

Manitoba's Access to Justice (A2J) Initiative

Phase 1

Funded by The Law Society of Manitoba

May 2026

We acknowledge that we live in Treaty One Territory, and that Manitoba is located on the Treaty Territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishininewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denusuline and Nehethowuk Nations and the Homeland of the Red River Métis. We acknowledge that Northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	2
Introduction	1
CEO Message.....	1
Foreword	2
Manitoba's A2J Initiative.....	2
Goals.....	2
Methodology	2
Success Factors.....	2
Phase 1-Listening & Defining.....	3
Limitations of Phase 1	3
Executive Summary.....	6
What We Heard Most Clearly	6
Engagement Overview	6
Building a Shared Foundation	6
Manitoba's A2J Challenge	6
Our Purpose	7
Challenges for People	7
Challenges for Providers.....	8
Challenges for Decision Makers	8
Why This Matters Now.....	8
A2J Themes.....	8
Values	9
Principles	9
About this Report	9
What Comes Next	9
Big Ideas for Change.....	9
Access to Justice Is.....	12
What We Heard from Community.....	12
A2J is an Ongoing Commitment to Change	13
A2J is Inherently Disruptive	15
A2J is Feeling Safe, Seen and Understood.....	17
A2J is Trust and Transparency	20
A2J is Personally Relevant to Me	21
A2J is Ease of Understanding & Navigating	25
Where We Go Next.....	28
Mobilizing our A2J Community	29
Appendices	32
Appendix A – Community Voices	33
Appendix B – Select Tools & Approaches.....	36
Appendix C- Consultant Bios.....	38

Introduction

CEO Message

Manitoba's A2J community is dedicated to providing legal services and remedies to the populations we serve. We take deep pride in our commitment and we should. Together, we have sought to lessen families' burdens of time, cost and frustration. There is a strong commitment to truth and reconciliation, equity, diversity and inclusion within governments, the courts, the legal and social services professions and within communities.

Nevertheless, justice and related systems (e.g. health, social services, housing, immigration) remain complex, slow and challenging to navigate. Manitobans facing legal challenges continue to face insurmountable barriers. Service providers are exhausted as the need for their services grows.

As the regulator of Manitoba's legal profession, part of the Law Society's mandate is to improve access to legal services for the public and to foster and improve upon equity, diversity and inclusion within the legal profession.

The LSM actively supports and funds A2J projects that require coordinated leadership across sectors. As part of the Society's 2025-2028 strategic plan, the Society launched Manitoba's Access to Justice Initiative, of which you will learn more in the following pages.

Historically, we have brought community together through our chair ship of Manitoba's Access to

Justice Steering and Stakeholder Committees.

These tables were created across Canada in response to a groundbreaking [Roadmap for Change in Civil and Family Law report](#) that remains instructive over a decade later. While these tables were useful for networking and information sharing, they failed to represent the diversity of communities we serve and lacked an action focus.

In the spring of 2025, we set out to bring together diverse voices in dialogue about A2J challenges and opportunities. We spoke with our Manitoba partners but also reached out to advocates and change makers here, in Ontario and Saskatchewan.

What we heard is clear: if we are to deliver justice, if we are to improve on people's access to badly needed services, we must approach it differently. We must reimagine our overall approach, with urgency and purpose.

Our community dialogues revealed a willingness and readiness to act – across sectors, disciplines and communities. We have heard where change is most needed and what it will look like if we get it right. There is a clear will for transformation, and our challenge now is to align our mandates, unlock our resources and mobilize leadership to turn that vision into sustained, systemic change.

The path forward is challenging, but if we work collectively, we can achieve great things.

Leah Kosokowsky

Chief Operating Officer of The Law Society of Manitoba

Foreword

Throughout our 20+ years as public sector leaders, we have each experimented with different ways of working, fostering multi-disciplinary approaches and mobilizing cross sector coalitions (see Appendix C Consultant Bios).

Through community dialogue we aim to lay the groundwork for a more responsive, coordinated, and action-oriented approach to serving people facing legal and inter-related challenges.

Community co-design is the approach we take in all our work. It centres the voices of those most impacted; it is a relational, interactive and iterative approach that delivers transformative change.

We were heartened that our community dialogues revealed a good deal of consensus around values, principles, goals and priorities.

Community articulated many common barriers and an urgency and need for system-wide transformation.

What's missing is not the vision—but new ways of working that can help bring that vision to life.

This report reflects community insights into what must change, and what truly just systems and services look and feel like.

You eloquently articulated that A2J means more than access to legal counsel or public legal information: it means belonging, feeling seen and safe within the justice system and so much more.

Together, we can re-imagine what justice looks like—and deliver it, for all families, for all relations, for all communities, for all Manitobans.

Meegwetch, ekosani, pidamayaye, máhsi cho, maarsii, merci, thank you for trusting us with your words.

Leita Kalinowsky and Frankie Snider

Consultants to The Law Society of Manitoba

Manitoba's A2J Initiative

This Initiative seeks to build a platform for system-wide transformation and innovation.

Rooted in Truth and Reconciliation, equity, and people-centred design, our work is intended to be relational, iterative, inclusive, and action-focused.

Our goals were informed by community dialogue over the last 15 months.

Goals

Collectively we aim to:

1. mobilize a cross sectoral movement driving measurable results toward a fair and more just society.
2. co-create a reconciled approach to justice across governments, sectors and organizations by promoting collaboration, innovation, and community-driven solutions.
3. transform how people access and experience justice by fostering safe, compassionate, fair, equitable, timely, and affordable justice.

Methodology

We are drawing on relational and innovation approaches such as [community co-design](#), innovation engineering and Storycatching.

These approaches start with the people we are designing for and end with tailor-made solutions. They recognize that we grow our understanding and impact collectively. Further, that no person or group fully understands a challenge, nor can any solution succeed if it is developed in isolation.

Studies show that solutions with the greatest impact draw on a wide diversity of perspectives.

While there is no single approach to innovation, most include a version of these steps:

Empathize → Define → Generate Ideas →
Prototype → Test & Refine (repeat)

We listen to understand and empathize with those impacted by the challenges we seek to solve.

Broad, foundational questions help us define:

- What and who are we solving for?
- How do those impacted understand the challenges—and success?
- Where are communities' perspectives aligned or diverging?
- What does community tell us it looks like when we "get it wrong?", when we "get it right?"

We generate 100s of ideas for change, theme and piece them together into big ideas or strategies.

We prototype, test, and refine those ideas in community prior to implementing them.

This becomes our cadence for solving problems.

*Innovation approaches are repeatable methods proven to deliver increased value to people and providers. Solutions are **2 1/2 times more affordable** and **6 times faster** than typical "stage and gate" approaches. They reduce risk **by 30-80%** without compromising the ideas.*

Co-design ensures that solutions are informed by the people meant to benefit from them and by the decision makers and providers who will finance and implement them.

Success Factors

Co-design is people-centred and that changes us by challenging our blind spots and broadening our understanding. Co-design:

- surfaces root causes and upstream and downstream impacts.
- uncovers actions planned or taking place.

- synthesizes areas of agreement or divergence and their relative strength.
- generates more inclusive analysis of the challenges we seek to solve and thereby more impactful solutions.

Opportunities emerge through community dialogue. We identify allies—justice seekers, advocates and investors- who want to assist us in making needed change.

Multi-faceted solutions and implementation approaches deliver enhanced outcomes.

Phase 1-Listening & Defining

Focus:

- Define Manitoba's A2J challenge from the perspectives of people, providers and decision makers.¹
- Assess interest in collective action and areas of alignment.
- Investigate why progress is slower and more incremental than we may like and what levers we have, or require, to build and sustain momentum for justice system transformation.

Key Actions:

- Facilitate community dialogues.
- Conduct a survey.
- Gather insights at Manitoba's A2J Forum.
- Collect 100s of ideas and theme them into broad strategies for change.
- Validate what we heard.
- Reflect insights in this *What We Heard* Report and a draft *Manitoba A2J Road Map*.

Limitations of Phase 1

Engagement itself is a process of negotiation. We aimed to create safe spaces for productive critique and disagreement. To this end, we invited participants to bring their whole selves to the discussion including their education, lived professional, personal and community experience.

We guaranteed participants anonymity and opted not to attribute participant quotes. We did so to democratize insights gleaned and to challenge traditional western notions about whose voices are valued. We wanted to enable as much honesty about shortcomings within systems and services as possible without judgement or fear of reprisal.

We considered, and assessed, that it was too cumbersome to 'categorize' each speaker (e.g. newcomer PLEI provider, Indigenous lawyer, Bilingual Judge). People are far more complex than any label and live more intersectionally.

Readers of this report may assume that if an attribution refers to populations' demographics (i.e. race, class, gender, mental health), that the speaker has direct personal experience and are not 'speaking for' that demographic group.

At its best, co-design should challenge and widen our sightlines. While we believe relational approaches strengthen the legitimacy of our efforts, it is important to acknowledge that western culture is resistant to conflict. That can make it difficult for people to offer honest, constructive critiques.

Our community dialogues were simply a starting point to determine if there is sufficient interest in collective action.

¹ **People** are community members seeking justice and impacted by a legal challenge. **Providers** are those delivering services, supports and decisions in response to a legal challenge. **Decision makers** are those with positional authority to make legislative, regulatory, major policy or court rule changes or to advocate for them. **Decision makers** also have authority to make or advocate for major capital or in-kind investments (e.g. human resources, space, legal, procurement, marketing,

communications, web design or translation). In our intersectional realities we may embody several of these roles (e.g. a Francophone, Muslim woman who delivers public legal education, information and services and whose family members have navigated the Canadian immigration and related systems. A 2SLGBTQIA+, Indigenous neurodivergent, female social worker who has survived interpersonal family violence and sought and obtained a Protection Order).

