

**ENHANCING  
SOCIAL  
INSTITUTIONS  
THAT SERVE  
MISSANABIE  
PEOPLE**

**COMMUNITY  
RECONCILIATION  
AND  
PEACEBUILDING**

**HEALING  
AND  
WELLNESS  
FOR ALL**

**SUPPORTING  
ELDER WELL-BEING  
AND ENSURING  
OPPORTUNITIES  
TO CONTRIBUTE**

**ALIGN STAFF JOB  
DESCRIPTIONS  
TO GOALS OF CPP**

**CULTURAL  
REVITALIZATION,  
LANGUAGE RENEWAL,  
CULTURAL IDENTITY  
AND CONNECTION  
STRENGTHENED**

**PATHWAYS TO SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**



## SECTION THREE: SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

*(CCP) focuses on revitalizing the cultural foundations of the Nation and using those foundations as a strong platform for building a healthy and prosperous future. It also describes strategies for restoring the unity and social cohesion of the Nation so that it will be able to overcome development challenges, particularly related to wellness and education. Strategies for the following goals are listed below: 1) develop and implement a dynamic cultural revitalization and language learning and retention program, 2) develop and implement a comprehensive community healing and wellness plan leading to measurable improvements in community wellness, 3) establish a community reconciliation and peace-building program to nurture a foundation of mutual respect and community harmony between all Missanabie people, 4) develop the pathways for lifelong learning and create the support systems for people to be successful, 5) develop mechanisms to influence the effectiveness of the other social institutions that impact the life of Missanabie Cree people, and 6) pay special attention to the creation of culturally sound and effective social institutions during the on-the-land settlement process.*

### Definitions

**Social Development** refers to: a) the challenge of fostering social cohesion and unity between people, families, and groups within the community and strengthening the community's collective capacity to think and act together for a common purpose; b) promoting strong, safe, and healthy families and healthy child development; and c) strengthening the wellbeing of key demographics within the community such as children and youth, women, men, and elders. Social development is strengthened through education and training to address learning needs at various ages and for particular purposes (for example, basic literacy, job training, and post-secondary education). Social development also requires particular attention to health and wellness (in the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual aspects of life).

**Cultural Development** refers to the general pattern of life by which people live. It includes their customs, beliefs, values, morals, ideals, ceremonies, and spiritual practices, as well as their traditional language, ways of knowing, and indigenous skills, arts, crafts, and sciences. It is not possible to talk about culture without also talking about spirituality, which is not referring to any particular religion, but rather to the human capacity to know and love the Creator and to choose ways of living that are life-promoting and life-enhancing. Spirit animates the heart of all living cultures. Without spirit, culture becomes dead, unable to grow and change. Therefore, culture also refers to the sacred spiritual traditions that must be harmonized with everyday life to create a healthy community.

*Culturally-based development is the process of translating and applying the knowledge and wisdom of the traditional past into lived patterns of thought and action in the modern world, as well as the collective community work of agreeing on shared values for guiding our community development.*

### Issues, challenges and opportunities

#### Wellness issues

1. Wellness is the #1 issue for us to move forward as a Nation. Substance abuse is far too prevalent and is affecting the wellbeing of individuals, families and the community as a whole. Mental health issues include depression, anxiety, hopelessness, post-traumatic stress syndrome and mental illnesses such as bipolar

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disorder. Domestic violence and other types of abuse are far too common. So many people have lived through the violence and seen it all around them.

2. An underlying issue is trauma, both personal and collective (historical and intergenerational). There was a consensus at the Community Story meetings that between 70% and 90% of Missanabie members are impacted by trauma.
3. We are divided among ourselves—family against family, faction against faction. Gossip and lateral violence are part of this picture. These behaviours hurt individuals, tear apart families and perpetuate disunity in the community.
4. About 30% of the community is now on a healing journey of some kind. On the other hand, many members have suffered trauma but are in denial about addiction and wellness issues.
5. One of the root causes of lateral violence is the political structure within which we are trapped. When the government offers us crumbs in terms of dollars, we end up fighting over them. As well, the last election was very divisive. As one Community Story participant explained, “It’s so silly that we fight each other when the real fight is not personal... We are better than that!”

