

# What We Heard:

## Métis Women's Responses to Gender-Based Violence

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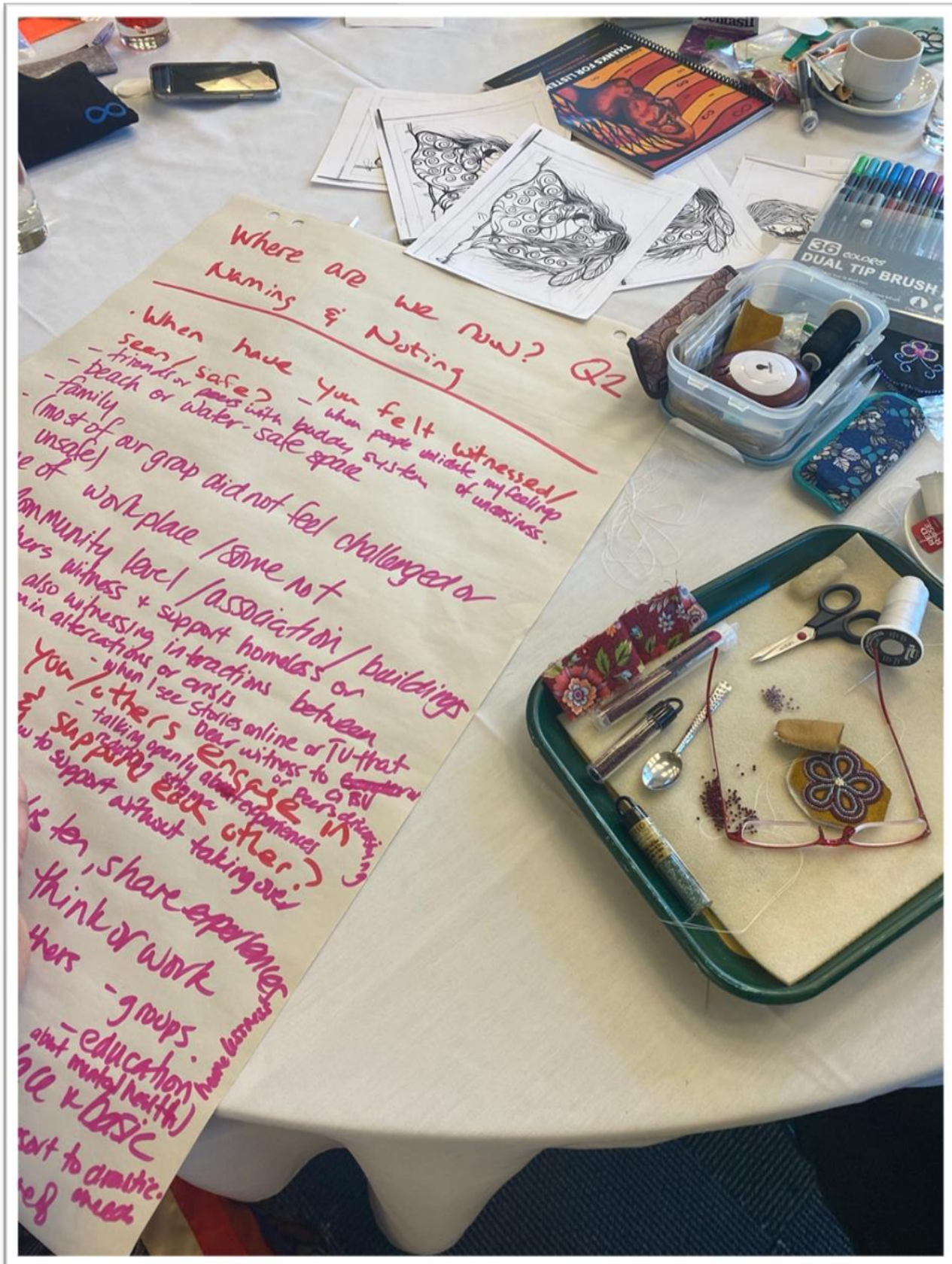
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## Executive Summary

In this report we provide a summary of what we heard using a Métis feminist witnessing methodology. This work examines what Métis women think and feel is necessary to help resist and end gender-based violence (GBV) in Métis families, communities, organizations, and workplaces, as well as how Métis women resist, challenge, find support, and imagine a future without GBV.

This work is grounded in and begins to imagine next steps based on what was learned from the *Thanks for Listening: Witnessing Métis Women and Girls Experiences of Violence & Pathways to Healing* (Clark, et. al., 2021). This report was written for the Métis Nation of British Columbia based on research emerged from the Sashing Our Warriors campaign – centering voices of Métis women, girls and gender-diverse relatives. A Métis feminist analysis brings together existing curricular literature with the wisdom of Métis women, girls, two-spirit and gender diverse people. For a full analysis of Métis women and girls' experiences of violence and recommendations for pathways to healing, please refer to the *Thanks for Listening Report*.

This report summarizes what we heard from Métis women invited to the gathering on May 13 and 14, 2023 in Snuneymuxw Territory (otherwise known as Nanaimo, BC) in response to four sacred questions about their experiences of resistance, survival and healing. What we heard through witnessing praxis on the first day of the gathering, May 13th, is the focus of this report. We facilitated the participants' engagement through a transformational approach to the consultation, including by acknowledging the historical, political, cultural and current realities for Métis populations (through a Métis GBA+ lens).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The authors wish to acknowledge that we have prepared this report for the Métis Nation of British Columbia and that what we heard is our witnessing and reporting back the participants' written and oral responses to the questions they were asked. The purpose of the report is to inform MNBC of Métis women's specific responses to these questions based on the participants' experiences and perspectives. The views expressed in this report are either reported directly from the participants' written and oral responses (where identified as such) or are the authors' collective summary and perspective on what we heard and our recommendations based on this.

## **Territorial Recognition & Acknowledgements**

We wish to recognize the Indigenous Nations where we are writing from and where the witnessing event took place. The event was held on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the Snuneymuxw Nation. Natalie Clark and Robline Davey wrote from the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of the Secwepemc Nation. Patricia Barkaskas wrote from the traditional, ancestral territories of the Lkwungen peoples, the Songhess and Esquimalt Nations, as well as from Treaty 7 territory and the Métis Homeland.

In our approach to this work, we recognize that colonialism and sexual violence are intimately connected, and any efforts to address gender-based violence in the context of settler colonialism must be conducted with this in mind (Clark et al., 2021; Davey, forthcoming; Green, 2017; LaRocque, 2007; Maracle, 1996).

We acknowledge the Métis Elders, knowledge keepers, and children, youth and adults of all genders who we have been honoured to walk alongside and learn from. We also want to acknowledge that this work builds on a long history of front-line Métis women and girls and gender-diverse Métis relatives experience, activism, advocacy and research over many years by those in the broader community. We hope that you will see your recommendations, truth-telling and even silences reflected in the report that follows.

## Background & Foreword

**Who was invited:** Originally, MNBC sent out an expression of interest to all the regional women's representatives (7) for them to pass onto their community women's representatives (30) and the women of the regional youth committee (4).

MNBC's invitation for this event was specifically for cis-gender women and girls. The authors were informed that a separate gathering would be held for LGBTQ2SIA+ Métis individuals to honour their particular experiences and perspectives.

**Who attended:** Minister Dr. Kate Elliott (elected chairperson for Métis Women of BC, who holds portfolios for Women and Gender Equity and Mental Health and Harm Reduction, Regional women's representatives (3), 13 women from communities across BC, 1 youth, 1 Elder; for a total of 19 women (R1: 6, R2: 5, R3: 1, R4: 2, R5: 3, R6: 1, R7:1). 3 staff members from Ministry of Women and Gender Equity, Angela Marston (Knowledge Carrier), 3 Métis women Facilitators, and 2 Métis Mental Health Navigators.

**A Métis women's gathering:** Métis women were brought together in Snuneymuxw territory by MNBC in order to share their experiences of resistance, survival and healing through a transformational approach to imagining a world without gender-based violence. This gathering was a space to engage with four sacred questions framed through resilience and power. Métis women gathered in a sharing and witnessing circle space at circular tables in smaller groups and were provided with the questions, along with art, beading, and writing supplies. In their smaller circles the women discussed and responded to the questions. They wrote their responses (captured in this report) and presented them to the whole group. While they were discussing and presenting, their words, activities and the room were also recorded through witnessing practices, including photos, word maps, and artistic renderings (these are also included in this report).

**What we heard:** Participant responses were recorded, through various witnessing practices, as part of a larger and holistic Métis feminist witnessing methodology. The purpose of this report is not to analyze the responses from the Métis women who participated in the event, but rather to document their perspectives. It aims to offer valuable insights into the unique experiences of Métis women, focusing on their encounters with resistance, survival, and healing. These accounts are examined through a transformational approach that envisions a world without gender-based violence.

## Methodology: Under the Kitchen Table—What We Heard

This report builds on a practice of sharing stories that might be done on the land while berry-picking, around a kitchen table while beading, as well as in the creative writing and art of Métis women, girls and gender-diverse relatives. The experience of listening, and witnessing the words, beading and laughter of Métis women, evoked a practice and reminders of childhood sitting under tables listening to laughter, truth-telling and theorizing.

### Witnessing Approach

This methodology is also a witnessing one, relational with conversation, beading, art and even silence at the core. This witnessing practice and methodology (Hunt 2014, 2018) is a Métis feminist and holistic model that follows in the traditions of Indigenous, Métis and Black feminist theorizing of love, rage, desire, resistance, and resurgence as the foundation from which to challenge sexualized violence (Clark et al., 2021).

A Métis feminist witnessing methodology (Clark et. al, 2021) is used to center sources which uphold the voices and practices of Métis women. The foundation for this Métis witnessing methodology was formed alongside relational knowledge from our collective work of witnessing resistance, survival and healing. This methodology was utilized in *Thanks for Listening: Witnessing Métis Women & Girls' Experiences of Violence & Pathways to Healing* (Clark et al., 2021). *Thanks for Listening* was initiated by the holistic grassroots Sashing our Warriors campaign to provide background for future programming designed for Métis women and girls. Examining violence against Métis women, girls, and gender-diverse individuals is important, integral, and timely to provide a basis for much needed funding for programming specific to the needs of Métis women, girls, and gender-diverse individuals in a culturally safe way (Dyck, 2019; Jones et al., 2020; Monchalin et al., 2020).