We invited you to tell us who is missing and what we may have overlooked. The following is your feedback and our acknowledgment of the limitations of Phase 1:

- Participants were selected from Manitoba's A2J Network and or represent members of Manitoba's former A2J Steering and Stakeholder Committees. Participants are not representative of the entire justice ecosystem.
- Participants did not explicitly include justice seekers, though all participants were encouraged to bring their whole selves, and experiences of their relatives and communities and many did share personal experiences.
- Manitobans will be invited to participate in the co-design, prototyping and testing the big ideas generated by community and Phase 2 implementation will enable continuous dialogue among people, providers and decision makers².
- We acknowledge, and community underscored, that A2J has cross cutting implications for health, mental health, addictions, housing, family services, immigration, labour, transportation, sport, culture and education among others. At first participants largely focused on gaps in family, intimate partner violence, Child Protection, wills and probate and immigration. As we spoke to more people, similar challenges and opportunities emerged irrespective of the area of law. Ideas proposed by community benefit people navigating any type of legal challenge. We believe this presents a significant opportunity.
- Indigenous participation must be distinctions based, honouring the uniqueness and breadth of experiences and the ways in which nations express and choose to participate.
- Indigenous participation in Phase 1 included staff members from the Manitoba Métis Federation, the Manitoba Inuit Association,

Manitoba Keewatinowí Okimakanak and the Southern Chiefs Organization.

- Indigenous service providers participated as Elders, Knowledge Keepers and community members through their organizations or counsels.
- While we did speak to individual Métis people and had a discussion with staff at the MMF, we did not formally engage in consultation with the MMF as the Government of the Red River Métis and that is why there are no references to the MMF in Appendix A Community Voices except as an attendee and participant at our Annual A2J Forum).
- Engagement with Indigenous governance bodies, nations, communities and NGOs must be foundational and ongoing given the coalescence of our justice systems and the disproportionate representation of Indigenous peoples in Western criminal justice, child and family services and health systems.
- Indigenous government, community and organizations have expressed concern about resources available to support the vast need. We have heard the myriads of ways in which Indigenous governments and organizations are already responding to the needs of their nations and citizens. Any future A2J Action Coalition will need to consider this feedback, and continue collaborating, to ensure that we are not contributing to further strain, duplication or undermining efforts already self-determined and underway.
- Federal participation is essential, given joint legislative, service and funding responsibilities (e.g. justice, bilingualism, First Nations, health, child and family, labour, housing, immigration). Future governance will have to consider this.
- Law enforcement participation was recommended by some participants.
- Engagement of funding bodies was limited to the Manitoba Law Foundation, Province of

² Having collectively engaged 100s of justice seekers over the last decade, we attest that the feedback contained in this report aligns with what we have heard directly from

Manitobans navigating civil, family and or criminal legal challenges. It also aligns with recommendations outlined in various A2J national and local reports, national and international calls to action and calls to justice.

Manitoba-including Legal Aid Manitoba, the University of Manitoba and the LSM. Some participants recommended including other funders such as the Winnipeg Foundation.

- Community dialogue participants serve northern, southern, western and eastern regions of our province, including individuals from rural and remote communities, First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. All engagements were held in Winnipeg. Participants reside in western, eastern and southern regions. Further outreach to northern and remote communities is required.
- Professional body engagement was limited to The Manitoba Bar Association. Others could be engaged in co-design such as FAMLI, Alternative Dispute Resolution Canada and its Manitoba affiliates, Criminal Defence Association.

Executive Summary

A2J is not limited by effort, ideas, or commitment.

What We Heard Most Clearly

- We are working harder—but not in ways that allow change to compound and build.
- We are duplicating effort while critical gaps remain.
- We lack shared infrastructure, processes and time to act collectively.
- No one is responsible for seeing the full justice system.
- As a result, progress is slow, fragmented, and unsustainable.

Engagement Overview

We are grateful to those who generously shared time, knowledge, life experiences and critiques.

We engaged Indigenous governments and organizations, Elders and Knowledge Keepers, numerous provincial departments, the three levels of court and administrative tribunals, and legal, social, financial and spiritual providers from the not for profit, public and private sectors including voices from Indigenous, Francophone, Black and racialized communities, newcomer and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, rural and urban dwellers (see Appendix A - Community Voices).

We drew from community round tables at Manitoba's Annual A2J Forum and took in presentations and updates from advocates, academics and community leaders. We hosted group and one-on-one community dialogues. We conducted a survey of select leaders, providers, students and board members.

We validated what we heard with community and generated 100s of ideas for change.

Building a Shared Foundation

Working together is hard. Change is only possible if we agree on who and what we're solving for.

To this end, we asked community:

- "What challenges do you, your organization, your communities and the family members³ you serve face?"
- "What does A2J mean to you, your community(ies) and those you serve?"
- "What would it look and feel like if we got access right?"

This is what we took away.

Manitoba's A2J Challenge

People face many barriers hampering their right to safe, compassionate, fair, equitable, timely, and affordable justice because systems and services were never designed for everyone.

- Barriers persist because the access challenge is so complex and solutions span the mandates and responsibilities of all levels of government, three levels of court, and dozens of public, private and community service providers.
- No one has the mandate to foster a holistic understanding of the justice system or a person's journey in seeking justice.
- We duplicate effort on common functions (e.g. community engagement, networking, training, research, policy and data analysis) and in the delivery of public legal education, advice, information and resolution support.

³ Family members, relatives and justice seekers are used interchangeably for people seeking justice and/or navigating legal challenges. We intentionally avoid the

use of the terms: "client", "applicant", offender for reasons that are further articulated by community in this report.

- Operationally, we function largely in silos.
- We continue to take pan-Indigenous approaches leading to greater harms, missed opportunities and solutions that do not work.
- These ways of working are costly to both people and providers.
- Mobilization around access issues and solutions is challenging for us to build and sustain.
- Progress on access is incremental and slow.
- Systemic and transformational change is required. This level and scale of change require collaboration across governments, sectors and organizations.
- Collaborative effort on this scale demands new ways of working and new tools, processes, systems and focus to ensure success.

Our Purpose

Together we can re-imagine what justice looks like by:

➤ *Re-building trust with those harmed*

You told us this means acknowledging the truths of those harmed by Western systems and ensuring we serve all people with dignity, respect, compassion and empathy.

➤ *Re-designing how we lead and work together.*

You told us this means promoting and modelling collaboration, innovation and community-driven solutions, taking risks, sharing data, measuring outcomes and continuously improving.

➤ *Empowering community. Sharing the power, knowledge and expertise needed to make meaningful change.*

You told us this means involving a diversity of people and centring the voices of community and front-line providers. Empowering community-led justice, self-determination and culturally trauma informed approaches. It means valuing lived experience and various knowledge traditions alongside formal education and training.

➤ *Re-visiting how and what we finance.*

You told us this means sustainable funding; pooling our human and financial resources, expertise and data to greater impact and incentivizing solutions that improve access for more Manitobans.

Challenges for People

- People face problems. They're stuck, frustrated, distrustful, fearful or in crisis.
- Many are unable to move from problem to resolution on their own.
- People are forced to learn multiple systems to navigate them and to use advocates in lieu of self-advocacy.
- First points of contact may not recognize legal issues.
- People navigate poverty, mental or physical health, addiction and/or housing insecurity in addition to their legal challenges. These lived experiences are often 'invisible' contributing to delayed support.
- People encounter embedded racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, ableism, linguistic and cultural barriers as they navigate systems and services.
- Individual legal rights, costs, processes, roles and supports are unclear.
- Information is scattered, inaccessible, incorrect.
- Support is concentrated in urban centres. Navigation assistance, guidance and tailored support are insufficient.
- Systems and services are designed in ways that 'don't talk to one another'. When they do, its dependent on 'heroic individuals' going above and beyond to make connections.
- People 'pinball' between providers encountering roadblocks, ineligibility, waitlists and voicemails.
- Court and legal processes are opaque and rigid. Court staff lack autonomy to apply proportionality, discretion and flexibility.
- Free supports have capacity constraints. Private support is out of reach, and legal aid does not cover all areas of need.

- Needs of the system(s) are often prioritized over needs of the people.

Challenges for Providers

- There are more providers, delivering more services to a greater number of people. Yet, gaps remain, and we duplicate effort.
- Providers, the public and decision makers are unclear about who does what.
- Courts, legal aid, and free and affordable legal, social, financial and spiritual support services are stretched thin.
- Funding and programming decisions are often reactive and not developed in collaboration with provider insights.
- Providers lack access to the same data and information as decision makers.
- We are vulnerable to personnel and funding changes. There is a lack of funding for evaluation.
- We are often forced to rush treatment and work outside our scope. We are pushed to 'police' clients and be reactive rather than preventative.
- We are seeing more self-represented litigants and a greater complexity of needs. It is taking longer to differentiate needs and provide good support and decisions.
- Changes to legislation, programs, court procedures, rules and forms are occurring at an accelerated pace. It is difficult to synthesize information, even as experts.
- Systems and processes need to be modernized, with universalized forms and documents.
- We lack processes and infrastructure to enable cross-system triage, referral, collaboration, and shared case management.
- Where processes are in place to share information, providers may not be aware.

Challenges for Decision Makers

- We all struggle to maintain a holistic understanding of justice systems and services and peoples' experiences accessing them.

- We don't control a person's whole journey from problem through to resolution.
- We are dependent on others to achieve our own A2J mandates.
- Change in one part of a system can drive cost, delay or effort elsewhere when not coordinated.
- Power is unbalanced between and among people, systems and organizations.
- People and front-line providers do not have means to share feedback with us. This limits our sightlines on the challenges.
- Government budget and election cycles impact decision making and long-term planning.
- We are forced to reinvent the wheel for each idea, project or change.
- We duplicate effort and investment, while at the same time gaps remain and resources fall short of need.
- Data collection and analysis is imprecise. We lack fulsome information on which to base decisions. Everyone collects data and yet not all is shared publicly or synthesized.
- We struggle to recruit, retain and develop our teams particularly in rural and remote communities.
- We struggle to deliver equitable services in different regions and to different communities.

Why This Matters Now

- Canada's results on A2J and rule of law continue to decline.
- Demand for services is increasing.
- Provider capacity is stretched thin.
- Complexity of needs is rising.
- Current approaches are not keeping pace.

A2J Themes

Justice is an important component of individual and social well-being. A2J happens when people are equipped to support their well-being.