### ***Physical health***

6. The root causal factors of physical ill health such as poor housing, poverty, stress, addictions and lack of social support play a big role. Until these things are addressed, sustainable health will be out of reach for many of our people. Health education strategies alone are not enough.
7. We also have to pay special attention to chronic diseases. For example, the incidence of diabetes is “crazy”, especially among elders.
8. In the past, our people knew the bush medicines that would help them to be healthy and to overcome diseases. Many of us have forgotten most of that knowledge.
9. Most Missanabie members have much better choice and access to health care services (hospitals, pharmacies, doctors, walk-in clinics) than people in more remote northern communities. However, some people report that there are long waits for some medical services and that they experience racism when accessing health and other types of services wherever they live.

### ***Family life***

10. People have grown up in families in which they were never held and told, “I love you.” This is one of the devastating results of residential schooling. People impacted by residential schooling also did not learn their roles and responsibilities as family members. Parents never learned how to parent.
11. In spite of these issues, many families remain relatively strong and are always improving. We know our family history and our family values keep us strong.

### ***Community unity:***

12. We are made up of many sub-communities because we live in so many different locations. The characteristics of these sub-communities vary because of the larger society as well as the particular Missanabie Cree families that live in them. In many ways, this makes maintaining a strong sense of overall community difficult. As one participant at a Community Story meeting said, “We don’t know each other. We have nothing to do with other Missanabie members.”

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13. In our traditional ways of living, “family” was bigger than a nuclear family (i.e. parents and children living in an independent dwelling). We were connected to each other (and still are) in large extended families consisting of grandparents, uncles and aunties, cousins, nieces and nephews. Today many of us have lost the strength of these connections in our extended families. We used to help each other, sometimes even raising each other’s children. Island View Summer Gatherings are starting to help us to reconnect our families.
14. More than 50% of Missanabie Cree people never participate in any Band activities. At the same time, we have always pulled together in times of crisis. We do have common goals for the Nation.

### **Housing:**

15. Many members struggle to get and maintain adequate and affordable housing. Home ownership can only be a dream for some, especially young people. Social housing is needed in the cities where many Missanabie people live. Housing will also be a frontline priority for creating a community on the land.

### **Education:**

16. The quantity and quality of education and training of our people needs to be improved. Many of the Missanabie youth leave school early. Textbooks may not adequately reflect First Nations history, achievements, or aspirations. Access to career training is required. Access to learning about our history, culture and traditions is a must, as is learning about wellness.

### **Cultural strength:**

17. There has been a serious loss of culture and identity among the Missanabie Cree. Members may have access to cultural activities, but the activities may not be specifically related to the Missanabie Cree.
18. Spiritual practices are varied, and may include both church and traditional practices. There is a felt need for greater understanding of Missanabie Cree history and traditions.
19. There are many highly trained professionals and members with traditional knowledge who could be more effectively utilized to bring healing and other benefits. We have also lost important traditional knowledge (such as about medicines) that we now need to recover.

### **Human Resource Assets**

20. We have many very well educated and skilled human resources—lawyers, teachers, MBAs, PhDs. Many of us have integrated well into the wider society. We also have members who are knowledgeable in the history of the Missanabie people, the language, our spiritual and cultural traditions and teaching, and our traditional survival and ecological skills. If these rich human resources dedicate themselves to healing and developing our Nation and the local communities within which we live, we can see wonderful things happening.

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**Goal One:     *Develop and implement a dynamic cultural revitalization and language learning and retention program***

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*The aim of this goal is to strengthen personal and cultural identity of Missanabie Cree members wherever they live and to ensure that the rich cultural wisdom of the Nation is not lost to future generations. This goal is placed as number one in this social development section because it is central to all the other goals.*

