



Supports for Dads:  
Prototype Research, Documentation, and Learning

June 30, 2019

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## 1. Introduction

The Winnipeg Boldness Project is an Indigenous social innovation initiative working alongside the North End community to identify solutions with the potential to improve outcomes for young children in the Point Douglas area. The Project is working towards a Bold Goal:

Children and families in Point Douglas will experience dramatically improved wellbeing in all aspects of self: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual.

Currently, about 50% of kids in the Point Douglas are doing really well in terms of early childhood development and are starting school at a point where they're ready to begin learning and take on the world. The Winnipeg Boldness Project is aiming to raise this number, because we believe that every child should have the same access to opportunity.

Our starting point in the design process was to engage the Point Douglas community in defining success for their children. Residents, parents and leaders also identified many of the roadblocks to success for their children and are driving the development of solutions to these roadblocks. A large proportion of the residents, parents, and leaders we engage with are Indigenous and espouse an Indigenous worldview and value base. Therefore, Indigenous perspectives and methodologies form the foundation of our problem definition and solution finding. We believe that the solutions generated will lead to better outcomes not only for Indigenous children, but better outcomes for all children.

### **Boldness is Community-Driven**

The Winnipeg Boldness Project operates using community development principles; the highest level of accountability is to Point Douglas community residents, families and their children. This guiding principle is understood at every level of the Project's governance. Our community partnerships, through families, leaders, and community-based organizations are at the core of this Project. They provide knowledge and direction as well as hands on testing of the ideas that they feel could produce possibilities for success and wellbeing for children and families in the community.

### **Boldness is Strength-Based**

The Winnipeg Boldness Project has employed a comprehensive strategy of community engagement through diverse arts-based methods. These methods have allowed community to share in the design of the Project while also sharing their own experiences raising their families in the North End of Winnipeg. These arts-based methods have included a Photo Voice project and a Tile Mosaic project.

## **Boldness is Community Wisdom**

The Winnipeg Boldness Project has been undertaking a deep community engagement and iterative knowledge mobilization process since April 2014. This process has brought together wisdom of community members and community service providers into a model titled: Ways of Knowing, Being, Feeling, and Doing: A Wholistic Early Childhood Development Model (Child Centred Model). The implementation of the Child Centre Model, combined with community defined indicators of healthy children and families will produce a bold goal: Children and families in Point Douglas will experience dramatically improved wellbeing in all aspects of physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual being.

## **Winnipeg Boldness & Support for Dads**

Early on in the Project, the Point Douglas community identified possible solution areas to be developed through the social lab process. The Support for Dads Proof of Possibility (POP) entails a person-centred approach that is able to address identified gaps around support for men and dads that exists in the community. The following document outlines the background, development, and evaluation of the prototype that have led to key learnings and considerations for scaling.

## 2. Opportunities for Impact

Babies and young children thrive through healthy interaction with a variety of caregivers including dads. There are a lot of programs targeted at moms with young children, but there is a lack of focus on dads and children. Fathering peer support, mentorship, and programs that provide opportunities for moms and dads to engage in programs and recreation together with their children will strengthen families. Additionally, addressing barriers within systems level supports (such as Income Assistance, Housing, etc.) will further enable dads to be fully engaged as part of families.

There are substantial benefits for children and families who have close relationships with men and fathers, particularly evidenced by what happens when fathers are absent. Sociological research has shown a negative effect of father absence on children, which has reflected deficits both economically and socio-emotionally throughout their lives (McLanahan, Tach, & Schneider, 2014). Father absence is associated with more children dropping out of school, disruptive and delinquent behaviors, lower income, poorer mental and physical health, and greater non-marital child-bearing and more divorce (Spielberger, Gouvea, Dinata, & Fleishman, 2011). As well, having a second parent, or a partnership within parenting, provides emotional support (or support via resources) for the mother or primary parent, which can reduce the stress factors within the home. Having a second parent in the picture also assists in the development of healthy attachment for the child, who then learns to not solely depend on one individual but allows them instead to define individual identities and differentiate between different needs and how they are met with different people (Eizirik & Bermann, 2004). Clearly, men and fathers play a significant role in supporting the development of healthy children and families. Any supports for children must also recognize and provide support for the men and fathers around them.

There are many systemic barriers that men in Point Douglas face that can make it difficult for them to be fully engaged with their families. Broadly speaking, indigenous men face the highest incarceration rates in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2015), are the highest victims of violent crimes such as homicides (Mulligan, Axford, & Solecki, 2015), and there are high representations of Indigenous men within street gangs in Canada. (Totten, 2010) Men's involvement with the justice system, combined with a systemic focus on supports for women and children creates a challenging environment for men and fathers to access and receive support. Women are given greater access to social support programs and have more programs that focus on their needs, whereas men may struggle to find support or access programs like food banks for their children. As one focus group participant puts it, "There's nothing, resources, nothing. You try to get help with social assistance, and you know right away, the ladies have it," (Andrews St. Family Centre Focus Group, July 14, 2016).

However, despite the challenges that men face, there are also promising projects that support men in healing and in being fully engaged in their families. An Australian Project called *Our Men, Our Healing*, identified the disruption of traditional ways of being for Indigenous men as

the leading cause for their struggles to maintain their role and identities within their families and community, and subsequently identified the value of culturally appropriate programming to help men redefine their identities and relationships. This project was also able to determine points of impact within policy, which assisted in reducing incarceration rates and incidents of family violence (The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation, 2015).

Within the book, *Indigenous Men and Masculinities* (2015), Bob Antones wrote about his successful work using traditional teachings to help men re-find their place within their families and communities, in a program called *Tending the Fire*. As well, many Indigenous men have found successful healing by recognizing and resisting the legacy of colonization and learning from traditional teachings how to connect and bond with their families (Sky, 2014; Comack, Deane, Morrisette, & Silver, 2013). These examples from around the world demonstrate the potential and value of supporting men and fathers.

### 3. Prototype Documentation

Through the work of this Proof of Possibility (POP) The Winnipeg Boldness Project has been seeking to learn from the community how best to support men and fathers in a way that is strength-based and meet their needs. This way of working is not new to many community leaders who have years of experience working with community members in a way that demonstrates their value, builds on their strengths, and works to address barriers that men face. We engaged in a variety of knowledge gathering activities to collect additional community perspectives and inform the development of future programs and services. These activities are summarized below, and the findings are included in Section 5: What Did We Learn.

#### 3.1. Knowledge Gathering

The knowledge gathering strategy for this POP included an environmental scan, a 26-week co-creation circle, individual interviews with community leaders and role models, community circles with men, and a community-wide survey for men. Pre-determined questions were similar within all processes and covered themes such as barriers to employment, access to services, stigma, peer support, and navigation of systems such as EIA, Manitoba Health, and the criminal justice system. A summary of the results from the multiple knowledge gathering activities is included in appendices A & B.

##### **Environmental Scan**

The environmental scan included an analysis of programs and organizations which cater to men within the Point Douglas area. This included counselling services, physical/mental/spiritual healthcare, addictions support, youth programs, employment and housing support, financial assistance, food programs, transportation, education and training, identification, recreation, mentorship, as well as parenting and family support programs. Gaps identified by this scan included a lack of mentorship programs, access to the arts and other leisure programs,

employment assistance, assistance with navigating the criminal justice system (including being pardoned or obtaining a clear criminal record), and anger management.

### **26-Week Co-Creation Circle**

Hosted by Lionel Houston, this circle was originally slated to be 13 weeks long, and the need was identified to see the circle extended to 26 weeks. Every Wednesday, men from Point Douglas met for a peer-support circle where Lionel shared culturally relevant teachings and supported them through group discussions. Lionel completed evaluations for this process and his findings were used to support this document.

### **Key Informant Interviews**

Community leaders and role models were identified by the Parent Guide Group and were interviewed for their stories. These stories are continuing to be collected in order to develop an elaborate understanding of fatherhood in the context of Point Douglas—whether cultural or societal—and the challenges and successes that men have had. One notable participant in this process was Mitch Bourbonniere, who has been recognized again and again as a community leader, and his responses are used in this document.

**Community Circles for Men** – One circle was held with participants of the North Point Douglas Women’s Centre’s men’s sharing circle facilitated by Billy Dubery, and another was facilitated by Kara Passey and Gladys Rowe with participants from Andrews Street Family Centre. Both circles were asked the same guiding questions in order to obtain feedback on the gaps and barriers experienced by men, including the lack of services available to them in the neighbourhood. The North Point Douglas Women’s Centre sharing circle is ongoing, and the Andrews Street Family Centre sharing circle was a one-time circle.