When we asked what A2J means, these themes recurred:

- A2J is a collective and ongoing commitment to change
- A2J is inherently disruptive
- A2J is feeling safe, seen and understood
- A2J is personally relevant to me and my community
- A2J is trust and transparency
- A2J is ease of understanding and navigating

When we asked what access would look and feel like when we “got it right”, the following echoed through our discussions.

Values

(beliefs about what is desirable in a just system)

- We act honourably with kindness, compassion and empathy.
- We act with respect, meaning dignity, clarity, and honesty.
- We create welcoming environments that foster safety and belonging.
- We listen deeply to understand.
- We deliver services that are inclusive and culturally trauma informed.
- We promote and support equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- We reflect the diversity of Manitobans we serve, particularly those under-served, over-policed and over-represented in our family, criminal, healthcare and child welfare systems.

Principles

(govern behaviour based on shared values)

- We support the whole person—including social, emotional, physical, mental, spiritual, and financial well-being.
- We support the whole family—children and youth, adults, parents and elders, all relations.
- We work to prevent harm, restore and heal.
- We work together to get everyone the right support, at the right time, from the right place—even if that place isn’t here/us/me.
- We get it wrong, reflect and evolve, welcoming the lessons to be learned.

About this Report

This Report reflects what we heard. It is not yet an implementation plan.

What Comes Next

A forthcoming *Manitoba Access to Justice Road Map* will build on this report by:

- affirming a shared foundation.
- articulating broad strategies for change.
- defining governance and accountability.
- identifying investment and implementation pathways.

Big Ideas for Change

The barrier isn’t knowing *what* to do—many reports have been written that that remain timely, relevant and important.

The barrier is *how* our A2J community builds and sustains momentum to deliver what our relatives and communities require and deserve.

These **6 big ideas** reflect areas of strongest community consensus. They are early signals of direction and will need to be further developed through community co-design.

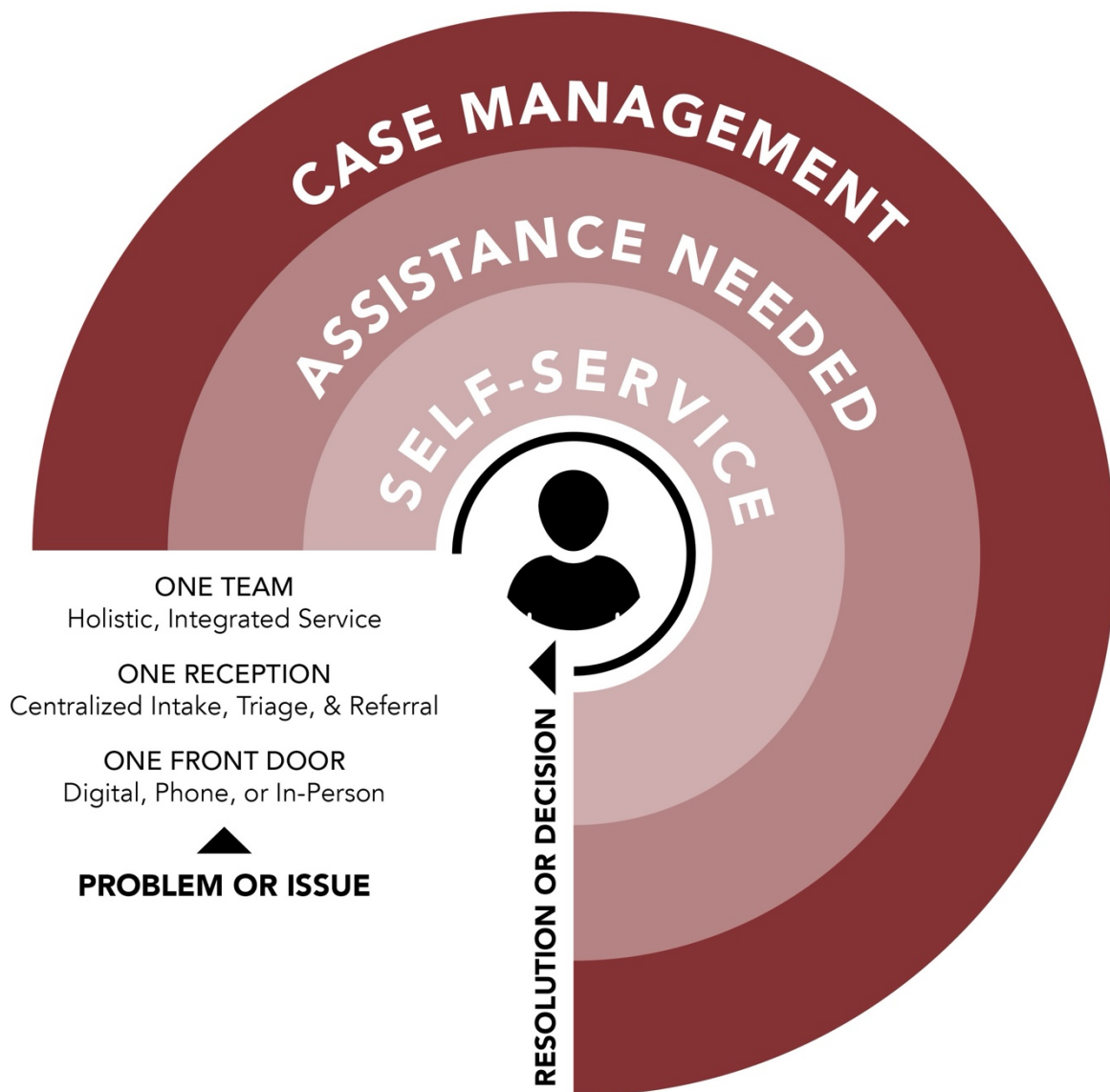
Changing How We Work Together

- ▶ **A Community Network** could build bridges among providers, policy makers and decision makers; raise public and provider awareness, foster best praxis and support common needs (e.g. info sharing, training, research and legal briefs, community engagement, data collection and analytics). This could reduce administrative burden on individual organizations.
- ▶ **A Road Map** could chart our collective path forward and include shared purpose, goals, values, principles and broad strategies for transformational change.
- ▶ **An Action Coalition** could share insight, leadership and accountability for stewarding a shared Road Map; building cohesion; pooling human and financial investments; driving

progress; removing barriers; being accountable, monitoring and reporting on actions taken and outcomes achieved.

Changing how People Experience Justice

- ▶ **A Service Eco-System** –of multi-disciplinary providers could work together as a 'single team' through community hubs or provider-access points to deliver whole person, whole family, holistic and integrated legal, social, health, mental health, financial and spiritual supports to our relatives and community members.
- ▶ **One Front Door, One Reception, One Team** –a consolidated web and offline information hub, single phone/ email/reception navigation, triage and referral could set people on the right path to resolving their legal challenges regardless of where they live and regardless of their individual capacity and circumstances.
- ▶ **Multiple Pathways to Justice**- guided decision trees, phone, in person and online supports could help people move from issue through to resolution on their own, with assistance or with full wrap around support and case management. Supports could be tailored to each individual and family's unique needs.



Access to Justice Is....

What We Heard from Community

A2J is an Ongoing Commitment to Change

CURRENT CHALLENGES

You told us structural challenges are the key barriers hindering progress including limited funding and resources (71%), lack of coordination across sectors (58%), and systemic resistance to change (42%).

Strategic Planning & Community Engagement

All participants have an A2J mandate. We are all dependent on one other to achieve our mandates.

We want improved coordination, but we also struggle with how our plans and priorities will interface.

"Despite good intentions, we are working harder, not smarter. We need a plan, a roadmap, a team. We keep rebuilding the wheel on every project."

"We already have a plan...how will your plan work with ours?"

All of us engage community, often on the same issues, sometimes from the same organization. We acknowledge this is hard on the people we aim to support and duplicative of their and our time and effort.

"Justice must be reshaped by and for communities — not imposed on them. But many communities are unaccustomed to being asked for input and may not have a clear vision for an alternative, requiring sustained engagement and trust-building".

Data

Each of us collects data but it is not all publicly available nor synthesized.

As a result, we cannot fully understand peoples' journeys from problem through to resolution. We struggle to measure the impact of our actions.

Ways of Working & Financing Change

Most of us do A2J work "off the side of desk."

We work primarily on individual projects.

"You build a great project and the funding ends. You lose human expertise, relationships and trust built up in community. You can't sustain momentum."

"Short-term, project funding reinforces silos and limits the engagement needed to support system wide planning and collective action".

Some of us have tables that bring us together around an area of law, a demographic group or a specific issue. We also lack time, governance, processes and supportive infrastructure to dialogue, plan and take collective action.

We are more connected than ever before thanks to our diverse and growing A2J Network. But Manitoba's A2J Network does not have the mandate, authority or resources to mobilize collective action.

Few legal problems are discreet, yet we often plan and deliver services that are.

We struggle to make change that requires input from others (i.e. judiciary, court operations, government, law society, law foundation, academia, health, child and family welfare).

The most impactful changes shared by community require trust, relationship building and collaboration to plan, finance, implement, monitor and measure.

WHAT WILL IT LOOK LIKE WHEN WE GET IT RIGHT?

Our A2J community sees an opportunity: to transform action and innovation into a collective ongoing practice.

Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers shared:

.... reconciliation starts with us, our relationship to ourselves, our past, present... one eagle feather will not help an eagle fly.

All those feathers must work together, and that's exactly how we must see [A2J] ... the value of each is important... but collectively, that's how we get off the ground".

Some examples we can build upon.

A cross-sector Family Law table chaired by the former Associate Chief Justice of the Court of Queen's Bench brought together providers and decision makers to discuss challenges and implement solutions quickly.

The Minister of Justice's cross-sector Family Law Collaboration Table co-designs, prototypes, tests, implements, monitors and measures legislative, policy and service change. It has innovated quickly and operated successfully through changes in political and administrative leadership.

