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DRAFT FAMILY UNITY DECLARATION

The Misswezahging, Mississauga, or Michi-Saagiig have the inherent right to enact any laws necessary in order to protect and preserve our Anishinaabe culture, to protect our lands, our language, customs, traditions and practices.

Children are a sacred gift to their family and community. When a child is welcomed to this physical place – it the responsibility of the parents, sib

lings, grandparents, aunties, uncles, cousins, and communities to celebrate the arrival of that child. The role of parents is to provide safety, trust, and security for their children. Discipline and societal training often falls to the responsibility of others in the extended family, especially Aunties and Uncles. The entire community watches each child grow and develop, and as their gifts become apparent, other Misswezahging and especially other members of their clan, may become involved in assisting that child develop their gifts. Any removal from Misswezahging child rearing system is an attack on the stability of the community.

By the rights given by our ancestors, the *Misswezhging Constitution*, and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, Misswezahging First Nation declares our right to practice our Anishinaabe legal system, including the need to protect our children and families.

1. To revitalize and preserve our traditional ways of child and family development, Misswezahging First Nation declares the importance of sustaining family unity.
2. All Misswezahging children, no matter their residency, have the right to;
   1. be protected from harm having received a culturally competent and responsive evaluation of safety.
   2. the preservation of family unity, including that all efforts should be made to keep a child with their birth parents, extended family, community, and Nation before any external placements.
   3. to fair and equal access to programs and services in Misswezahging First Nation, as a method to prevent interactions with the child welfare system.
3. The systemic harms of colonialism have impeded on

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1. Anishinaabe systems of family preservation. In recognition of these harms, all institutions in contact with Misswezahging children and families are responsible for;
   1. working towards the resolution of systemic issues like poverty and homelessness.
   2. providing support to the children and families to heal from intergenerational trauma.
   3. considering harm reduction measures for substance abuse and self-harm.
2. To prevent interactions with the child welfare system, Misswezahgings stress the importance of preserving, promoting, protecting, and transmitting traditional knowledge from one generation to the next including that;
   1. our members have the right practice their Indigenous and treaty rights.
   2. sustainable traditional practices prevent poverty and promote access to our preserved lands and resources.
   3. cultural programming must be freely available and accessible to all children and families.
   4. the opportunity to learn Anishinabemowin is imperative to a comprehensive understanding of Anishinaabe value structures.
   5. they are free to have the opportunity to reside in traditional Anishinaabe structures.
3. Assessment models not based on our traditional values have been used as a weapon to separate our families and children. In recognition that culturally unresponsive tools are detrimental to family unity, all service providers must;
   1. utilize culturally competent standards for the evaluation of safety, risk, and alternative care homes.
   2. all assessments tools used to evaluate Misswezahging children or families will require prior approval of Chief and Council.
4. Protecting our children and families is a community imperative. The disruption of Anishinaabe family development has informed the decision to evaluate the need for protection with a Anishinaabe methodology, including that;

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* 1. children are a gift and must be protected from harm, including physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual.
  2. however, it is the best of interests of any child is to remain in the custody of their Misswezahging relations.
  3. prevention of the disruption of family unity is paramount, all efforts must be made to assess and intervene in events that may
  4. lead the separation of a family.
  5. harms perpetrated by adults are likely the result of intergenerational trauma and removing children will likely continue this cycle of harm.
  6. plans of care that include the removal of a child must always include a communication order with the birth and extended family.

1. The practice of temporary care is part of Anishinaabe legal tradition, children were often placed with other family or community members for a specific time and reason. All institutions in contact with Misswezahging children and families must;
   1. remove barriers to Anishinaabe temporary care placement that are consensual between the birth family and the temporary care family.
   2. provide financial and social support to the child and their temporary home.
2. The practice of adoption is part of Anishinaabe legal tradition, children were often placed with individuals with a gift for child rearing. All institutions in contact with Misswezahging children and families must;
   1. remove barriers to Anishinaabe adoptions that are consensual between the birth family and the adoptive family.
   2. provide financial and social support to the child and their adoptive home.
3. The resolution of conflict should remain within the community. We have our own Debaakinagewin Law and process that will allow for this occur, including the following principles:
   1. we believe that Anishinaabe people are not inherently bad, but their behaviors may harm others.
   2. our own judicial system is able to resolve conflicts about plans of care, protection issues, or substance abuse.
   3. external judicial system are to be used as a final measure in any plan of care.