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Weaving Values: Métis Perspectives on Business & Leadership



Prepared by:



EDIFIEDPROJECTS

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Executive Summary

The modern landscape of Métis professional leadership is defined by a sophisticated intersection of cultural integrity, economic sovereignty, and the operationalization of kinship. Central to this paradigm is the concept of a “Relational Economy,” a framework where business success is inextricable from one’s capacity to function as a community helper. Within this system, leadership is not merely a trajectory toward individual accumulation or corporate efficiency but a mechanism for fulfilling intergenerational responsibilities and securing collective well-being.

The foundational principles of *wahkohtowin* (interconnectedness) and *otipemisiwak* (those who govern themselves), defined in Rupertsland Institute’s (2021) publication, provide the intellectual and spiritual scaffolding for Métis business owners (MBOs) and Métis people leaders (MPLs) as they navigate Western institutional structures. MPLs report a high level of psychological safety for their staff (4.14/5), while MBOs themselves show a strong sense of internal identity safety, scoring 3.90/5 for showing up ‘Loud and Proud’ in their work. However, when asked to what extent their organization performs specific Métis-affirming actions, MPLs in organizations with 500+ employees responded 34.2% lower on cultural integration than their counterparts in smaller organizations.

MBOs are currently forced to use their personal/operational profit to fund the social yield of their businesses, with 60% spending their operational budgets on reciprocity, because the standard financial system does not recognize these as legitimate or bankable costs. This means that capacity for community wealth-building is currently un-leveraged by standard financial products.

Furthermore, professional experience is complicated by systemic trauma responses, most notably lateral violence and identity gatekeeping, which remain sources of workplace harm. Addressing these challenges requires more than inclusion-based policies; it necessitates a fundamental reorientation of organizational hierarchies toward circular accountability, unscripted visiting, and distinctions-based wellness strategies (Hibbert, 2026).

Introduction

I have navigated many corporate and public sector workplace settings before taking the leap to entrepreneurship. This leap was driven by my lived experience of navigating systems that failed to account for my values and the mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional dissonance that resulted.

Among Métis, the leading reasons for self-employment are freedom or independence, concepts directly related to our identity as *otipemisiwak*, the people who own themselves (Statistics Canada, 2018, p. 5). Further to this concept of self-reliance, 91% of self-employed Métis do not receive outside assistance for their business, including banks, government funding, or investors (Statistics Canada, 2018, p. 5).

As a Métis woman, it is clear to me that there is a significant gap in mainstream/Western understanding of both Métis values and of how to truly integrate Métis-inclusive practices into the workplace. Furthermore, there are few reports, toolkits, and guides to support corporate action and response to TRC Call to Action 92 that are distinctions-based, meaning they are not pan-Indigenous in focus. In an extensive 2019 report, Les Femme Michif Otipemisiwak called for distinctions-based knowledge of Métis people to be integrated and evaluated in cultural competency training programs.

In response to these gaps, I initiated this grassroots research project with data collected from December 2025 to February 2026. The survey was promoted primarily through personal emails to Métis business owners and people leaders, on the Edified Projects website, and via LinkedIn. It is my hope that this report promotes even further engagement in the next iteration, as we begin to see ourselves and our values in these outcomes.

This initiative fills a critical gap in Métis-specific examples of how we embed our values into business and leadership. By taking a distinctions-based approach, this report highlights the unique ways Métis people are shifting systems and managing differently, so that corporate Canada can work with us differently as suppliers, business partners, employees, and leaders.

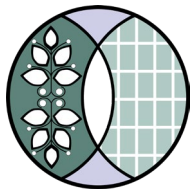
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Defining Success: Core Métis Values

Success for Métis leaders is a collective achievement rather than an individual destination. It is defined by the capacity to reinvest in community health, maintain reciprocal bonds, and act as a helper within a broader social ecosystem. In this relational economy, professional wellness is inseparable from the ability to support the collective and honour the intergenerational responsibility of *wahkohtowin* (kinship).

In the Métis business context, success is measured not by the isolation of the individual achiever but by the depth of the leader's roots within the community ecosystem. Entrepreneurial leadership is viewed through a lens of sustainable economic development that prioritizes social progress and the preservation of cultural traditions (Arcega, 2023).

Defining Our Success

For 91.4% of Métis leaders (both business owners and people leaders), the primary metric of excellence is reciprocity – the act of giving back and sharing resources. This commitment to communal reciprocity has surpassed “hard work and resilience” as the leading perceived driver of professional achievement among Métis leaders in this sample. Among Métis business owners, 60% incorporated Métis cultural practices or reciprocity intentionally in their budget in the past year, primarily for honorariums for Knowledge Carriers or for gifting or feasting.

This indicates that leadership is a functional tool for community elevation, where the leader acts as a steward. The emphasis on reciprocity suggests a radical departure from Western capitalism's focus on individual wealth accumulation. Instead, Métis business practices are often underpinned by entrepreneurial competence aimed at creating sustained value for the entire community (Arcega, 2023).

