

The Métis National Council's Emergency Management Executive Summary



MÉTIS NATION

REPORT SUMMARY

To fully implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and respect the recognized, inherent Métis right to self-determination; the existing gap in availability of resources and capacity dedicated to Métis-led emergency management approaches must be closed.

The Métis National Council (MNC) and its Environment Department is acutely aware that the hazard landscape may change and affect its members in the coming years. While there are many published examples of ways Indigenous peoples have experienced great harms related to natural and human induced hazards, there remains a lack of literature describing how Métis Nation citizens, who may live in the gaps between services available to First Nations, are impacted and will continue to be impacted by natural and human induced hazards.

Although MNC does not have authority over regional responses to emergencies, it can work in partnership with Governing Members (GMs) as well as provincial and federal authorities to ensure the needs of Métis citizens are met. From this standpoint, MNC wishes to develop a pathway toward increasing its support of GMs and of regional Métis organizations involved in Emergency Management initiatives to encourage Métis resilience.

It is untenable that the Métis Nation be expected to function solely under existing provincial and local government funding when it comes to emergency management, or to continuously apply for ad hoc/limited funding streams that are time and labor intensive to identify, maintain awareness of, and apply for.

Although governments may argue that emergency management services are provided to Métis Nation citizens through other parties, there is a consensus that the existing services do not adequately meet Métis needs, leaving Métis GMs to fill gaps without the required resources to do so. ***This is especially true within the context of Truth and Reconciliation where more organizations are seeking Indigenous input on Indigenous issues, yet adequate resources are not available to MNC or the GMs to act in these situations without straining already limited resources allocated for other purposes and for which they are accountable to other funders.***

The jurisdictional constraints imposed by federal and provincial structures have created service gaps for Métis Nation citizens across the Homeland, despite recognition by the federal government that Métis experiences, needs, and aspirations are unique. Métis citizens themselves, through the support of their GMs, are best positioned to identify what their needs and strengths are in emergency management. This review¹ describes that is imperative that MNC and the GMs be provided adequate resources to:

1. Consult with their membership on their emergency management needs, to design approaches that are appropriate and meaningful
2. Dedicate organizational resources toward emergency management to avoid a “side-of-the-desk” approach which is insufficient to adequately prepare and respond
3. Participate in national and regional conversations about the current state and future of emergency management and disaster risk reduction in Canada
4. Include emergency management considerations in current and future Métis nationhood, autonomy and self-determination discussions, so that any area within Métis authority is adequately prepared and resourced to address emergencies that affect those areas.

Despite the lack of dedicated funding, regional Métis organizations have already begun important localized emergency management planning work. This work has often relied on staff overloading themselves to achieve it. ***Often, those seeking funding have been told they are ineligible as they are intended to be represented by another jurisdiction, a situation reminiscent of the jurisdictional gaps that lead to the development of Jordan’s Principle for First Nations health care.***

The following summarizes the Métis National Council Emergency Management Review, regarding the identified resource needs of the Métis National Council and Governing Members.

1) GMs need to consult with their membership on their emergency management needs to design approaches that are appropriate and meaningful

Through stakeholder engagement and literature, this review identified that while the GMs know their communities well, no organization feels prepared to speak to the specific emergency management needs of their constituents, as they have not had adequate opportunities to listen to their citizens regarding emergency management priorities. Some have begun to conduct this work, and have determined that:

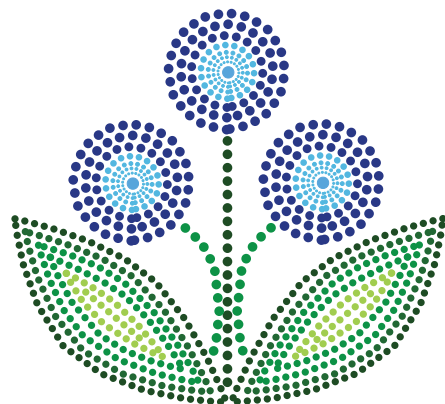
- a) Métis Nation citizens do have unique needs when it comes to emergency management

¹ The Métis National Council (MNC) Emergency Management Review was developed in partnership with representatives of the Métis Nation of British Columbia, the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, the Métis Nation of Alberta, and the Métis Nation of Ontario, along with input from governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Métis citizens with experience and knowledge of emergency management. It is designed as a point-in-time overview of existing perspectives in emergency management and to provide possible avenues for ensuring the Métis nation become adequately resourced to face the ever-increasing risk of emergencies and large-scale disasters.

