

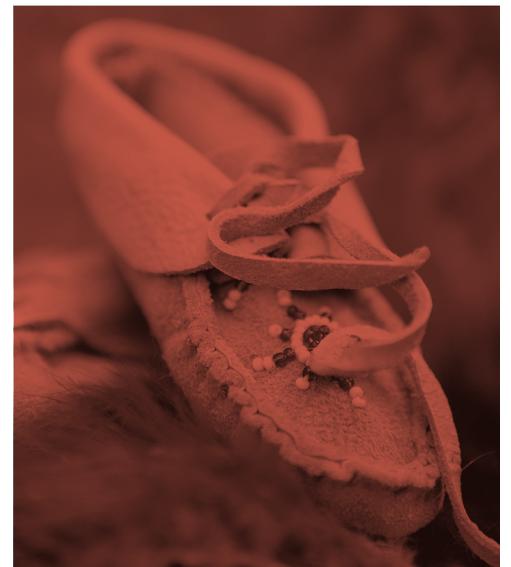
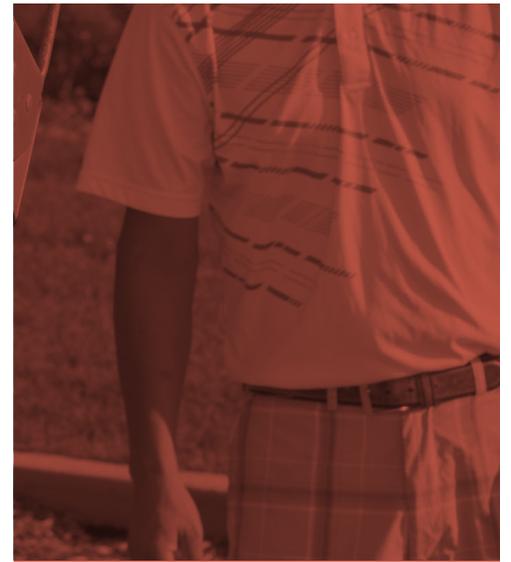
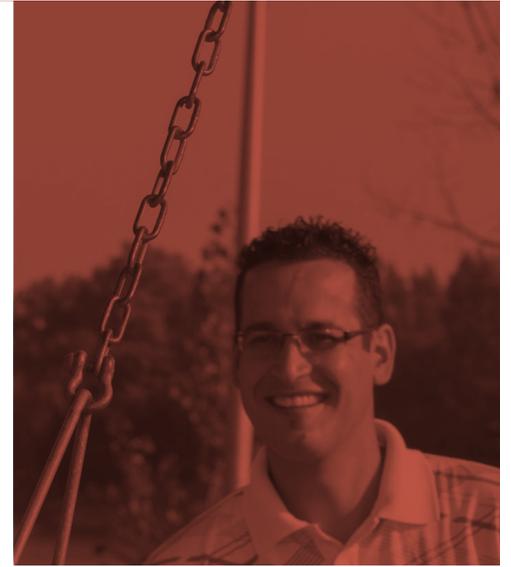