You identified the following as having the greatest potential for increasing access to justice:

- long-term funding (79%)
- improved collaboration across sectors (71%)
- shared data infrastructure and evaluation (42%)

You told us that we get closer to getting it right when peoples' experiences are centred and when governance is shared, distinctions-based and accountable.

"Meaningful accountability is shared and inherently collective. As members of a larger whole we must all recognize that no single system or institution can improve justice outcomes in isolation."

Actions have greater impact, are sustained, and faster with a shared plan and pooled investment.

We need time, mechanisms, resources and commitment to work collectively to affect needed legislative, regulatory, major policy, program, service, rule and funding changes.

A2J is Inherently Disruptive

CURRENT CHALLENGES

You were adamant that A2J is not simply about closing gaps within existing systems. It is not simply about legal representation or legal information.

We must address the culture, values and norms that underpin colonial systems and reproduce power imbalances and inequities.

Western systems--be they justice, health, social services or law enforcement --are built on colonial foundations which inform our organizational cultures and daily service delivery.

Traditional western systems reinforce risk aversion, exclusivity, hierarchy, and credentialism. They anchor us in the here and now and rules adherence.

“Institutional culture often defaults to “we’ve always done it this way,” particularly in courts and government, creating inertia that slows meaningful reform”.

Innovation and human-centred approaches on the other hand, give us a pathway to foster organizational cultures that are inclusive, diverse, agile, and flexible. Human-centred approaches do not tether us to the current system, but rather free us to be strategic, forward thinking and collaborative.

You described ways of working that hinder access and the attributes of a more inclusive organizational culture.

Current systems maintain the status quo and hinder access when they are:	We desire an inclusive and change-oriented culture that improves access and is:
Unresponsive to changing needs	Person and community-centred
Siloed, hierarchical, territorial	Collaborative
Credentialism, title-and Western education oriented	Valuing lived and diverse experiences and knowledge traditions
Individually motivated	Collective enriching
Focused on today's crisis i.e. “firefighting”	Predictive and visionary
Risk averse, static	Innovative, flexible
Output focused	Outcomes driven
Transactional	Strategic

Re-inventing traditional Western system(s) will be hard work. Systems thrive on homeostasis, and as such, they retreat to what is known and comfortable.

“Our justice systems have deeply embedded systemic resistance to change. Innovation is frequently met with hesitation, fear and reprisal”.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE WHEN WE GET IT RIGHT?

You told us that it takes a long-term commitment to shift our cultures from ones that harm to ones that co-create, prevent, heal and restore.

It is only when we adopt a shared vision and repeatedly *choose to act differently together*, that we build enough momentum that entrenched colonial systems must respond.

A2J, or what we have begun calling a “reconciled approach to justice” is about transforming: ourselves, the way we work and our rules and norms. It is about re-imagining systems and services in ways that honour the rich traditions of the various nations and cultures that inhabit Turtle Island.

“Justice must be reshaped by, and for, communities — not imposed on them.”

“If you don’t know our experiences...come and walk a day in our life”.

Like the fibers of the Métis sash and ceinture fléchée, we are more vibrant and resilient when we weave the individual strands of our cultures, knowledge and approaches together to create something new and better.

Indigenous Elders shared the importance of gratitude and acknowledging the contributions of others to our personal development and learning. They reflected on Murray Sinclair’s writings and four questions he posed:

- who are we?
- where are we going?
- why?
- what is our purpose?

These teachings reinforce that we are on a good path.

We develop the resilience required to shift harmful cultures by grounding our work in shared purpose, goals, values and principles. These form a cohesive core from which to live the changes people and communities are calling for.

How They Work Together

Disruption identifies the root cause of the problem — systems not built for everyone — and *commitment to change* is the path forward: collective, sustained action, led with humility.

Systems and services are comprised of people, and as such, each of us can re-imagine and re-create new ways to achieve communities’ vision.

In a reconciled approach, we commit to ever improving.

We celebrate the change makers and elevate them to serve as Elders, role models, coaches and champions.

We mobilize as a coalition driving system wide transformation, collective action and innovation.

“Access to justice is a practice — not a destination. A justice system that is fair for all must always be evolving.”

How we work and deliver services, whom we hire and how we support them must change.

“Innovation cannot rely on heroic individuals. Long-term transformation requires funded infrastructure, supportive policy, and a cultural shift in how systems are led and governed.”

When we do this culture work, we challenge harmful approaches that underpin colonial systems.

Together, we will have begun to re-imagine and build a reconciled approach to justice that transforms how people access and experience justice.

A2J is Feeling Safe, Seen and Understood

CURRENT CHALLENGE

You shared that colonial systems often fail to acknowledge or accommodate peoples' historical and current realities. This diminishes peoples' trust and increases disengagement.

Traditional western legal processes are perceived as hierarchical, rigid, and indifferent by people, providers and decision makers.

Our relatives and communities experience justice and related systems as unsafe, culturally disconnected, and harmful.

People tell us that how they are treated is as significant-sometimes even more- than the outcome or decision.

You acknowledged that even well-intentioned providers and decision makers can perpetuate harm. This can show up in a whole myriad of ways.

You shared that a lack of visible concern or caring can make people feel unheard and unsafe, particularly those who are experiencing trauma, or who enter justice and related systems with fear.

"Look directly at me even if I'm speaking [through an interpreter]. My body language, tone, facial expressions matter in what I am trying to convey to you.

Show me that you really see me, that you really hear me."

Past negative experiences with other systems—like child welfare, law enforcement or immigration—compound distrust in the justice system for equity deserving people who continue to experience marginalization and violence.

"Where we come from, we run and throw stones when we see the police. Justice isn't something we can count on or even expect for ourselves."

Historically traditional western systems have equated objectivity and fairness with a lack of emotion. This belief also finds its way into our norms, values and procedures. Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers shared that

"To love ourselves unconditionally first as a requirement, then to love all of our colleagues, and the family members we serve unconditionally, is radically different from what traditional western systems do and reinforce, consciously, unconsciously, explicitly and implicitly".

This teaching is imperative to healing past and current harms. It demands that we operate on a 'different plane' than what many of us may have been taught.

Listening and learning from this teaching elevates Indigenous ways of knowing and being. It is an act of truth, and reconciliation, to reflect on the harms Western systems cause and then to transform them through action.

Sometimes our ways of operating signal who is welcome and by extension safe. You highlighted that we operate from assumed and binary gender norms in application forms, dress codes, space and facility design. This excludes 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals', perpetuating emotional and even physical harm.

Language also impacts how our relatives feel and whether they can trust us. You shared that when we describe people as 'at risk', 'offender' 'abuser' or 'victim' we are working from a deficit model.

"The most expensive thing we have in the system is failure. If we fail to give people reasonable prospects in life, we end up paying for a whole lifetime. If (we) predict too early that a kid won't amount to much: 'at risk', then we're just maintaining them in failure instead of creating opportunity."

Language relays expectations that can negatively shape dignity and belonging. You shared that shifting from identity-based labels to behaviour-based descriptions reduces stigma, supports accountability, and increases the likelihood of lasting change⁴.

Some community members shared that ‘client’ or ‘user’ are not aligned with your worldviews.

Conversely when we use ‘family member,’ ‘relative’, or ‘justice seeker’ our language positions us in relationship.

Words have the power to shift how we think and act with those we serve and what we expect of ourselves on their behalf.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE WHEN WE GET IT RIGHT?

Everyone has a genuine sense of self-determination, choice, freedom of choice and decision-making power.

People feel that justice is real and that they can access it.

Empathy, compassion, and kindness are practiced by all. These values do not, and need not, conflict with legal objectivity or fairness which are also crucial to good justice.

Safe and welcoming spaces and faces greet family members at every step of their journey.

Providers and decision makers uphold set of shared values and principles informed by the communities we all serve.

Team members receive clear explanations around the “why and how” of what we are working toward.

Organizational cultures model comfort with complaints as opportunities for continuous improvement.

An Indigenous Elder shared the following teaching about the Medicine Wheel and instructive insights.

Our path forward seeks to honour this wisdom.

⁴ Motz et al., *Does contact with the justice system deter or promote future offending?* (2019); Graham, *The Power*

of Language to Transform Efforts to Address Intimate Partner Violence (2024)

Medicine Wheel Teaching

"When you think about unhealthy societies, which we are part of, whether we acknowledge that or not, and the Law Society is part of that larger society. We look for ways of how we can do things better ...we know it's not working very well the way it is.

If we use the Medicine Wheel concept of teaching, of looking in and saying, where's our weaknesses inside here? What are we struggling with right now? Justice is an important topic...we must protect people.

So how best do we do that? The court system is not doing very well in that way...

*You know reforms need to take place.... and yet we look at just one segment of protecting people: protecting society from itself.... [but we also must ask ourselves] **how do we make [society] healthy again?**...*

It's by finding what disease we are dealing with. Some of it belongs to a disease -centered right out of colonial thinking. The system got to the point of where it broke down....it was designed with ill and malintent.

*...[W]hen our wheel, our car broke down...how did we fix that? We didn't depend on bolts and screws and nuts and metal.... **we fixed it where it broke down.***

How did we do that? We went to the natural way of life. But who helped us with that? The people with the knowledge that knew how to do it helped us with that.

[W]e have a broken-down health system. We have 70, 75, 80% of our children are in care...it's a broken system. The legal system also needs fixing.

Our way would be to look in and see what is it that we must do here as a Nation? Our way would be let's ask our people. Let's ask our Elders, let's ask the old people: "what do we do to fix this"?

Let's ask the people who are currently impacted.

You can't go to the people that are part of the broken-down system, (to get) good ideas about how

*to change, to reform things. You can't... just rely on them to fix it. **One of the reasons it's broken down is because we never involved other people in how to fix it.***

Back home when we look at reform, the community must be involved. So, let's bring the judge, the lawyers, both sides, to the table... in a circle. Come and sit and talk about: "what do we do with this young man who is constantly breaking into people's homes?"

You have got to come together, talk about it as a society, as a community, and come up with the best way forward. And I see that the Medicine Wheel is, for me one of the best tools of dealing with ills that we have in every faith.

For me, I look at my 81-year-old body and I say, 'have I looked after my body, my spirit, my mind, my emotions? How do I feel about things? How do I feel about where I am today? 'What am I doing today?'