In alignment with this witnessing practice, Dr. Natalie Clark posed four sacred questions that were witnessed by the other two facilitators, Patricia Barkaskas and Robline Davey, the women gathered, and the MNBC staff observed. The gathering consisted of four round tables, each with four to seven Métis women, most of them engaged in various beading projects or working on healing colouring pages, supplied for the consultation. The facilitators presented each question to the participants, who subsequently engaged in lively discussion at their tables and collective recording of their responses, resulting in the following bulleted list of suggestions for ideas or how MNBC could take action towards creating healing spaces. The images of the chart paper follow the typed lists, along with the facilitators' documented active witnessing.

Below is the bulleted list, in the participants' words, in response to the four sacred questions, with sub-questions and descriptions. What follows are the list of dreams, ideas and recommendations from the women gathered.

## Four Sacred Questions

### 1. Looking Back: Honouring Coping/Survivance/Resistance

Métis women's and girls' resistance—what are the ceremonies, spaces, stories, songs, people and coping that helped Métis women girls, and including you survive, thrive and resist GBV (formal or informal) including all acts of resistance, not limited to poems, recipes, drawings, photos, etc.

- a. What are some of the strengths, survival & resistance/coping strategies for healing and survival that you have utilized,
- b. and that you have witnessed in other Métis women and girls?

### 2. Where we are now: Naming and Noting:

- a. What are the spaces, programs, moments where you feel witnessed, seen, safe, are part of your circle communities of care?
- b. What strategies do you and Métis girls, young women, and non-binary individuals in your community engage in to resist violence and support each other?

### 3. Looking Forward: Visioning: Healing Spaces, Programs etc.

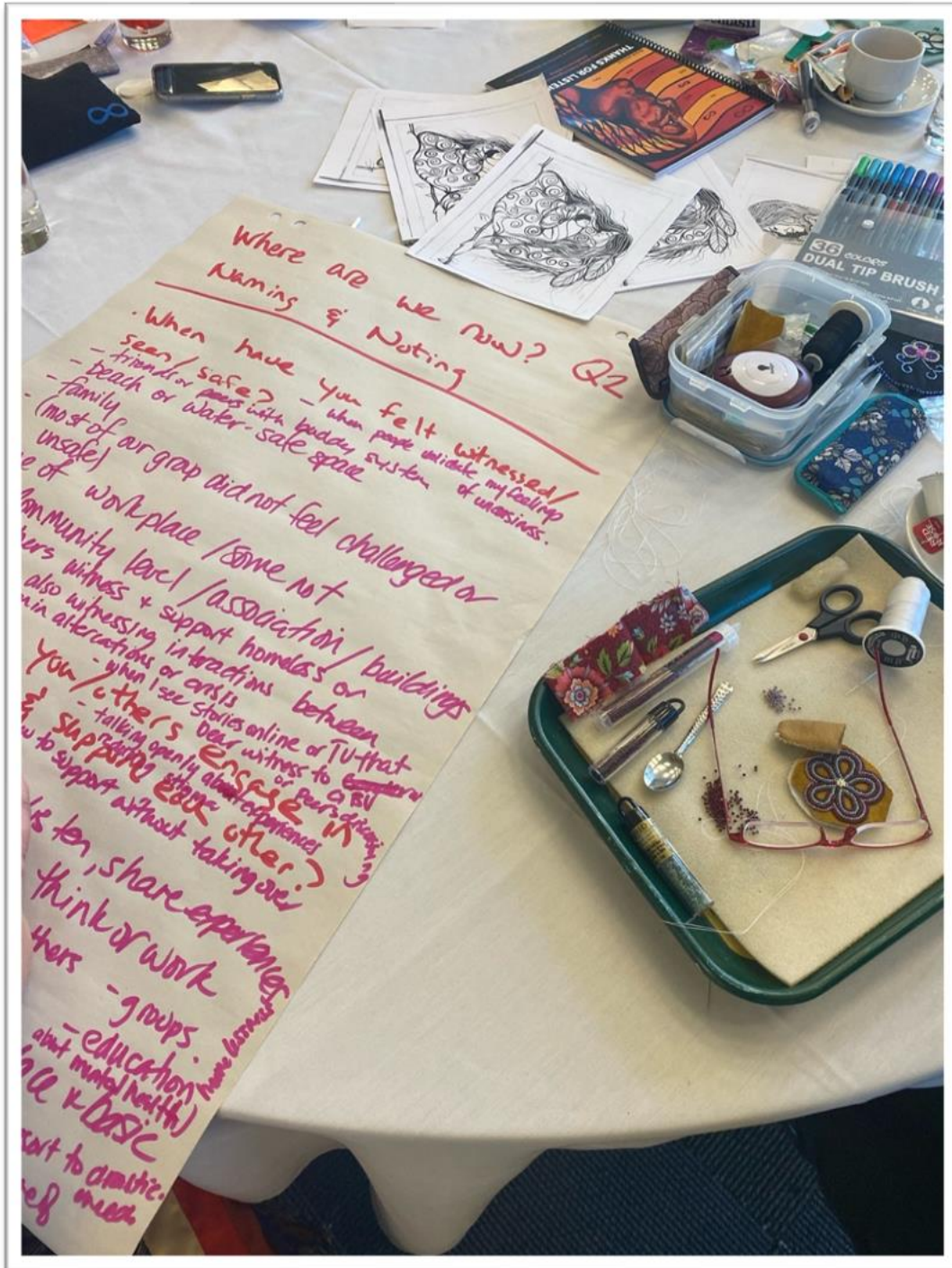
If you could design an ideal program to support Métis women, girls who experience GBV what would it be?

- a. What is your vision for change?
- b. How do you envision ending violence in our communities?
- c. What are some of your desires, wishes and dreams, and those of other Métis women and girls?
- d. (Imagining our future)? What practices, programs do you need developed and delivered to best support and celebrates our Métis women and girls to prevent violence and support our futures
- e. Describe in detail (art, words etc)
- f. What would be important to consider so diversity of Métis women and girls are included? (age, intersectionality, including geography, rural, urban, young, mothers, Elders etc).

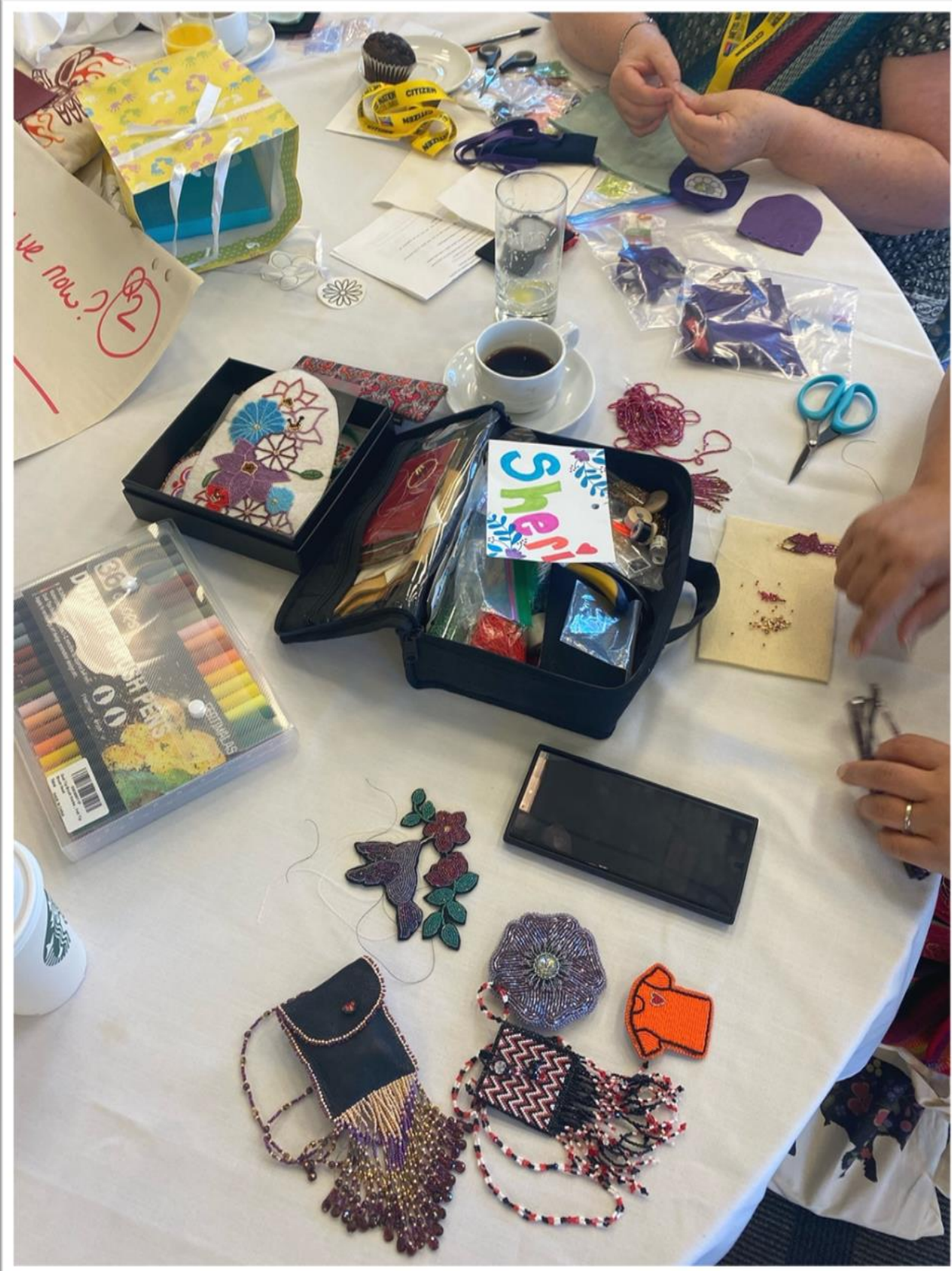
### 4. Prevention and Transformation of Conditions of Violence:

If a Métis girl in the future 7 generations from now wrote us a letter, would she say we did that eliminated GBV? (inspired by the work of Alexis Pauline Gumbs, Evidence, 2015).









