



**Mahmowenchike**

FAMILY DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

# Strategic Plan

2023-2028





# Our History



Mahmowenchike Family Development Centre evolved from the former Thunder Bay Native Child and Family Services Coalition. The Coalition was formed as the result of a two-day workshop in 1985 which addressed Indigenous child welfare issues in the Thunder Bay area.

Following the formation of Mahmowenchike Family Development Centre of Thunder Bay, Inc., we were able to convert the Pacific Avenue fire hall in Thunder Bay, Ontario into a childcare centre and we opened our doors in March 1995. At that time, we were licensed for 32 children aged 4 months to 5 years.



The focus of Mahmowenchike was always intended to be culturally appropriate services, meaning that cultural needs are valued, respected, and considered in all aspects of providing care. Cultural awareness and identity are fostered in all programs & activities.

In 2006, our second site in St. Ann school opened its doors. In September 2015, our Pacific Avenue site moved into St. Vincent school. In September 2021, our St. Elizabeth site opened its doors for a before & after school program.

Today, we are licensed for 148 total children between our 3 locations.

# Our Philosophy

**Mahmowenchike** is an Ojibwe word meaning "working together" and our organization is built on this philosophy: we work as a united front to ensure the healthy, strong development of a generation of children, both Indigenous & non-Indigenous.

Following an emergent curriculum model, we plan curriculum that follows the child's lead. Using observation & documentation skills, we draw on the children's interests and passions to develop engaging, enriching programs that work to stimulate the holistic development of each child enrolled.

Mahmowenchike believes in the growth and development of a healthy generation of children with strong senses of identity and self-esteem. We wish to play a role in ensuring that all of our children, regardless of background, are nurtured & loved, included & embraced.



**Photo credit:** Alexandra Frankow



# Our Vision

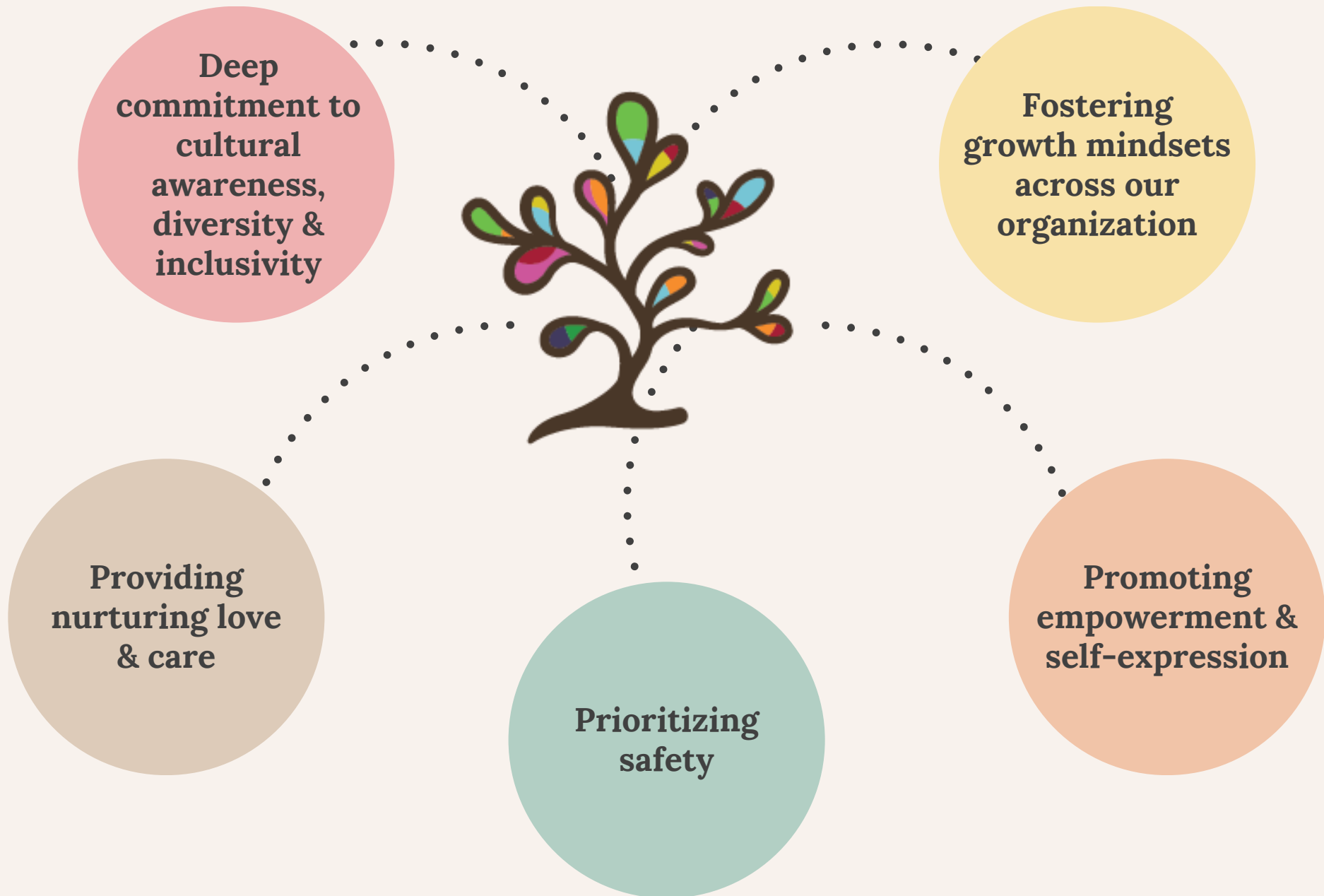
Our **Ultimate Goal** is to become a leader in reliable, nurturing, and culturally centered holistic childcare, creating a long-lasting profound impact on the lives of children, families, and the community we serve. We will achieve this by expanding and establishing multiple centres, each tailored to the unique needs of the communities they serve. Our centres will be distinguished by their cultural focus, outdoor classrooms, land-based activities, and partnerships with local organizations.

