



Clearing the Air: Igniting Change with the Red River Métis Tobacco Reduction Strategy

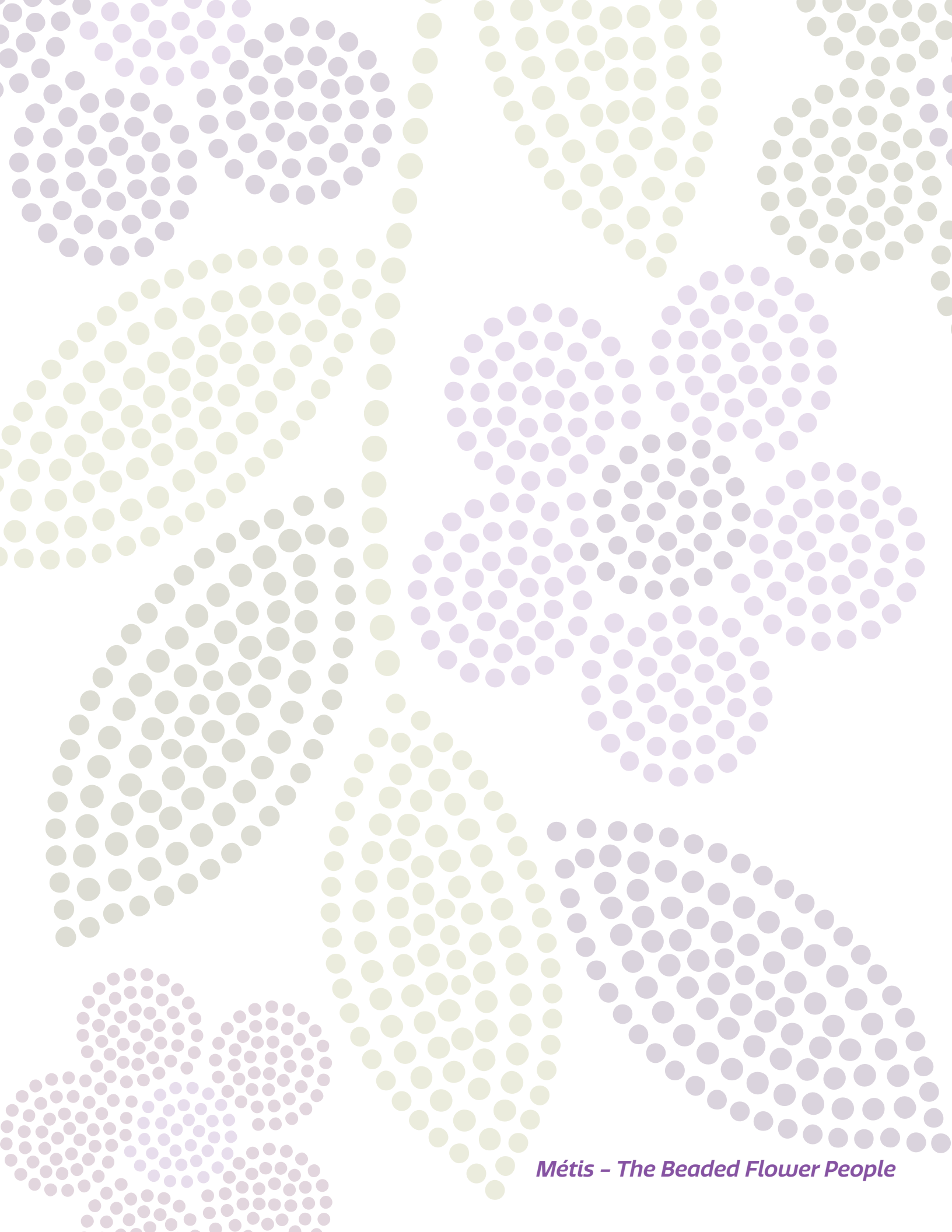
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Métis - The Beaded Flower People

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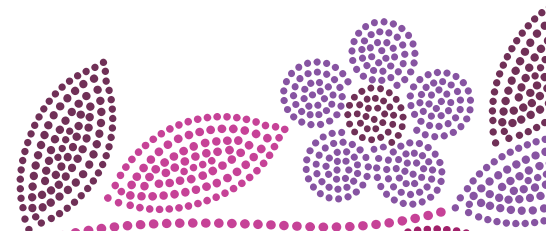
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A Message from the Minister of Health & Wellness

FOREWORD FROM MINISTER FRANCES CHARTRAND



It is with immense gratitude and a deep sense of purpose that I address the resilient and vibrant Red River Métis Citizens, our esteemed staff, and our invaluable funders through these words.