- Strategy #1: Build a Turtle Lodge on the Missanabie land that will serve as a focal point and teaching centre for cultural wisdom and practices
- Strategy #2: Hold seasonal ceremonies and other cultural activities at the Turtle Lodge on a regular basis, as well as during the annual gathering
- Strategy #3: Nurture the formation of community core groups in the centers where Missanabie Cree members live (beginning with Toronto, Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie and Thunder Bay) who will facilitate language classes and regular cultural activities (e.g. talking circles, drumming and singing groups; and identifying and using medicine plants), that target the needs and interests of different age groups, families, etc. This work could include the following:
- Identifying leaders for the core group in each location and provide these volunteers with some training in community development, lots of encouragement and access to resources
  - Providing avenues for these core groups to communicate with each other and with a Band staff person assigned to the cultural and language revitalization work
  - Hosting an annual event that brings these core groups together to celebrate, learn and share (could be a feature of the annual gatherings)
  - Providing these core groups with a variety of language and culture revitalization resources (see strategies #4 and #5 below)
- Strategy #4: Create a directory of Missanabie Cree individuals who can serve as cultural resources to facilitate cultural ceremonies and other events and to teach the language, and who will share their cultural knowledge to develop resource material
- Strategy #5: Nurture the emergence of a corps of language and culture mentors who can work with all age groups and segments of the community, and provide these mentors with access to resources, encouragement and peer support
- Strategy #6: Develop a broad range of resources designed to enhance language and culture revitalization, using a variety of formats (e.g. print, photographs, on-line, audio-visual). These resources will include a focus on the history of the Missanabie Cree (including the story of all that was lost during the treaty process, residential schooling, and the 60's scoop); traditional values, teachings and practices, and traditional ecological and practical knowledge.

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- Strategy #7: Implement a language learning and cultural revitalization program in the Band office that provides incentives for staff development and provides options that match the needs and interests of staff members
- Strategy #8: Place special emphasis on youth culture and language revitalization programming
- Strategy #9: Create an on-going Land Guardianship Program (Walking the Land) that asserts the stewardship role that the Missanabie Cree have over their traditional territory and that contributes to the ecological integrity of that land. This program would have a strong youth outreach component. It should also be linked to the Band's political and economic sovereignty efforts.
- Strategy #10: Reach out to the education, recreation, health and social service agencies that serve Missanabie Cree members to provide them with the knowledge, encouragement and resources that will enable them to become more culturally competent in addressing the needs of Missanabie Cree individuals and families
- Strategy #11: Ensure that the Band's core programs and communication processes support the language and culture revitalization work
- Strategy #12: Identify resources that can support the human and program costs of implementing the above-listed strategies in a sustainable way into the future (e.g. drawing on government and non-government grants, as well as the Band's own-source income)
- Strategy #13: Develop a monitoring and evaluation system that will enable the Nation to determine whether or not Missanabie Cree members are able to meet their own aspirations in terms of language learning and knowledge of cultural practices and involvement in cultural activities

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### ***Goal Two: Develop and implement a comprehensive community healing and wellness plan leading to measurable improvements in community wellness***

*The aim of this goal is to dramatically enhance the wellness levels of Missanabie Cree First Nation members wherever they live, especially by addressing the healing issues that are the result of historic trauma as well as current social, cultural and political conditions.*

- Strategy #1: Facilitate a highly participatory process that enables Missanabie Cree members to learn about and contribute to their collective story as a people by exploring the historical events that have shaped today's realities in terms of wellness issues and assets and resources that can be harnessed for personal and collective healing (i.e., a kind of "What was never told" process).

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- Strategy #2: Prepare a baseline of the wellness of Missanabie Cree people that looks at physical, mental, emotional and spiritual indicators of wellbeing.
- Strategy #3: Build a Wellness Centre (which could either be located on the land and perhaps linked to the Turtle Lodge or some other location)
- Strategy #4: Create a wellness plan that draws on best practice learning from around the country about healing (especially related to such issues as addictions, residential school syndrome and intergenerational trauma).
- Strategy #5: As one of the components of that wellness plan, foster a wellness movement within the Missanabie Cree First Nation that builds the capacity of and mobilizes the will, energy and resources of members to engage in their own healing journeys and to support each other (through talking circles, culturally based ceremonies and other activities, peer support groups such as AA, mentorship programs, etc.)
- Strategy #6: Another component of the wellness plan, create strategic wellness programs that are delivered by the Band (e.g. at the Turtle Lodge/ Wellness Centre, including seasonal ceremonies, retreats and workshops) or a mobile treatment program that can offer services in each of the centres where a concentration of Missanabie Cree members live)
- Strategy #7: As a third component of the wellness plan, create collaborative relationships with agencies and programs that offer wellness services to which Missanabie Cree members have access wherever they live to ensure that these services meet the real needs and are offered in such a way that they will be culturally comfortable.
- Strategy #8: Implement a wellness initiative in the Band office that provides multiple opportunities and incentives for staff and elected leaders to commit to a wellness plan of their own and to support each other in those efforts
- Strategy #9: The wellness plan will have a special focus on the needs and interests of youth so that the next generation will be ready to take on responsibilities of a productive and satisfying career, contributing to healthy families and taking on many kinds of leadership roles.
- Strategy #10: Another focus of the wellness plan will be on significantly decreasing the burden of chronic disease and other physical health issues that affect so many Missanabie Cree members. This component will include providing targeted services, but also addressing the social determinants of ill health (that include poverty, lack of adequate income, poor quality housing, low levels of education, poor nutrition, and the lack of social support systems).
- Strategy #11: Build up the human and financial resources needed to implement the wellness plan, including the hiring of a senior-level wellness leader/ coordinator