# Under the Kitchen Table: Reaching back, Witnessing Now and Visioning Towards a Future Without Gender Based Violence

## Responses to the Four Sacred Questions

### 1. Looking Back: Honouring Coping/Survivance/Resistance

Participant's shared examples of both individual holistic wellness (mental, emotional, physical and spiritual), being grounded in identity as well as examples of collective care provided in relationships and connections with other Métis women and girls' including Métis ceremonies, spaces, stories, songs, people and coping that helped them and other Métis women girls, survive, thrive and resist Gender-based Violence in all its forms.

**a. What are some of the strengths, survival & resistance/coping strategies for healing and survival that you have utilized?**

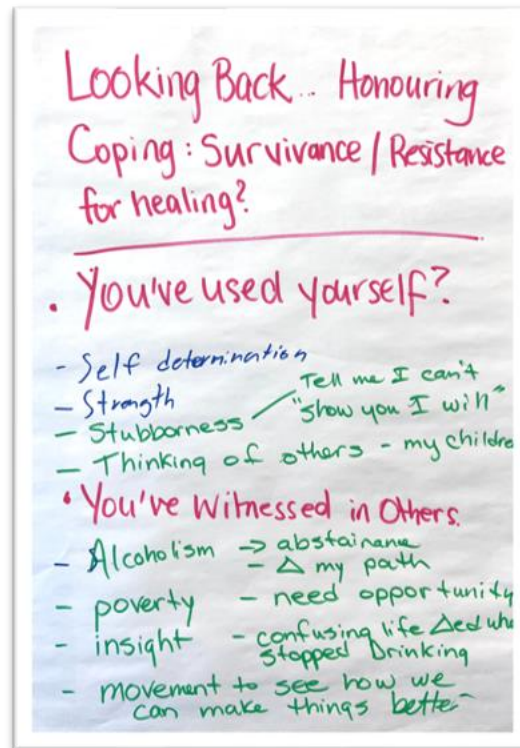
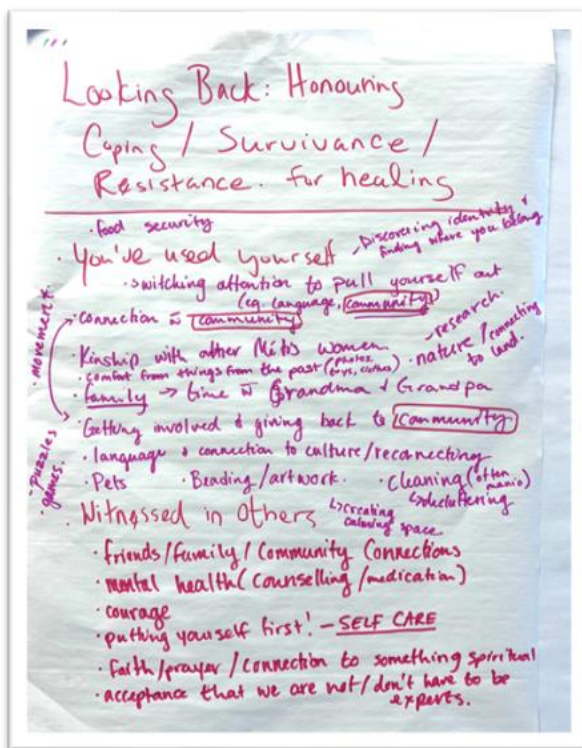
- Métis Identity
  - Discovering identity and finding where you belong
  - Finding Métis community
  - Language and connection to culture, reconnecting
- Self-regulation approaches (spiritual, emotional, mental)
  - Switching attention to pull yourself out
  - Be open
  - Self-determination
  - Visualization and manifestation
  - Finding balance



- Medicine wheel for wholistic wellness
- Métis counsellor
- Puzzles and Games
- Books – you can heal your life (Louise Hay)
- Self-regulation approaches (sensory & Physically-oriented techniques)
  - Laughter
  - Exercise/Movement
  - Smells are grounding – mother's perfume
  - Creating a physical space for yourself
  - Being in nature with animals and spirituality
  - Went to the water/forest
  - Washing dishes
  - Get busy
  - Cleaning and decluttering
  - Eat chocolate
  - Cried
  - Work for coping
  - Medical help
  - Kayaking
  - Gardening
- Ceremonial (Spiritual)
  - Smudging
  - Tattoos
- Arts-based techniques
  - Beading/art work
- Food security
  - Breaking bread
  - Health in nature, cooking, feeding family and friends
- Collective Care - Connection to and support within community
  - Volunteerism - Working with community
  - Acknowledging Ancestors – we come from strong people
  - Kinship with other Métis women
  - Stories
  - Learning for passing on from Elders, children, friends
  - Gatherings involved and giving back to community
- Family – Being around family (2)
  - Time with Grandma and Grandpa



- Comfort from things from the past (photos, toys, clothes)
- Thinking of others – my children
- My grandma
- Pets
- Strength and Leadership
  - Stubbornness “tell me I can’t, I will show you I will”
  - Strength of our women
  - Leaders who pass strength along

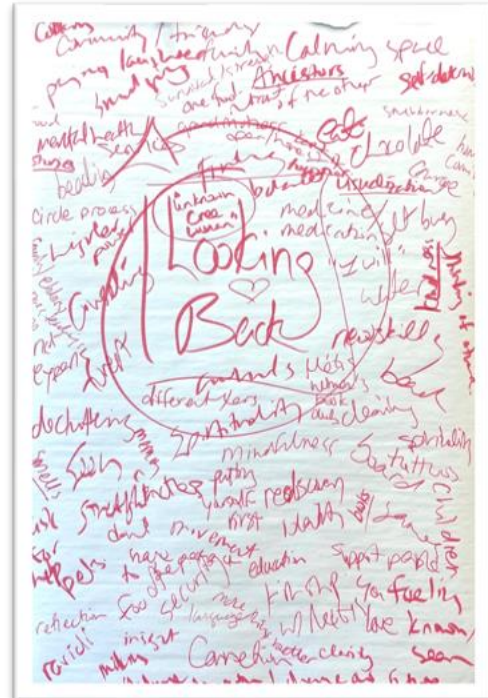
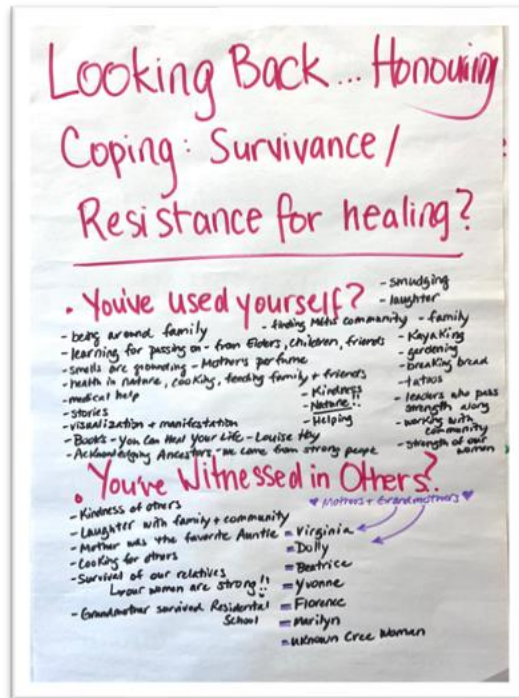


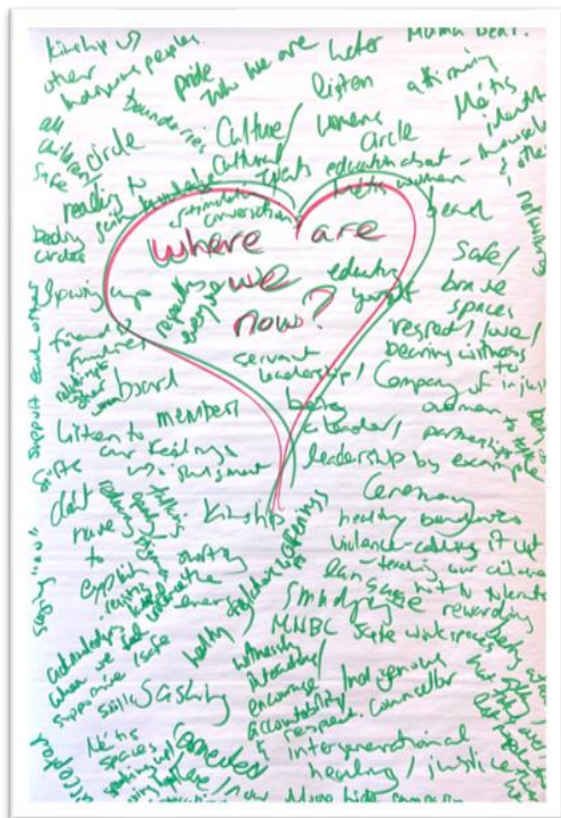
**b. and that you have witnessed in other Métis women and girls?**

- Creating calming spaces
  - Beading
  - Chanting
- Friends/family, community connections
  - Kindness of others
  - Playing board games
  - Mother was the favourite Auntie
  - Laughter with family and community
  - Grandmother survival of residential school

- Mothers and Grandmothers –
  - Virginia,
  - Beatrice,
  - Yvonne,
  - Florence,
  - Marilyn,
  - Unknown Cree Woman
- Mental health counselling, medications
  - Survival of our relatives – our women are strong!!
  - Insight – confusing life stopped when I stopped drinking
- Courage
  - Lead with a kind heart
  - Listen to your higher power
- Putting yourself first! SELF CARE
  - Sleep and Rest
  - Spending time with others
  - One foot in front of the other
  - Believe in yourself
  - Go to the bath
  - Bathing in the River
  - Acceptance that we are not/don't have to be experts
  - Swimming/competing
  - Alcoholism – to abstinence
- Care for Others
  - Sharing a meal
  - Seeing strength in others
  - Cooking for others
- Ceremonial Strategies
  - Sweat Lodge
  - Faith/prayer/connection to something spiritual
  - Praying/smudging
  - Meditating
- Arts-based strategies
  - Music/singing
  - Dance
  - Crafting (2)