The top 3 values that Métis leaders bring into the workplace (at more than 80% of respondents) are reciprocity, humour/storytelling, and respect for Elders. One respondent



indicated, "Storytelling is a key lens we use for all our communications and impact work." In addition, Métis leaders added important open-ended responses:

<i>"Kiskinohamaw" Show them so they can teach them self.</i>
<i>Prosperity (as our people define it) and a Team approach to doing what needs to be done - Metis colleagues all pitch in to help achieve a goal.</i>
<i>Authenticity and care</i>

This collective drive suggests that business decisions should be considered in light of their impact on the broader community. When reciprocity is centred, the usual markers of productivity, like hard work, become secondary factors.



Figure 1: Success metrics for Métis business owners and people leaders

Key Takeaway: Nearly all respondents indicated reciprocity is key to their success. For Métis leaders, leadership is viewed as a functional tool for community elevation rather than personal gain.



Financial Behaviour Mapping: The Cost of Reciprocity

The research mapped qualitative barriers against Métis business owners' (MBOs) financial behaviours. Despite "budget/funding" being a top-3 reported barrier (after "clients prioritizing speed/cost" and "difficulty finding Métis suppliers or staff"), 60% of MBOs actively spend their own operational budgets on cultural reciprocity. Of those MBOs who spend on cultural reciprocity, 83% fund Knowledge Carriers and 75% fund gifting or feasting. Open-ended responses on cultural elements included:

Intentionally hiring Metis employees.

Intentionally supporting Metis artists and creatives, restaurants and our Metis economy.

Connecting to Indigenous women entrepreneurs through my professional associations.

Despite the high value placed on giving back, there is a persistent financial gap where Métis business owners absorb the costs of cultural stewardship. Some respondents shared about the stress of "balancing health and well being with operational commitments [like] ensuring the business remains profitable and afloat." Most business owners utilize their own operational budgets to fund community responsibilities, such as supporting Knowledge Carriers or community feasting. When financial institutions and funding/granting programs change their requirements, Métis-led firms can evolve beyond self-funding models and fully leverage their profit margins for expansion, allowing them to lead the way in high-growth, capital-intensive industries.

Key Takeaway: Métis business owners are self-funding community reciprocity out of their own pockets because they either lack access to, or knowledge of, culturally aligned financial products.



Comparison of Lived Experience

The lived experience of inclusion was measured on a 1–5 scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

Metric	Role	Average Score	Learning Insight
"Métis employees feel psychologically safe to express their identity."	People Leaders	4.14	PLs report incredibly high psychological safety within their teams, highlighting a strong culture of inclusion.
"Senior leaders consistently demonstrate inclusive leadership behaviours."	People Leaders	4.00	Leadership is visibly prioritizing inclusion, setting a strong tone at the top.
"I show up loud and proud as a Métis person at work."	Métis Business Owners	3.90	External market pressures or client expectations may still be policing how MBOs express their identity.
"Prioritizing long-term relationships over the lowest short-term cost."	Métis Business Owner	3.85	MBOs embody inclusion in their procurement strategies by building good relations.

Figure 2: Inclusion experiences for Métis business owners and people leaders

Métis people leaders (MPLs) had an average score of 4.24 for "It is essential to take an empathetic approach (considering personal context) when managing performance." When asked about which culturally specific wellness offerings their organizations provide, one MPL indicated "ceremonial leave entrenched in our collective benefit agreements."

The areas of greatest opportunity for MPLs include:

- Consultation with Indigenous Elders when developing major policies
- Training on the appropriate use of Indigenous terminology
- Policies specifically accommodating family or community responsibilities

Opportunities for MBOs to grow include:

- Setting their own targets for Indigenous procurement
- Increasing capacity with other Métis suppliers
- Actively leveraging organizational influence to push for systemic change



Key Takeaway: While Métis leaders demonstrate exceptional interpersonal empathy in management (4.24/5), the data highlights a clear opportunity to transition from individual support to structural sovereignty by formalizing Elder consultation, Indigenous procurement targets, and collective systemic advocacy.

Leader Action Plan

To ensure our outcomes are met with action, each chapter concludes with a Leader Action Plan that suggests clear actions for both Métis and non-Métis leaders. These plans are designed to shift organizational culture to one of reciprocity and stewardship. By integrating these specific practices, leaders are encouraged to move toward long-term, relational investing in the Métis community ecosystem.

Timeline	Action Item (MBOs & MPLs)	Action Item (General Public/Non-Métis)	Strategic Goal
Immediate	Identify one high-friction activity (e.g., back-to-back meetings, excessive printing) that depletes the team or land.	Publicly recognize a Métis partner or staff member who acted as a helper to others, centring collective support over individual output.	Immediate triage to stop resource depletion and normalize giving back as a performance metric.
Quarterly	Update audit policies to ensure honorariums for Knowledge Carriers and community feasting are categorized as legitimate business costs.	Replace one vendor with an Indigenous-owned supplier to foster mutual exchange.	Support MBOs so they do not need to self-fund cultural work; keep resources within the community.