**Community Wide Survey for Men** – 100 responses to our survey were collected from men who work, live, or access services within Point Douglas. Responses were solicited online or in person from participants at Andrew’s Street Family centre, or during community events such as Picnic in the Park or the Austin Street Festival, and from various organizations who were able to support men in filling out the survey.

## **3.2. Feedback from Men**

There are many things that we heard from men through these activities. These include the importance of connections to culture, non-judgement, peer support, and an open structure. (North Point Douglas Women’s Centre Men Sharing Circle, January 22, 2018)

### **Connections to Culture**

Men shared that connections to culture were an important part of these types of support services. Not only was it important to connect with other peers who have similar experiences and cultures, but men also valued having people and activities that could provide a greater sense of connection to culture and identity (e.g., traditional food, smudges, sweat lodges, teachings, etc.).

## **Non-Judgement**

It was important to men that this space is free from judgement and open to all men. This is necessary to help all members feel open and safe to share their experiences, and to have those experiences affirmed and validated by others. It is very important to members that they can be themselves, and this atmosphere of non-judgement provides a place where men can share openly.

*People look at me as strong, someone who doesn't cry. Here I don't have to worry about what others think, I can cry, I can work on myself so I can be strong for others. No one here ever said no, no matter in what state I come in here. Men here still share – this is a safe space, I don't have to be that tough guy. All I'm doing is picking up the pieces of my broken childhood*

*Participant- NPDWC Men's Sharing Circle*

## **Peer Support**

It was also important to men that this is a space where everyone is a peer. Men highlighted the value of being able to relate to the experiences of other participants and the learning that this enables. This structure enables everyone to be able to experience both mentor and participant roles. It is important that this also extends to the facilitators - that the facilitators are also peers, and both give and receive support. Peer support is not restricted by age, in fact it was highlighted that reciprocal learning between generations is important to both older and younger men.

*I had the attitude I can't do this past September. Then in September, I loved coming here, I had to keep coming here. This is a space where I can also vent and lay it all out on the table. Hearing from other people gives you that strength, we feed off of each other*

*Facilitator- NPDWC Men's Sharing Circle*

## **Open Structure**

While the group has considered more structured discussion topics and activities, they emphasized that the core value of the group is to have self-directed time to vent and connect. It is important to continue to provide this time and space rather than focus on formal structures and processes.

## **Connections to Women and Families**

During the group many men discussed their relationships with women and children as a key focus for the changes that they were trying to make. It was important that programs like the NPDWC Men's Sharing Circle are offered and invited in by women's centres and other group serving women. There are very few supports that serve whole families together, however these opportunities provide spaces for men, women, and children to connect and strengthen their relationships.



## 4. Alignment with the Child Centred Model

### 4.1. Child Centred Model Summary

The foundation of the work developed through The Winnipeg Boldness Project relies on the wisdom and direction of community leaders who have, from the beginning, informed a way of working in the North End of Winnipeg, Manitoba that promotes success for families. This way of working has been documented in *Ways of Knowing, Being, Doing and Feeling: A Wholistic Early Childhood Development Model (Child Centred Model)* as a promising practice. Each of the prototypes designed and implemented by community partners with the support of the Project are demonstrations of the core values and attributes of promising practice of the Child Centred Model.

The Child Centred Model is a way of working with families that honours the strengths, knowledge, passion, and commitment that families bring to raising their children; and advocates for opportunities to learn, build, grow, experience, and belong to a community. The underlying belief within the Child Centred Model is that children are at the centre of a community: members, organizations, structures, and policies that are a part of that community are in interrelated and interdependent relationships with children and families. These relationships are important and need to be led by families and those who are in their close circles of support.

#### **4.1.1. Implications for Designing and Implementing based on the Child Centred Model**

1. Early childhood development initiatives will need to see sacredness of the whole child, within the context of history, culture, family, community, their full human potential, and right to the fullness of life.
2. Supports to parents must include teachings that affirm sacredness, dignity, value and worth, healing from trauma, and hope. Keeping families together must be priority. A variety of learning experiences must be accessible, affordable, culturally safe, and drawn from strength-based perspectives, with opportunity to spend some time on the land.
3. Healing strategies and modes of healing must integrate trauma counselling and restoration of balance in healing relationships between professionals and ones seeking help. The help of Elders, medicine people, sweat lodge ceremonies, healing circles, should be offered as an integral part of healing when the need is expressed.
4. Community Learning Circles should be implemented to share knowledges, wisdom and worldviews of the community.

5. The community has its own answers. Service providers can only be facilitators in the process of building strong, vibrant communities. The community is enriched with wisdom, knowledge and experience that can be drawn from in future initiatives.
6. Human resource development strategies must include multicultural proficiency education and training.
7. The whole community of service providers, everything that touches the lives of our children, must be fully engaged with, and invested in the early childhood development initiatives.

The Support for Dads prototype is a demonstration of the values and promising practices of the Child Centred Model.

#### 4.2. Support for Dads & the Child Centred Model

While documenting the Support for Dads prototype, several core values and attributes of promising practice emerged, in particular at the men's sharing circles at North Point Douglas Women's Centre and Andrews Street Family Centre and the circles hosted by Lionel Houston, that align with the Child Centred Model:

**Wholistic:** People are viewed in consideration of all aspects of self: the body, mind, and spirit as dynamic and interrelated parts of a single integrated whole system. Likewise, the world, systems, communities, and people in it are interconnected and interdependent; when one part is changed, it sends a rippling effect throughout the whole system.

*The Men's Sharing Circles is one part of making supports available to all members of a family - in this case men and fathers, who are often excluded by other supports. It also provides a space for men to explore all aspects of self, including body, mind, and spirit.*

**Interdependence:** Strength comes from reciprocal love and support of others; when people are supported by others, they gain the strength to return that love and support. People find purpose and meaning in relationships with others.

*By intentionally focusing on peer support as its core, The NPDWC Men's Sharing Circle encourages and facilitates men to not only share their own experiences, but also to learn from and support others. This reciprocity and interdependence strengthen the relationships and support between participants, and also provides men with the opportunity to grow together.*

**Strength-based:** Focusing on strengths gives people energy to grow; regardless of an individual or group's situation in life, they have strengths. These strengths are valued, respected and nurtured.

*The Men's Sharing Circles recognizes that each person has gifts and contributions that they can make to the group - the group has the collective strengths of all its members. The Sharing Circles emphasizes strengths by encouraging each person to share support, compassion, and referrals openly, and recognizing the contributions that each member brings.*

**Children are sacred:** Sacredness is especially observed in children, who are closest to Creator. Babies are a gift and a responsibility.

*Many of the men who participate in the NPDWC Men's Sharing Circle do so out of a desire to be role models and fathers. Providing supports to those who care for and support children and babies, like the NPDWC Men's Sharing Circle is an important part of honouring the sacredness of children.*

**Basic needs:** Access to basic needs such as food, shelter, and safety is an unconditional right.

*A key component to the activities we documented provides participants opportunities to meet their basic needs, including by hosting a shared meal as part of each meeting, as well as providing bus tickets to help those who may face barriers to transportation. Finally, staff are able to refer men to other supportive programs that may help them meet other basic needs.*

**Self-determination:** "We are put here by the creator to care for each other and for mother earth. We should therefore be responsible for ourselves, for our families, for the next generation, and for our community." (Canadian Council on Social Development, 1994, p.22) Having voice and volition to make choices to attend to individual needs leads to recognition of the responsibilities to family and community.

*The Men's Sharing Circles provides multiple opportunities for self-determination. First, by creating a space where discussion is group-led, men are able to raise issues or conversation topics according to their own needs. As well, because the group focuses on sharing rather than instructing, each participant is able to follow their own path and make their own choices towards change and healing, without judgement from the group.*

**Person Centred:** Services are responsive in considering people as wholistic beings who have competing needs and differing priorities; therefore, services are flexible.

*The Men's Sharing Circle is highly flexible. The agenda is open, and facilitators are able to be responsive to the needs of each participant. As well, men are free to share whatever they choose - they do not need to compartmentalize issues, nor are they forced to only follow one line of discussion. Open space is created for men to show up as wholistic beings.*

**Non-judgment:** All people are welcomed and respected regardless of situation or circumstance. People are met where *they* are at: services recognize that people are at different stages in their own journey, face different challenges, and have varied gifts.

*One of the core values of the NPDWC Men's Circle to participants is that they do not feel judged in the group, and consequently they feel free to share their experiences. Men in the group reported that this was a space they felt safe in, felt heard and affirmed in, and importantly one in which they felt no judgment.*

**Natural support systems:** Are actively promoted and supported to provide sustainable and stable resources for individuals and families.