- Painting
- Opportunities
  - From poverty to my path, need opportunity
  - Movement to see how we can make things better





## 2. Where We Are Now: Naming & Noting

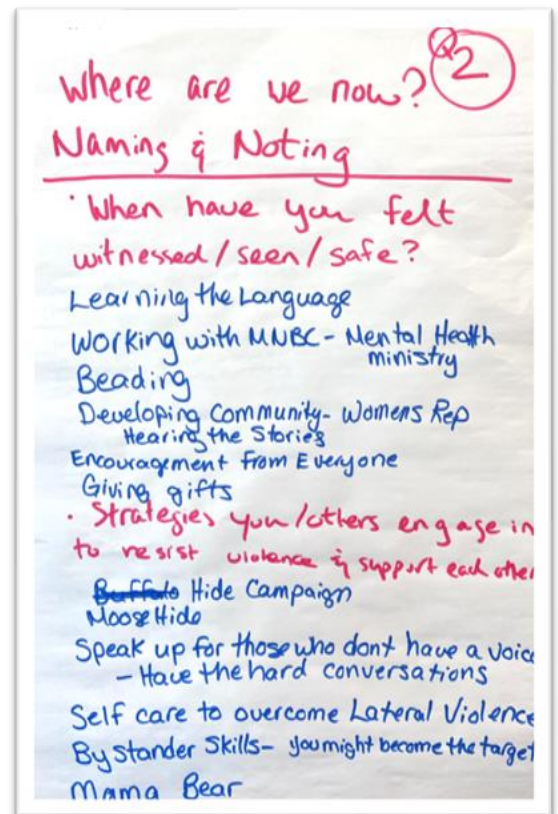
In response to this question, participants collectively expressed a sense of Métis identity, family and community as being foundational to their wellbeing and safety. There was also a strong expression of caring for others in community and within family in order to ensure their wellbeing. Participants asserted their need to care for others, their families and communities, when resisting GBV. An overall observation was that, despite many formal mechanisms or resources, many of which are not Métis-specific and/ or do not provide Métis-specific culturally-informed approaches, informal networks of care exist through the Métis community and within families. These are relied upon as part of strategies to resist GBV and support women and girls.

### a. What are the spaces, programs, moments where you feel witnessed, seen, safe, are part of your circle communities of care?

- Family
  - Family and friends
  - Being a parent for our children and ensuring their well-being
  - With family I feel safe
  - Surrounded by family and friends
- Métis Identity
  - Métis community level/ associations/ buildings
  - Involvement in chartered communities
  - Within Métis community
  - Women's Rep
  - Hearing the stories
  - Becoming a board member of SDMA
  - Hosting cultural events and creating community
  - Learning the language
  - Developing community



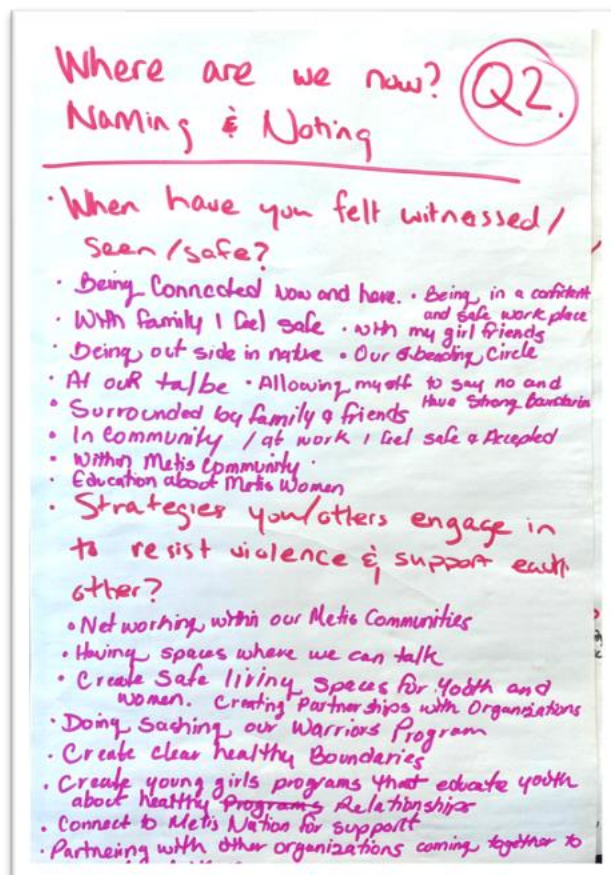
- Working with MNBC
  - Mental Health Ministry
- In circle with Métis women
  - a kinship and understanding
- Education about Métis women
- Affirming Métis identity in self and others
- Sharing pride
- Self-regulation approaches (spiritual, emotional, mental)
  - When people validate my feelings of uneasiness
  - Allowing myself to say no and have strong boundaries
- Self-regulation approaches (sensory & physically-oriented techniques)
  - Being connected to now and here
- Care for Others
  - Giving gifts
  - Watched others witness and support homeless or unhoused folks, also witnessing interactions between police and them in altercations or crisis
- Mental health counselling, medications
  - Using an Indigenous counsellor
- Ceremonial Strategies
  - Sashing, smudging
- Arts-based strategies
  - Beading
  - Our beading circle
- Connecting with nature/ creating safe spaces
  - Beach or water
    - safe space
  - Being outside in nature
- Strength and Leadership
  - Some of workplace/ some not
  - Being in a confident and safe workplace



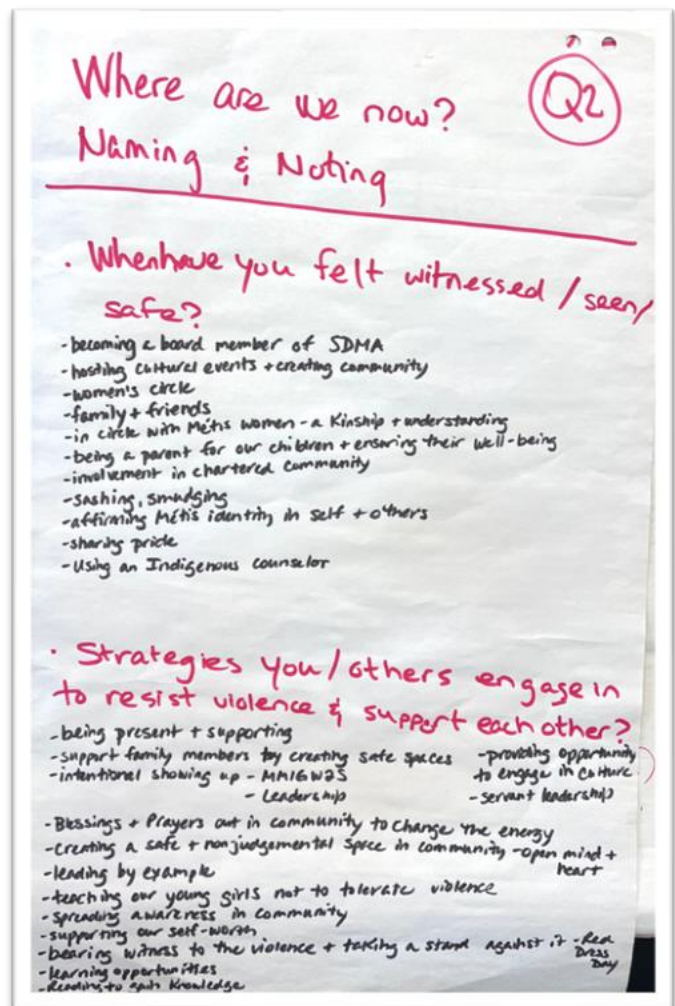
- Courage
  - Most of our group did not feel challenged or unsafe
- Connection to and support within community
  - Friends or peers with buddy system
  - Encouragement from everyone
  - When I see stories online or TV that bear witness to GBV or peers discussing
  - Women's circle
  - With my girlfriends
  - At our table
  - In community/ at work I feel safe and accepted

**b. What strategies do you and Métis girls, young women, and non-binary individuals in your community engage in to resist violence and support each other?**

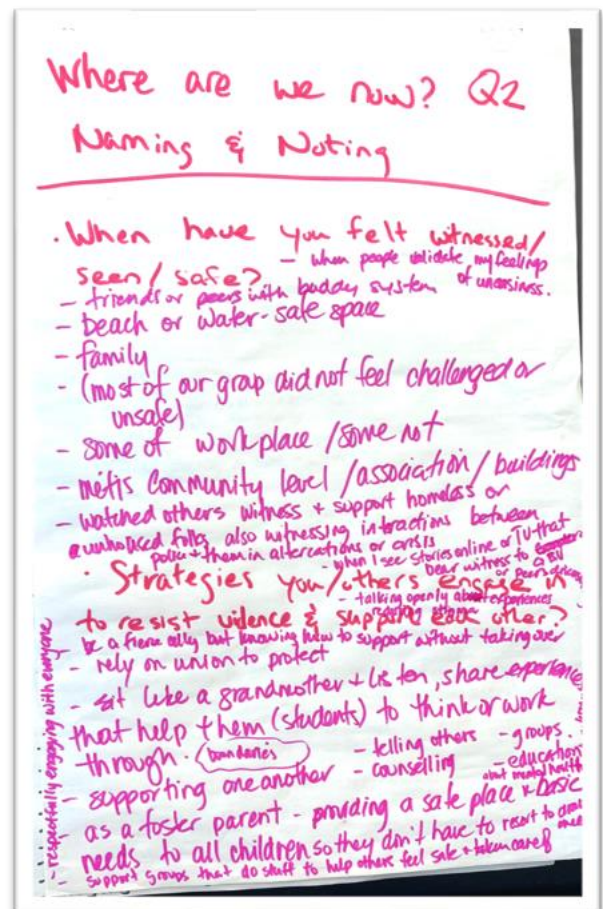
- Family
  - As a foster parent, providing a safe place and basic needs to all children, so they don't have to resort to dramatic means
  - Mama Bear
  - Support family members by creating safe spaces
- Métis Identity
  - Networking within our Métis communities
  - Connect to Métis Nation for support
  - Providing opportunities to engage in culture
  - Doing Sashing Our Warriors Program
- Putting yourself first! SELF CARE
  - Self care to overcome lateral violence
  - Supporting our self-worth
- Self-regulation approaches (spiritual, emotional, mental)
  - Boundaries
  - Create clear, healthy boundaries
  - Open mind and heart
- Care for Others



