



TŜILHQOT'IN NIDLIN



RECLAIMING FAMILY AND CHILDREN JURISDICTION

NEWSLETTER #2 | OCTOBER 2023

Taking Back Tsilhqot'in Family Jurisdiction

Since time immemorial, the Tsilhqot'in have raised healthy and thriving children and youth grounded in Tsilhqot'in cultural practices, values, approaches, and knowledge. The Tsilhqot'in Nation has always asserted an inherent right to self-government that includes jurisdiction over our own families and children.

In September 2020, the Nitis'il ?in-Qi (Council and Chiefs) and the Tsilhqot'in Ts'iqi Dechen Jedilhtan (Women's Council) supported efforts to begin making plans and figuring out how we can take back control of children and family services. This will include:

1. Creating a Tsilhqot'in Family Wellness Law that follows existing Tsilhqot'in laws and values.
2. Developing a new service model to decide which children and family services are provided and how they will be delivered to each community.

On June 26, 2024 the Nation will be hosting Federal, Provincial, and First Nation leaders to celebrate the 10-year anniversary of the Supreme Court decision and demonstrate to the world what we have achieved in the past ten years by working together as partners. To further mark the occasion, we are working towards having the Tsilhqot'in child and family coordination agreement signed at this time.

"We need to support youth across communities and address mental health stigmas."



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We need holistic family planning not just child-focused services.

Learning from our Community Members

A critical part of the Nidlin Initiative has, and will continue to be, community engagement and collaboration. The T̓silhqot̓'in Nidlin team connected with and received guidance from community members, including Youth, Elders, and families, as well as frontline workers, knowledge keepers, and community champions. Since January 2023, the Nidlin team has conducted two phases of engagement.

This has included:

- 163 interviews and surveys
- 5 focus groups with 50 knowledge keepers
- 6 frontline workers meetings
- 17 community gatherings and engagements
- 2 Nation gatherings and 3 community culture camps
- 8 women's council events

This engagement is supported by a variety of promotional, engagement, and digital tools.