*The NPDWC Men's Circle promotes natural support systems in two main ways. First, the supports it provides to men enables them in their aspirations to grow as partners, fathers and caregivers - as natural supports within families. Second, the group facilitates natural, supportive connections to emerge between other participants and facilitators as peers. Focusing on these types of supportive connections is important in promoting natural support systems around individuals, families, and children.*

**Options:** A wide variety of resources and services are accessible and appropriate to effectively meet the diverse needs of families and individuals.

*The supports provided by facilitators and staff through the NPDWC Men's Sharing Circle are flexible and responsive to each participant's needs. Staff are able to make referrals to programs, provide advocacy support, and assist with systems navigation. Importantly, these supports are guided by the individual's own needs, and facilitated by the breadth of knowledge the facilitators have about available programs and supports.*

**Prevention:** In addition to crises support, services work toward addressing the underlying causes of crises and support people to maintain healthy and happy lives.

*The Men's Sharing Circles is a good example of a prevention program. It exists and is available to men on a consistent basis, not just in crisis situations. This enables men to form deeper and more trusting bonds with facilitators and each other, as well as providing an important opportunity to help men address the underlying causes of crises.*

**Belonging and Identity:** "Belonging means we feel connected, important, valued, part of the group. It feels good to know that others want to have us around." (Grover, 2017, p.1) Identity is being able to answer four questions: Who am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going? What is my purpose? Services actively promote and incorporate these principles in dealing with all people.

*The Men's Sharing Circle provides a safe space for men to explore these central questions of belonging and identify with peers, to share and learn from others' experiences, and ultimately to support each other in developing a sense of community, of belonging, and identity.*

**Equity:** Certain individuals or groups face more challenges than others and therefore require more support. Specialized services, increased opportunities, and support is available to those who have greater need.

*This value is inherent in the open and flexible nature of the Men's Sharing Circle. Providing the opportunity for men to share as they choose, and for the group to direct the flow of conversation recognizes that each person has different needs and perspectives.*

The application of this model is consistent with the literature review completed in Section 2, which outlines key learning from previous research in related areas. The review indicated that there is a strong need for resources that meet the needs of men and support them in playing a vital role for children and families. The Men's Circle Model is a strong example of the application of the Promising Practices of the Child Centred Model as outlined in the above section. During the prototype documentation we found there is a need to create opportunities for men and families to thrive and for children to have the best possible start in life.

## 5. What Did We Learn

A variety of themes emerged from discussions with dads about their experiences of facing barriers in Point Douglas. These themes were decided by the occurrence of responses from fathers in the community throughout the different forms of data collection. Themes are supported by comments taken directly from the various qualitative data sets to show the prevalent barriers men in the Point Douglas area experience, as well as possible responses to these barriers.

### 5.1. Strengths

There are already some organizations that have been supporting fathers and men with inclusive family spaces to access to supports. These organizations and workers engage with fathers and men in a way that allows them to feel comfortable accessing them and provide examples of the types of supports that are possible.

#### **Safe Spaces**

Men talked about some of the positive experiences they have had, which revolved around safe spaces that created a sense of belonging and allowed them to feel comfortable and

understood. Andrews Street Family center was cited the most for being “like a second home; somewhere I can go and it’s safe.” (Andrews Street Family Centre Focus Group, July 14, 2016) Dads that are “met by ... professionals ... and not real people” (B. Dubery, key informant interview, July 21, 2016) are likely to not feel comfortable accessing supports. Workers have been able to “build that rapport and [they] have strong relationship[s]” (B. Dubery, key informant interview, July 21, 2016) with community members. Breaking that barrier between the professional and the men is beneficial to allow him to feel more understood. This helps to build a safe space for men to feel comfortable in asking for assistance.

### **Flexible, Relational Supports**

Dads need to feel supported in order to overcome barriers they face. Workers can provide a safe space for dads by giving moral support and peer support (M. Bourbonniere, key informant interview, May 2016). Workers have provided support by filling out forms, attending appointments, giving dads someone to talk to, providing dads with peer support (M. Bourbonniere, key informant interview, May 2016), and advocating for them (B. Dubery, key informant interview, July 21, 2016). Additionally, men need workers that understand what they are going through and can relate to their experiences (North Point Douglas Women’s Centre Men’s Sharing Circle, May 2016).

### **Connections Between Men, Women, and Families**

There are groups and spaces in the community that create opportunities for men, women, and families to connect with each other. While men often feel excluded from many places, the Andrews Street Family Centre provide a space that is open and welcoming of men and provide opportunities for men to connect with women and families.

## **5.2. Barriers for Dads**

Dads in Point Douglas face a wide range of barriers including interpersonal barriers, involvement with the criminal justice system, and system barriers. Without supports, dads are often unable to overcome these barriers. In order to understand what supports are needed for dads, the barriers they face have to be identified and understood.

### **Awareness**

The most acknowledged barrier spoken about by men was the lack of personal knowledge on the resources that are available to them. Many men talked about their experiences with “not knowing where to go or start [to find help] ... and not knowing about...resource[s]” (M. Bourbonniere, key informant interview, May 2016). Other men acknowledged the lack of general community knowledge on finding resources, “[a] lot of this information nobody knows about” (Andrews Street Family Centre Focus Group, July 14, 2016). Some comments showed the men’s willingness to receive help but were unable to get it because they were “...not sure where to go for help” (North Point Douglas Women’s Centre Men’s Sharing Circle, May 2016), and when they did ask, the workers often “don’t know the answers,” (Andrews Street Family Centre Focus Group, July 14, 2016).

### **Safe Supports**

A lack of trust in others can affect the ability of a person to connect with workers. The lack of trust in others is connected to other issues such as, lack of feeling like part of a community, the feeling of being unwelcomed, lacking a sense of belonging, and having trouble showing emotions. Asking for help shows a vulnerability of the self that many are not able to come to terms with. The need to hide one's vulnerability shows itself through various means, such as this expression of lacking trust in others. Men "need to talk, need to feel safe and build confidence to talk," (Andrews Street Family Centre Focus Group, July 14, 2016) and are unable to do so when they don't "feel comfortable ... accessing or calling" (B. Dubery, key informant interview, July 21, 2016).

### **Involvement in the Criminal Justice System**

A large barrier cited by men is their involvement in the criminal justice system and the lasting effects on their lives. Involvement with the criminal justice system for many men in the Point Douglas community is a regular occurrence, as they are often targeted by law enforcement due to the race and/or identity, where "...every time they seen an Indian, they try to arrest them for nothing, even making charges up," (North Point Douglas Women's Centre Men's Sharing Circle, May 2016). Additionally, criminal records create a huge barrier in finding employment for men, as "having a criminal record prevents [them] from getting work," (North Point Douglas Women's Centre Men's Sharing Circle, May 2016) due to the restrictions of employers in hiring those with criminal records. Further, involvement with the criminal justice system creates a barrier for dads trying to form relationships with their children, as they may have forced non-contact orders and are therefore are unable to have visits with their family (North Point Douglas Women's Centre Men's Sharing Circle, May 2016). Limiting the contact between fathers and their children can be extremely damaging as many men expressed the effects of not having positive male role models in their lives.

### **System Barriers**

Resources for dads are not granted in the same capacity as they are for mothers. Women are given larger access to assistance through financial means, program availability, and the catering of programs to women. "There's nothing, resources, nothing. You try to get help with social assistance, and you know right away, the ladies have it," (Andrews Street Family Centre Focus Group, July 14, 2016). Single fathers are unable to access food banks for their children because "they require health care numbers and the ladies have the numbers" (Andrews Street Family Centre Focus Group, July 14, 2016). Fathers need to "go to court to get custody papers before Manitoba Health [will] put them on [their] card" (Andrews Street Family Centre Focus Group, July 14, 2016), which has many more barriers attached to it. Additionally, males are not given priority for housing because they are male (The Winnipeg Boldness Project, Community Wide Men's Survey, April 2016). When they do get housing, their coverage for rent is extremely small and only allows them to reside in rooming houses, hotels, or other places that do not foster healthy environments and can lead to continued issues.

Issues such as transportation, wait times, keeping appointments, limited hours of operation, and confusing forms further limit men from accessing resources available to them (M.

Bourbonniere, key informant interview, May 2016). Additionally, men may be unable to access medical help due to their limited knowledge and inability to explain their issue(s) (North Point Douglas Women's Centre Men's Sharing Circle, May 2016). This results in them only seeking medical assistance in extreme circumstances, which impacts their overall health and wellbeing.