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Strategy #12: Develop and utilize a wellness monitoring and evaluation system that will enable the Nation to determine whether or not its initiatives are producing real progress in the health and wellbeing levels of Missanabie Cree First Nation members.

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### ***Goal Three: Establish a community reconciliation and peace-building program to nurture a foundation of mutual respect and community harmony between all Missanabie people***

*The aim of this goal is to restore unity and the capacity to work together toward common goals to the families and various groups within the Missanabie Cree, as well as the community as a whole.*

Strategy #1: Heal the political divisions within the community that have arisen among the supporters of the various political leaders that have been elected to office over the past several decades. Some avenues for achieving this strategy might include holding a community gathering at which all former and current Chiefs and Council members are honoured for their contribution, prominently displaying a timeline that recognizes the service of all the former and present political leaders, and facilitating special reconciliation processes to overcome past hurts.

Strategy #2: Create reconciliation processes to establish mutual respect and understanding between those that follow different religious paths (especially between Christians and Traditionalists). This will require calling forth the leaders of these faith communities into a common circle for the sake of the Nation's wellbeing. It will also require that individuals will have opportunities to engage in respectful dialogue aimed at achieving better understanding about foundation beliefs and practices.

Strategy #3: Ensure that all appointments to leadership or service positions and all hiring processes are entirely free from favoritism or nepotism

Strategy #4: Hold regular community gatherings that encourage people to have fun together and set the stage for people to work together without regard for old rivalries or resentments

Strategy #5: Create access to skilled reconciliation and mediation services (drawing on traditional and "western" practices) for individuals and families wishing to move past old conflictual patterns

Strategy #6: Link this initiative to the personal and community healing and wellness process, so that, as people become healthier, they are encouraged to embrace healthy relationships

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### ***Goal Four: Develop the Pathways for lifelong learning and create the support systems that will enable individuals to be successful***

*The aim of this goal is to build the human resources needed for individuals to achieve their personal development and career aspirations and for the Nation to have the human*



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*resources it needs to achieve its social, economic, political and cultural development aspirations.*

- Strategy #1: Develop and deliver a comprehensive training program with supportive learning resources for community members on Missanabie Cree culture, history, language and identity (see also Goal 2, strategy #1 above)
- Address pre-contact culture and history, the Colonial period and its impact, and how current community conditions are related in this history
  - The program of study will need to be completely flexible in terms of when and how learners are engaged, including such options as a menu of short courses delivered in the main population centres where Missanabie people live, intensive courses offered at Missanabie village, small study circle formats supplemented by Internet support, etc. At least part of the learning should be experiential and land-based.
  - At least 3 levels of the training will be needed for: children, youth and adults
  - The process of developing the curriculum needs to involve the Missanabie Elder's Council
- Strategy #2: Develop an educational program that focuses on cultural knowledge and practices (e.g. genealogy, otisiabi and the clan system, traditional survival skills, medicine plants, ceremonial practices and traditional values, etc.). It will be important for this program to use on-the-land and other experiential learning processes.
- Strategy #3: Develop and deliver a series of courses focused on personal growth, healing, and recovery from the intergenerational impacts of residential schools and historical trauma
- Personal healing and wellness
  - Family healing and wellness
  - Community healing and wellness
- Strategy #4: Develop and deliver a Missanabie Youth Life Path Program aimed at preparing young people for adult participation in family, community and work life:
- Link to personal growth, a healthy culture and identity issues
  - Strong focus on life skills, including addictions and suicide prevention
  - Ultimate prerequisites for, and link to, real employment opportunities
- Strategy #5: In collaboration with the Northeast Superior Regional Chiefs Forum, establish a *regional, indigenous, training college* through which all the above courses and programs can be offered, along with programs targeting preparation for economic participation in the mining, forestry, tourism and other regionally appropriate sectors.