- b) Resources for further study are required to determine what those needs are and how to address them
- c) The GMs are well placed to conduct needs assessment work locally, along with Métis volunteer organizations
- d) MNC's support in advocating for funding for this process is appreciated
- e) Government-led studies do not adequately capture the needs of Métis Nation citizens

Like many governments, the Government of Canada has increasingly taken a whole-of-society approach to emergency management². This approach aims to include the voices of all members of society in the development of a wholistic picture of emergency-related needs, risks, vulnerabilities, and strengths. It incorporates the understanding that governments are not able to meet all needs and that service gaps will exist in a top-down system, making it imperative to rely on community partners. The most efficient emergency response is one that leverages existing strong relationships and channels that have already been established and utilized. This is only possible if community partners are adequately resourced and able to prepare and respond appropriately, without being limited by fiscal and administrative barriers.

Community organizations that are representative of their communities play an important role in developing and maintaining protective relationships with people who may otherwise be vulnerable during emergencies. To address the needs of community members in emergencies, it is important for trusted community partners to discover what those needs are. To truly understand these needs, MNC and the GMs will need to be adequately resourced to consult their own membership and interpret their responses within their personal contexts. While it is possible to infer from other emergencies what the needs may be, the specific needs of Métis Nation citizens have yet to be determined.



² Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD Public Integrity Handbook, OECD iLibrary, Section 5, 2022.

Métis organizations need to be able to identify and address their communities' hazards, needs, vulnerabilities and strengths in context. They also need to be able to provide interpretation of their own data from a Métis lens, to ensure it is accurately understood and transmitted within its full context.

Figure 1 provides an overview of high-level community needs related to emergencies, compiled from documented experiences through After-Action Reports and other studies. Each of these needs are currently addressed or expected to be addressed by Métis governments and organizations, without there being an equivalent flow of funding to address them.

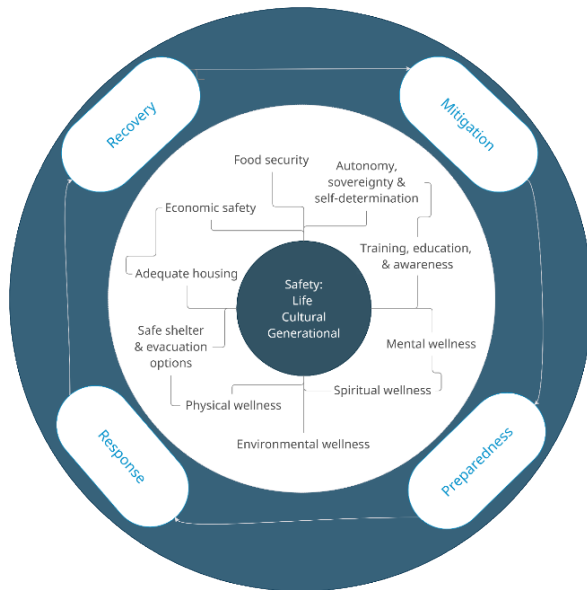


Figure 1 Community needs across the four pillars of emergency management

Some populations have been made highly vulnerable through systemic racism and other systemic barriers, so have needs that must be considered throughout the emergency management process. Planning specifically for

these groups is not only about inclusion but may have a direct effect on life safety. Many existing Métis organizations act as service providers for Métis Nation citizens who are made systemically vulnerable and so they must be adequately resourced to support these groups.

