S distribute these funds among the northern, southern, and central regions – is this based on population, geographic location, or specific needs? As Local Presidents, we currently do not have access to accurate citizen counts within our areas, despite having requested this information multiple times.

R: *Canada allocates funding to the Métis using different models—previously through the Métis National Council formula, but more recently shifting toward a population-based model, which disadvantages smaller regions. Once funds arrive at MN-S, allocations vary by program, with some distributed equally across Regions, some using population-based formulas with a base amount plus a population rider, and others are left open without geographic division. Adjustments are sometimes made for higher costs in the North. In practice, certain programs naturally draw more resources to Regions with greater needs. Overall, the approach aims to balance fairness, cost realities, and program-specific needs rather than relying on a single formula.*

Q/C: Costs are higher in the North—for example, longer travel distances and poor road conditions—so additional support is needed to make funding more equitable with the South. There was also a recent allocation to the South of \$150,000.

R: *We'll take that feedback into consideration. To clarify, the \$150,000 you referenced is designated for the urban councils in Regina, Prince Albert, and Saskatoon. Historically, these cities have had Métis urban councils, and Local leaders requested funding to help reactivate these councils and address urban issues. As a result, we've allocated approximately \$50,000 per city, forming a \$150,000 funding pool for the three major centres.*

Q/C: In the budget, approximately \$70 million in grants and programs is going directly to citizens, while only \$13 million goes to Locals and Regions. Many initiatives, like backpacks, baby bundles, or other supports, bypass Locals, even though that money could flow through them.

R: *To clarify, approximately \$25 million of the \$70 million in grants to citizens is directed to an affiliate. There is also this recurring issue that 80% of citizens do not belong to Locals. Strengthening that connection and building Local capacity is key. We work with Locals on programs like CEG, but uptake is low despite simplified reporting. Many Locals cite lack of time, volunteers, or support. While not all Locals are ready or willing to deliver programs, the goal is to reduce barriers, expand involvement, and ensure citizens get access to services.*

Q/C: We need more citizens to join Locals, and the best way is by tying services and programs to Local membership. If people want support for housing, education, or other benefits, they should also be part of a Local. At the same time, Locals need real capacity support, including funding for staff, even on a part-time basis. A small investment directly in Locals would make a significant difference for our members.

R: *Locals are essential. I've always belonged to mine, but many citizens today lack that connection. Sustainable funding is needed so every Local can have staff and capacity to deliver programs. That requires a strong fiscal financing agreement with Canada, and we are working toward that. We support delivering services through Locals, but we need to build up those not yet ready so all communities can participate.*

Q/C: What is the cost of running an MNLA?

R: *We will have that information for you during the budget presentation at the MNLA.*

Q/C: Locals having access to the list of citizens in their jurisdiction would be greatly appreciated.

R: *That has been a common point raised today. We hear you, and there are definitely others thinking along the same lines.*

2023-24 MN-S AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Matthew Vermette, Chief Operating Officer, presented a video excerpt from the November 2024 MNLA, in which the Verdus Group outlined the 2023–24 audited financial statements. It was confirmed that as the statements were not ratified in November 2024, they would be submitted for ratification at the September 6-7, 2025, MNLA.

CONCLUSION

The September 5, 2025, MN-S Leadership Forum concluded at 4:45 p.m. Elder Frank Natomagan offered a Closing Prayer.

* * *

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

The following items are attached for information:

- Detailed notes of the Discussion Session on: [Community Safety](#)
- Detailed notes of the Discussion Session on: [Mental Health and Recovery](#)

Detailed Notes of the Session on “Community Safety”

Facilitated by: Billie Jo Natomagan, Director, Planning and Priorities; Mike Natomagan, Local President, Pinehouse Lake; and Brennan Merasty, Minister of Self-Determination and Self-Government

Notes compiled by: Diane Parsons, Recording Secretary

The following summarizes the “Community Safety” session held September 5, 2025, and highlights the perspectives that emerged during the presentation and discussion.

Presentation

Billie Jo Natomagan provided background information on the Provincial Métis Council’s declaration of a state of emergency on drugs, alcohol, gangs, and violence across the Saskatchewan Métis Homeland.

Minister Merasty acknowledged perspectives from communities directly impacted by these challenges, and commented on:

- The severity of drugs, gangs, and violence, and the importance of the declaration of a state of emergency, in unlocking federal funding and alternative supports beyond the RCMP’s capacity
- A small community that declared an emergency and accessed federal funds, enabling an Indigenous-led investigative company to uncover gang and drug activity
- Communities’ reliance on reactive solutions, which were proving to be ineffective
- The realities of gang activity and violence near housing facilities, including fatal shootings, which highlighted the urgent need for proactive approaches
- Health authorities and schools not adequately addressing youth needs, with little dialogue about their futures or aspirations
- Connecting tools and resources, moving beyond the status quo, and adopting innovative approaches.