We envision a future where our childcare centre will thrive as a welcoming community hub, integrating diverse cultures and Indigenous practices. We will provide nurturing, holistic childcare that fosters children embodying love, care, and respect. Safety, empowerment, and self-expression will define our vibrant, inclusive space. With qualified educators fluent in Indigenous languages, we will be recognized for excellence, innovation, and collaboration. Families will trust us for top-notch care, extending our impact well beyond our centres' walls. Together, we will create a thriving, inclusive environment, revolutionizing childcare and leaving a positive legacy in our path.

## Our Mission

Our **core purpose** is to help children, families, and the community thrive and grow by providing reliable, nurturing and culturally centered holistic childcare.

# Core Values





# Strategic Priorities

1

**Enhancing** cultural knowledge & inclusivity

3

**Increasing** staff morale & engagement

5

**Expanding** physical space & creating a standalone centre

2

**Securing** adequate resources & funding

4

**Strengthening** community partnerships



1

## Enhancing cultural knowledge & inclusivity

### Why is it important?

Childcare centres should reflect the diverse communities they serve. By embracing and valuing diverse cultures, children learn to respect & appreciate diversity from an early age. Cultural knowledge also allows children to develop a strong sense of identity and belonging. By incorporating various cultural practices, traditions, and languages, children can explore and understand their own cultural heritage while also gaining exposure to other cultures, helping to shape their self-esteem and pride in who they are.

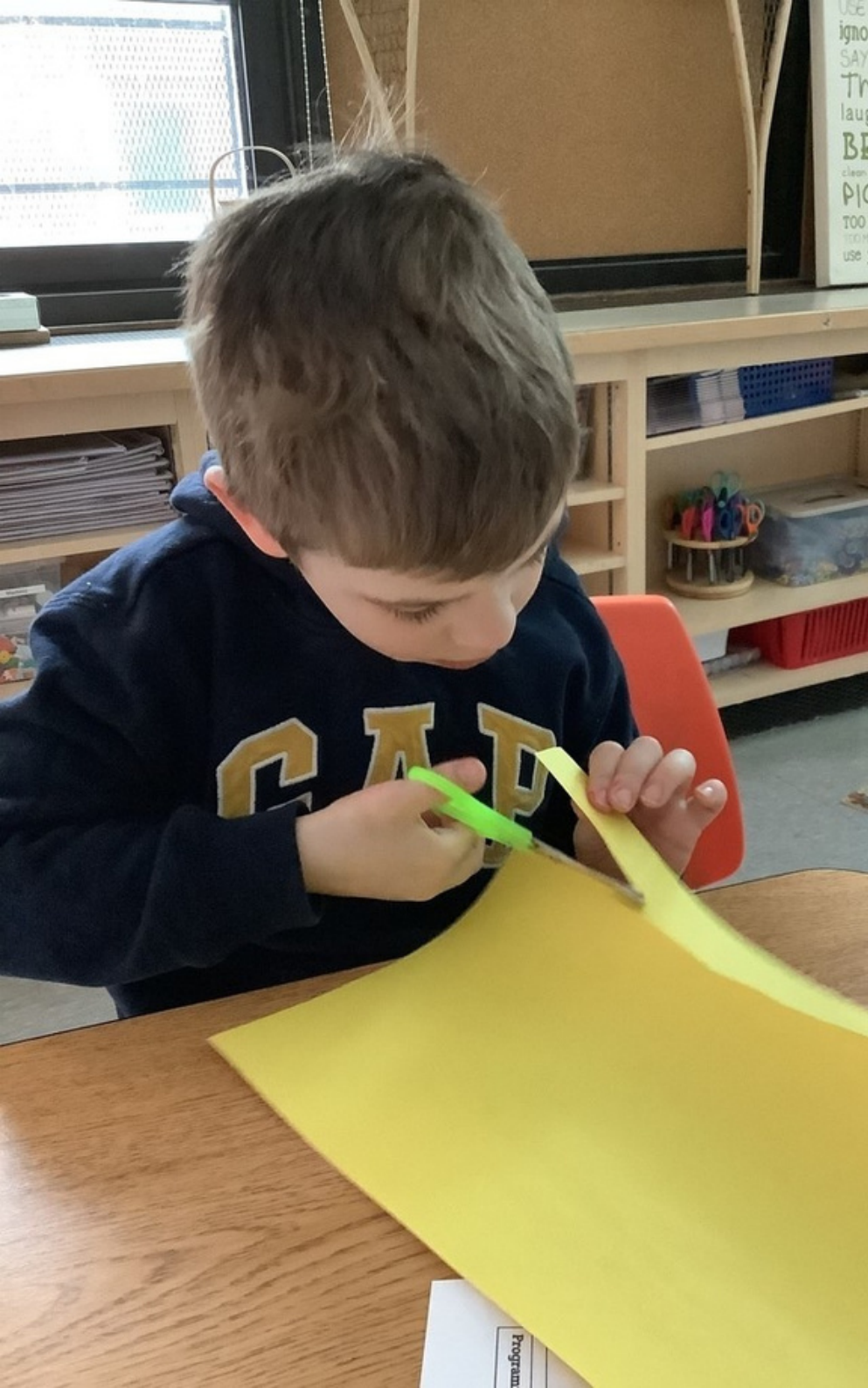
### How will we do it?