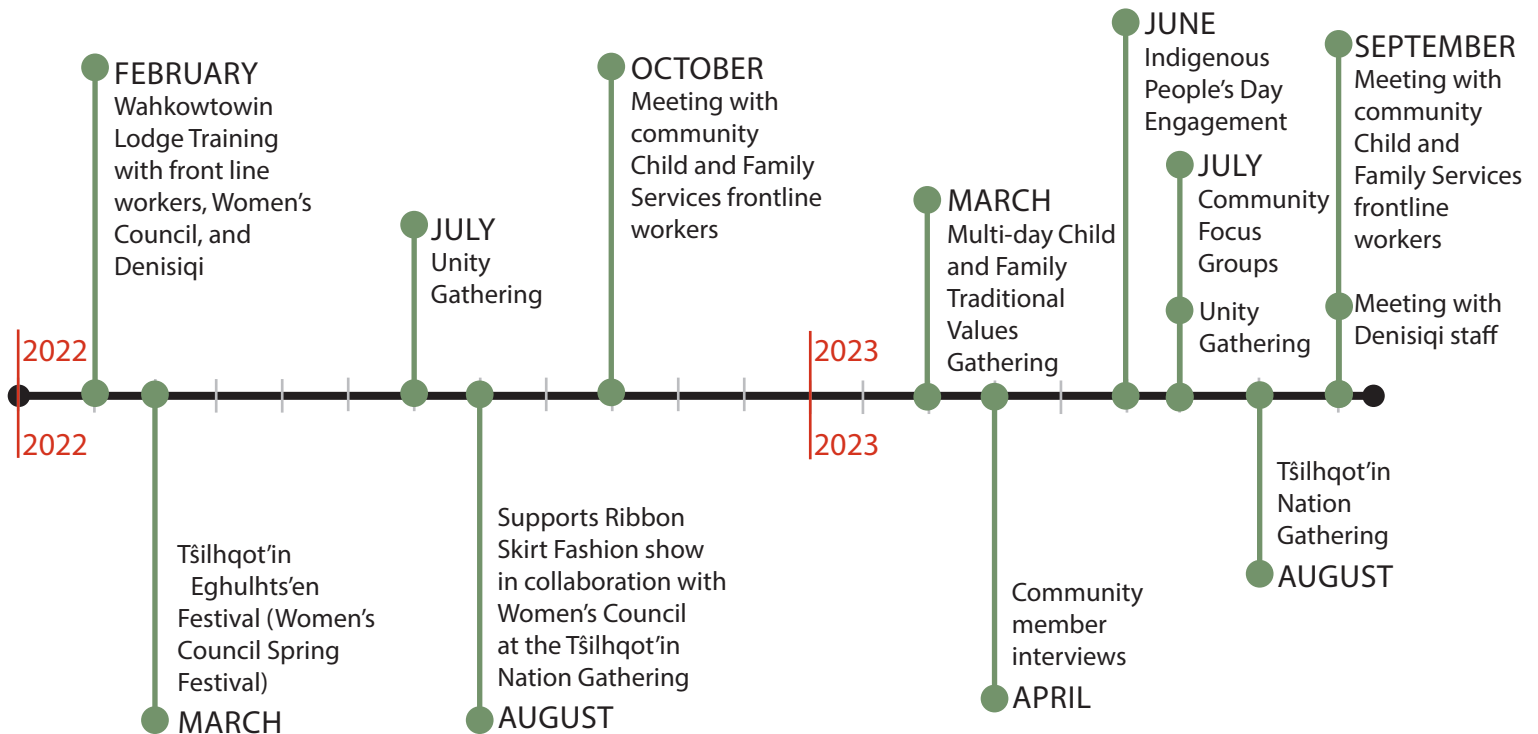
Overview of Engagement to Date

Our first phase of work since the initiative began focused on:

- » Introducing the Engagement Coordinators to the communities
- » Gathering and sharing information related to the treatment of children and families at a community and Nation level
- » Engaging communities on T̓silhqot̓'in protocols and laws

Our second phase of work has focused on:

- » Sharing back phase 1 results
- » Engaging key knowledge keepers, community champions, and frontline workers
- » Understanding the current system including strengths and challenges
- » Discussing case studies related to intervention and protection, including responses and steps
- » Gathering ideas on service model preferences and roles and responsibilities
- » Deciding on our own T̓silhqot̓'in words for our model





WORKING TOGETHER

50

Team Meetings



3

Team Interviews



16

Informational Products



25

Media Posts

SHARING INFORMATION

GETTING DIRECTION

5

Focus Groups

50

Knowledge Keepers

163

Interviews & Surveys

1

Community front-line staff workshop

7

Community Representatives

29

Elders

115

Women

13

Youth

47

Men

121

Adults

5

20

Participants

Meetings with Delegated Agency Staff (Youth Outreach, Early Childhood, Counsellors, Social Workers, Family Workers)



2

Nation Gatherings (Nation & Unity)



3

Community Culture Camps

17

Community Gatherings

8

Women's Council Events & Gatherings

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Tsilhqot'in Nidlin ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY Phase 1 & 2

January - September 2023



Community Direction

The Nidlin team has been engaging tirelessly with community members on the following key topics:

1. Our T̓ìlhqot̓'in protocols, laws and language around child-raising and approaches to supporting families
2. Strengths and challenges in our current system
3. Capacity, services, and resources needed for Prevention, Intervention and Protection
4. Ideas and information on service model components, preferences, and roles and responsibilities