The idea of distinctions-based healthcare is crucial to the Manitoba Métis Federation. It recognizes the history and culture of Indigenous peoples, including Red River Métis Citizens, and acknowledges systemic inequalities. The MMF is dedicated to providing culturally sensitive and respectful healthcare through distinctions-based healthcare. We aim to nurture a healthier and prosperous future for our Community

and create relevant programs and support for our Citizens.

Our Red River Métis Citizens have shown time and again their commitment to the betterment of our Community's health and well-being. Your voices, stories, experiences, and active participation in our research are the foundation upon which we build a future of improved health outcomes and holistic well-being. To the remarkable staff from the Health and Wellness Department who facilitate research and program development for our Citizens I extend my deepest thanks. Your commitment to ensuring the success of our initiatives, and your unwavering dedication to the well-being of our Citizens is commendable. It is through your efforts that we have been able to gather meaningful data, provide a safe space for dialogue, and offer a platform for the voices of our Red River Métis Citizens to be heard. No endeavor of this magnitude can be achieved without the support of those who believe in our vision. To our esteemed funders, your commitment to our Community's health and well-being speaks volumes. Your belief in our mission has enabled us to take strides toward implementing distinctions-based healthcare that not only acknowledges the unique needs of our Community but also paves the way for equitable and accessible services.

In closing, I want to reiterate my deepest gratitude to each and every one of you. Your participation, dedication, and support have transformed research from a mere endeavor into a beacon of hope and progress. Together, we are shaping a future where the well-being of our Red River Métis Citizens stands as a testament to the strength of Community, the power of collaboration, and the potential of compassionate healthcare.

With heartfelt appreciation,
Minister Frances Chartrand

Acknowledgements

The Manitoba Métis Federation Health & Wellness Department extends its gratitude to several individuals for their contributions to this report. Special thanks go to the President and Cabinet of the Manitoba Métis Federation for their continuous support throughout this project. We also acknowledge the valuable assistance provided by the staff at MMF Regional Offices in facilitating recruitment. Thank you to Indigenous Services Canada for funding this project.

Lastly, we express our heartfelt appreciation to the Red River Métis Citizens who generously shared their experiences and insights, which were instrumental in shaping this Tobacco Reduction Strategy.

Disclosure

The results and conclusions in this Tobacco Reduction Strategy are those of the authors and no official endorsement by the Indigenous Services Canada, or other parties, is intended or should be inferred. For the research design and all project activities related to the main goal of this study, approvals were obtained from the Manitoba Métis Federation to work with Red River Métis in various regions.



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Introduction

The significance of traditional tobacco among Red River Métis is deeply intertwined in their culture, social and spiritual practices, symbolizing respect, spirituality and community. However, socioeconomic determinants of health including the impact of colonialism, dispossession of land, systemic marginalization, and lack of access to appropriate health care—have led to increased commercial tobacco use among Red River Métis (Falade et al., 2024; Davy et al., 2016; Martens et al., 2010).

Commercial tobacco use is defined as the “leading preventable cause of premature death and diseases in Canada” (Health Canada, 2022). Currently, one in three Red River Métis in Manitoba smoke tobacco, and the rate is even higher in the northern region of the province (Martens et al., 2010). Although statistics indicate a reduction in the smoking prevalence rate among the Red River Métis from 2001 to 2012, commercial tobacco use remains higher in the Red River Métis Community compared to the general population (Janz et al., 2009; Martens et al., 2010; Ryan et al., 2015). Over 40% of Red

River Métis in the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) Thompson and Northwest Regions are current smokers, a rate significantly higher than the provincial average (Falade et al., 2024; Martens et al., 2010).

Recognizing the distinct roles and implications of traditional and commercial tobacco use among Red River Métis is essential. To reverse the trend in commercial tobacco use, proactive steps must be taken and implemented across all levels of health care, especially federally. These steps should aim to support Citizens who want to quit, reduce the harm caused by addiction to nicotine products, and protect the health of young people and non-smokers from the dangers of tobacco use.

With the current commitment by the MMF Health & Wellness Department and its collaborating partners, this comprehensive strategy provides a road map to reduce the use of commercial tobacco that reflects the voices of Red River Métis Citizens in Manitoba, aiming to improve their overall health and well-being.