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- Strategy #6: Create resources and working relationships with the education institutions that Missanabie Cree members attend, with the aim of ensuring that the curriculum reflects the history of First Nations people and their contribution to Canadian society, and that these institutions are culturally comfortable and safe environments for Missanabie Cree members to pursue their educational aspirations.
- Strategy #7: Create a baseline assessment of the success of Missanabie Cree children and youth in the school system and regularly monitor improvement according to a set of useful indicators.
- Strategy #8: Establish a Missanabie Lifelong Education Committee to guide and stimulate the work of ensuring that Missanabie Cree people have access to the programs and supports they need to be successful.

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### **Goal Five: Develop mechanisms to influence the effectiveness of the other social institutions that impact the lives of Missanabie Cree people**

*At the time of the development of this CCP, the scope of the social institutions under direct control by the Missanabie Cree First Nation is limited. With respect to many social development issues, members are accessing services delivered largely through municipal or provincial governments, or through a variety of voluntary sector organizations. The aim of this goal is to develop relationships and protocols with these bodies, such that these services meet the actual needs of Missanabie people, and that they contribute to greater wellbeing and prosperity for individuals, families and the Nation as a whole.*

- Strategy #1: Create an inventory of the primary social development agencies that serve Missanabie Cree people (e.g. education, health, child protection, income support and justice) and carry out a baseline assessment (in consultation with these institutions and those that access services through them) of their effectiveness with respect to the needs and aspirations of the Missanabie Cree.
- Strategy #2: Carry out a best practice review of social development agencies that serve First Nations people
- Strategy #3: Develop a phased approach for creating programs and services (either through satellite programs in various urban centres or at a centralized location) that can be taken on by the Nation as it develops its human and financial resource capacity and develops contribution agreements with provincial and federal governments
- Strategy #4: Enter into dialogue with those institutions that are having a major impact on the wellbeing of Missanabie Cree members (e.g. elementary, junior and senior high schools) with the aim of having a stronger voice in the way those institutions operate.

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- Strategy #5: Develop and make available resources that will assist social development agencies to better serve Missanabie Cree members (e.g. curriculum materials; information about the history, cultural practices and world views, current realities and aspirations of the Missanabie Cree; and best practice models for serving First Nations peoples).
- Strategy #6: Carry out an active search for resources (financial and human) that will support the above-listed strategies

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### **Goal Six: Pay special attention to the creation of culturally sound and effective social institutions during the on-the-land settlement process**

*The aim of this goal is to ensure a systematic and effective approach to creating Missanabie Cree's own social development institutions, especially linked to its settlement of its land base.*

- Strategy #1: Create a comprehensive social development plan (as a companion to the land use plan called for in the Resettlement chapter of this document) that will describe the gradual evolution of the full range of social development institutions and programs essential for promoting the prosperity and wellbeing of Missanabie Cree members. This plan will have a primary focus on the Missanabie settlement on its own land base, but will also look at the capacity of the Band to offer services to all their members wherever they live.
- Strategy #2: Create a resource development plan that will ensure that Missanabie has the financial and human resources to operate the social and cultural development programs and services it requires. This plan will look at funding available through the local control of services now being offered through municipal, provincial and federal governments as well as own-source revenue through Band-owned businesses and philanthropic funding through the voluntary sector (including the development of voluntary sector organizations created by Missanabie Cree members).

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### **Goal Seven: Special Initiatives for elders and youth**

- Strategy #1: Create special targeted initiatives to support the healing, well-being, learning, and life path progress of Missanabie youth anchored in cultural awareness and reinforced Indigenous identity.
- Strategy #2: Support Missanabie Cree elders to be as healthy, productive, and useful in their day-to-day lives as possible and having an important role to play in community decision-making and Nation building.