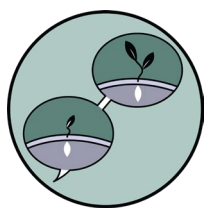


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Timeline	Action Item (MBOs & MPLs)	Action Item (General Public/Non-Métis)	Strategic Goal
	Shift 15% of your supply chain to Indigenous-led vendors to ensure consumption is balanced by reinvestment.	In procurement meetings, explicitly advocate for longer timelines that allow for relational pauses and stewardship.	Move from transactional buying to relational investing in the community ecosystem.
Annual	Set a visiting target for projects. For every 10 hours of high-output work, support 1 hour of visiting or rest.	For major projects, allocate a percentage of revenue to a local Indigenous non-profit, environmental organization, or community garden in the territory where you operate.	Ensure human actions and corporate consumption do not exceed what nature can replenish.
	Transition major decisions to a consensus-based model. Include community contribution as a requirement for leadership advancement.	Ask your Indigenous partners to define what social & ecological yield looks like for them and include these metrics in your annual reports.	Move from individual achievement toward long-term relational stewardship and power-sharing.





The Practice of Visiting (Keeoukaywin)

Operationalizing Métis values requires the deliberate practice of visiting, or keeoukaywin (Gaudet, 2019). Keeoukaywin is an Indigenous concept involving the act of trusting an unscripted process of connection through presence, active listening, and the sharing of space without an immediate transactional agenda. This practice is anchored in the scholarship of Dr. Janice Cindy Gaudet, who defines keeoukaywin (The Visiting Way) as "the main artery of our family systems, our mobility, and our way of thinking, doing, and taking care of one another" (Gaudet, 2019, p. 60). Gaudet further describes our spiritual responsibility to foster milo pimatisiwin (the good life) (p. 57). This is not just a soft skill or a peripheral social activity; rather, it is the primary methodology for connection.

In a professional context, visiting prioritizes the person over the transaction, allowing leaders to identify underlying organizational friction or morale shifts that formal reporting structures often obscure. By visiting with the land and community, leaders demystify their own relationship to historical truths and strengthen the well-being of the collective.

The Practice of Visiting

In the data, we see a clear difference between the visiting practices that a Métis business owner can implement compared to people leaders. Métis business owners host meals and team lunches (50% of MBOs) and hold meetings in homes and community spaces (80% of MBOs). Visiting acts as a sophisticated risk-management tool. It allows leaders to identify underlying organizational friction, morale shifts, or systemic issues that formal reporting structures and rigid slide-decks often obscure.



Open-ended responses from MBOs about incorporating visiting in their businesses include a variety of cultural elements:

<i>We begin our new relationships with tea ceremony.</i>
<i>The vast majority of my work is completed online, and yes, I do allocate time for getting to know folks and checking in with them when meetings start. That being said, some of my clients are engineers and "Type A" personalities, and prefer to just get on with it. They are "Action" people, so I respect their preferred method of communication in our dealings.</i>
<i>I work with a few clients who are much more comfortable with in person visits. I show up at their workspace and bring food/drink to share during our meetings.</i>

As we see in the table below, Métis business owners frequently attend community events, ensure meetings start in a relational way, and schedule extra time to catch up. These practices are not as prevalent among people leaders, likely due to the restrictions of a corporate environment.

Visiting Mechanism	Business Owner Frequency (n=20)	People Leader Frequency (n=21)
Attending Community Events	85%	52%
Relational Meeting Starts (Family Before Business)	80%	29%
Scheduling Extra Chat Time	80%	43%

Figure 3: How Métis business owners and people leaders incorporate visiting



Key Takeaway: Visiting is not a soft skill or a waste of time; it is a core operational metric for Métis businesses and teams. The data reveals deep operational implementation for MBOs when it comes to visiting practices, including time for visiting during meetings, compared to a more event-based approach for MPLs. There is a significant area for growth among people leaders, especially organizations with Métis people leaders. Corporate Canada may wish to consider this growth area to benefit from the ripple effects of relational leadership.

Leader Action Plan

In many corporate environments, visiting is treated as an interruption to work. For MBOs, visiting is the work. To bridge this gap for people leaders, we must build a structure that protects them from the guilt of spending time on relationship building.

Timeline	Action Item (MBOs & MPLs)	Action Item (General Public/Non-Métis)	Strategic Goal
Immediate	Mandate that all 30+ minute meetings begin with 5 minutes of visiting (checking in on family/wellness).	Practice active presence in meetings: Close all tabs/phones and listen for the <i>person</i> behind the status update.	Humanize the digital workplace and build immediate psychological safety.
	Block 1 hour a week on your calendar where anyone can drop in for a non-work chat.	Audit your calendar: Insert 10-minute relational buffers between back-to-back blocks.	Signal availability and value presence over outputs.