**BOLD  
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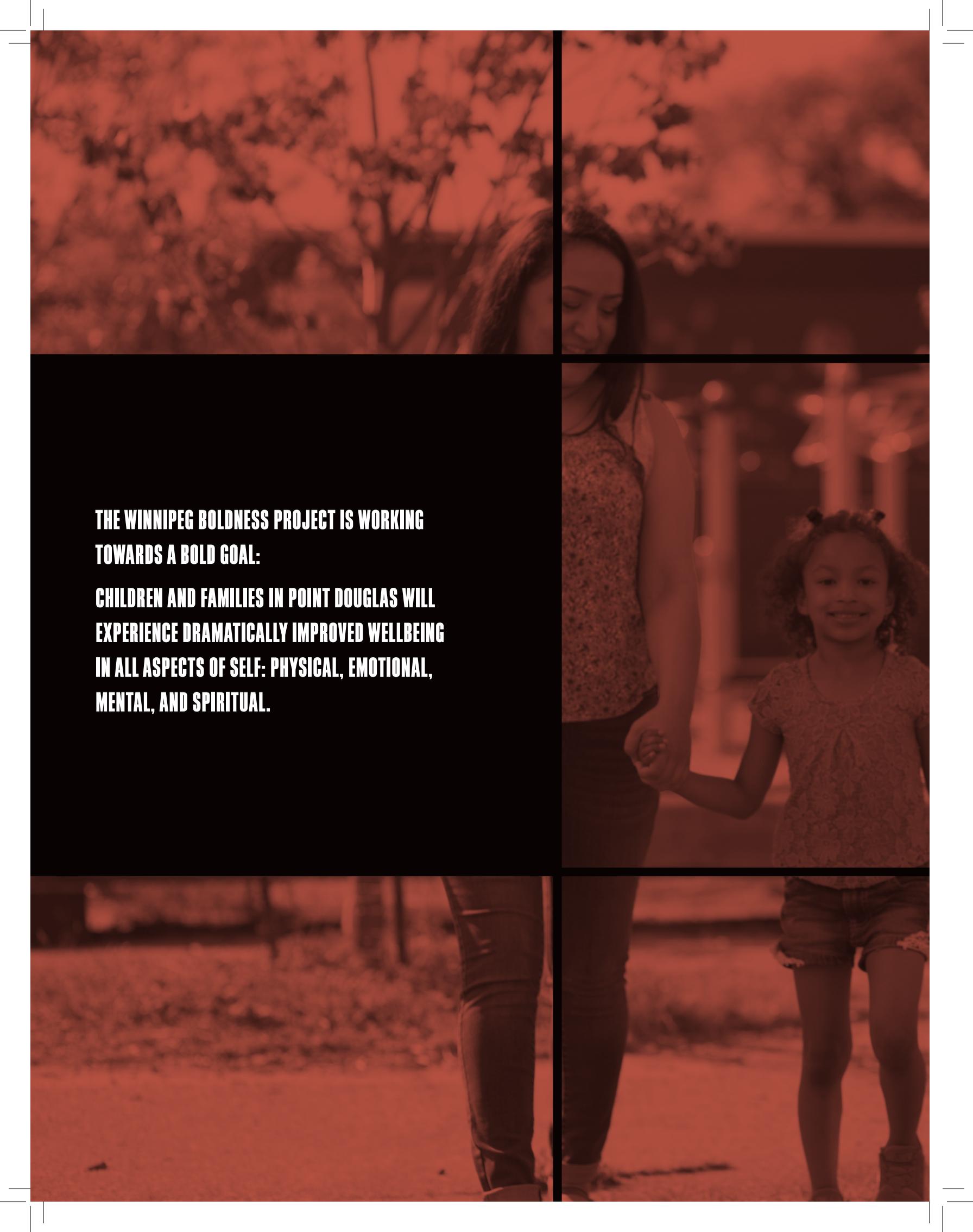
**THE  
WINNIPEG  
BOLDNESS  
PROJECT**