- Be a fierce ally but knowing how to support without taking over
- Respectfully engaging with everyone
- Sit like a grandmother and listen/ share experiences that help them (students) to think or work through
- Speak up for those who don't have a voice
- Being present and supporting
- Intentional showing up ie: MMIWG2S
- Teaching our young girls not to tolerate violence
- Mental health counselling, medications
  - Counselling
  - Support groups that do stuff to help others feel safe and taken care of
- Ceremonial Strategies
  - Blessing and prayers out in community to change the energy
- Connecting with nature/ creating safe spaces
  - Creating a safe and nonjudgmental space in community
  - Having spaces where we can talk
  - Create safe living spaces for youth and women
- Strength and Leadership
  - Servant leadership
  - Leadership
  - Leading by example



- Courage
  - Bystander skills/ you might become the target
  - Have the hard conversations
  - Bearing witness to the violence and taking a stand against it ie: Red Dress Day
- Connection to and support within community
  - Talking openly about experiences
  - Rely on Union to protect
  - Telling others
  - Education about mental health/ homelessness
  - Groups
  - Spreading awareness in the community
  - Creating partnerships with organizations
  - Partnering with other organizations/ coming together to support each other
- Opportunities
  - Create young girls' programs that educate youth about healthy relationships
  - Learning opportunities
  - Reading to gain knowledge
- Boys & Men's Groups
  - Moosehide Campaign

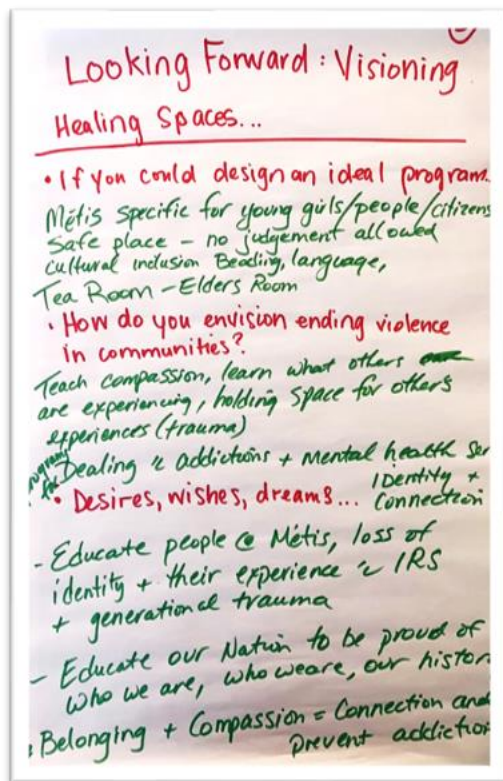




### 3. Looking Forward: Visioning Healing Spaces & Programs

#### a. If you could design an ideal program to support Métis women, girls who experience GBV what would it be?

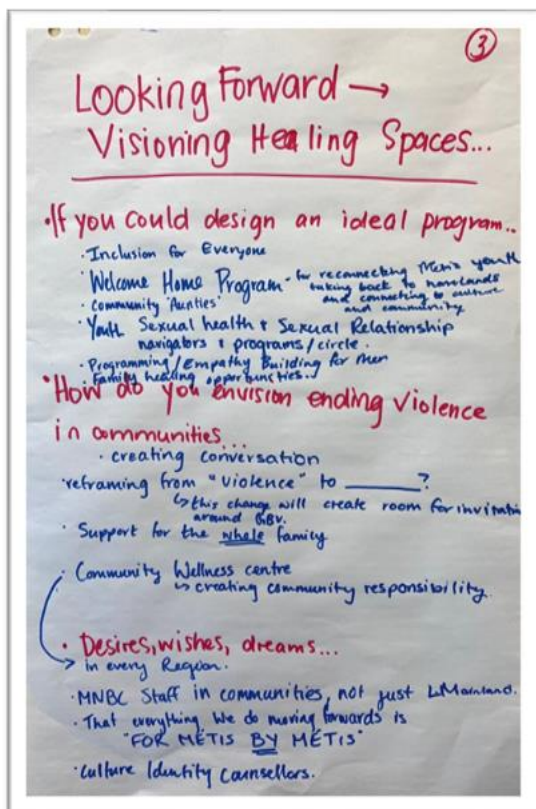
- What is your vision for change?
- How do you envision ending violence in our communities?
- What are some of your desires, wishes and dreams, and those of other Métis women and girls?
- (Imagining our future)? What practices, programs do you need developed and delivered to best support and celebrates our Métis women and girls to prevent violence and support our futures
- Describe in detail (art, words etc)
- What would be important to consider so diversity of Métis women and girls are included? (age, intersectionality, including geography, rural, urban, young, mothers, Elders etc)



In general, the participants expressed a collective vision of an inclusive and welcoming physical space, such as a community center, dedicated to the development of Métis-specific programs for Métis citizens. This envisioned space would provide access to various resources, including Métis crafts, wellness activities, traditional medicine, sexual health education, healthcare services, youth groups, education opportunities, and adjacent housing. The significance of accessibility was emphasized multiple times, indicating the importance of not only accommodating individuals with disabilities but also ensuring inclusion for all genders and individuals. Many participants highlighted the need for counseling services that offer support for identity, building connections, and connecting youth to land-based practices.

Furthermore, there was a strong interest in barrier-free harm reduction support, as well as prevention and support practices for healing. Education emerged as a central theme,

with a particular focus on youth programming, substance use support, men's initiatives, support for mothers, families, and the overall community. The goal is to cultivate Métis awareness and foster the advancement of Métis initiatives within the community.

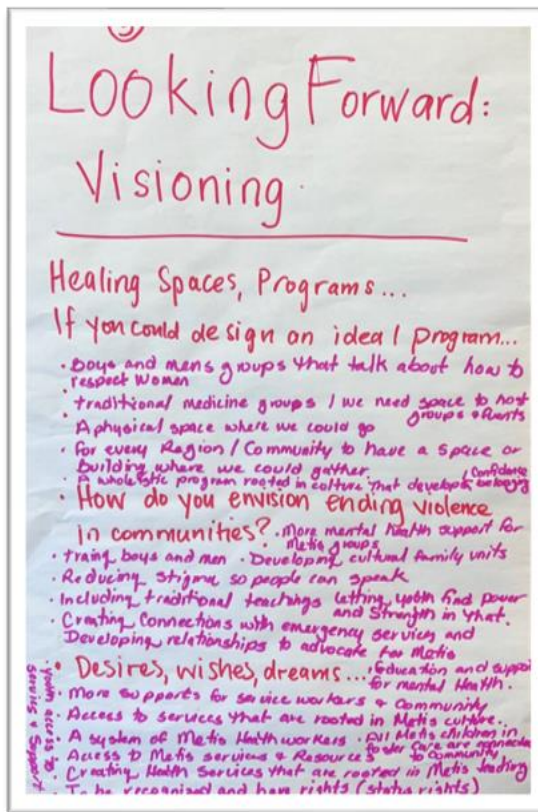
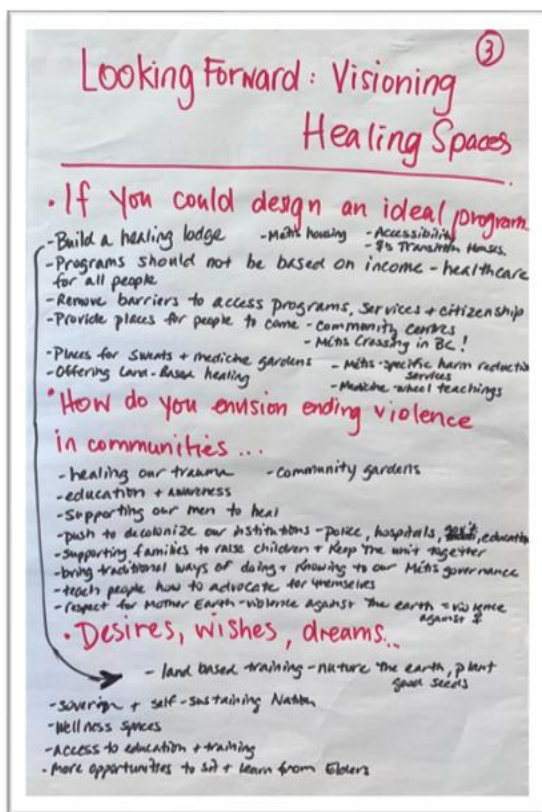


**a. If you could design an ideal program, what would it look like?**

- Cultural programming
  - Opportunities to engage in beading, language, traditional Métis crafts and artwork
  - Wholistic programs
  - Rooted in Métis culture that develops confidence and belonging
  - Community Aunties
- Inclusion - programming for everyone
  - Young women, girls, people, citizens, young men, boys, Elders
  - Safe place - cultivate psychological safety
  - No judgment allowed
- Boys & Men's Groups
  - Empathy Building for Métis Men
  - Discuss how to respect women
- Family Healing Opportunities
- Welcome Home Program
  - For reconnecting Métis youth
  - Taking youth back to the homelands and connecting them to culture and community
- Youth Sexual Health and Sexual Relationship Program
  - Navigators, programs and circle
- Healthcare equity and accessibility
  - Programs should not be income dependent
  - Healthcare for everyone
- Healing lodges
  - Sweats
  - Ceremony
  - Medicine gardens
  - Métis specific harm reduction services
  - Medicine wheel teachings
- Métis specific housing
  - Transition Houses for Métis
- Accessibility

- Remove barriers to access programming, services and citizenship
- Inclusion for everyone
- Métis Centered Community Centres
  - Provide places for people to gather and access
  - Physical space to host groups, workshops and learning opportunities (2)
  - Métis Crossing in BC
  - In each Region/Community
  - Building to gather in
  - Elder's Room / Tea Room
- Traditional Medicine Groups and Knowledge