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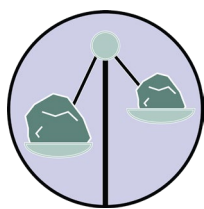
Timeline	Action Item (MBOs & MPLs)	Action Item (General Public/Non-Métis)	Strategic Goal
		Provide people leaders with a pre-approved monthly relational budget (e.g., \$100/month) that requires no prior approval for coffee, tea, or small gifts for staff.	Strategic Relevance: This removes the friction of seeking permission to be kind or reciprocal, allowing the leader to act with the same agility as an MBO.
		Create a micro-habit with the 5/15 Rule: every 1-hour meeting must have 5 minutes of unscripted visiting at the start, and every 1-on-1 must have 15 minutes dedicated to personal well-being before discussing KPIs.	This ensures that connection happens in small, high-frequency bursts, mimicking the natural visiting cadence of Métis communities, rather than the high-pressure, forced socialization of a “mandatory fun” quarterly event.

Quarterly	Move one significant client or vendor meeting to a community hub or coffee shop to flatten the hierarchy.	Attend community events (festivals, markets, or open houses) specifically to build relationships without a sales pitch.	Disrupt office-centric power dynamics and foster genuine community connection.
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Timeline	Action Item (MBOs & MPLs)	Action Item (General Public/Non-Métis)	Strategic Goal
	Update job descriptions to include relationship building as part of the core role.	Ask one vendor or client: "How can our partnership better support your team's wellness this quarter?"	Move visiting (relationship building) from a soft skill to a contractual expectation.
Annual	Implement "relational flex-time," allowing staff to use 2 hours a week for community visiting or land-based activities.	The connection log: Instead of tracking hours, leaders track meaningful touchpoints.	Institutionalize relational time as a protected business resource rather than a luxury.
	Implement relational performance reviews: Rate leaders based on team retention and the relational health of their department, not just output.	Host an annual appreciation visit for your primary suppliers where the only goal is to say, "thank you" and listen.	Institutionalize a culture where the "main artery" of the business is the people, not the profit.





Procurement and the 500- Employee Threshold

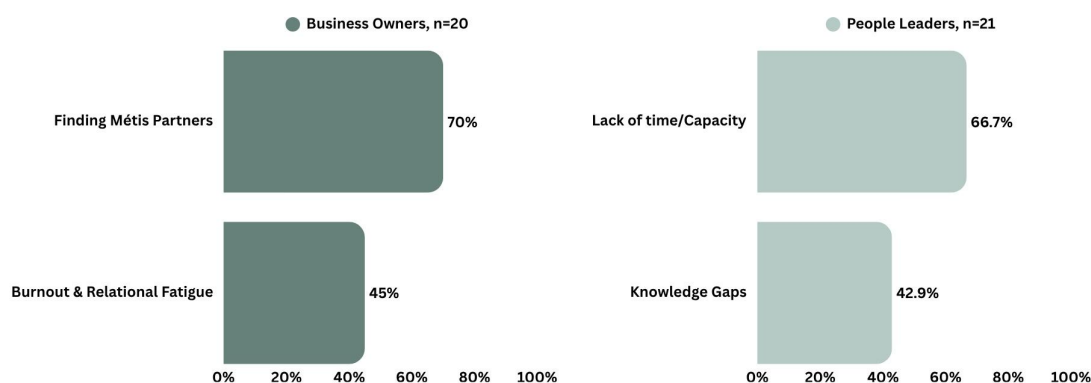
As organizations grow, they often encounter a shift in opportunities for visiting and personal connection. This survey identified 500 employees as a critical threshold where organizational friction begins to override cultural integrity. Open-ended responses from small organizations indicated:

All strategic planning and program development is done with a focus on leaving a sustainable future for our descendants.

I also prioritize reciprocal relationships with local Black, Indigenous and Racialized businesses and organizations.

In smaller organizations (under 500 employees), the implementation of sharing circles, for example, is reported by nearly half of surveyed Métis leaders, whereas this drops to 25% for respondents in organizations with more than 500 employees. This decline could be attributed to a lack of time and capacity, which 42% of leaders identify as the primary threat to Métis values at scale, alongside the significant challenge of finding Métis partners (70% of MBOs). However, there is nuance to this equation. One MBO indicated that “the hardest one here actually is the lack of follow-through from other Métis business owners when discussing potential partnerships. This is still a work in progress: finding the right partners.” Similarly, MPLs struggle to find Métis employees: one open-ended response from MPLs mentioned that Métis organizations don’t support sharing job postings, which presents a challenge.





Note: Percentages represent the frequency of mentions within each role; respondents could select multiple barriers.

Figure 4: Reported barriers or challenges

For Métis leaders, growth in organization size often leads to a drop in psychological safety scores because the leader can no longer maintain personal visiting with every employee. In fact, there is a continuous decline as size increases, dropping by nearly 28% between the smallest and largest organization categories. It is difficult to scale relationally, ensuring impact and headcount do not move toward a centralized, top-down hierarchy. To counter this, organizations can empower team members at every level – a practice known as “fractal leadership” – where small, autonomous units maintain their own relational cultures within the larger ecosystem (Chiem, 2025).

Key Takeaway: The data suggests that the larger the organization, the more assertive the “administrative cover” required to protect relational time. Small-to-medium organizations (1–500 employees) are more agile, but in large enterprises (500+ employees), relational practices plummet. The fact that “lack of time” and “rigidity” appear as top barriers in both procurement and scaling suggests that time poverty is the single greatest threat to Métis relational approaches in the workplace.