The following elements make up some of the areas of vulnerability community organizations need to consider:

- The impacts of recurring displacement and colonialism
- Supports for Elders
- Supports for persons with disabilities, including addictions
- Ongoing economic vulnerability and food insecurity
- GBA+ considerations and the impact on women, children, and youth, including domestic violence, human trafficking, and other safety considerations
- Sexual identity and gender diversity impacts
- Mental health considerations
- Physical health and continuation of medical care

Métis Nation citizens face the same challenges identified in After-Action Reviews regarding First Nation emergency responses, with the added geographical challenge of a citizenship that is often not tied to a specific area of land, creating additional jurisdictional complications.

Given the importance of understanding hazards, risks, and vulnerabilities, the Métis Nation requires resources for risk and vulnerability identification. Historical distrust of the Canadian government, contrasted by the trusting relationship Métis organizations and governments have worked for decades to build with their memberships, means the federal or provincial governments should not directly do this work. These governments should instead ensure funding reaches Métis representatives to gather and analyse their own data. Additionally, MNC and the GMs need access to resources to conduct After-Action Reviews, after an emergency impacts them, and should not need to struggle to fund for this process.

2) MNC and the GMs need dedicated organizational resources toward emergency management to avoid a “side-of-the-desk” approach which is insufficient to adequately prepare and respond

Effective emergency and disaster management requires significant technical expertise and specialized training that requires ongoing investment and resourcing. These resources and investments must be even higher when considering the need to value, revitalize, and apply Indigenous Knowledge to the field of practice.

There are identified service and jurisdictional gaps for Indigenous peoples living in urban areas across the country. These are amplified for some Métis Nation citizens who may not feel that services designed for First Nations are representative to them³. Dedicated services for urban Métis Nation citizens are essential even when comparable services exist that are not Métis-specific, and this becomes even more important in an emergency or disaster context, where needs and traumas are greater.

Métis resources dedicated entirely to emergency management are quite limited and challenging to access. Métis organizations do provide culturally appropriate services in many areas for citizens, including in individual and family wellness, education and employment, and in support of business and entrepreneurship. These existing programs and the expertise of the staff who provide them can successfully support emergency preparedness, response, and recovery, if each organization is adequately resourced to ensure its staff has the time and capacity to conduct these activities.

In addition, the Métis Nation includes many professionals in fields related to emergency management. If coordinated, these professionals can become a powerful voice in support of Métis emergency resilience. Each of the GMs share the perspective that they are uniquely positioned to understand and meet the needs of their membership, but that they are significantly under resourced to do so when it comes to emergencies. The department typically seeking to address emergency management in each of the GMs, as well as MNC, is the

³ National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Reclaiming Power and Place, The Final Report into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Volume 1b, https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Final_Report_Vol_1b.pdf

Environment/Climate department of each respective agency, as there is no resourcing for dedicated emergency management support.

The Government of Canada does not provide dedicated Métis funding for emergency management. Broadly, the GMs and MNC indicated that resources for emergency management have been extremely limited. Each organization has been obligated to utilize resources dedicated for other areas, generally environment and climate change, to attempt to address emergency management needs. Provincial governments hold the funding authority for the Métis communities within each province. If there is existing funding for the local authority, connection or collaboration driven by Métis may enable a Métis focused distribution of funds, but that is outside the purview of the federal government. During COVID-19 however, there was a deviation of this based on funding that was released to Métis communities because it was demonstrated that there was a deficit. Exploring what was effective in this context may be a useful way to learn how to dedicate future funding toward emergency management.

3) MNC and the GMs need to participate in national and regional conversations about the current state and future of emergency management and disaster risk reduction in Canada

In planning, the federal government seeks the Métis Nation input into emergency management discussions, without resourcing capacity to provide this input. During emergencies, local governments, provincial governments look to GMs to support Métis Nation citizens, without adequate resources being available to the GMs to provide this support. Provincial and local governments continue to look to the GMs as leaders who can speak to the needs of their citizens, without acknowledging that each GM requires funding to conduct the necessary ground truthing to identify those needs and develop appropriate resources to meet them.

Maintaining a relationship between MNC and Public Safety Canada is important for Métis perspectives to be included appropriately in emergency management policy and strategy, while regular engagement with departments like NRCan and ISC/CIRNAC can help to identify appropriate funding sources.