**b. How do you envision ending violence in communities?**



- Community Wellness Centre
  - Creating community responsibility
  - More Mental health support for Métis groups (3)
  - Education and support for mental health
  - Heal trauma (2)
  - Support our men to heal

- Training for men and boys
  - Mental Health and addictions programming
  - Identity and Connections
- Reduce stigma so people feel comfortable to speak
  - Reframe violence to \_\_\_\_\_?
  - Shifting language can create room for invitation around GBV
  - Create opportunities for conversation
- Provide education, teachings, and awareness
  - How to advocate for themselves
  - Compassion for others
  - Hold space for others
  - Learn what others have experienced
- Bring traditional ways of doing and knowing
  - To our Métis governance
  - For youth to find power and strength
- Decolonize our institutions
  - Police
  - Hospitals
  - Government agencies and services
  - Educational institutions and systems
- Support for the whole family
  - Support for families to raise children
  - Mandatory to keep the family unit together
  - Developing cultural family units
  - Services for Identity and connections
- Respect for mother earth
  - Violence against the earth = violence against women
  - Create and install community gardens
- Creating connections with emergency services to develop relationships to advocate for Métis



**c. What are your desires, wishes, dreams for the future?**

- Moving forward, everything that is created is for Métis, by Métis
- Belonging and compassion = Connection to prevent addiction
- Access to education and training in every region/community
  - Land based training
  - Access to and awareness of nature and the earth
  - More opportunities to sit with and learn from Elders
  - MNBC staff in communities locally instead of situated in lower mainland
  - For non-Métis about the Métis
- Loss of identity
- Experiences with IRSS
  - Inter-generational trauma
- For Métis to foster pride in our Nation
  - Who we are
  - Who we were
  - Our history
- Plant good seeds
- Become a sovereign and self-sustaining nation
  - To be recognized and have rights (status and rights)
- Wellness spaces
- Access to services and resources that are rooted in Métis culture (2)
  - More support for service workers and Community
- All Métis children in foster care are connected to Community
- A system of Métis health workers
  - Create health services that are rooted in Métis teachings
  - Cultural identity counsellors



**4. Prevention and Transformation of Conditions of Violence**

The final question was a self-reflexive piece for each participant to work on, during which the facilitators created a quiet space with music playing for the participants to engage in this writing if they wished. We invite the reader to also respond to this question in a similar way.

This question is based on the work of Alexis Pauline Gumbs, *Evidence* (2015). In this work, a letter from a girl named Alandria, age 12, writing from the future back to her Ancestor Alexis.

We include the letter here which is an excerpt of the longer chapter.

*Ancestor Alexis,*

*I've heard about you. I've even read some of your writing. Everyone says I have an old soul, and I'm really interested in what it was like back when you lived. It seems like people were afraid a lot. Maybe every day? It's hard to imagine, but it seems that way from the writing. I have to remember that no one knew that things would get better, and that even people who were working to make it happen had to live with oppression every day. I read your writing and the writing of your other comrades from that time and I feel grateful. It seems like maybe you knew about us. It feels like you loved us already. Thank you for being brave.*

*I'm 12 and last year I did a project for our community about your time, the time of silence-breaking. I made a poster and everything and an interactive dance. A friend of mine did one on the second abbreviated ice age instigated by oil on fire, but I thought writing about the time of silence-breaking would be harder. The ice continents were in your imaginations, the limits of your memory melted, you spoke about the hard things and you could see your own voices. It must feel almost like a force of nature where you live. I'm 12 and you would have thought of me as part of your family, even though now we do family differently; we have chosen family now, so maybe we would just be comrades if you lived here in this generation.*

*Who knows? But I think that if you met me, you would feel like we have some things in common. I'm a poet and I use interactive dance so maybe you would choose me as family. I know I would choose you. You could have been at my wow kapow ritual that happened recently. In our community, 12 is an important accountability age. We named this ritual for how it feels in our bodies around now. Wow kapow. I think you used to call it the pituitary gland.*

*We are here five generations after you and a lot has happened. A lot of the things that used to exist when you were 12 and even when you were 28 don't exist anymore.*

*People broke a lot of things other than silence during your lifetime. And people learned how to grow new things and in new ways. Now we are very good at growing. I'm growing a lot right now and everyone is supportive of growing time, which includes day dreams, deep breaths, and quiet walks. No one is impatient while anyone else is growing. It seems like people are growing all the time in different ways. It was great to learn about you and a time when whole communities decided to grow past silence. It is hard to read about the fact that sexual abuse, what we would call the deepest violation of someone else's growing, used to happen all the time. It is hard to imagine what it felt like to people to walk around with all that hurt from harming and being harmed. But I can tell from the writing that people were afraid so much. History was so close. But the amazing thing is how people spoke and wrote and danced anyway. Imagine being afraid to speak.*

*Anyway. I wanted to say thank you. Now in the 5th generation since the time of the silence breaking we are called hope holders and healers. There are still people doing a lot of healing, but it seems like generation after generation people got less and less afraid. People took those writings and started to recite them and then another generation hummed their melodies and then another generation clicked their rhythms and then another generation just walked them with their feet and now we just breathe it, what you were saying before about how love is the most powerful thing. About how everything and everyone is sacred.*

*I read a really old story where the character believed that time travel was dangerous because if you change one thing in the past the whole future changes and then you might never get born. I am still here writing this though so I think it's ok to tell you that everything works out. That it's ok. And it's not easy all the time, not even here, because so much has been broken, besides silence, but it is possible, it does feel possible. My friends and I feel possible all the time. So when you get afraid to speak, remember that you all were part of us all learning how to just do it. And most... take it for granted. Except poets like me. I remember you. I feel it. Wow. Kapow.*

*love,  
alandria" (p.34-36)*

Our question to the participants in the gathering, and to you, the reader of this report, is to write a letter from a future Ancestor. If a Métis girl in the future seven generations from now wrote *you* a letter – what would she say you about what we and her other Métis ancestors did to eliminate GBV?

- How will your future relation write to you to thank you, her ancestor, for the work you did to create a future without GBV?
- What would she say about the time you live in and how the world shifted through your work, and the work of others, to imagine and then create a GBV-free future for her?
- What gifts did she inherit from you and others doing this work to ensure she, and other Métis girls, women, gender-diverse and Two-spirit individuals, are free to live in a world where GBV is no longer a reality?



## Recognition of Patterns, Sharing Bead Work: Four Wise Practice Recommendations

Indigenous trauma and violence informed practices call for the development of models for addressing violence that are aligned with Indigenous values, Indigenous paradigms and epistemologies and that are based in strengths, resistance and survival. I suggest that we move beyond decolonizing Western models of trauma, and instead attend to the centering of *wise practices* and specific Indigenous Nations approaches within a web of relational accountability (Clark, 2016, p. 11).

Next, the anti-violence wisdom of Métis women, girls, are centered to identify four (4) patterns that were shared during the session. This document presents a comprehensive overview of wise practice recommendations for the effective implementation of best practices, supported by illustrative examples for each wise practice.

### **Pattern 1: Inclusive Métis-Specific & Violence-Informed Programming**

#### ***Wise Practice Recommendation***

Develop Métis understandings of sexualized violence within an intersectional framework that considers gender-based colonialism and build programming that recognizes Métis laws, self-determination and ideas of consent.

Indigenous GBA+, or Indigenous intersectionality not only recognizes the multi-generational impact of colonization and violence but points towards curriculum and policy solutions that acknowledge sovereignty, build on resistance and emerge from the strengths within the community and within Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse individuals themselves. Indigenous girls, women and gender-



diverse individuals are the best guides of determining their own needs in this respect, as they are already engaging in daily acts of understanding, negotiating and resisting colonial sexualized violence (Clark, 2016).

Métis intersectionality requires acknowledging that sexual violence is a mechanism of power that emerges within contexts of settler colonialism, patriarchy, heteronormativity and other systems of oppression. These intersecting dynamics of colonial violence requires teaching about sexualized violence through Métis feminist, intersectional, anti-colonial and other critical lenses as an important part of the work.

Existing models of sexual violence curriculum and even trauma-informed practice do not account for ongoing and daily experiences of violence of colonialism and intersecting acts of racism, sexism, ableism, transphobia or homophobia through institutional policies and programs; nor for historic and ongoing resistance, activism and survivance by Métis peoples.

Métis-specific GBV and intersectional programming could include:

***Examples:***

- Sexual violence programs for Métis women and girls
- Creating formalized Métis-specific responses to GBV within community that identify and address the root causes of violence and how attitudes, actions and systemic structures perpetuate GBV against Métis women, girls and gender-diverse relatives.
- Educating boys and men about the impacts of patriarchy and misogyny, and teaching them about respectful relationships
- Métis GBA+ Toolkit <https://metiswomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Metis-Specific-GBA-Tool.pdf>
- Indigenous GBA+ Toolkit [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/indigenous-people/aboriginal-peoples-documents/maciw\\_igba\\_toolkit.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/indigenous-people/aboriginal-peoples-documents/maciw_igba_toolkit.pdf)/Indigenous Intersectionality/Red Intersectionality

## **Pattern 2: Spaces for Community Gatherings, Programming, Ceremonies**

### ***Wise Practice Recommendation***

Centre and create safe witnessing and listening spaces for voices of all Métis people, including all genders and ages. “As witness, we have a role that is not to take up the voice or story of that which we have witnessed, nor to change the story, but to ensure the truths of the acts can be comprehended, honored and validated” (Sarah Hunt, 2014, p. 38). The work before us needs to answer the questions:

*Question 1: How can we be a good witness to Métis survivors of sexualized violence?*

*Question 2: How can we comprehend, honor and validate the stories we receive from them? What ways can we create space, and centre the voices of Métis women, girls and gender-diverse relatives in our work?*

As Natalie Clark has wrote previously:

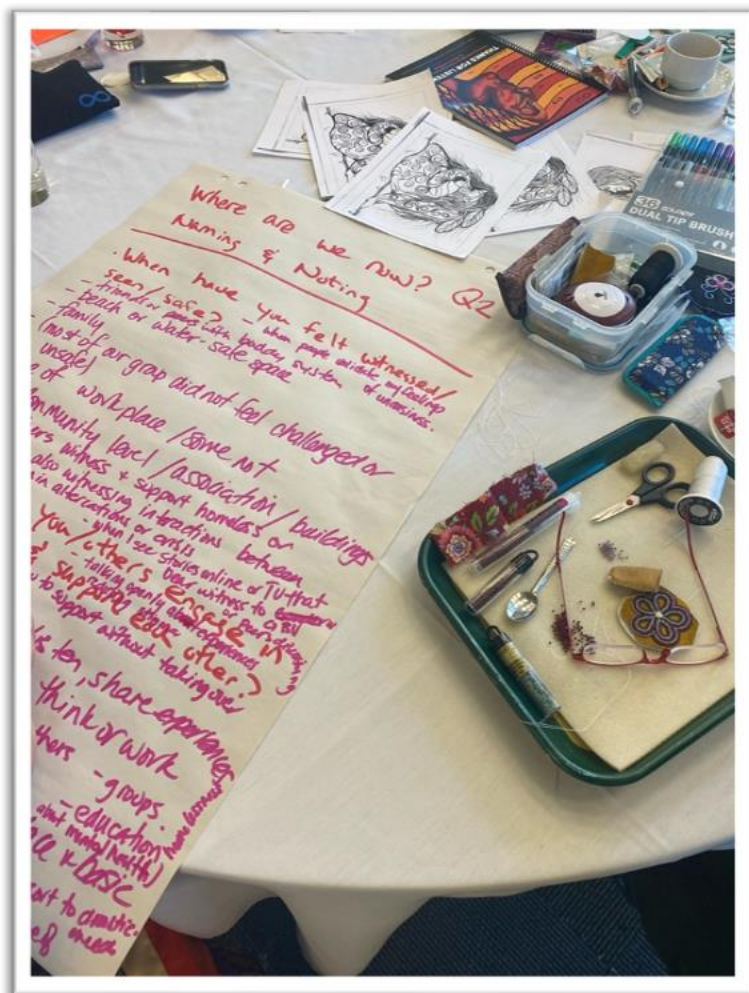
*the young Indigenous women I work with and the circle of girls and women who received their stories, are all engaged in intimate acts of decolonizing, both through theorizing about violence and the forms that it takes, as well as through truth-telling in certain spaces and relationships, such as the Indigenous grrlz groups that facilitate and allow for relational witnessing and accountability. Listening to the voices of young women, girls two-spirit and gender diverse people is necessary for sexual violence to be understood in the context of colonial violence as it is experienced by Métis women and girls... (Clark, 2016).*

There is a need to centre and create space for the voices of all Métis people—Métis specific spaces in which services are focused on holistic wellness and supports that educate and empower. These services would provide wrap-around support, such as counselling, girls and women's groups, youth-specific programming, groups for gender-diverse relatives, employment supports and housing for Elders and youth. Key is a Métis-specific physical space where women's and girls' voices and experiences are upheld and honoured, and where they can engage in activities that strengthen Métis cultural practices, such as a Métis community centres.

### ***Examples:***

- Gatherings such as this event in a rented space.
- *Thanks for Listening* MNBC consultation and report (Clark et al., 2020).
- [Kikéyelc: A Place of Belonging](https://lmofcs.ca/kik%C3%A9yelc-a-place-of-belonging/) A culturally safe supported housing for Indigenous youth and Elders in Kamloops BC (<https://lmofcs.ca/kik%C3%A9yelc-a-place-of-belonging/>)





### **Pattern 3: Métis-focused Sexualized Violence Curriculum & Consultation**

#### **Wise Practice Recommendation**

Commit to the development of curriculum and programming on sexualized violence that actively resists narratives of risk and harm, instead centering realities of violence alongside stories of Métis women, girls and gender-diverse peoples' strength, resiliency and survivance. Develop curriculum around Métis sexualized violence groups, supporting and witnessing survivors of violence.

Following the wisdom of Indigenous youth leaders, we can embrace the

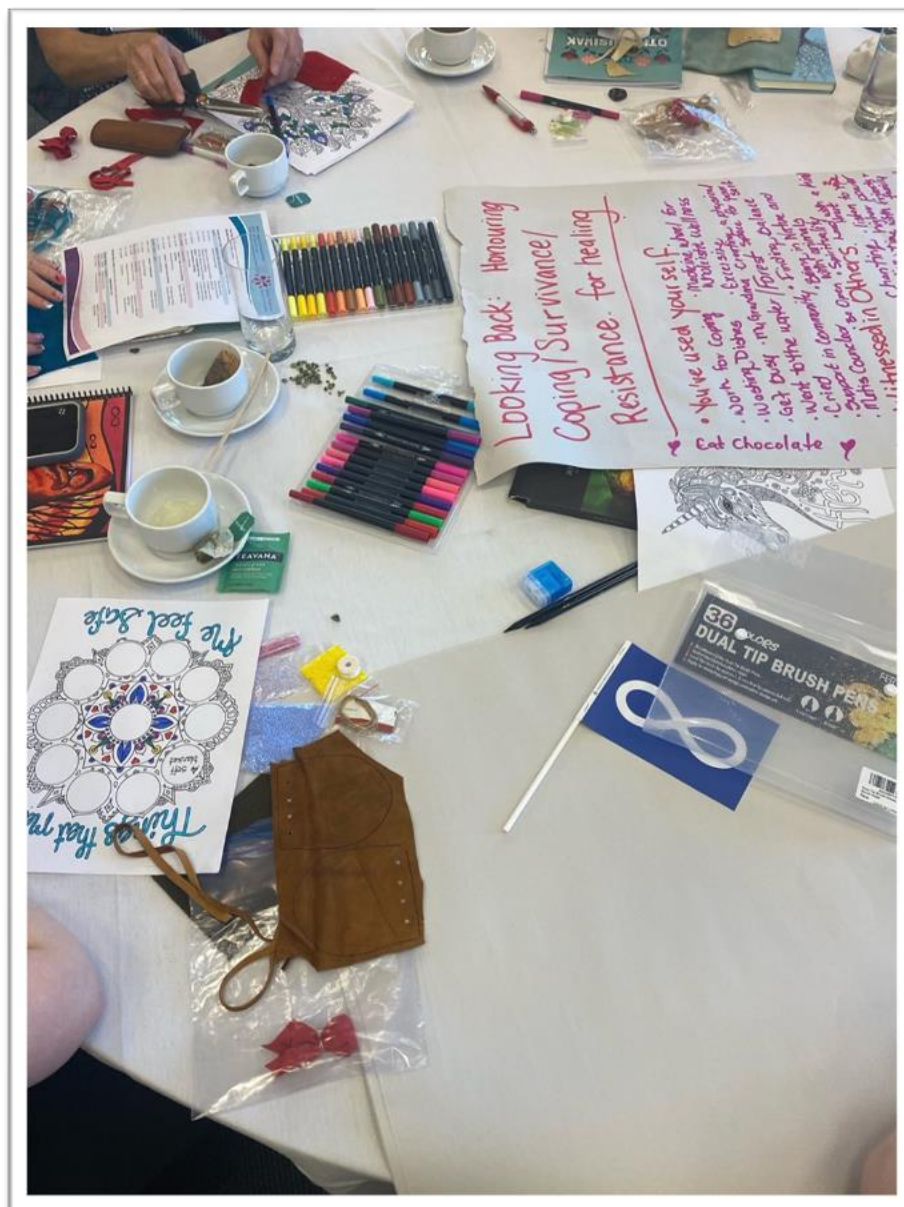
model that resistance is both intergenerational and is being given new meaning as youth reclaim their bodies as sites of self-determination rather than risk. “Resistance Is Sexy Means that responding to oppression can be done in a way that recognizes the organizing of our ancestors and Indigenous youth who are living resistance every day; and that reclaiming our bodies and restoring our cultures are part of the process” (Native Youth Sexual Health Network <https://www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com/what-we-believe-in>)

“Being More Than “At Risk” and “Vulnerable” Means that being Indigenous or a young person is not a “risk” or “vulnerability” factor all by itself. In fact being ourselves can be empowering. What actually puts our lives “at risk” are things such as racism, colonialism, and not having access to culturally safe resources and supports” (Native Youth Sexual Health Network, <https://www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com/what-we-believe-in>).

#### **Examples:**



- *Decolonizing Rape Culture* UBC, TRU events and working groups
- Thanks for Listening MNBC report (<https://www.mnbc.ca/media/1216>)
- Ask Auntie Indigenous Girls Group Curriculum (<https://www.indigenouslyouthwellness.ca/wellness-quests/ask-auntie>)
- Neskonlith Grrlz Group (Natalie Clark, Elder Minnie Grinder)
- Clark, Natalie & Hunt, Sarah & National Indigenous Youth Council on HIV/AIDS (NIYCHA). (2017). *Beyond "At Risk": Indigenous Youth Speak to Service Providers.*



## **Pattern 4: Holistic Wellness—Grounded in Identity and Community Care**

### ***Wise Practice Recommendation***

Métis women and girls' physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being is deeply connected to their particular experiences of being Métis. Integral to holistic wellness is the need for a recognition of our identity and ability to take pride in being Métis. This, in combination with a connection to the broader Métis community—a sense of collective belonging—are critical to wellbeing across a lifespan.

This is visible from our extensive research for the *Thanks for Listening* Report (Clark et al, 2021), what we heard at this gathering, and the leadership work of generations of Métis people simply caring for one another in everyday ways. This loving labour is unseen in research, not formalized in programs, but takes place in the sacred and informal spaces between us.

One of the central recommendations is to create avenues for Métis women, girls, two-spirit and gender diverse people of all ages to put forward requests for new methods to increase community care, and to ensure or provide the funds to support this work.