### **Lack of Employment Resources**

Men's feeling of self-worth is directly connected to their ability to provide for their families. Men that we spoke with identified that there is a need for more opportunities to build skills, gain further education and training, and get support in finding ongoing gainful employment. Men also talked about the need to change the narrative around the shape of employment: acknowledging that some skills and labour are undervalued (e.g. childcare), or that some men might not be able to maintain a 9 to 5, full time work schedule. Finding the job is not usually the issue for most men, it is keeping it. (The Winnipeg Boldness Project, Support for Dads co-creation session, May 5, 2017)

### **Lack of Mental Health Supports**

Men highlighted that mental health supports are a critical need. The men we spoke with highlighted multiple issues with the current mental health supports available. First, there is a need for greater efforts and supports that focus on prevention. As one participant put it, "They're only treating people who are at rock bottom." (The Winnipeg Boldness Project, Support for Dads co-creation session, May 5, 2017) Second, there is a need to actively engage men as service recipients in the design of programs and services. Men felt that they and families needed more choices and fewer mandated interventions - giving more resources to men and families to find the best solution for them rather than prescriptive approaches. Further to this, men highlighted the need for alternative approaches to mental health - greater options that they and families can draw upon.

### **Lack of Supports that Include Men, Women, and Families**

Many men reported feeling excluded by supports that focus solely on women. (The Winnipeg Boldness Project, Support for Dads co-creation session, May 5, 2017) While separate supports for men and women are important, there is also a need for supports that bring men, women, and families together. Opportunities for men to reconnect and build stronger relationships with women and children are a critical part of supporting the whole child and men's' roles in their development. Many programs and services tend to focus on different groups in isolation (e.g., supports for women and supports for men separately). However, many of the men we spoke with are seeking to grow as fathers and partners. Supports are needed that are inclusive for everyone involved in these relationships.

## **5.3. Guiding Principles**

Participatory, community-driven solutions have been shown to be more congruent with the needs of unique communities, leading to increased participation and greater positive impact. Men who participated in the knowledge gathering that informed the development of these guiding principles and values for practice, identified the importance of feeling valued, to have



safe spaces, to access cultural supports, and to have resources for health and wellness. They shared stories about inaccessible resources and a significant gap in what currently exists to support their health.

In identifying these needs, they also shared the importance of considering answers to the questions who, when, how, where, and why in the development of supports, resources, groups, and programs. The following guiding principles provide important opportunities for organizations and funders to reflect on, when implementing activities that focus on men.

1. **Place and Space.** Both location and the space provided for men's resources are factors in accessibility and feeling unconditionally accepted. Men would like locations that they can easily access. The feeling that they get in the space is important, feeling like home and feeling welcome in the community are important.
2. **Staffing.** Support workers and the way that they work with men is an important element for success. Skills such as system navigation and advocacy are valued. Men would like to be connected to workers who know the resources available and how to access them when needed.
3. **Lived Experience.** It is important to value lived experience when seeking leaders for groups and programs. Men would like to work with individuals who have experienced similar challenges as they have and would like them to be healthy role models. Men would like support from their peers. This allows them to build trust and feel safe enough to open up. They are all there to support one another in advocacy or with other specialized skills that they may be gifted with.
4. **Cultural Activities.** Supporting a connection to culture helps to build strong relationships and to develop self-mastery. Culture can include ceremony, teachings, and medicines. This also includes a modelling of how values and actions can be enacted in our everyday lives.
5. **Relational Accountability.** Centering culture can also strengthen relational accountability. This is how we are in relationship with one another and the responsibility and care we take with these relationships. Relational accountability can be fostered through activities that support intergenerational connections, support time for learning, model respect, and include food.
6. **Acceptance and Belonging.** Men would like to feel valued, heard, and respected. Sitting in groups, sharing their experiences, and listening to stories of others makes them feel validated, like they are not alone and makes space for emotions and reflection. Sharing without the fear of judgement ensures that strong relationships are built. These relationships build a collective, natural support system who cares for and looks out for the wellbeing of one another.

7. **Strength-Based Work.** Working from a strength-based approach enables the flexibility to meet the men where they are at and for what they need at that moment. This approach also enables men to see their gifts and the gifts of others. This builds interdependence and a community of support. A strength-based approach provides opportunity for people to feel good about themselves and to know they are valued and important. This approach also supports a learning environment where individuals and groups work together to learn about themselves and those around them.
8. **Relationality.** Relationships are important to foster and support. Strengthening men's relationships with partners and children will support wellbeing and build confidence in the roles and responsibilities that they hold in these relationships. Coming together as a whole family is important and so is time for men and their partners. This principle is based on the value of relationality. It is a commitment to honouring and nurturing our relationships through maintaining our responsibilities to one another.
9. **Reciprocity and Leadership.** Reciprocity is a value that forms the basis for concepts such as leadership, mentorship, and maintaining intergenerational relationships. It is giving back to others by sharing our gifts. Citizenship and community building are two outcomes that result from active engagement in reciprocity.
10. **Connection to Women and Families.** While it is important that men and women each have separate spaces for their individual needs, it is also important that supports for both create spaces and opportunities for men, women, and families to connect with each other and strengthen their relationships.

## 6. Efforts to Scale

### 6.1. Further Development

Employment and Social Development Canada provided funds to develop innovative approaches for engaging fathers through their Early Learning and Child Care Innovation stream from January to June 2019. The project proposed to develop guiding principles based on The Winnipeg Boldness Project's past knowledge gathering and prototyping activities, then validate and refine with community stakeholders through testing.

*Engaging Fathers in the North End: Guiding Principles & Promising Practices* outlines nine principles for engaging men in programming, in particular peer support sharing circles. The document includes a toolkit that provides further questions, considerations and methods for organizations to host their own customized programming. Please see the full document in appendix C.

Three organizations tested the guiding principles between January and June 2019, by implementing customized programming suitable to their organization and participants.

**Andrews Street Family Centre** began a new series of circles between March and June 2019. Initially 11 men signed up, with between nine and four men in attendance at each circle. The men decided that the circle would be closed to new participants so that the group could build trust. The facilitator led the participants to identify themes and activities that were of interest to the group. The majority of sessions were peer sharing circles, and others included a variety of cultural and pre-employment activities. Generally, circles opened with a traditional prayer and smudging ceremony, followed by sharing circle, activity or learning topic. Each circle also included sharing food. Activities/topics included: drumming, naming ceremonies, sweatlodge ceremonies, dream catcher making, first aid/CPR training, food handlers training and learning about neighbourhood resources.

**Mount Carmel Clinic** tested the Guiding Principles by building on their *Super Dads Super Kids (SDSK)* parenting group. SDSK curriculum consists of eight sessions, six of which were offered on alternate weeks. Sharing circles, traditional Indigenous teachings and ceremonies were offered every other week between SDSK curriculum sessions. On-site childcare was provided on weeks that men had the chance to work on their own healing during sharing circles. Their children participated together with their fathers through the SDSK curriculum sessions. The sessions were attended by up to eight men and 18 children (an average of six men and eight children per session over 13 sessions).

**North Point Douglas Women's Centre** enhanced their pre-existing men's night with cultural and community activities including sweat lodge ceremonies and a community feast. Men's night has been running every other Monday for several years and was the basis for the Guiding Principles. Over 50 men signed in for circles during the testing period, an average of 16 men at each circle (up to 28 men). Over 390 people were served at the community feast.

### **Outcomes**

Eupraxia Training was contracted to undertake the evaluation component of the project. The Social Impact Study Report, *A Bigger Kind of Strong*, outlines the program, methods and findings that include outcomes for primary and secondary beneficiaries, a social impact analysis and recommendations. The report found that the outcomes posited in the theory of change were largely achieved in addition to other outcomes identified by the participants throughout the evaluation. These included individual, family/homelife, financial, cultural and community, and social and systems outcomes. See appendix D for the theory of change and comprehensive list of outcomes and indicators.

### **Additional Activities**

In addition to developing guiding principles and testing men's circles, the funding allowed for some additional exploration of possibilities for fatherhood engagement. The coordinator connected with other organizations offering men's sharing circles and parenting programs (located outside of Point Douglas): Men's Healing Circle and Red Road to Healing at the First

Nations Family Advocate Office, Neah Ke Papa at Manitoba Metis Federation (not currently running). These organizations further validated the principles for engaging fathers as well as the need to address the gap in services for men/fathers as part the continuum of family supports.

Wiiiji'idiwag Ikwewag (Manitoba Indigenous Doula Initiative) was contracted to conduct consultations with men in order to develop and incorporate strategies to better support and engage fathers throughout pregnancy and birthing. An outline of activities and summary of feedback is included in appendix E. These findings will inform the development of supplemental Birth Helper training curriculum.