# **BABY BASKET: SUPPORTING NEW PARENTS**

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**PROTOTYPING FOR CHANGE  
DECEMBER, 2019**





**THE WINNIPEG BOLDNESS 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.**

We are working with residents and groups in this neighbourhood to test new ideas to support the wellbeing of children and families. These prototypes which we are calling Proofs of Possibilities (POPs), support a vision for change in our community. We are exploring possibilities in the following areas:

# PROOFS OF POSSIBILITIES



# BABY BASKET: SUPPORTING NEW PARENTS

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## COMMUNITY VISION

All families and their babies will have access to the supports that they need to thrive.

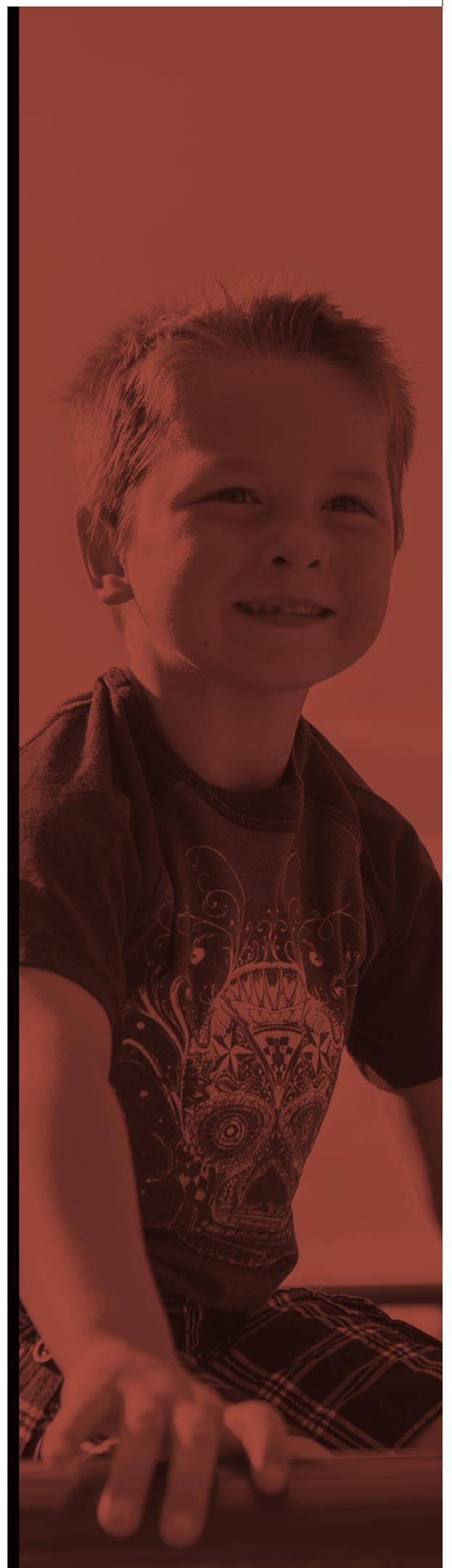
The Baby Basket focuses on building trusting and supportive relationships with expectant mothers to help reduce stress, share information, and provide necessary supplies as they celebrate the arrival of their new child. Working together with the North End Women's Centre, we developed and tested the Baby Basket prototype.

A Baby Basket is a physical collection of items, supports, and information that is given to parents in order to celebrate the arrival of a new child, and link them with the necessary resources they may need to keep their new baby happy and healthy.



The Baby Basket is guided by the following principles, which were developed alongside the community:

- **Focus on celebration:** Many available supports for new parents focus only on keeping the baby safe from harm, while the Baby Basket is intended to celebrate the arrival of a new child.
- **Grow trusting relationships:** The Baby Basket is meant to be used as a tool to invite families into an ongoing, supportive relationship with healthcare, programming, and community resources.
- **Provide equitable support:** Make sure that supports go to where they are most needed, rather than being spread out evenly amongst everyone regardless of need
- **Customize to families' needs:** The Baby Basket should help staff learn what options families prefer most and explore how these options can be given to families.





## WHY DID WE FOCUS ON THE BABY BASKET?

While the health care system is designed to help people maintain good health and provide care during times of need, seeking help can sometimes be an overwhelming experience. The policies and procedures around child care focus mainly on making sure that babies are kept safe from harm, sometimes without considering how these procedures coincide with individual child care methods and different cultural practices or norms. This can lead to parents feeling unfairly judged or even ostracized from systems. While professionals may be attempting to support the health and safety of a new baby, starting relationships this way can lead to mistrust and fear among new families, and at times even cause families to avoid the healthcare system in the future when they need support.

The community pointed towards an idea that could help make the health care system more accessible: a package for new families that could be provided upon the arrival of a new child that would help to build a solid foundation for a respectful and positive relationship. Instead of seeing birth as a health emergency, our community asked us to focus on celebrating the birth of a new baby, while promoting positive access to healthcare, information on safe sleep, and helping to fulfill basic needs.

The Baby Basket was inspired by the Finnish Baby Box - a physical box that all expectant parents in Finland receive, which includes diapers, bedding, a sleep surface, and other helpful items for new parents. Using this as a starting point, the community guided us

as we built upon this concept and explored what a basket for parents in Point Douglas might contain.

The Baby Basket is intended to be an entry point and strong beginning to building a trusting, supportive, and long-term relationship with healthcare staff. These relationships are needed to help families and children access the services they need to stay healthy.

**Improving Indigenous health and building better relationships between Indigenous peoples and the healthcare system is action called for by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Providing supports like the Baby Basket is an important step towards these goals.**

## WHAT BLOCKS NEW PARENTS FROM SEEKING SUPPORT?

### **Birth is treated like an emergency, rather than a celebration**

Families within Point Douglas often face negative birthing experiences where they're made to feel that the health of their children is an emergency situation. When children's lives begin this way, it takes away from a broader celebration of life and can create a negative association with these systems.