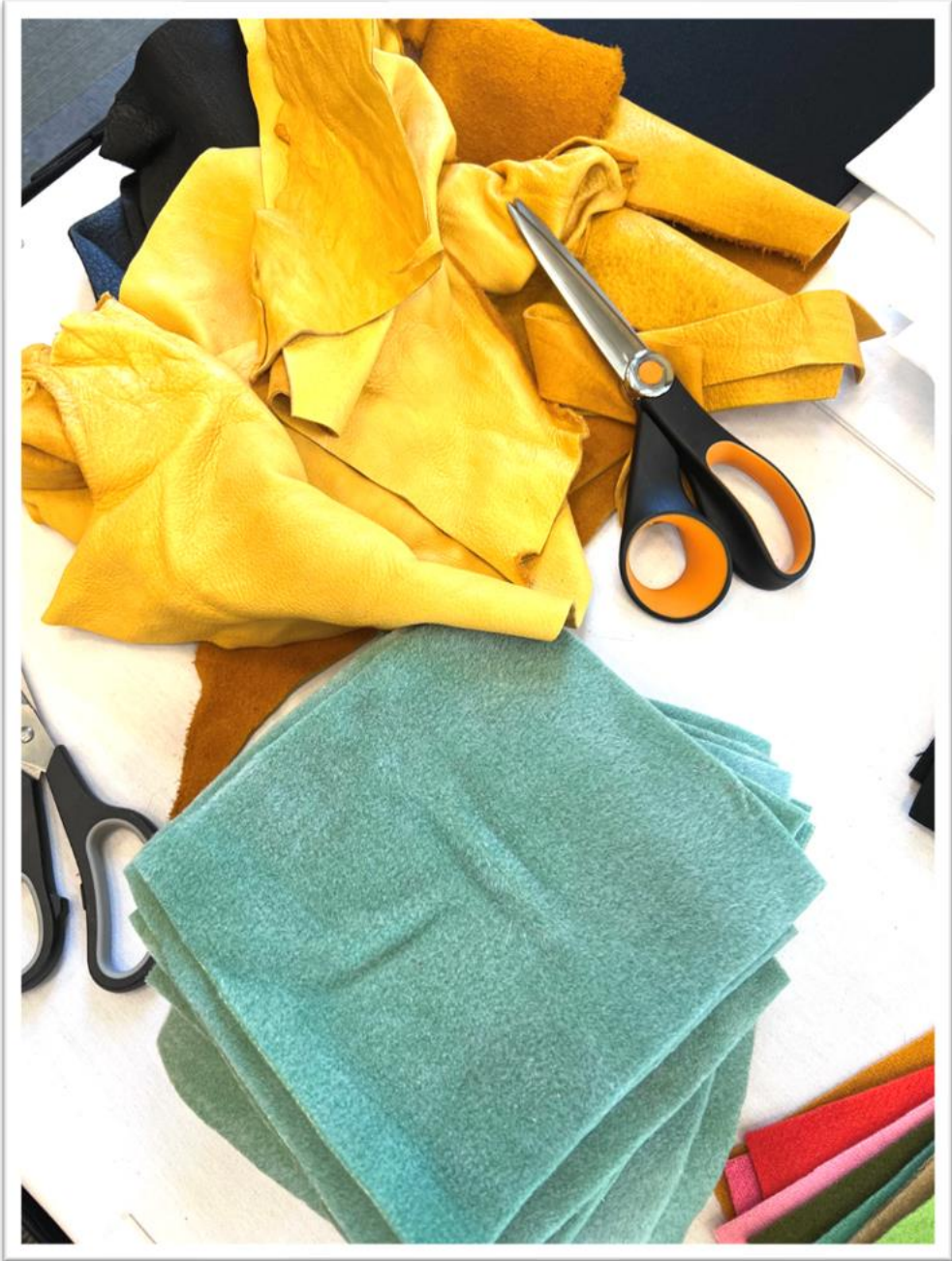
Holistic wellness includes knowledge of who you are and who you belong to within the institutions that organize and govern our lives. These can be educational and legal systems, or family and community structures. Métis institutions, systems, and structures, like those of other Indigenous groups in Canada, have been distorted, disrupted, dismantled, and or destroyed through colonial strategies aimed at genocide of Indigenous peoples, communities, and Nations—replaced almost entirely with Canadian institutions.

These colonial institutions have not acknowledged or recognized Métis self-determination and sovereignty and were purposely built to eradicate the Métis Nation, and collectively held Métis rights, where they exist, over time, assimilating Métis people as Canadian citizens (Desmarais, 2017). This history of genocide, along with anti-Indigenous, and specifically anti-Métis, racism has resulted in loss of knowledge about Métis culture, society and institutions, contributing to feelings of personal shame in possessing Métis identity.

Métis women and girls must have access to the institutions of Métis society and know their culture. They need to be able to take pride in who they are as Métis women and girls, and feel accepted and supported so that they can thrive in their communities and within broader society.

### ***Examples:***

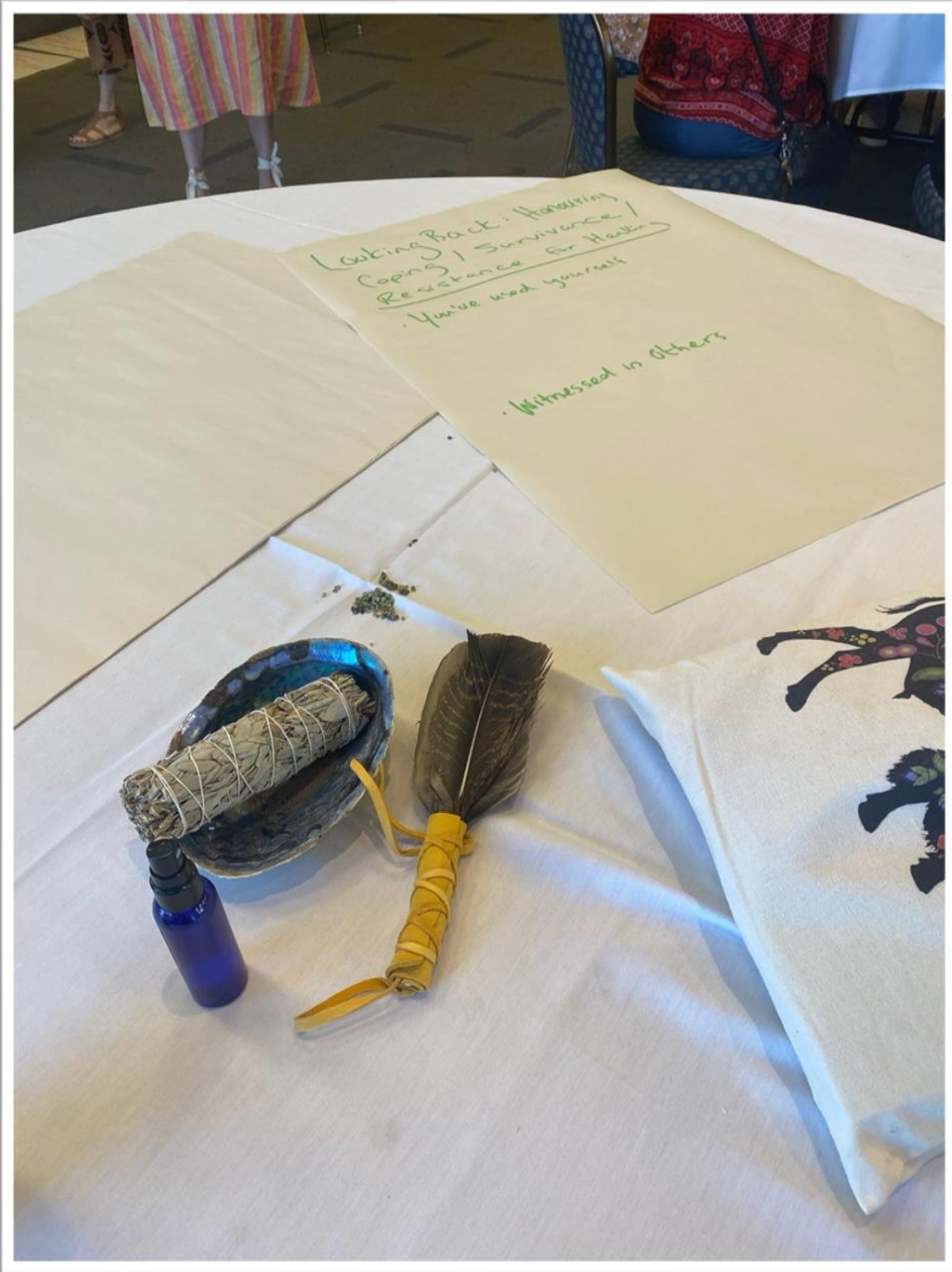
- ABC's of wellness Natalie for the Ask Auntie program:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BXvvezGpXbc>
- Métis Women's menopause workshops
- Book club with participant suggested readings below



## Métis Women's Book Club Reading List

- Maria Campbell .....*Halfbreed*
- Marilyn Dumont .....A Really Good Brown Girl
- Jean Teillet .....The North-West Is Our Mother: The Story of Louis Riel's People, the Métis Nation
- Jesse Thistle .....From the Ashes: My Story of Being Métis, Homeless, and Finding My Way
- Chester Brown.....Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography
- Katherena Vermette:
- The Break
  - Red River Resistance (A Girl Called Echo, #2)
  - River Woman
  - The Strangers
  - Pemmican Wars
  - Road Allowance Era (A Girl Called Echo, #4)
- Jesse Wentz .....Unreconciled: Family, Truth, and Indigenous Resistance
- Cherie Dimaline:
- Empire of Wild
  - The Marrow Thieves
  - Red Rooms
  - Funeral Songs for Dying Girls
  - A Gentle Habit
  - An Anthology of Monsters: How Sorty Saves us from our Anxiety
- Christopher Adams .....Métis in Canada: History, Identity, Law and Politics
- Martha Harroun Foster ...We Know Who We Are: Métis Identity in a Montana Community
- Louise Erdrich.....The Plague of Doves
- Bailey Oster .....Stories of Métis Women: Tales My Kookum Told Me
- Chantal Fiola
- Rekindling the Sacred Fire: Métis Ancestry and Anishinaabe Spirituality
  - Returning to Ceremony: Spirituality in Manitoba Métis Communities
- Christopher Adams .....Métis in Canada: History, Identity, Law and Politics
- Anrolda Dufour Bowes ....A Short Story Collection of A life Lived as a Road Allowance Métis
- Michelle Porter .....Approaching Fire
- Beatrice Culleton Mosioner..... April Raintree
- Lee Maracle
- Celia's Song
  - Bobbi Lee, Indian Rebel
- Chelsea Vowel .....Indigenous Writes
- Sherry Farrell Racette .....Flower Beadwork People





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