We will increase cultural knowledge within our staff team and create an inclusive environment that embraces diversity.

- We will provide cultural training & awareness programming for our staff members.
- We will incorporate more Indigenous cultural exposure activities and resources into our programs.
- We will prioritize hiring Indigenous staff members to promote cultural authenticity.
- We will develop partnerships with local Indigenous Knowledge Keepers, Elders, and organizations to incorporate more perspectives in to our circle.

**Photo credit:** Alexandra Frankow





## 2

### **Securing adequate resources & funding**

#### **Why is it important?**

Adequate resources & funding will enable our centre to expand our physical space, increase our capacity, and accommodate a greater number of children. It will also allow Mahmowenchike to invest in continuous improvement of our programming, supporting professional development and training for our staff, enhancing their skills & knowledge. Adequate resources & funding will support Mahmowenchike's growth and sustainability for the years to come.

#### **How will we do it?**

We will acquire the necessary resources and secure funding to support our growth and continued sustainability.

- We will research and apply for additional funding opportunities.
- We will explore training programs for our administrative staff to enhance their skills & capacity in grant writing.
- We will expand our physical space to accommodate more programs for more children.
- We will advocate for increased financial support from the school board, the Ministry of Education, and the community.



# 3

## Increasing staff morale & engagement

### Why is it important?

Staff morale and engagement directly impact the quality of care provided to the children and families we serve. When staff feel motivated, valued, and satisfied in their work, they are more likely to go above and beyond to meet the needs of our families. High staff morale supports a positive and nurturing environment which allows children to feel safe, supported, and loved, and also to observe respectful & kind interactions. It is essential that our staff are committed and dedicated to the children in our care and consistent and familiar staff members are crucial for young children, who rely on secure attachments & consistent routines.

### How will we do it?

We will foster a positive work environment, enhance staff morale, and promote a sense of belonging among employees.

- We will implement regular check-in meetings and create opportunities for staff input.
- We will empower staff to be a part of the decision-making processes.
- We will offer support systems, such as Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), to address staff well-being.
- We will provide ongoing professional development and cultural training opportunities.

**Photo credit:** Alexandra Frankow







## 4

### **Strengthening community partnerships**

#### **Why is it important?**

Community partnerships allow us to make the circle of care for the children, families, and the community we serve, stronger than ever. By accessing community supports and working together as a community, we can provide children in and outside of our centres with a wider range of resources, support, and knowledge than we could if we were operating alone. We wish to expand our services to offer specialized programming and initiatives through partnerships with various services in the community. Through partnerships, we will be able to offer a larger network of services & support to children and families.

#### **How will we do it?**

We will build strong partnerships with local organizations to expand Mahmowenchike's reach and impact in the community.

- We will establish collaborations with community organizations to provide additional resources and workshops.
- We will advocate for the needs of children, families, and the community at large.
- We will seek support from community members to rally behind our mission and vision.



# 5

## Expanding physical space & creating a standalone centre

### Why is it important?

Childcare in Thunder Bay is in extremely high demand. Our current system is unable to meet the demand of our city's lengthy waitlists and Mahmowenchike's waitlist is consistently higher than 800 children. Expanding our physical space and creating a standalone centre would allow Mahmowenchike to increase our capacity and serve more children & families, allowing more families to access quality culturally centered holistic childcare. A standalone centre would allow Mahmowenchike to design culturally vibrant spaces, outdoor classrooms and land-based activities areas, and to offer specialized programming within our walls.

### How will we do it?

We will secure a larger and dedicated space for Mahmowenchike to accommodate more children and offer specialized programming.

- We will research available options and secure a standalone centre to expand Mahmowenchike's operations.
- We will design and implement an outdoor classroom and land-based activities areas, both at our current locations & at our future standalone centre.
- We will develop partnerships with local organizations to enhance program offerings.
- We will create an inviting and culturally vibrant environment within our new space.



**Special thanks** to Corey Wesley for his time & dedication in facilitating the creation of this Strategic Plan

**Cover photo credit:** Alexandra Frankow



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*Working together to make the circle stronger*