Throughout knowledge gathering, prototyping and scaling activities another gap in the continuum of family support emerged: men connecting with women and children. While the programs and services for women and children are much needed, the opportunity for families to heal and be together is also important. In addition to Men's Night, North Point Douglas Women's Centre and Andrews Street Family Centre offer parenting programs open to men. Andrews Street Family Centre is open to whole families including men through their drop-in and other programs; It is one of the few resource centres in the area that does not exclude men. North Point Douglas Women's Centre is primarily a women's centre and believes in protecting that space, however, also acknowledges the gap in resources for men and opportunities for men, women and children to come together. It is also the host organization for the Mama Bear Clan, a community outreach and safety program that is "led by women, and supported by men". Many men from Men's Night participate as volunteers in safety walks and outreach activities. Facilitators often indicate how important it is for men to start from a place of respect for women in their own healing journeys. Being welcomed into the women's centre and to walk with Mama Bear Clan is very much appreciated by the men.

## 7. Recommendations

Recommendations were derived from men's expressions of what they believe is needed in Point Douglas in order to help support them better and address the barriers.

### **Personal Development Workshops**

Personal development skills such as problem solving, decision making, communication skills, healthy relationships, life skills, cooking skills, and goal setting could help men deal with emotional issues, as well as give them better coping skills. Many of the men are experiencing life on a basis of "survival, addictions, violence and crimes," (North Point Douglas Women's Centre Men's Sharing Circle, May 2016), and providing them with personal development skills can help to foster healthy lifestyles. Parenting classes, employment skills, and adult education were also mentioned. "The biggest thing I agree with is we need more programming and workshops, support groups ... to discuss stuff like we're doing now," (Andrews Street Family Centre Focus Group July 14, 2016).

### **Mental Health Supports**

Mental health supports include counselling, addictions programs, developing a men's safe house, a space for healing, domestic violence programs for men and their children, and group therapy. "[I] have days where I just have a drink because I have nowhere to go, no one to talk to," (Andrews Street Family Centre Focus Group July 14, 2016). Without mental health supports and someone to talk to, men may revert to unhealthy behaviours in an attempt to cope with the stressors of life. Men may have unresolved traumas from their childhood that are influencing their current behaviour (North Point Douglas Women's Centre Men's Sharing Circle, May 2016). Providing them with supports to address these traumas can help with their healing journey and foster healthy lifestyles.

### **Creating Safe Spaces**

Men need to be able to feel safe and comfortable when they are going to receive help from agencies "They come into a community and are too shy to ask and they are too quiet. They need to talk, need to feel safe, and build confidence to talk" (Andrews Street Family Centre Focus Group, July 14, 2016). This includes having workers with similar identities, backgrounds, and worldviews. Men expressed their need for "aboriginal counsellors, preferably men," because they "have a hard time talking to people who don't really understand what [they're] going through," (North Point Douglas Women's Centre Men's Sharing Circle, May 2016). Having workers from the community is important for men because the workers will be able to "understand what the struggles are," (Andrews Street Family Centre Focus Group July 14, 2016). When agencies have staff from outside the community, men feel, "it is [the staff's] job, but they don't care enough," (Andrews Street Family Centre Focus Group, May 2016). Staff from outside the community treat their job simply as a job, whereas staff from the community have a deeper understanding and connection to the issues their clients face.

### **Creating Men's Resources**

More funding needs to be allocated for men's resources in order to be able to run the programs they need. Women's programs are often given more budgets for things like food, personal care items, and general funding. Additionally, men need to be given access to women's programs or have programs created specifically for them due to the extreme lack of programs currently available. Men cited needing a men's resource center, or a men's drop-in center in Point Douglas to address their many needs (The Winnipeg Boldness Project Community Wide Men's Survey, April 2016; North Point Douglas Women's Centre Men's Sharing Circle, May 2016; and M. Bourbonniere, key informant interview, May 2016). Many men talked about needing a safe space to hang out where they can talk with other men (Andrew's Street Family Centre Focus Group, July 14, 2016). A resource or drop-in center would allow men the space to hang out while also allowing for the opportunity to access additional resources at their discretion.

### **Creating Opportunities to Reconnect with Women and Families**

As important as supports that focus specifically on men are, it is also important that there are also efforts towards creating spaces and supports to help men reconnect with women and families. Many men talked about feeling excluded by supports for women and children (Andrews Street Family Centre Men's Focus Group, July 14, 2016). More opportunities and supports are needed to help men build and maintain strong relationships.

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## 9. Appendix

### Appendix A – Problems, Barriers & Successes

Problems, Barriers & Successes

Appendix A

	Men's Circle: Participant and Observer Comments	Survey	Men's Focus Group: Andrews St.	Key Informant Interviews	NPDWC: Men's Circle
<b>Cultural</b>					
Stopped believing in Culture	2				
Lack of cultural/Indigenous programs/workers	3				
<b>Interpersonal</b>					
Feeling unwelcomed in community	1	13			
Didn't know where to go for help	5	15	4	3	
Lack of trust in others	11		1	5	
Only felt sense of belonging with peers' negative behaviors	3				
Want to be around those that try to make change	2				
Angry about past	2				
Staying in unhealthy relationships for housing/other resources	4				
Want to control anger: remorse for yelling at partner	3				
Trouble showing emotion and love	4				
<b>Trauma</b>					
Childhood trauma caused need for survival, addictions, violence and crime	4				
No father/healthy male role model	7		1		
Parents fighting: break of trust	1				
<b>Child &amp; Family Services</b>					
CFS: giving up hope on parents returning	4				
CFS: abused while in care	2				
CFS doesn't see me as capable parent, made to attend programs but still not given access	4				
CFS: disallowing relationships because of dad's past	4				
CFS traumatized those in it			1		
CFS doesn't allow for growth but of care (i.e. lack of funding for school)			1		

	Men's Circle Participant and Observer Comments	Survey	Men's Focus Group: Andrews St.	Key Informant Interviews	NPWC: Men's Circle
<b>Justice System</b>					
Incarceration: from childhood to adulthood	3				
Criminal record: unable to find employment	8		1		1
Harassment/unwilling to help because of race/identity	4	5			
Forced no contact with children, unable to form relationships	5				1
Difficult to get ahead so resort to crime instead, becoming involved in CJS and lose kids			2		
<b>Drug and Alcohol Issues</b>					
Alcohol and Violence part of upbringing	6				
Addictions cause loss of relationships	2				
Detox houses not as nice as womens					1
<b>Housing Issues/Homelessness</b>					
Lack of money given by EIA causes bad living situations	2		1		
Lack of proper housing	1				
EIA only covers rooming houses/hotels for single men: unsafe/depression (addictions)	5				
<b>Employment Issues</b>					
Don't own proper work clothes/clean clothes: lack of resources	2				
Lack of contact information/stable housing	1				1
Lack of identification	1				
Trouble filling out resumes	1				
Lack of experience/No experience	1				
Frustration trying to find employment	1				

	Men's Circle: Participant and Observer Comments	Survey	Men's Focus Group: Andrews St.	Key Informant Interviews	NPDWC: Men's Circle
<b>Financial Stress</b>	2				
Lack of funds for transportation to find work/access resources	2	3	1	1	
EIA doesn't give much: can't find job for multiple reasons	2				1
Assistance goes to women: expectation that men will work		1	1	5	1
Cut offs for financial assistance programs (i.e. Jump Start) are too strict			1		
<b>Medical Issues</b>					
Unable to access medical help/explain issue	3				1
Wait for appointments too long, don't bother going	3	1			
Trouble keeping appointments without proper housing	2	2			
Mental health issues	1			2	
Children are on mothers medical card: need to fight to get them on fathers	3				
<b>Other</b>					
Lack of professional training (i.e. workers don't know about resources/don't have proper training)			3		
Programs set up for females and often don't accept males		7	2		
Programs are out of the area and therefore unable to attend			3		
Hours of resources aren't flexible			1	2	
Unable to navigate systems				2	

	Men's Circle Participant and Observer Comments	Survey	Men's Focus Group: Andrews St.	Key Informant Interviews	NPDWC: Men's Circle
<b>Successes</b>					
Want to attend more of these sessions	3				
Group makes me feeling better about myself	1				
Andrews St: A safe place to go: like a home			5		
Dr. Johnson helps those in need with medical issues/forms			1		

## Appendix B – Suggested Solutions

Suggested Solutions

Appendix B

	Men's Circle - Participant and Observer Comments	Survey	Men's Fous Group - Andrews St.	Key Informant Interviews	NPDWC - Men's Circle
<b>Workers Understanding Men</b>					
Cultural Identity/Programs	13	3		1	
Someone to understand where they are coming from			4		
Support Programs/Workers	6			3	
<b>Personal Development</b>					
Personal Development	6		1		1
Problem Solving	4	1			
Decision Making	4				
Communication	4		1		
Anger Management	8	1			1
Healthy Relationships	13				
Life Skills Training	3				
Cooking Skills	5				
Adult Education for Men	4			1	1
Goal Setting help	1				
<b>Health/Mental Health Supports</b>					
Counseling	5		1	1	
Addictions Programs	4	1			
Safe House	6	6	1		
Healing Places	3	1			
Domestic Violence Programs (men and their children)	2				
Group Therapy	4	9	1	1	
Medical/Health supports	3	1	1		
<b>Parenting</b>					
Fathering Classes/Dad Supports	2	9			
Traditional parenting	2				
<b>Employment</b>					
Employment Skills	1			1	
Hangout spaces			1		
Mens Drop-In		3		1	