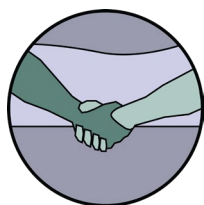


Leader Action Plan

Our Leader Action Plan must prioritize providing "Administrative Cover" to give Métis leaders their time back and empowering smaller pods/units to maintain strong relations internally. This means having organizational culture hubs for every 50 or so employees, each with their own visiting budget.

Timeline	Action Item (MBOs & MPLs)	Action Item (General Public / Non-Métis)	Strategic Goal
Immediate	If a department exceeds 50 people, split it into two smaller pods to maintain relational proximity.	Distribute a list of local Métis-owned vendors to your procurement team to address the #1 external barrier of "finding partners."	Prevent relational anonymity and actively dismantle the barriers to community-based procurement.
Quarterly	Move from top-down mentorship to peer-to-peer circles. Support junior staff to mentor leaders on community trends.	Establish a quarterly event budget for all middle managers to use for team connection without formal approval layers.	Distribute authority and remove the "approval friction" that stifles spontaneous visiting.
Annual	Formalize a consensus-based decision-making framework for all major capital expenditures or strategic pivots.	Work with leadership to create a policy that treats Indigenous relational needs differently from generic corporate DEI.	Ensure that Nation-specific Indigenous cultural integrity is not diluted into broad, non-specific diversity initiatives.





Decolonizing the Hierarchy

Traditional corporate structures are built on a model that often mirrors colonial governance – prioritizing the top-down flow of information and concentrated decision-making power. For Métis people leaders and business owners, this verticality creates a significant identity friction, as it conflicts with the values of *wahkohtowin* (interconnectedness) and reciprocity. Decolonizing the hierarchy is not about removing structure, but about reorienting it: transitioning to a circle where authority is earned through mentorship and decisions are validated through consensus.

Decolonizing the Hierarchy

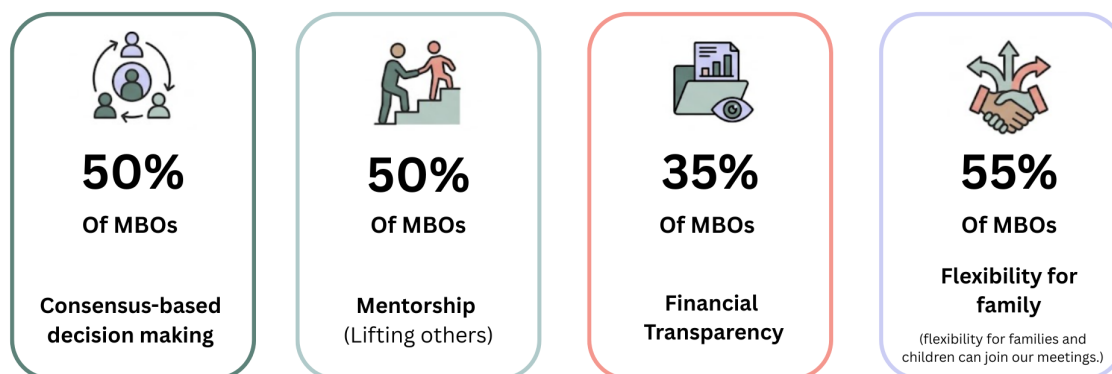


Figure 5: Métis business owners' strategies to decolonize operations

The data reveal that consensus-based decision-making and active mentorship are the dual pillars of Métis organizational health. One MBO said that “as a solo-preneur, I mentor (for free) folks in my two professional associations and other Indigenous women.”



In terms of key qualities of mentors, open-ended responses from MPLs indicated:

<i>Willingness to share their time and knowledge so generously and teach gently but firmly how to uphold my responsibilities in the circle</i>
<i>Love and support</i>
<i>Love; Safety; Teachings</i>

The survey data showed that more than 76% of MPLs identified the following as key elements in a mentor: connection to Métis culture, connection to their community, empathy, resilience, and strength.

In a traditional colonial hierarchy, information (especially financial data) is often used as a tool of control. By contrast, 35% of Métis business owners are explicitly using transparency to shift power downward. When combined with the fact that 50% of MBOs prioritize consensus and mentorship, you have a profile of circular leadership where the leader acts as a facilitator rather than a commander.

In a decolonized environment, the leader's role is not to issue orders, but to facilitate agreement and act as a ladder for junior staff. When 35% of MBOs prioritize financial transparency, it indicates that "information hoarding" – a hallmark of colonial management – is being actively dismantled to build collective trust.

Key Takeaway: Circular accountability is a model for leadership that may reduce Métis founder burnout and increase employee retention. It allows staff to have a genuine seat at the table and provides a clear path for mentorship. For MBOs, this is the primary mechanism to move up the "showing up loud and proud" score from 3.90/5.00, as it removes the fear of hierarchical punishment.

Leader Action Plan

To decolonize the hierarchy of an organization, leaders can engage in circular accountability, a framework where authority is distributed and decision-making requires collective validation rather than unilateral executive action.