1. Our T̓ìlhqot̓'in Protocols, Laws and Language

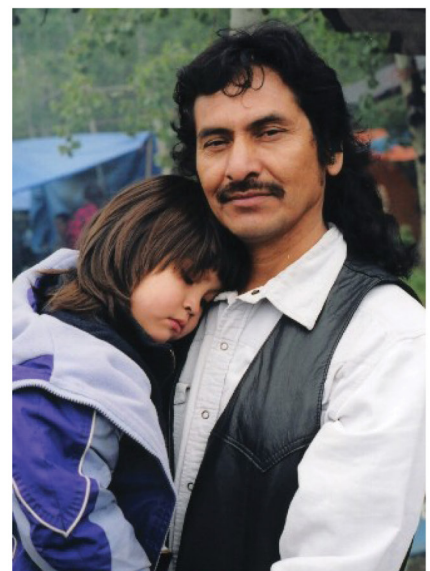
The Nation is working toward revitalizing and restoring traditional values, knowledge, and approaches to nurture strong and resilient children, youth, families, and communities. During the first phase of engagement, the T̓ìlhqot̓'in Nidlin team focused on connecting with and receiving guidance from community members, including Youth, Elders, and families, on T̓ìlhqot̓'in protocols and laws around child-raising and approaches to supporting families. The knowledge shared by our communities is summarized in Newsletter #1.

During Phase 2, community members shared words that they would like to use for Adoption and Foster Parent as well as other words related to caring for our children and families (see next page).

“More people are willing to speak about trauma [but] we do not have enough resources to address mental health issues.



“People come together in crisis, people want to be included.



“More layers of extended family are getting involved and helping out.



“Ideally our effort goes into prevention versus crisis response.



Community members shared key needs related to the system/culture

Ensuring that children in care have access to cultural programming

Ensuring requirements are in place to support children in care to connect with their communities and culture

Delivering cultural training to outreach workers and foster homes

Creating culturally appropriate family wellness planning tools

Strengthening access to language, culture, and family history for children in care and living away from home

Focus on supporting T̂silhqot̂'in families to foster our children

Increasing understanding on the impacts of residential schools

Hosting family circles with a trained coordinator, involving foster families as appropriate



2. Strengths and Challenges in our Current System

We summarized the strengths and challenges that have been shared related to values and teachings, strong children and parenting, and family support and well-being of children. As we build our legislation service model, we will build on our strengths and focus on addressing challenges.

STRENGTHS What is working?

CHALLENGES What is not working well?

Values & Teachings

Connection to Culture, Language, & History

- We are strong in our teachings and protocols
- Community cultural programming and activities
- Our Elders and Knowledge Keepers
- Our language is being taught in school

- Loss of traditional knowledge among families
- Impacts of colonization and residential school
- Children in care/ coming out of care are disconnected from culture and community
- System does not take cultural approaches to raising children into account
- Lack of knowledge and resources on family trees
- Lack of cultural sensitivity among service providers

Healing & Wellness

- Strong preventative work, fewer children in care
- Growing use of mental health services
- Some service providers have established trust with families and children

- Substance use and addictions, lack of treatment and post treatment services
- Impacts of residential school
- Delays and frustration in accessing wellness services
- Inconsistent mental wellness supports/ service providers
- Lack of mental health services for adults
- Limited training in grief and trauma

Strong Children & Parenting

Our children and Youth

- Children and Youth are engaged in programs and activities
- Our Youth are the next generation of leaders
- We learn more when we interview Youths as they exit care

- Couch-surfing, falling through the cracks
- Special needs that require unique support systems
- Lack of connection to community for high school students in Williams Lake, gangs provide belonging
- Staff turnover impacts relationship building
- FASD stigmas are a barrier to getting support
- Youth
- Lack of consistency in relationships and support when in care



STRENGTHS What is working?

Family Support Systems

- Close knit family systems
- Families have been supporting each other for generations
- Fewer requirements for voluntary kindship agreements

CHALLENGES What is not working well?

- Lack of volunteering to support children, fear of scrutiny from 'system', family disputes, invasive forms
- Children in need
- Discrimination between families
- Current tools for family wellness planning are not useful
- Family therapy not offered
- Difficult to reach families
- Frustrations with turnaround times for family visits to children in care
- Short notice when Youth are returning to community from various facilities

Family Support & Well-being of Children

Safety and Infrastructure

- We know who is safe in the community
- MCFD has a 24 hour child helpline

- Lack of safe and confidential spaces
- Housing is at crisis level, making it difficult to foster children
- Inaccessible treatment services/centres and safe homes
- Lack of support and trusted people in extreme/crisis/violent situations
- Limited housing in Williams Lake