### **Few opportunities for self-determination**

The ability to make decisions and decide what is best for one's family is valued by members of the Point Douglas community. Without adequate choices and control over their own child care and parenting techniques, families can feel as though programs are not meeting their needs and

often stop seeking help altogether.

### **Negative experiences with systems**

Racism and classism are issues that are being addressed within the health care system, but remain issues nonetheless. The negative experiences that issues of this nature cause within families can be traumatic and increases the likelihood that families will avoid seeking help when they need it most.



# PUTTING THE CHILD-CENTRED MODEL INTO ACTION

The Child-Centred Model – a way of working for positive change developed by the community of Point Douglas – helped us find the best ways to develop the Baby Basket and support new parents.

**We worked to give additional help to those who need it most**, rather than giving every family identical supports regardless of need.

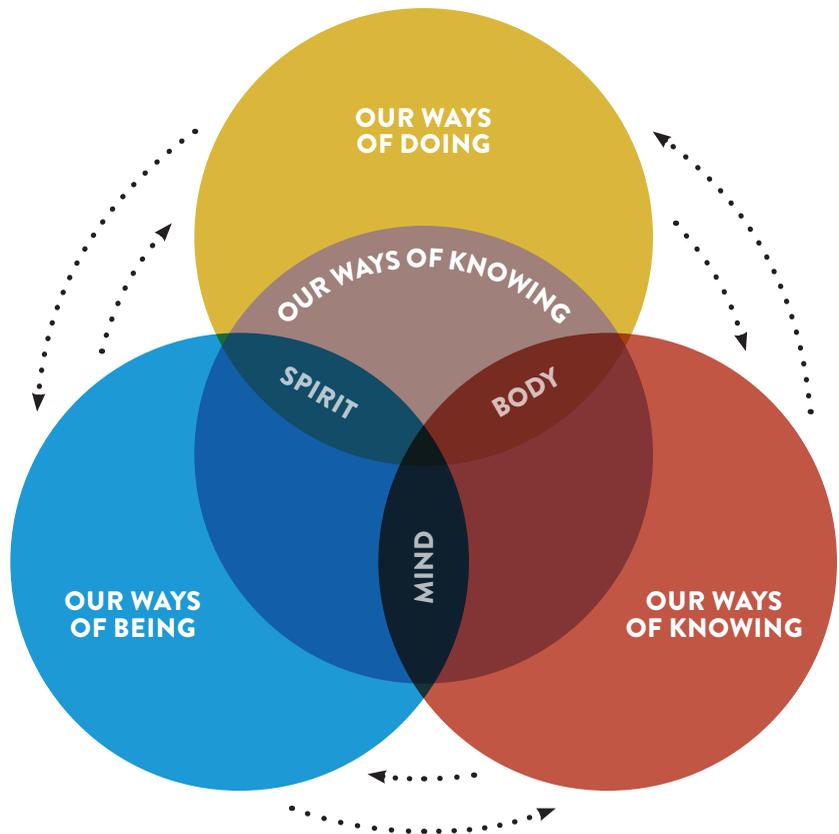
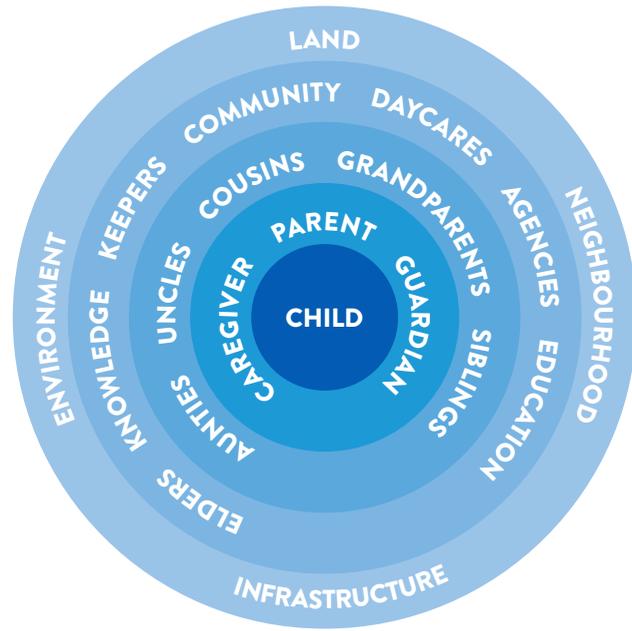
**We worked to provide choices for families regarding what can be included in their basket**, rather than delivering a one-size-fits-all solution.