Rationale and Methodology

What We Heard and Where We Are Going

Given the heightened prevalence of tobacco use among Red River Métis Citizens and its substantial contributions to premature mortality and the onset of chronic diseases in Canadian population, it is important to develop measures aimed at reducing the rate of commercial tobacco use among Citizens (Falade et al.; 2024).

To achieve this goal, the MMF Health and Wellness Department utilized a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach to gather the perspectives of our Citizens and stakeholders from the Manitoba Tobacco Reduction Alliance and Department of Mental Health and Community Wellness. Feedback from these research engagements, as documented by Falade and colleagues (2024), have served as the foundation for informing the development of the Red River Métis specific tobacco strategy.

The Clearing the Air:

Igniting Change with the Red River Métis Strategy includes 3 major themes:



Prevention

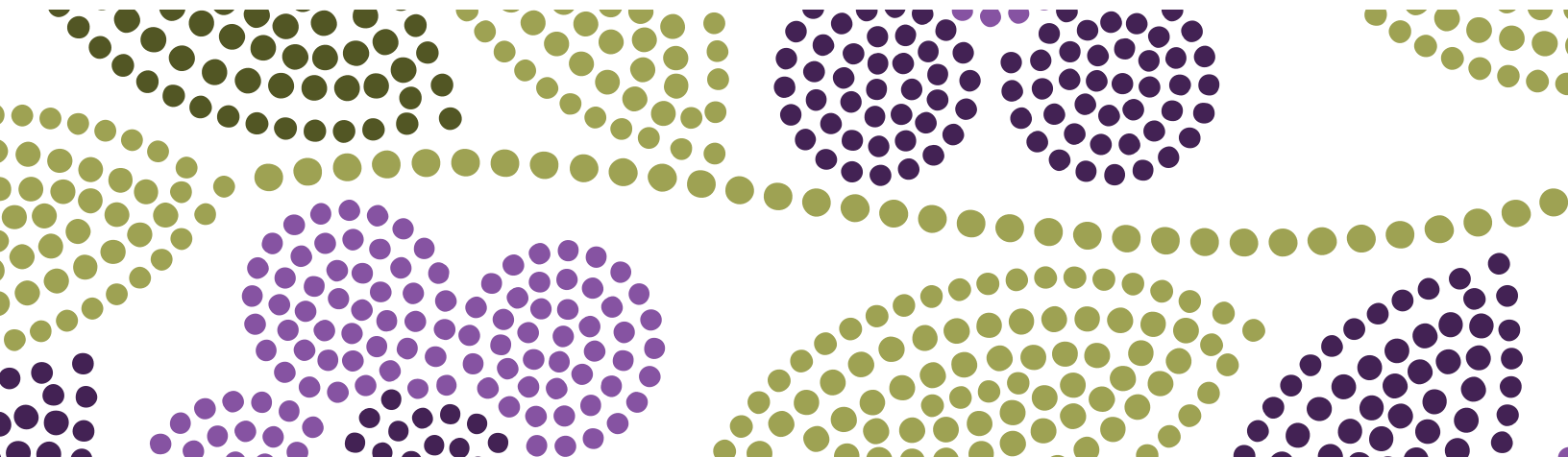


Protection



Cessation

Development of these strategic pillars were based on the findings derived from MMF's research engagements with Red River Métis Citizens and relevant stakeholders. The strategy also includes additional tools and resources as a guide for MMF partners, health authorities and policy makers, thereby facilitating future policy amendments and seamless implementation of Red River Métis-specific program.