Well, the first thing is I do a sort of a physical check with myself in the morning... I just need to know that I can get up and walk again, right? And then, 'how is your spirit feeling today'? Because if something happens today on my way to work, you know, what happens? Events happen. Accidents happen. 'Are my emotions in check so that I know that I'm not going to just go and hurt somebody because of something that happened to me?'

I have got to do these check ins. [W]e need to help our young people, a lot of times, understand that they, too, must do those check ins if they're going to have a better life themselves, right?

.. so, I think reform starts with what we're doing, law, society, other societies that we have within the community.

...we must know, how do we relate best? How do we work best at the work that we want to do, the reforms that we know we need to make? How best do we do that?

I tell you the medicine wheel will help us hold on. It's an old form of teaching...but it works.

A2J is Trust and Transparency

CURRENT CHALLENGES

You shared that the role and limits of court and legal processes are misunderstood by people, providers and even decision makers.

People navigating traditional western court and legal systems often do not feel confident that they are being given clear, honest, or complete information.

Opaque, technical language and complex procedures, leave most people feeling confused, fearful, alienated and powerless—particularly those without support.

“Clients don’t understand what lawyers or judges do or how decisions are made. People pay thousands to lawyers and feel like nothing is happening because they don’t understand the process or what’s being done for them.”

A lack of plain language, inconsistent service, confusing referrals, and being passed from one provider to another erodes confidence and deters future help-seeking.

Many give up without resolving their legal challenge or realizing their legal rights.

These experiences erode peoples’ trust in the rule of law.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE WHEN WE GET IT RIGHT?

When A2J is grounded in accountability, relationship, trust and transparency, justice seekers feel confident, respected, and informed.

Legal processes are timely and culturally trauma informed, consistently explained in plain language, both official languages and multiple representative languages including costs, timelines, roles, processes, forms and court orders.

We work with community to ensure information and forms are adapted to cultural contexts.

“Francophone and newcomer communities help co-design inclusive approaches that recognize unique cultural and linguistic needs and expectations”.

Physical, mental and emotional accessibility needs are screened for, acknowledged and met with appropriate pathways to resolution.

People trust the answers and guidance they receive. They engage and follow through.

People see value and have faith in democratic institutions and processes, the courts, the legal system and rule of law.

A2J is Personally Relevant to Me

CURRENT CHALLENGES

There are competing tensions and perspectives that emerge when discussing A2J at the individual and community levels.

Indeed, justice is an essential component of both individual and community wellbeing.

While we have heard that A2J happens when people are equipped to support their wellbeing, we also heard that current systems are poorly set up to do so.

In this sense access is so much more than the ability to access legal advice, representation or information.

People's lives are not segmented in the ways that services and solutions are parceled by laws and policies.

People experience their issues as interrelated.

Their criminal justice issues are connected to their experiences with the child welfare system, social services, family law and more.

For Indigenous peoples, legal challenges may also be rooted in historical trauma-whether that be as a survivor of residential school, the 60's scoop or ongoing colonization.

The silos we work within do not reflect peoples' realities. People's challenges are both intersectional and systemic.

Justice seekers and those delivering services speak both about wellness and measures that point to access improving or declining (e.g. belonging and affordability; safety and timeliness).

One's personal needs directly shape our personal views of justice and access (e.g. poverty, hunger, safety, historic trauma, language or technology deficits, a lawsuit).

Our community dialogues were comprehensive in both surfacing these tensions and pointing to the

ways in which A2J understanding and action must be expanded to hold this complexity.

Intersectional Realities

People do not see themselves reflected in the justice system when they walk down the halls of the courthouse and see portraits of white, middle aged men; when they make contact with legal counsel who do not look, act or speak like them; when they come to a court centre for help or before a judge in a courtroom.

Our family members tell us that justice feels foreign, imposed, inaccessible and culturally irrelevant particularly equity deserving people such as Indigenous, Black or racialized individuals, newcomers, Francophones, 2SLGBTQIA+, those from non-Christian/western cultural or religious traditions, and or those who have experienced violence or trauma.

People may also be navigating poverty, trauma, violence, housing insecurity, disability, mental or physical health challenges or addiction alongside their legal challenge(s).

Some of you shared that Manitoba has been on the leading edge of therapeutic courts that focus on addressing the underlying issues driving criminal behaviour and that there is much to build on here.

You told us that navigating court and out of court services is challenging even for trained professionals and experts. For people with physical or cognitive disabilities, addictions, or mental health challenges it is near impossible.

Western justice and related systems reflect the priorities, values, and power structures of the people who built them, and the purposes they were established for. As such, they have historically, and continue to, marginalize and exclude other ways of knowing and being

“Indigenous communities, for example, define justice according to their laws and traditions—not colonial templates”.

“Indigenous and community justice have much to teach us (non-Indigenous peoples). [Indigenous cultures] make room for collaboration, culture, and compassion — which are essential to meaningful justice”.

Holistic and Integrated

Justice is multi-faceted and complex, yet colonial systems and services have tended to frame challenges as legal rather than multi-faceted and in need of integrated and holistic solutions.

Service providers and the courts are seeing a greater complexity of needs, and it is taking you longer to differentiate those complex challenges.

People, providers and decision makers often require financial, social, cultural, linguistic, psychological support regardless of whether the issue is civil, criminal and or family related.

“Outcomes are often delayed or derailed not because legal solutions don’t exist, but because the broader supports that would enable legal action — transportation, childcare, mental health supports, income assistance — are missing”.

Awareness and Understanding

Misinformation and myth abound. These take additional time to address.

As providers and decision makers, we are spending more time establishing trust and bridging cultural understandings, particularly with people who may not expect justice and who may even fear us.

“Many newcomers, for example, arrive with deep misunderstandings about Canadian law-and ask: ‘do women have more rights than men in Canada?’”

Individuals' perceptions of the Canadian and Manitoba justice systems are shaped by their countr(ies) of original and personal experiences or

observations, including witnessing or experiencing racial profiling, over-policing, and the disproportionate incarceration of Indigenous, Black, and other racialized community members.

“As an immigrant ... some of the concepts are very new. Things like family law, do not exist in a lot of countries...coming to a system where you enrol your kids in school...there’s a sudden expectation that the kids learn at home. Your parenting is different.... the way you discipline your child is different. So, there are ways that kids or the family can get involved in the justice system...without knowing.”

Geographic and Technological Access

Remote residents particularly First Nations, Métis, Inuit, rural and northern ones, face severe access issues due to a lack of local court and service infrastructure, no or limited digital access and transportation challenges which may change with seasons or remain year-round.

Geographic and technological challenges are compounded by differences in services and funding provided by Canada and Manitoba to First Nations and Métis people.

Legal and related supports are concentrated in major centres, making it hard for people outside those areas to access support at home or nearby.

Conflicts of interest compound these challenges in Manitoba’s smaller regional centres.

We discussed the increased reliance on technology as both an opportunity and a barrier. On the one hand, technology stands to improve access for those with high capacity and low complexity needs. It stands to improve connections among service providers in different sectors and geographic locations. It may reduce justice system and personal cost and burden related to transportation to a court or service centre.

On the other hand, the increasing shift to on-line and e-service for court and out of court services is problematic for people who do not have reliable

internet, digital literacy or a safe place to access and use technology.

“People don’t have computer access, but court services are increasingly online.”

When increased digital access is offered outside a continuum of service choice, it contributes to tiered justice.

Bringing justice to communities or returning it to community is also a double-edged challenge. You roundly criticized the fly-in/fly-out model of justice as dehumanizing and disconnected.

“Courts arrive briefly, render decisions, and depart—leaving no continuity or relationship. The system is not meaningful for many First Nations. It’s imposed, not aligned with our ways of resolving conflict.”

Community-led solutions such as restorative justice on the other hand are yielding promise. You highlighted examples of law enforcement, survivor services, courts, community justice, elected officials, Elders and Indigenous community working in partnership to take back and build local, Indigenous justice models.

Our work must wrestle through how to amplify and not duplicate these efforts.

It is an ongoing challenge to navigate how a Western justice system can co-exist, respect and learn from other ways of delivering community-led, and Indigenous-led justice. Many of you spoke of your commitment to this effort. We see a clear opportunity to build upon that.

Age Barriers

You highlighted that services tailored to elders, children and youth are few. Engagement of these populations is also a gap.

“Tailored solutions are needed such as youth-first appearance court which aims to connect youth to social supports at their first court appearance — before deeper involvement in the system. It addresses the rise in youth violence by focusing on

family connections, mental health, and peer supports early”.

Information sharing between and among systems is challenging, despite the existence of some legal processes and mechanisms.

A lack of awareness of how to work across systems is a challenge for experts, let alone those in corollary or justice-adjacent roles.

Language

Legal information and resources are often delivered in English. Translation into plain, user-friendly language and French is treated as a luxury. Translated information into other languages is rare.

Accessibility standards are not consistently acknowledged and met for folks who may require accommodations.

“Clients aren’t even aware they can demand service in French—and some lawyers resist accepting French documents. People who are aware fear that requesting[it] will lead to delays or lower quality help.”

There is a shallow pool of Francophone and other non-English legal professionals, creating challenges around access and conflict of interest. Francophone representation on the bench and in other disciplines is also a gap.

“Newcomers with law degrees from other countries face language, cultural, and regulatory barriers to practicing law in Manitoba and end up in adjacent but lower-paid roles despite our qualifications”.

“Many newcomers are French-speaking (e.g., African francophones), yet legal education and accreditation are English-centric”.

The courts, Manitoba Justice and Info Justice are implementing a Bilingual Action Plan to close these gaps.

The Faculty of Law is working on strategies to diversify the profession and support newcomers, racialized individuals and Francophones to practice law in Manitoba.

The Province of Manitoba is engaging citizens on a Bilingual Service Strategy. Work in these areas could be better coordinated with A2J efforts to amplify impact.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE WHEN WE GET IT RIGHT?

From a systems theory perspective, systems are self-reinforcing. The design of institutions, policies, processes continuously reproduce the same barriers and inequities, norms, values and culture they were established upon.