The emergency management structure in Canada is designed to be implemented through authorities that have jurisdiction over land areas, which creates both successes and challenges. For urban Indigenous peoples, including non-settlement Métis people, this creates a service gap when it comes to preparedness and recovery. In addition, for urban Indigenous peoples, response will be organized by the local authority of jurisdiction. If not planned in consultation with the urban Indigenous communities involved, this response may lack cultural responsiveness and could create additional risk for urban Indigenous populations. In addition, it is important not to assume that an urban Indigenous person connected to services in one location, will be able to maintain their quality of life when displaced and disconnected from these services in a new community. With adequate resources, MNC and the GMs can become active participants in

national and regional discussions regarding emergency management that improve response for everyone by better supporting Métis Nation citizens.

4) MNC and the GMs seek to include emergency management considerations in current and future Métis nationhood, autonomy and self-determination discussions, so that any area within Métis authority is adequately prepared and resourced to address emergencies that affect those areas.

The Government of Canada has begun to recognize, across various agreements, the inherent right to self-government and self-determination for the Métis Nation. However, this vision has not been accompanied by an adequate resource transfer for emergency management planning. As self-government agreements continue to be negotiated under the Canada-Métis Nation Accord of 2017, an eye towards emergency mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery is essential. When an emergency or disaster strikes, how is the Métis Nation supported? How do Métis organizations identify where their members are located, whether they are affected, and whether they need support? Are self-governing Métis Nation citizens also responsible for emergency response?

Although the federal government speaks of the Métis as a valued nation-to-nation partner and respected critical stakeholder, most Métis Nation citizens are funded as regular citizens under provincial and local governments when it comes to emergencies. This in turn leaves the Métis without an opportunity to exert their recognized right to self-determination and self-governance when it comes to keeping their people safe.

Various frameworks followed by Canada speak to the need for greater inclusion of Indigenous voices:

- The Sendai Framework identifies the need to use localized Indigenous contributions⁴
- UNDRIP recognizes the historic injustices faced by Indigenous Peoples and reaffirms their rights on issues such as culture, identity, religion, language, health, education, and community. Articles 3, 4, 18, 19, 31, and 31 speak to emergency management and the importance of Indigenous participation in disaster risk reduction processes, as well as the obligation of states to consult with them⁵.
- The Emergency Management Strategy for Canada & Interim Action Plan “commits the federal, provincial and territorial governments within their areas of responsibility to provide Indigenous peoples and their communities with the capacity to integrate traditional knowledge and public awareness and education programs into emergency management and disaster risk reduction. **To this end, governments will establish a**

⁴ S. J. Lambert and J.C. Scott, 2019. International Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies and Indigenous Peoples, International Indigenous Policy Journal, Vol. 10, No. 2.

⁵ United Nations. 2007. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf

dialogue with Indigenous peoples with respect to their emergency management needs and in setting emergency management priorities”⁶.

The literature on Canadian Indigenous Emergency Management mainly addresses experiences of First Nations, with only occasional mention of Métis Nation citizens or communities, often those are near FN communities. Métis wildfire researcher Dr. Amy Christianson has examined wildfire mitigation amongst the Peavine Métis in Alberta⁷ and other Métis experiences with wildfire⁸. Fitzpatrick⁹ identified wildfire reports that included Métis communities in the Rural Municipality of Wood Buffalo, Alberta through news media. The most detailed insights on Métis community responses to a disaster and evacuation are contained within Clark’s commissioned report¹⁰ in which the exclusionary treatment of Métis relative to their First Nations counterparts is noted.

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of existing plans and policies is important, so disaster risk reduction (DRR) becomes an integral component of sustainable development. A United Nations Handbook¹¹ points to social factors (access to services and post-disaster safety nets; allocation of safe land for all strategic activities and housing; multi-stakeholder participation in all stages and strengthening of social alliances and networking) and environmental factors (through ecosystem-based risk management) that help to achieve resilience. Communities that are proactive in their DRR through sustainable development efforts can save lives and property in the event of disaster, reducing fatalities and injuries. Lambert and Scott¹² find that Indigenous communities, like all communities, will benefit from increased investments in housing, infrastructure, economic growth and employment, better ecosystem health, better health and wellbeing, and active participation in local democracy. ***From this literature, it is evident that for community leaders, reducing emergency and disaster risks can be a legacy opportunity, an opportunity to improve social, cultural, and economic conditions and leave the community more prosperous and secure than before.***