	<i>Men's Circle - Participant and Observer Comments</i>	<i>Survey</i>	<i>Men's Fous Group - Andrews St.</i>	<i>Key Informant Interviews</i>	<i>NPDWC - Men's Circle</i>
<b>Men's Resources</b>					
Resources for Mens Programs (i.e funding)	1				
More awareness of resources for men	2			1	
Resource Center for Men		12			2
Recreation for Men	1				
<b>Giving back</b>					
Mentor Youth	1				
Suicide Intervention Training	1				
<b>Other</b>					
Services for Older Men			1		1
24/7 or Afterhours Hotline for Men	2		1	1	
Day Programs to keep busy	1				

### 1. Guiding Principles

Participatory, community driven solutions have been shown to be more congruent with the needs of unique communities, leading to increased participation and greater positive impact. Men who participated in the knowledge gathering that informed the development of these guiding principles and values for practice identified the importance of feeling valued, to have safe spaces, to access cultural supports, and to have resources for health and wellness. They shared stories about inaccessible resources and a significant gap in what currently exists to support their health.

In identifying these needs, they also shared the importance of considering answers to the questions who, when, how, where, and why in the development of supports, resources, groups, and programs. The following guiding principles provide important opportunities for organizations and funders to reflect on when implementing activities that focus on men.

**Place and Space.** Both location and the space provided for men's resources are factors in accessibility and feeling unconditionally accepted. Men would like locations that they can access easily. The feeling that they get in the space is important, feeling like home and feeling welcome in the community are important.

**Staffing.** Support workers and the way that they work with men is an important element for success. Skills such as system navigation and advocacy are valued. Men would like to be connected to workers who know the resources available and how to access them when needed.

**Lived Experience.** It is important to value lived experience when seeking leaders for groups and programs. Men would like to work with individuals who have experienced similar challenges as they have and would like them to be healthy role models. Men would like support from their peers. This allows for them to build trust and feel safe enough to open up. They are all there to support one another in advocacy or with other specialized skills that they may be gifted with.

**Cultural Activities.** Supporting a connection to culture helps to build strong relationships and to develop self-mastery. Culture can include ceremony, teachings, and medicines. This also includes a modelling of how values and actions can be enacted in our everyday lives.

**Relational Accountability.** Centering culture can also strengthen relational accountability. This is how we are in relationship with one another and the responsibility and care we take with these relationships. Relational accountability can be fostered through activities that support intergenerational connections, support time for learning, model respect, and include food.

**Acceptance and Belonging.** Men would like to feel valued, heard, and respected. Sitting in groups, sharing their experiences, and listening to stories of others makes them feel validated, like they are not alone and makes space for emotions and reflection. Sharing without the fear of judgement ensures that strong relationships are built. These relationships build a collective, natural support system who cares for and looks out for the wellbeing of one another.

**Strength-based Work.** Working from a strength-based approach allows for the flexibility to meet the men where they are at and for what they need at that moment. This approach also allows for men to see their gifts and the gifts of others. This builds interdependence and a community of support. A strength-based approach provides opportunity for people to feel good about themselves and to know they are valued and important. This approach also supports a learning environment where individuals and groups work together to learn about themselves and those around them.

**Relationality.** Relationships are important to foster and support. Strengthening of relationships with partners and children will support wellbeing and build confidence in the roles and responsibilities that they hold in these relationships. Coming together as a whole family is important and so is time for men and their partners. This principle is based on the value of relationality. It is a commitment to honouring and nurturing our relationships through maintaining our responsibilities to one another.

**Reciprocity and Leadership.** Reciprocity is a value that forms the basis for concepts such as leadership, mentorship, and maintaining intergenerational relationships. Giving back to others by sharing our gifts. Citizenship and community building are two outcomes that result from active engagement in reciprocity.

**Connection to women and families.** While it is important that men and women each have separate spaces for their individual needs, it is also important that supports for both create spaces and opportunities for men, women, and families to connect with each other and strengthen their relationships.

## **2. Implementing Guiding Principles**

The knowledge gathering process provided a strong framework for what has been working to support men, goals, and how to address barriers that are experienced. Peer support groups in particular have shown promising impact based off of the feedback received by men and leaders. The framework that follows is a design that is meant to be adaptable to unique contexts of organizations, individual demographics, and the goals of participating individuals. Based on the guiding principles presented above this framework works to illustrate the possibilities of implementing these groups with men in various settings. The chart below connects the guiding principles with important questions to consider and possible actions to take to address these questions.



Guiding Principle	Questions	Actions & Considerations	Required / Encouraged
<b>Place &amp; Space</b>	Is the location accessible?	Is your resource in the community where most participants live and is your location accessible via public transportation?	
	Is the location a safe space?	It is important to consider the “feel” of the environment. Do the physical surroundings feel welcoming, is there a feeling of “home”? Are staff welcoming of participants?	
	Is the timing of the group accessible?	There is a need for programs and groups during the evenings and weekends.	
	What is the structure of the group?	Do not “over-program”. Allow for flexibility dependent on needs identified each time.	
	How is the organization supporting men to share needs and priorities?	Participants must be supported to set the priorities for the group. This means getting to know each other over several sessions, making space for sharing, and participatory identification of needs, barriers, and priorities.	
	What resources are available to support engagement	Food and transportation are two important resources to provide. Barriers to engagement should be explored in priority setting and addressed through resources when possible. Needs may differ according to group.	
	How many people will the group target? Is there a maximum capacity?	It is important to maximum group size will be, with a group where trust and relationship building are pivotal. How much consistency do you want in participant attendance? Will it be an open or closed group? Consistency, relationships, trust and staff levels are all factors to consider when answering this question.	

<b>Staffing</b>	What is the practice approach that this person takes when working with men?	Work from a place of genuine interest and concern for men, getting to know who they are and building a strong helping relationship takes time. Staff must be able to “walk their talk”.	
	Does this person have considerable knowledge of available resources?	It is important to be well connected and have a strong knowledge of resources that are important to the group.	
	Does this person have skills for advocacy and systems navigation?	Staff must be able to address barriers to accessing supports and resources. This can mean attending appointments and providing transportation.	
<b>Lived Experience</b>	Does this person have lived experience? Will the men feel like they can relate to and learn from the experiences of the leader?	Building rapport and a strong relationship with participants can be supported when staff have lived experience related to the experiences of the men in the group. This adds to the ability to relate to and feel heard by the leader.	
	Is this person already a leader from the community?	There are many strong leaders who already exist in many communities who would be assets to engaging men.	
	How will the group engage with participants who already have skills and experiences that will be valuable to the rest of the group members?	Peer mentoring and support is an asset to building strong groups. Identifying the skills and experiences that exist in the group and matching these with priorities is an important activity.	

<b>Cultural Activities</b>	Who is providing cultural support? Is this person recognized by the community as a traditional knowledge keeper?	Traditional knowledge, teachings and ceremonies are important to include. Finding a person or people who are traditional knowledge keepers, and who are considered such by their community, can take time.	
	What resources are available to support participation in cultural activities?	Tobacco, cloth, feast food, transportation to ceremonies, and Elder honouraria are costs to include in budgets.	
<b>Relational Accountability</b>	Are there opportunities to learn about responsibilities and roles in relationships?	If relationships are a priority for the group, it is important to consider how learning will be supported. This can include traditional teachings, education or training workshops, facilitated discussions, and the use of teaching or sharing circles.	
	What activities will support intergenerational connections?	Planning activities to allow many generations of families to come together is important and can be led by the men in the groups.	
	How will relational accountability be modelled, and opportunities made to place this learning into action?	Role modelling is an excellent tool to reinforce learning and growth. This also contributes to building trust. When a strong group dynamic is built each man will likely have an opportunity to be both mentor and mentee, sharing their own experiences and how they worked through any challenges.	
<b>Acceptance &amp; Belonging</b>	What activities will support men to feel valued, heard, and respected?	The use of circles, feedback and checking in on process and priorities will support this principle. Consistency is an important factor.	