Attempts at reform often focus on distinct parts of a system or process without shifting the whole, thus leaving systemic challenges untouched.

From a feminist theory perspective, western systems privilege dominant voices (i.e. white, male, heterosexual, Christian, neuro-typical, middle class, college educated).

This fails to account for the unequal distribution of power across gender, race, sexuality, culture, language and class.

These theoretical frames help explain why western systems struggle to respond to diverse needs. They help us understand why Indigenous, multi-disciplinary; community-based approaches may be viewed as 'less than'.

True progress on access must begin to re-imagine justice as inclusive, relational, person-centred and integrating community-knowledge.

We can only improve an individual's journey from challenge through resolution by taking a comprehensive and whole person and whole system approach.

When we get access and justice right, they are dynamic, responsive, rooted in equity, representation, and cultural humility.

There are clear ways to request meaningful participation in the western justice system.

We deliver a continuum of care that strives to prevent, intervene and heal. We

- prioritize relationships over transactions.
- integrate criminal, family, civil matters.
- centre ceremony, land-based teaching, culture, and healing.
- draw on the wisdom of Knowledge Keepers, Elders, youth, Indigenous government and community in the design and delivery of justice and related services.

The presence of alternative resolution and community justice is apparent, and celebrated, including Indigenous justice initiatives, restorative justice practices, community sentencing circles, and land-based educational programs within and beyond correctional facilities.

Justice is community-led; this is what it means for justice to be personally relevant.

A2J is Ease of Understanding & Navigating

CURRENT CHALLENGES

System & Service Capacity

People and their first point of contact may not recognize legal issues.

“Without civic legal education, legal literacy remains dangerously low. People and service providers must work harder to understand and navigate these complex systems.

This can delay service or result in people never realizing their legal rights”.

People are also navigating poverty, mental or physical health challenges, addiction, housing insecurity.

“We have participants who often don’t have the capacity, either long term or in the crisis moment, to understand and figure out the justice system, not just navigating and knowing where to get supports, but even just understanding what is happening...what their rights are...”

We are delivering an increased range of free and affordable supports.

Tailored support exists for Indigenous families, newcomers, francophones, survivors of intimate partner (IPV) or family violence (FV), low- and medium-income earners, 2SLGBTQIA+ and those preferring to resolve their issues outside of court.

We are investing more yet, courts, legal aid, legal information, social, financial and spiritual support services are all stretched thin.

Roles & Authorities

The public, providers and decision makers are confused about who does what.

Public Legal Education and Information (PLEI) providers have overlapping mandates but serve different populations. Each plays a role in raising public awareness.

People must navigate multiple providers, services and decision-making bodies —each with its own rules, processes, and eligibility. This fragmentation overwhelms people and stretches well intended providers beyond their capacity.

Court and legal processes remain inaccessible with complex terminology, outdated forms, and opaque and rigid rules.

“[S]ociety talks a lot about how to provide information in a way that people will understand... and as government we do a terrible job... I think about adults with intellectual disabilities, many of whom are unfortunately justice -involved, and probably don’t have a clue what’s going on, and are relying on other people to explain”.

Court staff lack autonomy and training to be proactive and apply proportionality, discretion and flexibility to reduce wait times and increase flow.

You shared that court staff are focused on ‘gatekeeping’ and often reject self-represented litigants’ forms for minor errors.

“A woman drove to Thompson three times from a remote community to file documents and was turned away each time due to simple errors in form completion that did not impact the filing. Consider the cost and time it took her trying to access justice”

It is taking longer to differentiate complex needs and provide good support and decisions.

Our rules and procedures do not recognize that most people don’t have the capacity to navigate these systems alone.

People are “struggling with the myriad of problems that are woven together, and one of the big challenges is then being able to identify, this is legal, this is housing, this may be employment or immigration...people are so grateful you might not have an answer but to spend the time and to be compassionate... as opposed to just trying to pawn them off or bounce them off to the to the next place”.

Cost

Free supports have capacity constraints which leads to long wait times and prolonged conflict in turn exacerbating case complexity.

Private support and legal aid remain out of reach for a growing number of Manitobans and certain legal challenges.

A significant number of family lawyers left practice recently leaving hundreds of people without representation and increasing risk of IPV and FV.

“My worst files are IPV. These are the files that need court and good representation—but clients can’t find lawyers who’ll take them.”

People who can afford it rely on private support (e.g. lawyers, financial advisors) to navigate the legal and court systems. This becomes expensive even for those with means resulting in people draining their savings or having to let their counsel go mid-process.

System Navigation & Coordination

Websites, including those of government, courts and community organizations, contain incorrect or outdated information and broken links.

“Information is fragmented, difficult to find and act on. Pieces of information are out there but it is extremely challenging, even for experts in an area of law, to synthesize and understand - let alone when legal issues are multi-dimensional or when you’re a self-represented litigant struggling to navigate this system alone”.

Front end and navigation support are insufficient, concentrated in urban centres and challenging for people to locate and use.

Providers lack broad awareness of what is taking place across a dynamic and constantly changing justice eco-system.

Systems and services don’t “talk to one another.” When they do, it is employee and relationship specific and therefore vulnerable to funding and personnel change.

People “pinball” between providers encountering roadblocks, ineligibility, waitlists and voicemails.

“Many give up, even in serious matters like child custody or eviction, never realizing their legal rights”.

“Our silos don’t talk-a lot of Child Protection cases end up in the adult correctional system. 87% of our incarcerated population is Indigenous”.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE WHEN WE GET IT RIGHT?

"No matter who you are, or where you live, you have a real opportunity to understand your rights and options and to pursue them. You feel supported and within your rights to seek the justice you do. You don't feel like a lone vigilante, but like a normal member of society."

Frontline staff are empowered with policy and procedure that support flexibility and discretion.

Providers have supportive infrastructure and processes that enable cross-referral and multi-disciplinary case management⁵.

"it's connecting those resource points and knowing about them... getting a package to help support somebody through their journey... it's having that network of resources willing and able to say, 'here's somebody in crisis. How do we get those supports to direct them, to provide to them?'"

Legal problems are understood as relational and contextual.

We lessen the mental health stigma that deters people from accessing advocacy or services framed as psychological or emotional support by offering all clients a continuum of social, legal and financial supports".

Court is a place of last resort. Alternatives like mediation, community-supported resolution, diversion, restorative justice and administrative models are prioritized and accessible.

We work together as a single eco-system, a single team to bridge gaps and cracks between and among existing systems (i.e. civil and criminal and family law, restorative and community justice, child welfare/protection, court and out of court, in and

out of remand and custody, health, immigration, labour, housing, health, addictions and mental health) for family members with more complex challenges.

At the same time, we work together to re-design siloed systems and services into holistic and integrated ones.

Child protection, family violence, family law and youth justice among others are all viewed as opportunities for preventing and intervening in future offending behaviour and breaking cycles of recurring and intergenerational trauma.

"Our efforts are action focused. Solutions address root causes".

Legal information and advice, court processes, and related services are easy to locate and use in one central location with assistance:

- 24/7 emergency supports are available and publicly promoted.
- drop-in services are available at off-peak hours to facilitate improved access.
- front end and navigation support are enhanced and available in rural and remote areas.
- help is available over the phone, in person, by email or online.

Service requests and referrals are increasing and broadening where they originate from.

The time and cost people invest in pursuing justice yields clear results.

⁵ Some of you are experimenting with eco-system approaches that warmly path people among various systems and services. (e.g. TOBA Centre, Family Resolution Service, St. Boniface Community Hub,

Coalition of Francophone and Newcomer providers, Victim Services-Winnipeg Police partnership). We can build on these.

Where We Go Next

Mobilizing our A2J Community

Your ideas have been reflected in a draft **A2J Road Map**.

An **A2J Action Coalition** of community, providers and decision makers is being mobilized. Governance is being proposed. You told us that front line, community, Elder and youth voices must be centred. We heard you.

Initial Steps Emerging from Our Community Dialogues

- Form a community, cross government, cross sector **A2J Action Coalition**.
- Sign a **Memorandum of Understanding** committing to work collectively and adopting shared purpose, goals, values and principles as a foundation for change.
- Adopt a **Manitoba A2J Road Map** to guide collective action and investment.
- Adopt **governance** and routines that support **collective action** and **investment**.
- Establish a **learning and measurement framework** to track, measure, report and share accountability for outcomes.
- Establish a multi-year **Innovation Fund** to grow our A2J Network and to co-design, prototype and test community's big ideas⁶.

Ideas We Can All Advance

When we embody shared goals, values and guiding principles, we empower all people-irrespective of role, title or positional authority-to advance change.

Momentum and enthusiasm builds. Progress compounds.

Build Cohesion

We can all advance what community has described as 'just' within our work, teams, organizations and span of control:

- Recruit, train and promote based on them.
- Measure actions, decisions, investments, service delivery and design against them.
- Resolve constraints implicit and complicit in western systems by learning from Elders, community, team members, theorists and researchers from varied lived experiences.
- Model the Seven Sacred Teachings, the Medicine Wheel, Gender Based Analysis+, and culturally trauma-informed praxis (See Appendix B Select Tools & Approaches).
- Accept the truths of those harmed by western systems and work to repair harm. Familiarize ourselves with the truths, spirit and calls of [The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action](#), the [Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls for Justice](#), the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), the recommendations of the [Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission](#), and [Canada's Black Justice Strategy](#). Work to advance these in our professional and personal lives.
- Include all applicable calls and recommendations in your organization's strategic and project plans.
- Track, monitor and report regularly on progress to ensure accountability.

⁶ Resourcing may come from collective financial or human resource investments or in-kind contributions such as soft infrastructure (i.e. space, furniture), services (e.g. web design, marketing, communication, translation, financial,

procurement) or expertise (e.g. legal, policy, rule changes) or a combination. Seeking individual organizational approvals prior to launch enables to needed delegated authority required to make timely innovation investment decisions collectively.