Resources and Programming

- Diverse range of programs
- Community champions

- Limited information on services available
- Lack of choice for service provision in communities, concern over biases
- Low community turnout to programming
- Lack of programs for families and youth in Williams Lake
- Lack of legal services support

Staffing and Organization

- 'Urban' support worker connected to families in Williams Lake
- Training and staff support available through Denisiqi

- High staff turnover (communities, MCFD)
- Limited resources, staff capacity and mentorship
- Some communities don't have support workers, challenging to connect with those communities
- Few legal advocates
- Inconsistent dialogue and connections with MCFD social workers (high case loads, scheduling, system delays)



3. Capacity, Services, and Resources needed for Prevention, Intervention and Protection

During Phase 1 and 2 we heard from community members about a variety of capacity, services, resources and programming needs related to Prevention, Intervention, and Protection.

Sutsel esqax ts'enehyax

Children are well looked after

(Prevention)

Prevention programs include activities that help keep children and families safe and healthy. These programs focus on teaching important skills and provide opportunities for children and families to learn and practice their culture.

Nexwelh anant'in

Help us

(Intervention)

Intervention services provide additional support to children and families who are dealing with challenges. These services offer help, guidance and solutions to make things better for families facing difficulties.

?Elhelh nilyagh

We're raising them together

(Protection)

Protection protocols tell us what should happen when a child may be in an unsafe situation. When a child is being mistreated, abused, or neglected, protection services help families to create a plan to ensure the child's safety.

Sutsel esqax ts'enehyax

Children are well looked after

(Prevention)

Community members shared the importance of prevention programs and infrastructure that help to keep children and families safe and healthy. These should be available to all community members.

Prevention

Prevention programs include activities that help keep children and families safe and healthy. These programs focus on teaching important skills and provide opportunities for children and families to learn and practice their culture.

	Programs	Infrastructure
Family & Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy Parenting & Pregnancy Outreach Program • Family Workshops • Holistic Family Wellness Planning • Elders/Youth Connection Programs • Child & Youth Activities & Practical Workshops • Transportation Services • Relationship-building between children, parents, & extended family (family group conferencing) • FAS relative relief • Assessment support • Anger management & domestic abuse support • Support for children with disabilities/special needs • School support up to Grade 12 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Housing • Elders Centre • Youth Centre in good location • Family Services Building (drop-in) • Tutoring/Learning Centre • Space for young children (outdoor playground) • Safe house • Respite home
Wellness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreation and Fitness • Training (e.g., in trauma-informed care) • Art Programs • Horse Program • Gardening • Addiction Prevention, Treatment & Awareness • Mental Health Promotion & Awareness • Support for parents' education & employment • Youth outdoor activities and learning • Counselling & wellness • Resources for Abuse & Healing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All-in-one Wellness Centre, Treatment / Healing Centre • Community Gardens and Greenhouses • Recreation Facilities (Baseball, Rec Centre) • Woodsheds • Solar farm • Spiritual spaces • Infrastructure & support for off-reserve members
Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land-based Programming • Language Teachings • Fishing & Hunting Camps with knowledge keepers • Culture Camps • Harvesting • Medicine Gathering • Community-led cultural programs • Teachings on T̓silhqot'in laws, values, history, & identity • Storytelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sweats • Smoke Houses • Pit Houses • Community Hall • Cultural Centre • Outdoor Gathering Spaces



Nexwelh anant'in
Help us
(Intervention)

When asked about intervention, community members stressed the need for programming that focused on families, children and youth, community, and culture.

Intervention

Intervention related infrastructure and programming would provide additional support to children and families dealing with challenges. These services offer help, guidance and solutions to make things better for families facing difficulties.

