

## Keeping the Sash Around the Family:

### A Look at Metis Child, Family and Community Services

*Once a month, we will profile a different program of the Metis Child, Family and Community Services (MCFCS) Agency, an affiliate of the Manitoba Metis Federation. This month, we look at its Metis Spirit Program.*

For many, involvement with child and family services ends when they turn 18. But the staff at the Metis Child, Family and Community Services Agency recognizes that just because someone reaches adulthood doesn't mean that they don't require support anymore.

Enter the Metis Spirit Program, which provides services to young adults 18 to 21 who have aged out of the care of MCFCS but still need guidance and support. The program provides them with the resources they need to be sustainable in day-to-day living, as well as in planning and setting goals for the future.

Some of the services it offers young adults include ongoing life skill development, emotional support, support in managing critical incidents and crises, advocacy, assistance with accessing community resources and the development of support networks. It also helps them secure employment and pursue educational opportunities.

"Whether they need help with housing, employment or education, we'll be there to assist them," says Dianne Cross, the agency's Metis Spirit worker. "The program doesn't do the work for them, but it will guide them. Some need us to walk beside them and others, to walk behind them so they know that we're there. Each person is different and their needs are very unique.

"One very important part of the program is providing emotional support," she continues. "It is extremely important for our young people to have their feelings acknowledged."

The program also offers a soon-to-be biweekly group session, which is attended by youth in the Skills for Life program, as well as young adults in the Metis Spirit Program. The young adults have the opportunity to act as role models to their younger peers.

"They had asked at a focus group to move the groups to twice a month rather than once," says Cross. "One will be more informal, and one will focus on specific needs. We've had support groups on topics from everything to healthy relationships to obtaining an MMF membership, depending on what their needs are."

Another area of the program comprises focus groups, three of which are held every year. "The focus groups provide our young people an opportunity to share with us their needs, what their time in care is/was like, what transitioning out of care has been like for them and where we as an agency can make improvements to better support them. It's really an opportunity for them to use their voices," says Cross.

Before youth turn 18, the agency advises them of the program and determines if they need ongoing supportive services. Even if the youth are not currently accessing the program, the agency continues to provide outreach services to them to ensure they're aware of the program should they ever require its services in the future.

"One of our mottos is 'You're not alone,'" says Cross. "Maybe they don't need to access the program now, but they might in a year. If they ever need us, we're here."

For more information about the Metis Spirit Program, visit the agency's website at [www.metiscfs.mb.ca](http://www.metiscfs.mb.ca) or call (204) 927-6890. Watch for another feature about an MCFCS program in the next edition of *Le Metis!*