Grow Manitoba's A2J Community Network

- Participate in and promote Manitoba's Network and this Initiative. Gather allies.
- Build bridges across our justice eco-system by attending education and networking. Invite new folks into our circle.
- Develop and share common best praxis through our Network, your organization or sector-specific initiatives and efforts.
- Foster a culturally trauma-informed praxis.
- Launch an inventory of education and training to foster service excellence.
- Broaden invitations to education days and training offered by your organization.
- Seek out and include a holistic view of the law including Indigenous law, other cultural traditions, interdisciplinary approaches and alternatives to court.
- Expose ourselves, our teams and students to a diversity of lived experiences early and throughout our careers. (e.g. residential school survivors, child and adult survivors of violence, other races, languages, cultures, genders, sexual orientations, ages).
- Participate in cultural competency and anti-bias education delivered by those with lived experience. Incorporate in your requirements and standards.
- Educate ourselves and our teams in standardized intimate partner violence (IPV) and family violence assessment and screening. Ensure tools differentiate how violence presents differently based on race, gender or relationship. Incorporate in your professional standards and requirements.
- Participate in and require regular training on French language rights and lawyer obligations.
- Participate in and include Manitoba Department of Families' training on information sharing mechanisms and legal standards to support cross disciplinary and holistic service provision.

Create inclusive environments in court, public, private and community services

- Embed culturally trauma-informed and anti-bias approaches in our practices, service delivery, policy and decision making.
- Sit in community with community regularly. Accept and extend invitations to ceremonies, celebrations, AGMs, education days particularly those that take you outside your current circles.
- Follow up with complainants and welcome their feedback. Listen to understand people's journeys and pain points. Work to address them or share with the lead responsible.
- Seek out dialogue with folks who have barriers to participation (e.g. residents in facilities, youth, elders). Ask: "what would have helped"? "What would have made you/them feel – safe, understood, heard?" Implement insights in training, service delivery and program design.

Design physical environments to increase belonging, safety and trust.

- Familiarize ourselves with and follow universal design principles (e.g. [The Accessibility for Manitobans Act](#)).
- Engage the [Manitoba Accessibility Office](#) and persons with disabilities. Apply for [Funding](#) to support access initiatives.
- Showcase art that celebrates Manitoba and Canada's diversity for those who visit us to enjoy and see themselves in.
- Offer family-friendly spaces, fidget toys and trauma support animals, furniture or objects that create comfort and safety.
- Display pride flags. Offer non-gendered washrooms. Review how your environment, forms or materials may be organized along binary gender norms (male/female) to the exclusion of queer or transgender folks.
- Familiarize ourselves with [amendments to The Canadian Human Rights Act and Criminal Code](#) that protect based on gender and gender expression. Develop culturally and gender inclusive dress codes and challenge prohibitions that inadvertently create barriers

(e.g. footwear) or signal who “belongs” and doesn’t (e.g. body art, jewelry).

- Normalize the need for self-care by celebrating and modelling well-being within our teams. Provide care rooms or quiet spaces for justice seekers and providers to rest, mediate, smudge.
- Familiarize ourselves with [Bilingualism in Manitoba](#). Display Bilingual text and text in other representative language(s) where providers are available. List resources for interpretation and translation. Work with community on translation to ensure cultural appropriateness.

Work collectively to value and elevate interdisciplinary models and holistic approaches to legal challenges.

- Support and train people responsible for designing legislation, policy, rules, services and programs in **relational and innovation approaches** that centre peoples’ diverse lived experiences. (See **Appendix B**).
- Assess interdisciplinary models from other jurisdictions or sectors and see what we can learn from, and apply, in our context.
- Support, model and train people in **journey or process mapping**. Consider variations in experience for the same legal challenge (e.g. urban, rural, remote; youth, adults).
- Support, model and train people in **user experience (UX) testing and behavioural insights** to inform the inclusive and accessible design of websites, forms, processes, rules and procedures and reduce cost, time, delay and frustration associated with applicant errors or rejections.

Appendices

Appendix A – Community Voices⁷

Thank you to Natasha Brown, Manitoba's Director of A2J and Community Engagement, Carley Misanchuk, The Law Society of Manitoba intern and Laena Garrison, Manager Indigenous Economic Development, Province of Manitoba for helping facilitate some of the community dialogues.

Thank you to Natasha Brown, Erin Wilcott and their team of law students for planning and delivering Manitoba's Annual A2J Forum.

Community Dialogue Participants

At the Root Consulting- Quinn Saretsky

Community Legal Education Association-Mary Troszko, Executive Director, Jennifer Dunik, Law Phone-In Supervisor, Charlene Thomas, Law Phone-In Lawyer, Nina Holatova, Program Coordinator, Jill Dunan, Workplace Sexual Harassment Hotline Lawyer

Court of Appeal-The Honourable Chief Justice Marianne Rivoalen

Community Unemployed Help Centre, Andrew Douglas, Executive Director

Fisher River Justice Program-Cynthia Murdock

Healthy Muslim Families- Humaira Jaleel, Executive Director, Nazmun Siddiqua, Program Facilitator- Access to Justice, Ahmed Bdikheir, Amna Iqbal, Hafiz Jatto, Khalid Jaleel, Omar Fahmawi

Holistic Ongoing Opportunities Development Facilitation and Management Services Inc (HOODFAMS)-Mandela Kuet, founder

John Howard Society-Aiden Enns, Chanelle Lajoie

L'Association de juristes d'expression française du Manitoba (AJEFM)-Info Justice- Tarik Daoudi, Executive Director, Ruphine Djuissi, Legal

Consultant, Brigitte Kutin Nuamah, Legal Consultant, Oceane Moayeh

The Law Society of Manitoba-Leah Kosokowsky CEO, Alissa Schacter, Deputy CEO Kyle Dear, President, Benchers Committee Members

Legal Help Centre Inc.-Kasia James, Executive Director, Katherine L. Bueti K.C., BOD, President, Danielle Magnifico, Legal Director, Daniel Hildebrand, Staff Lawyer, Shasta Benaim, Chloe Dreilich

Legal Aid Manitoba- Peter Kingsley, CEO, Sandra Bracken, Marcelle Marion

Legal Information for Incarcerated Manitobans- Manitoba Library Association-Prison Libraries Committee-Kirsten Wurmman, Margaret Banka

Manitoba Bar Association, Michelle Falk, Executive Director, Rhoni MacKenzie, Associate Family Law, Megan Spencer, Family Law Lawyer and Mediator

Manitoba Council of Administrative Tribunals- Karen Dyck, Amanda Cloutier, Aimee Craft

Manitoba Inuit Association Gayle Gruben, Marie Preteau, Donald Prederhooft

Manitoba Justice -Jeremy Akerstream, DM of Justice and Deputy Attorney General, Glenn Joynt, ADM Legislative Counsel, Charlotte Price, ADM Courts, Owen Fergusson, ADM Public Safety, Michael Conner, ADAG, Jennifer Mann, Director of Prosecutions, Keewatin Rupp-Hayden, Director Indigenous Relations, Kim Prendergast, Special Advisor to DM, Craig Savage, Kim Basarab, Marnie Evans-Manitoba Prosecution Service, Jessica Praznik, Executive Director Family Resolution Service, Michael Williams, Director, FRS, Nicholas Liang-Associate Executive Director, Family Resolution Service

⁷ Sometimes participants signed in and sometimes a replacement attended for another scheduled representative. Sometimes people included names and titles and other times they did not. If we missed acknowledging you, or got your name or title wrong, we apologize. Some people have changed roles since. This list is "as at" the time of engagement.

Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc.-Brennan Manoakesick, Edwin Wood, Charles Wood

Mediation Services-Christine Enns, Odelia Duffus, Hassan Fardawsa

Manitoba Justice Elders' Counsel and Indigenous Leaders' Counsel-Elder Ross, Elder Tracey, Michael Pierre, Hazel Perrie

The Manitoba Law Foundation, Erin Wilcott, Executive Director

Manitoba Law Library-Legal Information for Incarcerated Manitobans Project-Karen Sawatzky

Minister of Justice and Attorney General -The Honourable Matt Wiebe

Oshki-Giizhig-Mark Granger, Vanessa Koch, Emiley Thompson

Provincial Court-The Honourable Chief Judge Ryan Rolston, The Honourable Associate Chief Judge Tracey M. Lord, The Honourable Associate Chief Judge Lee Ann M. Martin

Southern Chiefs Organization Inc.-Crystal Brown, Leanne Gardiner, Caroline Hornan, Leslie Maddis, Cindy Collins

Social Planning Council of Winnipeg-Kate Kehler, Rebecca Nicholls, Hafiz Jatto

University of Manitoba-Faculty of Law-Richard Jochelson, Dean, Allison Fenske, Amar Khoday, Laura Reimer, Laurelle Harris, Mary Shariff, Natasha Brown, Trina McFadyen, Yvan Larocque, Liz McCandless

Province of Manitoba (various departments) - Carolyn Ryan, Acting DM for Housing, Addictions and Homelessness and CEO of Manitoba Housing, Department of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness, Rob Cann, EFO/ADM, Housing, Addictions and Homelessness, Jessie Oyugi, Senior Advisor to the DM of Municipal and Northern Relations, Bernadette Preun, Deputy Minister - Labour and Immigration, Don Hallett, ADM, Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures, Nicole Armstrong, ADM, Environment and Climate Change, Jeff Hnatiuk, Deputy Minister – Sport,

Culture, Heritage and Tourism, Amna Mackin, ADM Clerk's Office, Manitoba Indigenous Reconciliation, Heidi Wurmman, ADM, Families, Christina Moody, Acting DM for Families, Sylvia Buchholz, Director, Advanced Education and Training, Brian O'Leary, DM Education and Early Childhood Learning, Nichole Magas, Executive Director, Health Child and Strategic Initiatives, Department of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness, Heather Leeman, ADM, Housing, Addictions and Homelessness, Laura Anderson, Director, Families, Karmel Chartrand, ADM, Labour and Immigration, Josh Beaupre, A/Executive Director, Environment and Climate Change, Lisa Bergen, Executive Director, Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures, Lanna Many Grey Horses, Manitoba Indigenous Reconciliation, Julia Tetrault, Director, Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism

We Yone Palaver Hut Inc. (Palaver Hut)-Victor Kaicombey

One on One Dialogues

Brea Lowenberger, Co-Founder/Director, CREATE Justice and A2J Coordinator, University of Saskatchewan

Meredith Brown-Calibrate Solutions, Ontario

Michelle Kuly, Principal and CEO Blueprint Inc, Founding Partner Neralake

Frankie Snider, Pathways Therapy, Former Assistant Deputy Minister, Manitoba Indigenous Relations

Kelly Fournel-CEO Tech Manitoba

Signe Hanson-Couturier- Executive Director Manitoba Education

2025 A2J Annual Forum- Round Table Participants & Presenters

Court of Appeal, Provincial Court, Court of King's Bench-judicial representatives

Manitoba Métis Federation

First Nations Advocate Office-Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs

Legal Aid Manitoba

Public Interest Law Centre

Manitoba Justice (Crown Law, Family Law,
Prosecutions, Family Resolution Service)

Centre Juridique Franco-Justice

Perrie Law (development of Inuit Clinic)

**Legal Information for Incarcerated Manitobans and
the Prison Libraries Project**

Community Unemployed Help Centre

Mediation Services

Manitoba Council of Administrative Tribunals

Manitoba Human Rights Commission

Elizabeth Fry Society of Manitoba

Gladue Writers (At the Root Consulting and
Kiwetinohek Consulting)

End Homelessness Winnipeg

The HOODFAMS

Canada's Black Justice Strategy Manitoba
representative

National A2J Committee Co-Chairs

Fisher River Cree Nation-Restorative Justice

Appendix B – Select Tools & Approaches

Innovation & Community Engagement

- [International Association for Public Participation \(IAP2 Canada\)](#) - supports education, training and certification for public, private and community sectors.
- [Design Thinking](#): human-centred, iterative problem-solving (IDEO). [Stanford d.school](#) has resources for application in public engagement and systems change.
- [Innovation Engineering](#): a method for solving problems using emerging technologies (e.g. data, AI, system architecture, blockchain). Applies systems thinking and structured experimentation to drive scalable transformation.
- [Lean Management](#): continuous improvement approach to create user value, eliminate waste, and improve flow.
- [Behavioural Insights](#): psychological and economic insights and evidence-based practice to help design more effective policies, programs, and forms; increase understandability and reduce rejection rates.
- [Storycatching](#): narrative and lived experience approach to inform program design and service delivery.

Equity & Diversity

- [Gender-Based Analysis Plus \(GBA+\)](#): an intersectional analytical tool. Supports development of responsive and inclusive policies, services and programs design. Helps understand who is impacted by the issue; identify how the initiative could be tailored to meet diverse needs and anticipate and mitigate barriers to access.
- [Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba](#)- offers training and education services to private and public sector organizations

including research, a speakers' bureau and an Elders' Teaching Series.

- [Accessibility Toolkits](#) - the Manitoba Accessibility Office develops tools and training to support compliance with statutory requirements and to improve access for all.
- [Unconscious Bias Education](#): can include anti-racism education⁸. These tools, education and training equip professionals to deliver services with equity, fairness and cultural sensitivity.
- [Bilingualism in Manitoba-tools and resources](#).

Data Collection

- Data Collection-[Reducing the "Justice Gap" Through Data for Systemic Change: Using Multiple Perspective Legal Needs Surveys to Improve Person-Centred Justice](#)
- [World Justice Project-Rule of Law Index](#), [HiIL Justice Dashboard- Needs and Satisfaction Surveys](#), [United Nations-Sustainable Development Goal 16](#), [OECD & Open Society- Legal Needs Surveys and Access to Justice](#), Canadian Index on Wellbeing, Justice Development Goals, A2JBC Triple Aim Framework, Department of Justice Index for A2J in Administrative Bodies.

Trauma Informed Approaches

- [Trauma Informed Approaches to Policy and Practice](#)
- [Manitoba Trauma Information and Education Centre](#)
- Guides- [The Trauma Toolkit-2nd Edition \(MB\)](#), [Healing Families, Helping Systems \(BC\)](#); [Trauma Informed Practice Guide \(BC\)](#)
- [Alliance Centres](#)- After the Montreal Massacre on December 6, 1985, the Canadian government made a commitment to deal with public policy, education, legislation and

⁸ <https://mansomanitoba.ca/resource-category/anti-racism/>

applied research on violence against women and children. One of their initiatives was the development of 5 sister centres across Canada (New Brunswick., Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia). University of Manitoba's [RESOLVE](#) Director Dr. Kendra Nixon is the current Chair of the Canadian Alliance.

- [From Awareness to Action](#) - online guide and learning opportunities to build family law practitioners 'capacity to respond to family violence. The A2A promotes standardized screening tools to enhance substantive and procedural decision making by multi-disciplinary professionals (e.g. judges, lawyers, assessors). They produce research, legal briefs and webinars in both official languages.

Appendix C- Consultant Bios

Leita Kalinowsky (she/her) is married to Angela with whom she co-parents their beloved Shadow (fur baby). She is the granddaughter of Polish/Ukrainian immigrants and grew up in rural Manitoba among the wheat fields.

Leita loves food and wine, architecture and design, CrossFit and hiking. She spends winters exploring and her summers at Sherwood Lake gardening, weaving, reading and enjoying family and friends.

Throughout her 20+ years as a public sector leader, Leita experimented with different ways of working. After proving her career-long thesis, she left the Manitoba government to work as a change and management consultant.

Leita grounds her work in the principle that *“true change begins by centring the experiences of those most affected by the challenges we seek to solve”*.

She has an honours degree in Women’s Studies and a joint graduate degree in public administration. She has led system transformation in sectors as diverse as the environment and the economy, intergovernmental relations and criminal and family justice.

Leita honed what she and her peers dubbed *“a reconciled approach to public service.”* They wove together Indigenous teachings and wisdom from Francophone, newcomer and survivor communities, with feminist and systems theories.

They drew on Gender Based Analysis+ and evidence-based innovation methodologies, social science best practices and lessons from software developers and architects. They advanced Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2SLGBTQIA+ Calls to Justice striving to live the spirit of these painful truths shared *“so that we might one day walk side by side in unconditional love and mutual respect”*.

She says, *“together we wrestled with how to show up and do change work in a good way”*.

As a former Executive Director in Manitoba Justice, Leita is most proud of her former team’s accomplishments applying these approaches in family law and gender-based violence where they treated their work as a living laboratory.

In just 24 months Leita’s team delivered eight major legislative changes and co-designed a first in Canada *“single window, culturally, trauma informed, eco-system approach to service delivery”*. They delivered a 60-fold increase in family touches, reorganized multiple business areas and realized a dramatic culture shift aligned with the values gifted to them by families.

They achieved these outcomes during the height of COVID-19 and without major new investments. They did this by challenging traditional ways of working through co-design, co-leadership, democratized decision-making, and a labour pipeline program that empowered students and interns to *“lead, learn and fail safely in real time”*.

Leita is fiercely committed to enhancing experiential, linguistic, gender, age and racial diversity in all spaces. She was most proud when community members told her team *“That they felt safe and seen for the first time receiving FRS support”* and when her own team shared feeling that *“we can bring our whole selves to the work”*.

Leita underscores that these successes weren’t accidental. They were backed by values, principles and data; powered by repeatable and proven innovation methods and nurtured by diverse knowledge traditions and partnerships.

“It truly “took a village” to deliver what families told us it would look like “if we got it right”.

This is the lived experience, passion and expertise that Leita brings to her consulting work.

Frankie Snider (she/her) is a Métis woman, born and raised in the territory now known as Red River Settlement. Frankie is a mother to Braden and Kestin, new grandmother to Aurora, and counts her favourite sidekick as her Dogue de Bordeaux, Ruby. In her downtime, she is passionate about music, beautiful words, travel, fitness, and engaging in many forms of creativity.

Frankie started her career as a frontline mental health worker, before moving into senior leadership in a variety of roles within different levels of government and agency settings. Frankie's leadership career has been focused on disrupting systems to better meet the needs of community, using collaborative practices and compassionate leadership to do so. Throughout her career, she has been a firm believer that design of policies, programs and services cannot happen effectively without co-design.

Frankie has a graduate degree in Marriage and Family Therapy, with a keen academic interest in integration of traditional ways of knowing and being within systems of therapeutic practice.

More recently, Frankie has been advancing her studies in moral injury and compassionate leadership, while studying to become a clinical supervisor to new therapists. This unorthodox graduate degree served her well in her career as a leader, in providing a solid base of systems theory from which she views the world.

Some of Frankie's favourite moments to date have been:

- supporting the development, implementation and delivery of the Rural and Northern Telehealth Services at Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Center to provide mental health services in remote First Nations;
- supporting Manitoba Justice in the creation of the Elders and Indigenous Advisory Councils;
- working collaboratively with Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak to establish a joint table with Manitoba Justice and the Rights Holder Organizations to then address much needed amendments to the Police Services

Act and much needed reimagining of the process around Independent Investigations, leading to ongoing tables between Senior Officials;

- the introduction of Eagle Feathers into Manitoba's courtrooms and working towards transfer of responsibility for the Indigenous Court work program;
- and in establishing internal mechanisms to ensure advancement of Truth and Reconciliation across government.

In her last role, as Assistant Deputy Minister of the Indigenous Reconciliation Secretariat, Frankie led a team that worked tirelessly to advance Truth and Reconciliation with the creation of the mandatory training for the Public Service, supporting Giganawenimaanaanig, formerly known as the MMIWG2S+ Implementation Advisory Committee, and supporting the team responsible for Manitoba's response to Indian Residential Schools.

Throughout her time at government, Frankie could often be heard discussing reconciled approaches and repeating her favourite line "addressing systemic racism requires systemic approaches."

After 20 years of trying to disrupt and heal systems, Frankie left government to work more directly in community once again as a private practice psychotherapist. Working to support the healing of one person at a time has allowed her to reconnect directly in relationship with others and herself. She continues to engage in supporting system change as a consultant and through her volunteer engagements.