Prevention

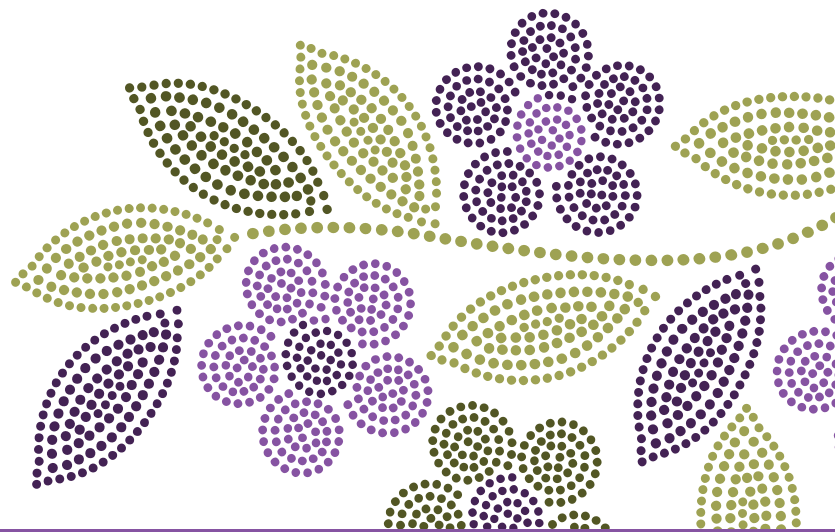
Commercial tobacco use and cigarette smoking can lead to many illnesses, such as cancer, heart disease, stroke, and lung disease (National Institute of Drug Abuse, 2021). Consuming tobacco leads to the death of 45,000 Canadians, including about 1,525 Manitobans every year (Health Canada, 2022; Manitoba Tobacco Reduction Alliance Inc-MANTRA, 2023). Undoubtedly, many of these illnesses and deaths are partially or completely preventable. Therefore, implementing tobacco smoking and vaping prevention strategies is extremely important to prevent tobacco-related death and illnesses. Unfortunately, there is limited information on preventing the uptake of tobacco smoke among Red River Métis. Hence, the significance of developing a Red River Métis-specific tobacco reduction strategy.

GOAL

To prevent tobacco smoking and vaping among Red River Métis Citizens.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

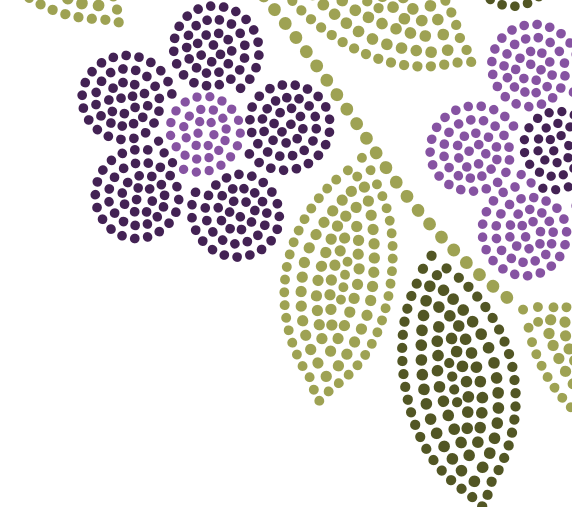
- Educate Citizens on health-associated harms of tobacco smoking and vaping.
- Prevent initiation of tobacco use among Red River Métis youth and young adults.



"I know that education at a younger age, may be starting at 8 years old instead of waiting until they're in grade 8 to start doing it or to start educating them might be the process."

- Red River Métis Citizen

Prevention



ACTIONS

- Organize and promote education campaigns on adverse effects of tobacco smoking and vaping among Red River Métis local communities.
- Develop a "catch them young" program that adopts the culturally relevant tools such as story telling to enlighten elementary school students about the health risks and dangers of tobacco smoking and vaping.
- Promote social media campaigns targeted towards Red River Métis youth and young adults.
- Create educational materials and resources on the adverse effects of tobacco smoking and vaping.
- Sponsor programs and activities that discourage tobacco use.

"If we educate them in advance, they may be the ones that will educate those others that are pressuring them, say 'hey' you know give them that confidence and knowledge to give them some advice."

– Red River Métis Citizen

Protection

This strategy involves approaches that would protect non-smoking Citizens; reduce the harmful effects of tobacco use; reduce second-hand smoke exposure within the Red River Métis Community; limit exposure to smoke; and promote “no smoking” policies. These efforts are necessary due to the higher level of exposure experienced by Red River Métis Citizens compared to all other Manitobans (Martens et al., 2010).

GOAL

To protect the health of young Red River Métis Citizens and adult non-smokers from the dangers of commercial tobacco use.

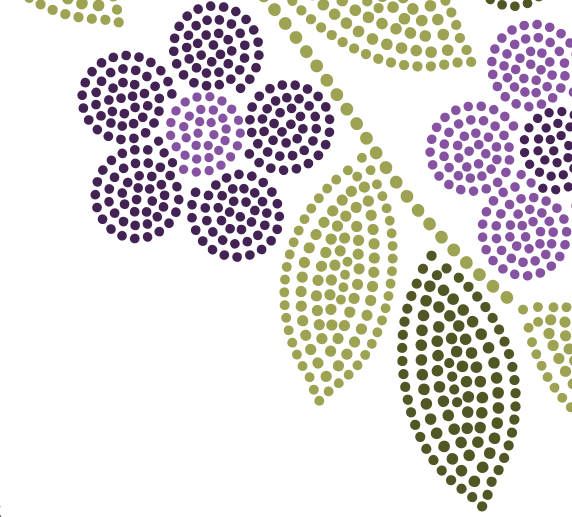
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- Create a smoke free environment.
- Enlighten Citizens on the dangers of second-hand smoke exposure.