Timeline	Action Item (MBOs & MPLs)	Action Item (General Public / Non-Métis)	Strategic Goal
Immediate	Ask a junior staff member to facilitate your next project update.	Transparency knowledge sharing: Share the “why” behind a recent leadership decision with your team, including the data or constraints used.	Immediate reduction in hierarchical friction; building the “muscle” for shared power and public speaking.
Quarterly	Assign a junior staff member to mentor a senior executive. AND/OR Transparency session: Hold a meeting where financial goals and budgets are explained in plain language.	Reallocate 20% of your weekly management time (tracking tasks) to mentorship (developing the person).	Flip the power dynamic and ensure financial literacy is democratized across the circle.
Annual	Transition the business to a “transparency-first” or consensus model.	When drafting new contracts, empower the client/community to co-design the success metrics.	Institutionalize trust through transparency; dismantle information hoarding.





Intersectionality and Addressing Workplace Harm

Workplace harm within the Métis professional experience is complex, often manifesting as lateral violence – a systemic trauma response where individuals who have been marginalized turn their frustration or anger against their own peers (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2014). This behaviour often takes the form of identity gatekeeping, where an individual's heritage or “Métis-ness” is questioned or policed by colleagues.

To effectively dismantle this, organizations can pivot from siloed concepts of inclusion to intersectionality (Spiteri, 2023). While inclusion focuses primarily on representative presence, *intersectional safety* proactively protects the layered identities of Métis staff – including their genders and diverse abilities – from both internal and external pressures. Our research indicates that these pressures are structural failures rather than just interpersonal issues; identity gatekeeping is tied as the #1 source of harm alongside harm from external clients.

There are only 2 of us, and it would be weird to have so much Metis-specific policy/practice. Instead, we adopt practices that are based in relationality for our entire organization. Our accommodations are for everyone, not just Metis people or neurodivergent people. We lead with love for all our team members, not just our Metis team.

Intersectional Inclusion

Our data highlight a critical opportunity for growth: 37% of respondents reported a lack of formal policies to support neurodivergent employees. Traditional inclusion models often



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focus solely on ethnicity, ignoring how neurodivergence or gender intersects with a person's ability to fit into Western corporate norms.

From Statistics Canada data, we know that employed Métis women are less likely to be self-employed (11%) than Métis men and less likely to have an incorporated business, indicating potential structural barriers (Statistics Canada, 2018, p. 5). Across Canada, self-employment was highest in BC and lowest in Manitoba, speaking to important regional distinctions (Statistics Canada, 2018, p. 5). And women were more likely to be employed part-time, with over one-fifth of core working-age Métis women working part-time so they could care for their children (Statistics Canada, 2018, p. 6).

It is not surprising that MBOs, when asked about how they intentionally promote rematriation within their business, took many approaches. A substantial 75% of respondents in this sample own an Indigenous women-led business, and 65% said they prioritize local protocols and ensure all engagements are done in a good way. A further 55% encourage flexibility for families, even empowering employees to have children join meetings where possible. And 40% explicitly prioritize women and Two-Spirit people in leadership/mentorship. One open-ended response described connecting to Indigenous women entrepreneurs through professional associations.

Intersectional safety integrates neuro-inclusive and gender-specific practices – such as relational scheduling, adaptable communication styles, and flexible hours to support childcare, a major factor that would help Métis women find work (Les Femme Michif Otipemisiwak, 2019) – into the core of Métis-inclusive leadership. This approach honours the Métis value of *otipemisiwak* (self-governance) by allowing employees to lead projects aligned with their unique vision and personal context.

Key Takeaway: Inclusion requires moving toward intersectional safety, a framework that integrates neuro-inclusive practices with the Métis value of *otipemisiwak* to empower employees through self-governance and flexible corporate norms.



“Métis women have demonstrated immense strength in the face of overwhelming discrimination. Despite all of the systemic barriers they face, they are determined to continue to work toward cultural revitalization.” (Les Femme Michif Otipemisiwak, 2019, p. 88)

Sources of Workplace Harm

For 38% of MPLs, lateral violence from fellow Indigenous colleagues and prejudice from external clients are tied as the primary sources of workplace harm. A report from Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak (LFMO) (2019) highlights that women face unnecessary barriers and lateral violence while carrying out their duties, reminding organizations that strong governance must be built on diverse voices working together without fear of reprisal.

The research reveals a significant gap in how these harms are documented. Many MPLs (71%) report no reciprocal offboarding mechanism (conducting exit interviews that focus on mutual learning and maintaining the relationship beyond the employment period), meaning talent may be lost without leadership ever identifying the root cause. Métis talent may exit the organization due to lateral violence and prejudice from external clients without leadership understanding the cultural friction that may have caused the departure.

To dismantle this cycle, organizations must actively foster *lateral kindness* – a culturally anchored strategy to celebrate and uplift Indigenous colleagues (Whyman et al., 2024). Lateral kindness is a professional competency that interrupts the cycle of internalized oppression. By modelling kinship and empathy, organizations can reinstate Indigenous ways. LFMO’s MIYÓYÂWIN Initiative emphasizes that culture heals and that Western systems alone cannot meet the complex mental health needs of Métis women and 2SLGBTQIA+ kin, who often face compounded barriers like racism and gender-based discrimination (Jaber et al., 2022; NWAC, 2015).