Programs & Services	Description
Family & Youth Youth Programming Family Identity & Recognition Parent Support Family Outreach Safe Individuals Family Conferencing	Intervention programming for children and youth that engages them in positive activities and supports trust building and family healing (e.g. journaling, cultural activities). Engaging children and youth in learning about where they come from and their connection to family and community (e.g. family tree). Providing consistent resources & support for parents, facilitating self help and healing Create systems to check in on families, provide mentoring, and address issues before they escalate Build children's ability to identify and trust safe individuals in their community Mediating workshops, group conferences, or talking circles for families to address challenges
Wellness Staff supports Treatment support Healing Men's & Women's Programs	Staff who are working in intervention can receive supports from Elders and other knowledge keepers. Programming that reduces parent isolation (e.g. during sobriety) and provides support when they come back from treatment.. Consistent healing, medical assistance, and recovery support in communities, including a spirit bath for parents and families as part of intervention. Support for men and women to gather in groups, share, and support each other as parents and caregivers to address family challenges.
Culture Traditional Teachings Connection to the Land Elder Advice	Teaching traditional parenting skills to those who need it the most. Opportunities for children, youth and families that are in need of intervention support to connect to sacred places, family protocols, language, and teachings on the land. Continuous availability of a respected Elder in each community to provide advisory support to families



Recognizing the importance of teamwork and collaboration. We can collaborate with other successful programs in the area.



To support the delivery of intervention services and programs, community members identified a variety of infrastructure needs.

Intervention

Intervention related infrastructure and programming would provide additional support to children and families dealing with challenges. The following infrastructure supports safety, healing, and connections for families facing difficulties.

	Infrastructure	Description
Family & Youth	Safe Homes	Designated and protected homes in the community that Youth know about. These houses would be supported with renovations and other resources such as monetary compensation.
	Respite Home	Dedicated home that provides respite for children and youth when they cannot stay with parents or care givers for shorter periods of time. This home would be supported with staff and resources.
	Safe spaces	Place where Children and Youth can go during the day for activities, and to connect with an Elder or another adult when they need to communicate issues or needs.
Wellness	Wellness spaces	Places of belonging where services and programming that support family wellness can easily be accessed and utilized.
	Treatment Centre	Care facility providing support with substance use and other wellness challenges in the short, medium, and long term.
Culture	Cultural and Gathering Spaces	Support for intervention activities such as men's and women's circles, ceremonies and Family Circles with an emphasis on collective approaches to health and wellness.



?Elhelh nilyagh

We're raising them together

(Protection)

With regards to protection, community members, knowledge holders and frontline workers emphasized specific needs related to services provision, capacity and resources, with an emphasis on building capacity.

Protection

Protection protocols tell us what should happen when a child may be in an unsafe situation. When a child is being mistreated, abused, or neglected, protection services help families to create a plan to ensure the child's safety.

Establishing easy and quick access to safe people/community based crisis support teams

Develop Nation-wide protocols for crisis situations

Ensure worker's safety

Improve relationships between organizations and with communities

Develop strong communication, file sharing and information management systems

Enhance staff capacity at all levels

Strengthen hiring and retention of community staff

Provide supports so that more families can become care givers/provide foster homes