	How will an environment of acceptance and belonging be fostered?	This is connected to the principles of live experience, relational accountability, and cultural activities. Building a sense of belonging is a complex undertaking that requires consistency, safety, and strong relationships. Activities to foster this will be connected to each of these values.	
	How will the work support the development of natural support systems?	Natural support systems are communities of care that are there for one another in times of need and celebration. Development can take time, trust, and space for connection. Relational accountability is linked to this principle.	
	Is there time for “unprogrammed” relationship building?	A large majority of time must be made for relationship building, sharing, and reflection.	
<b>Strength-based Work</b>	How will the program work from a place of strength?	If this is not a familiar approach for your organization, consider hiring a trainer for an in-service.	
	Do staff have the skills to work from this approach?	Training on a strength-based approach and how to work from this foundation is important.	
	How will the program or group be flexible to meet the needs of each individual?	Meeting each individual where they are at is an important principle. Ensure there are supportive policies and resources are available to meet unique and varying needs.	
	What activities will support men to understand and strengthen their gifts?	Exploration and learning about who we are, where we come from, what is our purpose, and where we are going is a teaching for personal growth and development of strengths. Activities that reinforce these teachings and allow men to seek answers to these questions.	

<b>Relationality</b>	What activities will support men to foster strong relationships?	Suggestions in the past have included drum groups, kid's night. An important note however is that this is not to replace the critical time for men to do their own work.	
	How will partners and children be included in this work?		
<b>Reciprocity &amp; Leadership</b>	What activities will support men to take leadership roles in their community?	Giving back to the community is an important teaching shared by Elders. What opportunities will there be for men to take leadership roles. These can include leading a project that fills a need, supporting organizations, supporting other community members in various ways. This is also connected to the principle of strength-based work.	
	How can the group give back to and be actively engaged in community?	As the group develops building relationships can be supported by working to address a priority area as a group. Identifying a barrier, designing a solution, and filling a need can be a goal that the group is working towards to give back to the community.	
	What mentorship opportunities are/will be available and supported?	There are many roles that are needed in a group. Men can be supported and mentored to fill various roles in order to build their leadership skills.	
<b>Connection to Women and Families</b>	What opportunities to connect with women and families will be available?	While there is important work for men to do on their own or with peers, opportunities to connect and grow with women and families are needed in order to support healthy families and children.	

**Table 1: Questions to Consider**

The table above provides important questions and considerations as programs are designed to engage with and meet the needs of men in the community. The next sections will outline a potential structure for the group and will include ideas on length, duration, methods of

engagement, format of sessions including setting priorities, processes for relationship building, and potential outcomes.

### **3. Designing the Group**

Weekly sessions have been successful, but this can be adjusted based on the unique needs of the participants. Sessions are suggested to last 2 to 3 hours, that includes time for eating, sharing, and closing each session.

As with any program development, available resources dictate the timing and duration of a group. In the learning from the previous knowledge gathering it was clear that an intended 13-week session was not enough to meet the needs of the group and it was funded for 26 weeks. The lack of ongoing, permanent resources is a critical issue to consider when engaging men in these types of processes. Once trust and relationships are built, how will they be maintained and supported through long-term resources in the community?

#### **3.1. Potential methods for engagement**

Once the location and leadership or facilitator of a group has been finalized, it is time to plan for recruitment of participants. Potentially there is an existing need based on community interactions that have led to the development of this group. Word of mouth can be an important engagement tool, particularly if the lead of the group is a community member who has experience in the area already.

Bringing a group of men together must begin with relationship building activities, setting a common vision or purpose, and identifying barriers and priorities for the participants. Facilitating this knowledge gathering can take 1-3 weeks depending on the time allotted. As trust was identified as a barrier and a necessity for engaging in meaningful work with men this process may take longer than initially anticipated. It is important not to rush, as these are foundations that will ensure continued participation that provides meaning and works towards positive outcomes.

1. Facilitated discussion of vision, needs, barriers, priorities
2. Identification of skills available in group
3. Priorities and planning
4. Sharing and talking circles

With a foundation beginning to be built the sessions may also start to incorporate other methods that are conducive to relationship building, sharing, skills development, and mentorship. These can include:

1. Peer-led topics
2. Sharing and talking circles

3. Traditional medicines
4. Ceremony
5. Giving back and leadership
6. Workshops
7. Family focused events

### **3.2. Resources/staffing required**

It was identified that the space, resources, and staff are important considerations when working to engage men from the community. Ensuring a welcoming environment means considering the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects of a place and space. These are also areas that can be addressed in the discussion on needs and priorities to ensure men feel heard and have meaningful input into all aspects of the group.

1. Space
2. Food
3. Transportation
4. Peer facilitator(s)
5. Tobacco and medicines
6. Sacred item for circle
7. Traditional Knowledge keeper
8. Resources to support group's priorities

### **3.3. Session Format**

An important aspect identified in the knowledge gathering was the space for men to feel heard and validated. This means that each session should allow for this process to take place. Circles have been used in a variety of settings to engage participants in self-exploration, reflection, and healing.

1. Setting intention and supporting a safe space
2. Opening and acknowledgements
3. Ground rules for circles
4. Circle process
5. Time for reflections – can share or not
6. Open sharing
7. Closing and acknowledgments

### **3.4. Uncovering potential topics**

While priority setting and understanding a common vision is an important foundational process to engage in at the beginning of a group it is important that this remains an iterative process.

An iterative process ensures that as new needs arise, more sharing occurs, and as growth leads to new priorities the group continues to grow with the participants.

1. Led by the groups needs
2. Priority setting
3. What do the men want to address
4. Facilitator observations
5. Planning for future activities

### **3.5. Important processes**

The “how” of engaging men and supporting strong group processes and relationship building was identified. The following processes work to bring the guiding principles and values into the everyday interactions of the group.

1. Facilitating sessions
  - a. Time for sharing is critical and may be the focus of the first sessions
2. Getting to know the group
  - a. Introductions
  - b. Creating a safe space
  - c. Building relationships
  - d. Feeling valued and respected
3. Learning more about priorities and needs
4. Skill building and engaging peers as leaders
  - a. Based on the priorities who can help lead at different times, how can they be supported to plan and implement a session
  - b. Mentorship

### **3.6. Potential outcomes**

Potential outcomes, based on a well-supported, structured, and resourced implementation led by facilitators who have lived experience and are skilled in the ways of working described above can include an increase in:

1. Sense of belonging
2. Active leadership
3. Demonstrated reciprocity
4. Strengthened relationships
5. Knowledge of community resources
6. Ability to access health and social services
7. Ability to advocate for self
8. Ability to advocate for peers
9. Sense of purpose and knowledge of strengths
10. Personal skill development



## Appendix D – Social Impact Analysis Theory of Change and Outcomes

### Theory of Change

The Winnipeg Boldness Project is currently working with Eupraxia Training to develop a Theory of Change and accompanying evaluation framework. Listed below are the draft elements of these frameworks that will inform the social impact analysis.

The draft Theory of Change for the Support for Dads prototype is as follows:

- By creating safe spaces for Indigenous fathers to embark on their own healing journeys, primarily through culturally appropriate and peer mentorship activities;
- By providing concrete support and learning opportunities for Indigenous fathers; and
- By providing opportunities for men to reconnect with women and children, and to participate as integral members of families;
  - Men will increase their sense of well-being, acceptance, and support;
  - Men will be more engaged with their families and their children;
  - Men's participation in community programming will increase;
  - Initial signals of longer-term beneficial effects will be seen.

### Guiding Questions

The following guiding questions will inform the development of an evaluation framework:

- What are the social impacts of the Support for Dads program? What can be directly attributed to the program? To what else does the program contribute?
- What “social value” can a Supports for Dads program result in or contribute to in the short-term or long-term?
- How do safe spaces for healing contribute to the overall impact of the program?
- How do culturally appropriate and peer mentorship activities contribute?
- How do concrete supports and learning opportunities contribute?
- How do family reconnection activities contribute?

### Systems-Level Impacts

Part of the goals of prototype evaluation will be to explore the degree to which programs like these could have monetary impacts at a systems level. Potential areas of impact have been identified and will be explored through the evaluation process. These areas include:

#### *Incarceration*

Men in the healing circle spoke explicitly of the importance of having a safe place to:

- Talk about lifetime experiences and process past traumas
- Build positive and supportive relationships with other men

- Come to terms with shame and guilt related to past behaviours
- Learn from positive role models
- Find spiritual supports through reconnection to the teachings and rituals of their culture
- Find better paths forward
- Make amends for harms done that resulted in them being incarcerated.

#### *Gang activity*

Men in the healing circle spoke explicitly of being able to divert youths' direction into further and violent gang behaviour (initiation rite). They spoke of their own gang involvement (some of it leading to incarceration) and the reasons for that.

#### *Suicide prevention*

Men in the healing circle, especially the young men, spoke of their despair at seemingly hopeless situations at some points in their lives, their pain from abuse they and siblings were suffering in foster homes, the opioid-related deaths of family members they witnessed or tried to prevent, the inability to see a good way forward, and the hope they got from being in the circle with other men.