Recent disasters in Canada show in very explicit terms how Indigenous communities are in the frontline of many disasters yet legislation and policy often exclude Indigenous voices in

⁶ Public Safety Canada, The Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Emergency Management Strategy Interim Action Plan 2021-2022 <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/2022-ems-ctn-pln/2022-ems-ctn-pln-en.pdf> p.2

⁷ A. Christianson, T.K. Mcgee & L. L'Hirondelle, 2014, The Influence of Culture on Wildfire Mitigation at Peavine Métis Settlement, Alberta, Canada, Society & Natural Resources, 27:9, 931-947, DOI: 10.1080/08941920.2014.905886

⁸ A. Christianson, T.K. Mcgee & L. L'Hirondelle, 2013, How historic and current wildfire experiences in an Aboriginal community influence mitigation preferences, International Journal of Wildland Fire, 22, pp. 527-536.

⁹ K.M. Fitzpatrick, T.C. Wild, C. Pritchard, T. Azimi., T. McGree, J. Sperber, L. Albert, S. Montesanti, 2021, Health Systems Responsiveness in Addressing Indigenous Residents' Health and Mental Health Needs Following the 2016 Horse River Wildfire in Northern Alberta, Canada: Perspectives From Health Service Providers.

¹⁰ Clark, T.D., 2018, Rebuilding Resilient Indigenous Communities in the RMWB: Final Report.

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/615cce89f72da40d46b95fc6/t/6192c14208d95a1ec5b53bba/1637007685737/Rebuildin-g-Resilient-Indigenous-Communities-Final-Report-Final-1.pdf>

¹¹ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2012, How to make cities more resilient: A handbook for local government leaders, https://www.unisdr.org/files/26462_handbookfinalonlineversion.pdf

¹² S. J. Lambert and J.C. Scott, 2019. International Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies and Indigenous Peoples, International Indigenous Policy Journal, Vol. 10, No. 2.

emergency responses. A report commissioned by the Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority (NITHA) to investigate the response and evacuation procedures of the 2015 Saskatchewan wildfires revealed a lack of defined roles and responsibilities that made it difficult for community representatives to address community concerns or help ensure the wellbeing of evacuees. NITHA noted, “a general sense that the provincial response lacked cultural awareness and sensitivity”¹³. Subsequent discussions led an historic agreement in March 2018 formalizing the relationship between Prince Albert Grand Council, representing 12 Indigenous communities, and the Canadian Red Cross. In 2021, the Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief, Alvin Fiddler, presented a report to the Province of Ontario outlining a First Nation-specific emergency management concept that includes the following recommendations¹⁴:

- Establish clear roles for the federal and provincial governments, and First Nations through tripartite agreements.
- Maintain the distinction between an “emergency” and “disaster”, where an “emergency” focuses on institutional response, and a “disaster” focuses on the degree of harm.
- Scale the definition of “disaster” to each individual First Nation, focusing on each First Nation’s ability to cope as a benchmark.
- Eliminate the distinction between social emergencies and other types of emergency hazards or provide dedicated funding for social emergencies.
- Create a mechanism to empower emergency declarations by First Nations.
- Ensure that all pillars of emergency management are conceptualized as a “disaster cycle” with all pillars given equal consideration and contribute resources to pre-disaster pillars.
- Develop remoteness indices/indicators specific to emergency management and apply the remoteness indices/indicators to First Nations in Ontario.

These recommendations demonstrate the requirement for Indigenous leadership to play a clear role in emergency management that reflects the needs of their populations, echoed by the vision of the MNC and GMs.

The Métis National Council and Governing Members have the potential to become important voices in emergency management. The Métis Nation is a distinct Indigenous people which requires resources to assess and address the Métis Nation’s emergency management needs to fully realize Métis Nation resilience.

For more information, please consult the Métis National Council's Emergency Management Report.