Build trust between youth and children in care with service providers



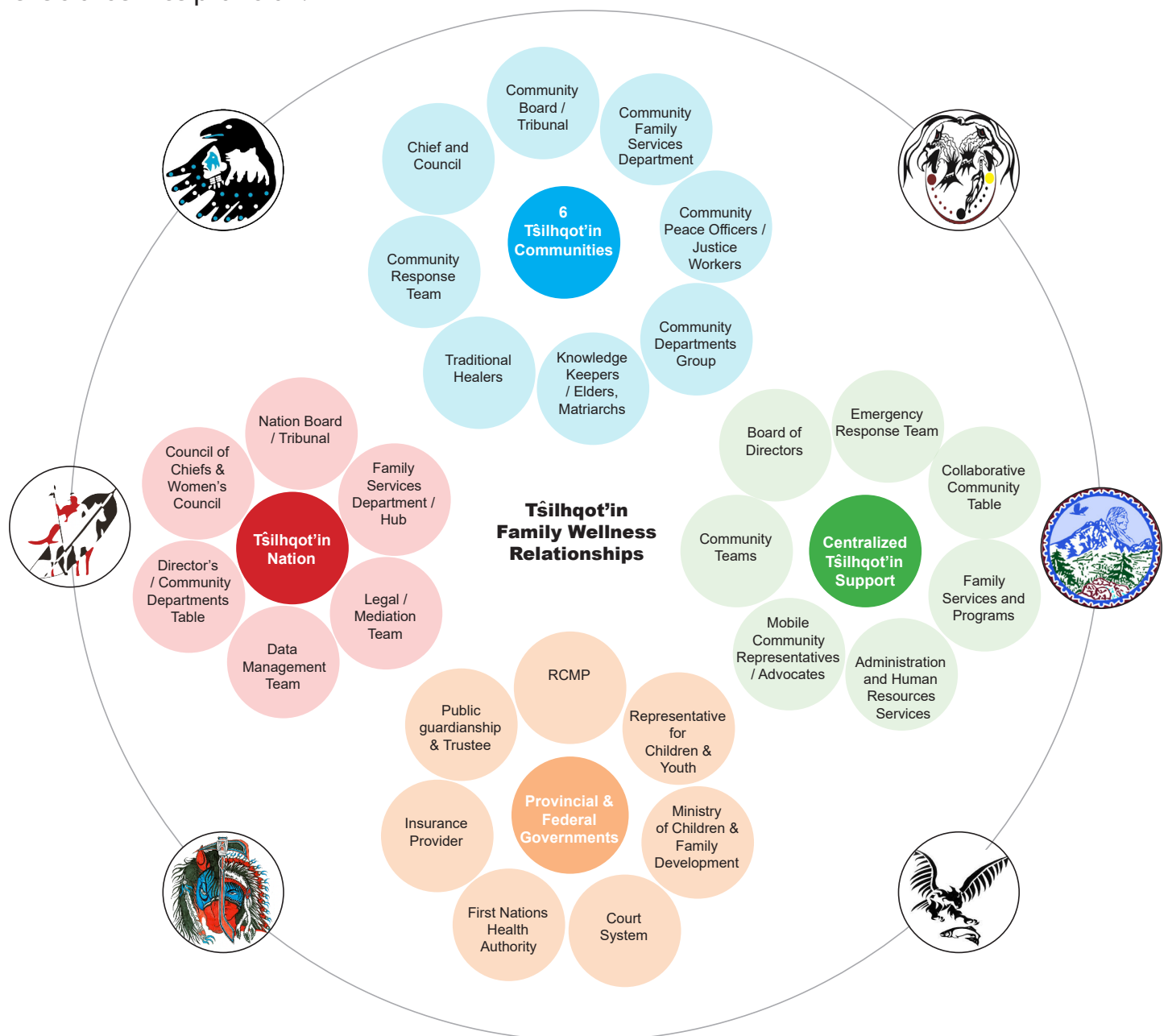
Lack of prevention structures leads to strain on intervention





4. Ideas and information on service model components, preferences, and roles and responsibilities




The graphic below summarizes the groups involved in supporting children and families across prevention, protection and intervention services and activities. Community members and knowledge keepers emphasized the need for community autonomy with collaboration and support from other levels of service provision.





As the Nation draws down jurisdiction under their own laws, a new service delivery model is required. The options below are a starting point to consider how services can be delivered by one central organization, by organizations within each community, or a mix at the nation and community level. In the potential Option 4 service model (added after Phase 2 engagement), emphasis is placed on community level service provision with support from a centralized T̂silhqot̂in organization and/or other organizations on an as-needed, community-specific basis.

LEGEND

-  Represents a centralized organization delivering children and family programs and services.
-  Represents the children and families receiving the programs and services.
-  Community Logos indicate the communities where the children and family programs and services are delivered.