#### *No-contact orders, parole, and pardons*

Facilitators mentioned that men in the circles were being encouraged and getting help to complete community service requirements that prevented them from getting pardons for unpaid fines; not getting pardoned meant not being able to look for work. They were getting help to navigate the systems that would allow them to have supervised visits with children through the organizations where programs were being offered. They had advocates when parole officers were being inflexible.

#### *Children in care*

Facilitators and fathers both mentioned that fathers wanted to see their children but were often prevented from doing so because "the system" was inflexible and had extremely high expectations, the workers did not show up with children as promised, workers had outdated or inaccurate information about fathers, or because no safe, private, supportive space had been made available for the meetings.

#### *Identification*

Facilitators mentioned that many men did not have identification (stolen, lost wallets) and therefore could not access critical services or benefits. They could not look for work, drive, or buy vehicles which had financial implications (having to take taxis or pay friends/relatives to drive the family places). They could not access health services. Often women have their babies in Winnipeg hospitals while men remain at home (travel expenses from areas outside Winnipeg are too high) and so men are not able to register their paternity.

#### *Health*

Facilitators mentioned that, through the circles, men were getting help addressing long-standing physical health issues (needing eye glasses, getting help with diabetes). Both

facilitators and men in the healing circle said that reconnecting with culture was critical; getting a spirit name and working with an elder helped them to overcome addictions and get on a better path emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. Serious addictions of course come with an associated package of social costs. Learning about traditional medicines and teachings gave them a sense of purpose, pride, social connection, and strength to keep healing.

### **Potential Scaling Outcomes**

Potential outcomes for the prototype include increases in:

- Participation levels of fathers in community programs
- Time and quality of interaction between fathers and children/families
- Families' perception of wellbeing
- Fathers' feelings of acceptance and support
- Skills and knowledge level among service provider staff to build trusting relationships and better engage fathers
- Quality of interactions between service providers and fathers

The prototype will set the groundwork for further scaling activities that will lead to longer-term results such as increases in:

- Service providers using the Guiding Principles and toolkit to engage with fathers
- Opportunities for family gatherings for Point Douglas families
- Safe spaces for fathers to embark on their own healing journeys
- Culturally appropriate and peer mentorship activities
- Opportunities for men to reconnect with women and children, and to participate as integral members of families

Longer term results may also include improvement in early childhood development and family well-being outcomes such as:

- School readiness
- Graduation rates
- Physical and mental health
- Involvement in Child and Family Services
- Involvement in Justice

These indicators are preliminary and are based on the work done to date in knowledge gathering.

## Appendix E – Wiji'idiwag Ikwewag Men's Focus Groups Summary Report

### Introduction

Wiji'idiwag Ikwewag is a non-profit organization that provides wholistic pregnancy, birthing, and postpartum supports to women, men and children to create safe birthing and parenting environments. Wiji'idiwag Ikwewag utilizes culturally rooted teachings and practices that build confidence and promote the restoration of traditional birth practices, sacred family bonds and healthy relationships. We recognize that each family situation is unique, our customized approach respects the diversity of families and honours their personal values and beliefs. Wiji'idiwag Ikwewag is committed to personal healing and wellness to foster nurturing and empowering relationships that will create a strong foundation to support communities and families.

In providing support to families it became apparent that men required support in a way that differed from women to achieve the same level of success. In discussions with service providers and through various interactions with men, it was also suggested that services provided to men are better received when provided by another man.

### Focus Groups

Wiji'idiwag Ikwewag planned and advertised five men's focus groups. Registration for all sessions was good, however, two sessions were cancelled when no one attended with some of the "no-shows" attending another session. Focus groups were held in Winnipeg, Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation and Misipawistik Cree Nation with a total of 20 participants. The participants were men ranging from the ages of 18 – 70 years old. They were both employed and unemployed, none identified as being students. The men were fathers, grandfathers and uncles. Of the 20 men, two did not have their own children, one had prior custody of his niece and nephew and the other was a support to family members. The focus of the discussion questions centred around their own experiences as fathers during pregnancy, labour and birth, post-partum, parenting and supports as a male caregiver/parent. Each Group shared their experience or lack of when entering fatherhood, becoming grandfathers and other male family roles. They shared their teachings passed on to them from their elders, grandmothers and father figures or male role models they had in their lives.

### KEY THEMES

The responses to the discussion questions have been grouped into five key theme areas. The responses have been summarized. These themes will inform the development of programming for men.

#### Childhood Traumas

Some of the men who participated expressed their own childhood traumas of physical, mental, emotional and sexual abuse. They discussed growing up in poverty, alcohol use within the home and a lack of healthy communication. They reflected that this has impacted their

relationships as adults. Many did not have males modeling good relationship behaviour. No one talked to them about their roles and responsibilities as a father. They struggled in their own relationships with their partners, ex-partners and children. Most of the men had worked on their own healing. Most utilized ceremony and land-based ways of healing and some utilized western approaches such as therapy. All men were able to recognize how their upbringing has impacted their lives and impacted those around them.

“I decided to start dating again and felt something was off and started praying for certain qualities and I ended typing sex therapist and found one and after the second time it felt like a part of my brain was throbbing and blood was being pumped there for the first time, and I told people this was like the first father son talk I ever had regarding intimacy, women, relationships, sex, not to throw my dad under the bus, he never had the talk from his dad. He grew up with 12 siblings in poverty so when did he get the talk from his dad? There was no time.” -Lee, WPG.

The men talked about the importance of healing from childhood trauma in order to be a better parent and partner. They talked about utilization of ceremonies and land-based learning as having the biggest impact on their recovery.

### **Religion / Spirituality**

In the 1870s the Government of Canada along with various religious organizations established residential schools. Their two primary objectives were to remove and isolate children from their homes, families, traditional and cultural livelihood, and to assimilate into the dominate culture. Many of our Indigenous rural and urban communities today are divided by religion and spirituality. The men shared that growing up in their home religion was forced on them by their parents, or they didn't grow up with the ceremonial part of the culture. The men talked about being angry because of the residential schools and the continued impact religion has on our communities. They talked about how the introduction of religion forced our ceremonies and practices to go underground and how that took away from the ability for young men to learn their roles and responsibilities. They talked about the impact religion/colonization had on gender roles within the communities.

### **Child and Family Services**

Participants shared experiences both as children within the system as well as their experiences as fathers, grandfathers and uncles with their children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews in the child welfare system. Residential Schools, the 60s scoop and CFS have dramatically impacted the role of parenting for a lot of Indigenous peoples. The men discussed some of their personal experience being in the system or having their children and grandchildren being involved in the system. They talked about how difficult it is to parent with the involvement of CFS. They talked about not being able to see their children, about having their children moved out of their community and placed in Winnipeg and the impact that had on them and their children.

### **Traditional Teachings**

Ceremony and traditional knowledge were shared in each focus group. Each participant had shared their own experience of their healing journey. What they were taught from their elders and grandmothers, and what they learned on their own journeys after becoming fathers or male caregivers (uncles etc.). They talked about how they utilize those teachings in their interactions with their children and how they parent and/or provide care. The men all shared the need for respect for the women as life-givers. They talked about teaching their sons and the young men in their families how to respect women and why they must be respected. They talked about how that respect for women will lead to reduced violence within the homes. The men talked about how incorporating their traditional knowledge/teachings and Rites of Passage into their lives and their parenting has had a positive impact on their relationships with their children and partners. They talked about utilizing those teachings to become a better person, parent and partner.

Many of the men talked about how they had not utilized that knowledge or teachings in their first relationships or as a father but incorporated it into their lives as a grandfather or in a second relationship and how because of that, the outcome of the relationship improved.

### **Support Systems**

In discussions on support systems, the men shared what resources they had available at the time when they first became fathers. They stated that it is hard to get support, especially for men. They talked about how there is a lot of support for women and that is a good thing, however, they felt they are more likely to end up on the street because of the lack of support. They talked about wanting to be there to support their partners during pregnancy and birth but how the supports are not in place. Comments were made that of the supports/classes that are available, the information is hard to find or there is not enough. General comments were made that of the classes/supports available that they were more like doing paperwork than learning. There was no hands-on learning available. The men talked about growing up with single mothers and how that impacted their ability to support their partners and their children, especially their daughters. They would like to see supportive programming that focuses on the role of the father and how to be a good father. The men would also like to see a program where men can come and talk about whatever is on their mind and that the program is run by men.

### **CONCLUSION**

The men who participated agreed that programming to support men must have a cultural foundation, be grounded in ceremony and be taught on the land. They agreed that programming for men must be run/taught by other men to be most effective. Programming must be hands on. Finally, information on the programming needs to be readily available and widespread to ensure that men are aware of what is available to them.