**We worked to celebrate the arrival of a child**, rather than focusing solely on avoiding harm.

**We worked to provide families the option to connect with support workers**, rather than forcing these connections upon them.

**When we work within the Child-Centred Model, we are able to support positive change for children, parents, families, and the community.**

To learn more about the Child-Centred Model, read the full report at [winnipegboldness.ca/childcentredmodel](http://winnipegboldness.ca/childcentredmodel)



**“IT IS A REALLY FUN WAY TO GET TO KNOW [A] FAMILY BECAUSE IT’S LIKE, WE ARE NOT STARTING OFF WITH THE TYPICAL ISSUES. WE ARE NOT TALKING ABOUT ‘NOW MY KIDS ARE IN CARE.’... IT’S A REALLY GOOD EXPERIENCE BECAUSE IT’S A FUN WAY TO GET TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER, SO WE ARE STARTING OFF ON LIKE A REALLY HAPPY NOTE.”**

— Support Worker

**“IT DEFINITELY DEVELOPS THE CONNECTION AND RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MUM AND THE CHILD, RIGHT. SURE THEY ARE NOT GOING TO BE IN HER CARE, BUT THAT DOESN’T MEAN THAT THEY CAN’T HAVE THAT RELATIONSHIP, THAT CONNECTION AT ALL, RIGHT?”**

— Support Worker

**“I LIKED PICKING OUT [BABY BASKET ITEMS] MYSELF BECAUSE I KNEW WHAT I NEEDED.”**

— mother

**“[WE WERE] ABLE TO SPECIFICALLY PICK OUT THINGS THAT WE NEEDED. WE NEEDED WASH CLOTHS SO THAT’S WHAT WE CHOSE ON THERE. THE STAR BLANKET WAS SPECIAL BECAUSE SHE DOESN’T HAVE ONE EITHER AND THAT’S SOMETHING I ALWAYS WANTED FOR HER AND THEY’RE EXPENSIVE. THAT WAS REALLY EXCITING.”**

— mother

**[ON THE VALUE TO PROGRAM VOLUNTEERS]  
“I WAS JUST THINKING ABOUT WOMEN GETTING THEIR CASE PLANS. OH GO TO ANGER MANAGEMENT. GO TO PARENTING CLASSES. LEARN THIS. LEARN THAT. AND THEN WITH A DIFFERENT PROGRAM LIKE THIS, IT’S LIKE, “I’M NOT THE ONE GETTING KNOWLEDGE OR WHATEVER. I’M THE ONE GIVING OUT. I’M THE ONE SHARING.”**

— Support Worker

# TIMELINE OF PROTOTYPE ACTIVITIES

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**APRIL, 2016**

## PROTOTYPE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

We engaged a broader audience to help design the Baby Basket, including researching similar work and meetings with:

- Public Health nurses
- The supervisor of the Pediatric Residents pilot project
- The Provincial Infant Mortality Working Group Safe Sleep Sub-committee
- The Manitoba Indigenous Doula Initiative (MIDI)
- Indigenous Knowledge Keepers  
Indigenous doulas



**JANUARY, 2016**

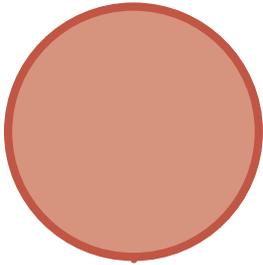
## INITIAL DISCUSSIONS

In our earliest conversations with community, the Baby Basket (inspired by the Finnish Baby Box) was named as a priority to be developed through the prototyping process. Our consultations shifted the focus away from a safe sleep box and towards an opportunity to build supportive relationships, reduce stress, and provide information.



**JUNE, 2016**  
**CO-CREATION SESSION**

We hosted a co-creation session that gathered people together from healthcare, education, government, community, and philanthropy, to help design the Baby Basket.



## FEBRUARY 2017 PARTNERSHIP WITH NORTH END WOMEN'S CENTRE

We partnered with the North End Women's Centre (NEWC) to create and share the Baby Basket prototype. Baskets included supportive items such as a star blanket and diapers, as well as information on topics such as: safe sleep, how and where to get benefits, and breastfeeding.



## APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2017 PROTOTYPE IMPLEMENTATION

Community members helped families select the items that they wanted and put each basket together. A total of 50 Baby baskets were given to families: 24 through NEWC, 21 through the Indigenous Doulas prototype, and 5 through the Health and Wellness prototype. Several items that weren't on the initial Baby Basket list were given to families at their request, including a high chair, a baby rocker, a baby swing, a baby monitor, and a crib mattress.

### TOP ITEMS SELECTED BY FAMILIES

Families were given 20 'points' that they could use to choose the items that they wanted. Each item was given a point value. The following items were most often chosen by families: Indigenous children.

- 1 Strollers and Stroller/Car Seat Combos (30)
- 2 Baby Moccasins (15)
- 3 Disposable Diapers Jumbo Pack (14)
- 4 Star Blanket (10)
- 5 Baby Hand/Foot Print Kit (10)

The top items show the common needs that families have that they are able to fill with a Baby Basket. Strollers and diapers help families manage the additional challenges of a new child (e.g., by keeping the baby clean) and participate in recreation and the community (e.g. by making it easier for them to get around). The other items focus on celebrating the new child. This suggests that when we provide supports to families, if we only focus on children's physical needs we will miss out on things that are equally as important to families but often left out – celebrating the arrival of a new child and supports to stay connected to community.



# SUPPORTING FAMILIES AND THEIR BABIES TODAY



As long as today's systemic barriers exist, the best ways that we found to support the arrival of a new child are:

## PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CELEBRATION

In addition to supports for basic needs, opportunities to celebrate are important to the wellness of the whole family and provide an opportunity to build a long-term supportive relationship with them

## ALLOW FAMILIES TO DETERMINE WHAT IS BEST FOR THEIR OWN CHILDREN

Allowing families to choose what is most important to them is an important step towards self-determination and building strong relationships with support workers. Families feel respected when they are able to make their own choices.

## EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES TO SCALE

The work done on the baby basket prototype provides a starting point for anyone interested in expanding this initiative. Some ideas for scaling included: developing a social enterprise to assemble and distribute the baskets, seeking additional funding for this intervention, strengthening partnerships with Indigenous organizations, and exploring options that focus on equity - giving more supports to families with the highest need.

## PROVIDE RESOURCES WITHOUT CONDITIONS

It is very important that the Baby Basket be provided to families without conditions, including the collection of information, commercial product advertising, or asking for money from families.



# CHANGING THE SYSTEM FOR TOMORROW



Through this work we found that there are larger barriers that affect families and community members. We need governments, non-profits, and businesses to:

1

## OFFER MANY PLACES AND WAYS FOR FAMILIES TO FIND SUPPORTS WHERE THEY FEEL COMFORTABLE

Supports like the Baby Basket provide an opportunity for families to connect with support staff in a respectful and safe way, and learn about other resources that they may need to maintain a healthy life.

2

## PROVIDE SUPPORTS THAT TREAT BIRTH AS A CELEBRATION

Focusing only on the physical and health aspects of birth and childcare makes it feel like an emergency rather than a celebration. To create welcoming spaces for babies and families to thrive we need to emphasize celebrating the arrival of a new child.

3

## ENSURE THAT FUNDING STRUCTURES SUPPORT WHOLISTIC AND FLEXIBLE APPROACHES

Existing structures focus on individual family members or short-term, one-size-fits-all programs. Families need long-term, flexible supports to achieve their goals.

4

## BUILD STRONG RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN FAMILIES AND AGENCIES BY TRUSTING FAMILIES FIRST

Families must be provided services and support without judgment or any punitive treatment, especially during times of crisis or trauma. By respecting families' decisions and meeting them where they're at, trusting and respectful relationships can be formed.

If you would like to learn more about the barriers that families in Point Douglas face to celebrating the arrival of a new child, read the full POP report [\[reference\]](#), read our report on helpful ways to work with Point Douglas [\[reference\]](#), and explore our other POP reports [\[reference\]](#).



**“WE ARE THANKFUL TO OUR ANCESTORS WHO ENTRUSTED US WITH THE CARE OF THIS GENERATION, AND THE GENERATION WE WILL NEVER KNOW.”**

—(MacNeill, 2014, p.29)

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the development and implementation of our prototypes, including our guide groups, partners, community organizations, local residents, and the North End community as a whole.

Many thanks to our funders for their continued support in the project, including the Province of Manitoba, the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, and United Way of Winnipeg.

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