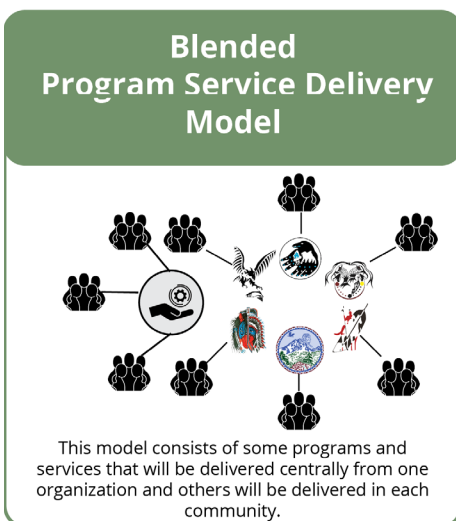
OPTION 1



OPTION 2



OPTION 3



OPTION 4



OPTION 5



In Phase 3, the Nidlin team will be looking to community members to help decide how services will be delivered to families, including where the services are located and which individuals and organizations provide the services.



Envisioning the Future for our Children

Community members have shared many teachings and values that we should honour as we work towards our vision for child and family services in the community. The Ndilin team will continue working with each community and learning from our members. Our engagement will continue to guide the development of the T̓silhqot̓in Family Law and how services will be delivered to each community.

During Phase 3 of the Ndilin team will be committed to:

- Understanding data and information needs
- Discussing the strengths and challenges of the current system and how our system will differ
- Deciding how services and programs will be delivered to each community
- Building out the roles and responsibilities of different groups, departments, and organizations
- Engaging with community members at large, as well as those most impacted by child and family services
- Engaging with community champions, frontline workers and knowledge keepers
- Ensuring cultural safety in engagement and building in ceremony, language and protocols
- Using a variety of engagement methods and tools including video, storytelling, and family gatherings



“We need people who are passionate about working with children.



“We need to ensure that ensure facility locations are appealing and comfortable for youth.

“We were taught to be proud of our kids, we need to support each other and be strong, we need equality and to uphold the traditions that we lost.



“Camping away from the community is a way for the family to reconnect.



Upcoming Opportunities

Stay tuned for information on how to engage with the Nidlin Team or upcoming community events.

Conclusion

Through talking and listening to community members, we have learned that the T̓silhqot̓'in way of supporting children and families is a community effort. Community members have told us that when children and families are doing well, the whole community is doing well. This idea is the basis for working together to help protect children and families. We continue to honour T̓silhqot̓'in culture and traditions and focus on working together so that T̓silhqot̓'in children and families can thrive.

NIDLIN ENGAGEMENT TEAM MEMBERS



TANISLEIGH EVANS

T̓silhqot̓'in Nidlin Engagement Lead
Tanisleigh has worked for the T̓silhqot̓'in Nation for 2 years. Tanisleigh is Cree and grew up in and around the T̓silhqot̓'in territory. Tanis has been able to ride into town with Tl̓'etinqox for the last 7 years. She has worked with the Women's Council in her time at TNG and has been able to get to know and love the T̓silhqot̓'in.



LONI SOLOMON

T̓silhqot̓'in Nidlin Engagement Coordinator
Loni has worked with the T̓silhqot̓'in Nidlin team for the last 7 months. Loni is no stranger to the T̓silhqot̓'in as she is an on-reserve member of Yunešit̓'in and worked with TNG at the original building. Loni is a mom and a T̓silhqot̓'in matriarch in the making, working towards jurisdiction.



ETHAN HUNLIN

T̓silhqot̓'in Nidlin Youth Engagement Coordinator
Ethan has worked with the T̓silhqot̓'in Nation for the last 6 months. Ethan is a T̓sideldel member and previously worked with youth in his community. Ethan is passionate about youth work and helping people with his Nation. Ethan is currently putting his passion into reclaiming family jurisdiction in the T̓silhqot̓'in Nation.



KEANNA SAUNDERS

Senior Administrative Assistant
Keanna has worked for the T̓silhqot̓'in Nation for 1.5 years, starting as a receptionist and, as of April 2023, the Administrative Assistant with Nidlin. Keanna is First Nations and Métis, originating from Winnipeg, Manitoba. Keanna is a big family person and loves to spend free time with family and animals out in nature. Keanna's future plan in life is to work with kids and is looking forward to making a difference and the future with TNG.