“I think that we’ve come a long way, because most places – we’ve made it very difficult for people to smoke in public or to vape in public. So I think that’s a big, big start that places don’t allow it. And I hope they continue to do that because it makes it harder for a person, and I know that for myself, my husband smokes, but he doesn’t smoke in the house. So he has to go out in the cold if he’s going to – in the winter. And he just has to respect that because it’s his choice if he wants to smoke, but it’s my choice of the house. [Laughs]. So, I think – yeah, I think just making places non-smoking and non-vaping is important.

– Red River Métis Citizen

Protection



ACTIONS

- Educate Citizens on how to maintain smoke-free homes and cars.
- Work with the MMF Housing and Property Management Department to create designated smoke areas in new MMF buildings constructed for Citizens.
- Implement "No smoking" policy/provide "No smoking" signs in homes constructed by MMF.
- Develop culturally-specific "No Smoking in this Vehicle" car stickers and distribute to Citizens.
- Organize and promote education campaigns on adverse effects of second-hand smoke among Red River Métis local communities.
- Develop and distribute educational materials and resources on dangers of second-hand smoke exposure.

"I think myself, if the family doesn't smoke in the house, then it's a good chance that the kids won't even start."

– Red River Métis Citizen

Cessation

Tobacco cessation strategy encourages and supports individuals who smoke to quit. We are aware that most Citizens who smoke tobacco products and engage in vaping desire to quit, but they often lack access to affordable services and support that would promote cessation of smoking. Therefore, the cessation strategy outlined here would ensure the provision of needed support for Citizens who want to quit smoking and reduce the harm of their addiction to nicotine products. In the overall, it would facilitate reduction of smoking and vaping rates among Red River Métis Citizens. This section highlights the tobacco cessation strategy and the action plans for its implementation.

“But like I said, I have tried numerous times and on my own I just was not strong enough. [...] I just didn't have the willpower strong enough to say, “okay, I've got to do this.” I couldn't find it. I tried. But to me it wasn't there.”

– **Red River Métis Citizen (Focus Group Participants)**

“And I think what would be good is if you can contact somebody that was a smoker and is not anymore, if you can talk to that person when you feel like, so overwhelmed by wanting to smoke, if you can contact somebody like that it would be just great. But I didn't have anybody.”

– **Red River Métis Citizen (Focus Group Participants)**

“May be once a week, there could be a therapist or a counsellor, an open therapist or counsellor that you can make a schedule with or an appointment with. So you can go and talk about that kind of stuff. Why you're addicted to smoking cigarettes, or why you want to quit or stuff like that, to help that kind of thing.”

– **Red River Métis Citizen (Focus Group Participants)**

Cessation



GOAL

To help Red River Métis Citizens who smoke quit successfully.

OBJECTIVES

- Develop Métis-specific approaches to help Citizens who smoke quit.
- Provide appropriate cessation support for Métis Citizens who are willing to quit smoking.
- Educate Citizens on benefits of tobacco smoking cessation.
- Enlighten Citizens against using vaping as a cessation tool.

ACTIONS

- Appoint a MMF Cessation Support Professional/Therapist/Coach.
- Create smoking cessation support program that will be implemented by the Cessation Support Professional.
- Develop a Quit Smoke webpage under Health and Wellness Department on the MMF website. The page will be populated with different cessation resources, cessation support program and cessation support phone number.
- Distribute smoking cessation kits containing guide to quitting with information, tips, and resources to help Citizens quit successfully; money box to save the cash Citizens are supposed to spend on cigarettes; tracking journal to record their savings every time they do not smoke; quit note pad and pencil; and card for Citizens' wallet with MMF cessation support contact details.
- Work in partnership with the clinical support team to provide free Nicotine Replacement Therapy (gums, patches, nasal spray, inhalers, and lozenges) & Medications for Citizens who are willing to quit.
- Develop and distribute educational materials and resources on health benefits of quitting tobacco smoking and vaping.
- Create and distribute educational materials and resources emphasizing why vaping is not an alternative to tobacco smoking when trying to quit.

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