Key Takeaway: Lateral violence is just as damaging to Métis professional retention as external market pressures. Without formal feedback loops and offboarding, organizations remain unclear on the identity issues that drive talent away.

The ERG Message to Non-Métis HR

One of the most common tools in the HR inclusion toolkit is the Employee Resource Group, or ERG. Large organizations often tell Indigenous staff, “If you want to connect, feel free to start an ERG!” But our data revealed a massive gap. Nearly half of our MPL respondents were unsure of what an ERG even was. At minimum, they can act as a social group for visiting and connection. With proper resources and empowerment, ERGs can inform policy and the company’s mission. However, if our own leaders don’t understand the tools available to them, those tools will never be effective.

But the problem goes deeper than just a lack of definitions. Simply asking Indigenous staff to start an ERG is often an extractive practice. It adds a heavy, unpaid reporting burden to their existing workload, requiring them to solve the company’s diversity issues on their own time or in addition to their workload.

To move toward intersectional safety, HR must stop treating ERGs as informal affinity groups and start treating them as formal, protected groups. This requires three structural pillars: budget, mandate, and protection. An ERG without a budget is just a committee. They need dedicated funds for honorariums for Elders, community visiting events, and cultural learning – ensuring that Métis staff and people leaders are not self-funding the company’s diversity goals.

In terms of a mandate, the group’s feedback must be formally integrated into executive decision-making. If they identify a barrier to recruitment, leadership must be open to actively listening and ensure accountabilities are in place at the appropriate levels to address it.

For protection, HR must provide the structural oversight to ensure these groups don’t become arenas for the identity gatekeeping and lateral violence we discussed earlier. They must be intersectionally safe spaces where all Métis staff – regardless of their background, gender, or status as neurodivergent – feel welcome.



By resourcing these groups properly, we move from passive inclusion to active advocacy. We provide the infrastructure for wahkohtowin to thrive within the corporate world.

Key Takeaway: To ensure intersectional safety, HR must provide the budget, the mandate, and the structural protection to ensure Employee Resource Groups prevent burnout, dissonance, and/or lateral violence.

Leader Action Plan

To actively promote intersectional safety and lateral kindness, leaders at all levels must not shy away from the complex challenge of dismantling systemic barriers that foster organizational silos. This includes open acknowledgement of employee successes, proactively checking in, and providing dedicated resources to support relational empowerment and change.

Timeline	Action Item (MBOs & MPLs)	Action Item (General Public / Non-Métis)	Strategic Goal
Immediate	Publicly celebrate a colleague's cultural achievement or community work.	Safety check-in: In 1-on-1s, ask: "Do you feel safe to show up as your full self here, or are there pressures I should be aware of?"	Model lateral kindness and begin identifying hidden identity friction.
Quarterly	Implement an exit interview process with questions about identity affirmation and lateral harm.	Provide the budget, mandate, and structural protection for Employee Resource Groups to thrive without becoming arenas for harm.	Close the feedback loop to understand why talent leaves and resource safe spaces for Métis staff.
Annual	Mandate annual training for all leaders to identify and interrupt cycles of lateral violence.	Review HR policies to ensure lateral violence is explicitly defined as a violation of workplace conduct.	Protect identity and move from being unsure about ERGs to active advocacy.





Next Steps: Turning Data into Action

Building on the strong foundation of keeoukaywin and reciprocity, Métis leaders demonstrate incredible resilience in balancing complex roles and cultural identities. The findings of this research indicate that the future of Métis leadership depends on the ability of organizations to protect the “main artery” of the business – its people.

While Métis leaders already champion core values with excellence, we have a transformative opportunity to further protect their time and celebrate their multifaceted identities. Moving toward interactive, fluid support systems will allow us to elevate our strong safety foundation into a future of unapologetic, authentic professional leadership.

To increase the current cultural safety scores, organizations must move beyond static reporting and toward the implementation of distinctions-based wellness and circular accountability (Hibbert, 2026). By fostering a culture of lateral kindness and resourcing unscripted visiting, the professional landscape can be transformed into a space where Métis leaders can show up “loud and proud” as their full selves.

This is not merely an HR objective; it is a strategic necessity for securing a tangible competitive advantage in talent retention and community partnership in an evolving global economy.

The integration of trauma-informed approaches and the recognition of historical trauma as a factor in present-day disparities are essential for creating supportive environments where all persons can thrive. Ultimately, the move from individual achievement to long-term relational stewardship will ensure that Métis-specific cultural integrity is not diluted but remains a vibrant and essential component of the Canadian professional ecosystem.

Edified Projects is committed to sustained action based on these findings. At edifiedprojects.com/weavingvalues, we offer an HR Toolkit and an asynchronous, self-paced course. The HR Toolkit is designed to support many of the quarterly/annual actions



in the Leader Action Plans from this report. As this project evolves, we will continue to incorporate qualitative storytelling – including interviews and focus groups – and conduct periodic surveys to ensure Métis values remain central to the experiences of entrepreneurs and leaders in the workforce.