¹³ Haznet, 2019, Empowering Indigenous emergency management: The Prince Albert Grand Council and the Canadian Red Cross Agreement, <http://haznet.ca/empowering-indigenous-emergency-management-prince-albert-grand-council-canadian-red-cross-agreement/>

¹⁴ Nishnawbe Aski Nation, 2021, NAN Presents First Nations Specific Emergency Management Concept to Ontario Premier, <https://www.nan.ca/news/nan-presents-first-nations-specific-emergency-management-concept-to-ontario-premier/>

1.1 MNC Resilience Pathway

Figure 2 summarizes the recommendations made in this document into a visual journey forward for MNC and the GMs.

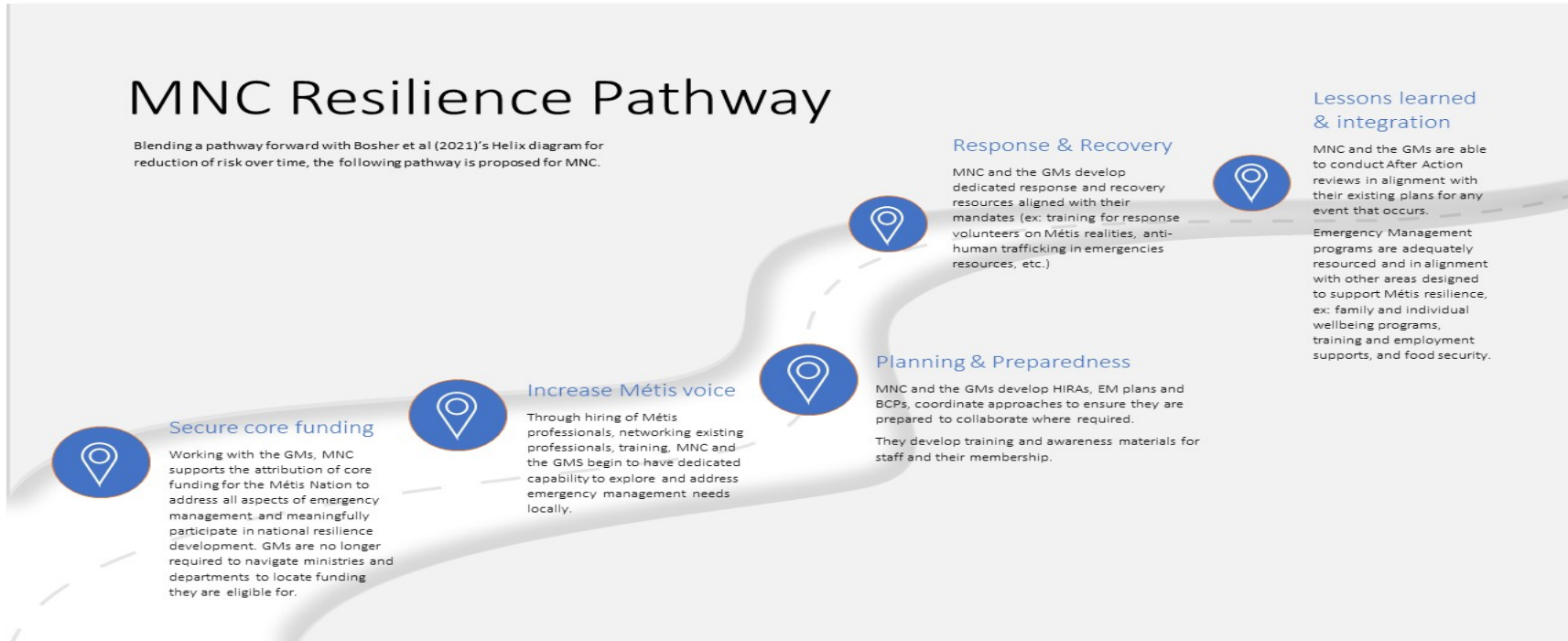


Figure 2: MNC Resilience Pathway

Prepared by:
30 September 2022



Calian is pleased to present this report summary to the Métis National Council to consolidate findings from the Métis National Council Emergency Management Report.