Discussion

Participants were invited to consider the following question in separate discussion groups: “*What do you consider the most urgent community safety challenges, and which of these require immediate attention in responding to the crisis?*” After group discussions, participants offered responses on:

- Funding:
 - o Adequate funding will be required to support programming
- Security and Policing
 - o Métis communities face a shortage of RCMP officers, and those serving them require cross-cultural training to work effectively with community members
 - o There is a lack of cultural training for RCMP officers
 - o TIPI Security has had some success in addressing challenges related to alcohol and drugs and could provide input on programming, homelessness, and services
 - o Sentencing is often not proportionate to the crimes committed
 - o Incarceration rates remain high, and the justice system is viewed as profit-driven
 - o The design of a Métis judiciary system should be advanced
 - o Policing services are distant and insufficient, leaving communities without timely support
 - o In some situations, a volunteer fire department can respond faster than police

-
- Distinctions-based considerations:
 - Many Métis communities are isolated; northern and southern communities face different challenges regarding addictions, resources and capacity
 - Youth voices have not been sufficiently engaged; their direct input is essential to understanding perspectives and experiences
 - Timely access to nearby, distinctions-based treatment centres is needed, with reduced barriers so individuals ready for treatment, can receive it immediately
 - Cultural norms, family privacy, and lingering shame, can prevent people from acknowledging issues, which keeps problems hidden
 - We need to meet people where they are, respecting that everyone has their own story
 - Raise awareness among those coming from the south to the north, to ensure they understand local realities
 - Some Locals serve many communities across hundreds of kilometres, facing challenges similar to small rural areas
 - Many Métis community members do not connect with a Local, making it challenging to effectively serve the community
 - Trends and challenges in larger centres, such as homelessness, substance abuse, overdoses, and hospital security issues, are expected to emerge in smaller communities in the coming years
 - Partnerships:
 - RCMP and provincial government representatives should be invited to discussions to hear directly from Métis about the challenges that communities face
 - Collaboration is needed with municipal representatives and First Nations neighbours, as these issues affect all communities
 - An interagency city committee is helping to build connections with municipalities and gradually raise awareness of Métis presence and support
 - Urgent attention should be given to:
 - Distinctions-based planning and programming
 - Community safety and policing improvements
 - Development of funding proposals
 - Convening a conference on programming and funding, including community leaders and representatives from Federal, Provincial, First Nations, and Métis governments.

Detailed Notes of the Session on “Mental Health and Recovery”

Presenters: Beverly Fullerton, Minister of Health and Mental Health and Addictions; and Shirley Isbister, Local President, Central Urban Métis Federation Inc.

Facilitated by: Kailene Gudjonson, Manager, Mobile Outreach, MN-S

Notes compiled by: Brontë Sawada, Recording Secretary

The following summarizes the “Mental Health and Recovery” session held September 5, 2025, and highlights the perspectives that emerged during the presentation and discussion.

Presentation

Presenters Beverly Fullerton and Shirley Isbister acknowledged the need for accessible supports to meet the unique needs of Métis communities. They noted that Métis involvement was essential in addressing factors affecting mental health and in identifying solutions for recovery. As such, the session was designed to gather participants’ feedback to help inform new and practical approaches.

Discussion

Facilitator Kailene Gudjonson invited participants to divide into three colour-coded groups to consider assigned topics, then return to their original tables to share what they learned.

The following discussion topics were assigned:

- **Red Group:** Land-Based Cultural Recovery
- **White Group:** Western/Clinical Recovery
- **Blue Group:** Métis Values

During discussion, participants offered the following comments:

- On mental health:
 - Culture, language, pride, and identity are essential to mental wellness
 - Connections with Elders, other Métis people, and the broader Métis community are valuable
 - Shared values help unify Métis people, even across diverse topics
 - Family, love, appreciation, and positivity are central to maintaining well-being
 - It is harmful for people to continue concealing their Métis identity.
- On recovery:
 - Although commuting to remote communities can be challenging, the natural environment supports healing
 - Recovery is closely connected to environmental factors; health centres in remote, natural areas reduce negative exposures
 - Natural medicines and traditional healing practices play an important role in recovery
 - Safe, culturally informed spaces are essential to support healing
 - The Métis Nation and provinces must defend hunting and harvesting rights
 - Culture, language, pride, and identity are essential to recovery

Priorities

After reconvening, the colour-coded groups identified the following priorities:

- Red Group (Land-Based Cultural Recovery): Pride, life skills, community, purpose, respect, reconnection, safety, nature, identity, and Elders
- White Group (Western/Clinical Recovery): Faith, culture, support, communication, truth, love, ancestry, gathering, jigging, and cultural food
- Blue Group (Métis Values): Family, traditions, language, Elders, knowledge, music, dance, hunting and fishing, and access.

The session concluded with participants weaving together ribbons in their group's colours, representing unity and the collective knowledge shared during the discussion.

* * *