Found this report useful?

Email Alicia at alicia@edifiedprojects.com with feedback or to let us know where this research should go next.

Please tag [@Edified-Projects](#) on LinkedIn with your biggest takeaways.



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Appendix A: Methodology & Participant Profile

Methodology Overview

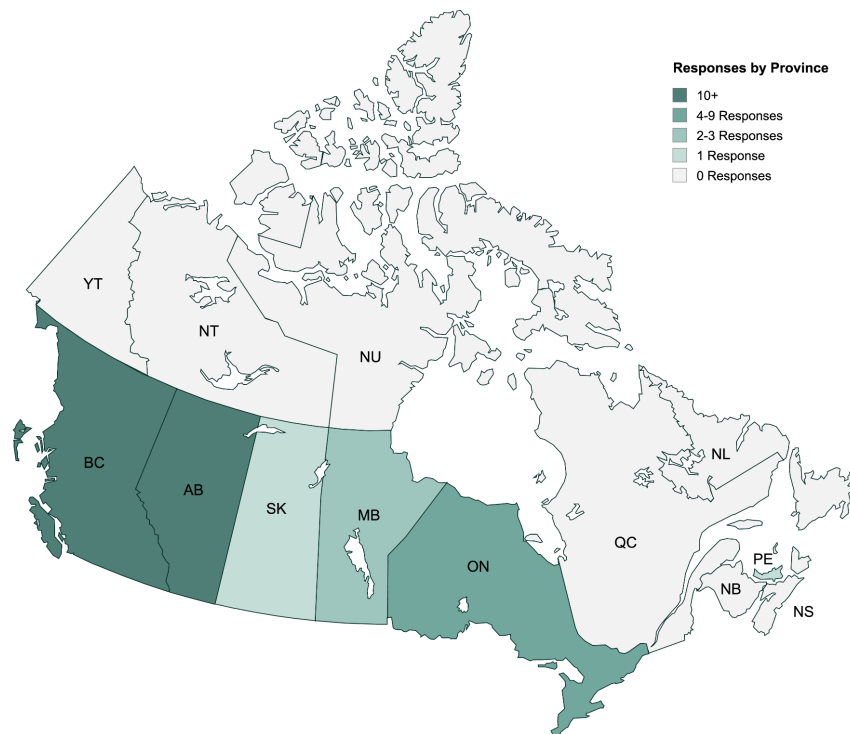
This research utilized a mixed-methods approach to investigate the operationalization of Métis values within professional leadership. From December 2025 to February 2026, quantitative data were collected through a structured survey of 35 Métis leaders (N=35).

Participant Profile

The survey reached a diverse cross-section of the Métis professional community across Canada:

- **Total Sample Size:** 35 respondents (comprising 20 business owners and 21 people leaders, with 6 individuals identifying as both).
- **Geographic Distribution:** The research reflects a broad reach, with primary representation from Alberta (35%), British Columbia (35%), and Ontario (15%), followed by Manitoba (9%), Saskatchewan (3%), and Prince Edward Island (3%).
- **Age Ranges:** The participant group is dominated by mid-to-senior career professionals, with 63% aged 30–49, 29% aged 50–64, and 9% aged 25–29.
- **Gender Identity & Leadership:** 69% women, 3% Two-Spirit, and 28% men responded to the survey, reinforcing the study's relevance to rematriation and gender-inclusive governance.
- **Organization Size:** Respondents represented a wide spectrum of institutional scales, from sole proprietorships to large-scale enterprises with 500+ employees. The majority of Métis business owners in this study operate small-to-mid-sized enterprises, with 75% managing fewer than 5 employees. MPLs represent a broader institutional spectrum, with more than one third coming from organizations of more than 100 employees. 14.3% came from organizations with 500+ employees.





Data provided by Edified Projects Inc.

To access the full suite of implementation tools, visit edifiedprojects.com/weavingvalues

Appendix B: Glossary

The following terms are used throughout the report:

- **Wahkohtowin (Kinship):** The foundational Cree/Michif law of relatedness. In a professional context, this refers to the interconnectedness of employees, their families, their community, the organization, and the Land, waters, and environment in which an organization is situated.
- **Otipemisiwak (Self-Governance):** Meaning “the people who own themselves.” In leadership, this refers to the value of self-governance, individual agency, and the ability to lead projects aligned with one’s unique personal and community context.
- **Keeoukaywin (The Visiting Way):** A Métis methodology (Gaudet, 2019) of building trust through conversation. In business, visiting can be thought of as a professional competency, like relationship building.
- **Rematriation:** The restoring of leadership, governance, and traditional knowledge to women and Two-Spirit people. It moves organizations away from patriarchal hierarchies toward circular, consensus-based care.
- **Intersectional Safety:** A framework that protects an individual’s whole identity – including ethnicity, gender, and neurodivergence – from systemic pressures, lateral violence, and identity gatekeeping.
- **Reciprocity:** The practice of mutual exchange. For Métis leaders, this includes “giving back” to the community through honorariums, feasting, and supporting the Indigenous economy.



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