

As shown on the map above, a combination of Indigenous and non-Indigenous supports and services available are located in Sioux Lookout and Thunder Bay, which requires community members living in the remote communities to fly out as there are no serviceable roads. Within the remote community, there are only two children and parenting supports, a healthy babies, healthy children program and an early education centre.

Taking a closer examination of the available supports and services in Sioux Lookout in Figure 1 below, shows that the nearest non-Indigenous service agency is [Rainy River District Child and Family Services](#). This organization is responsible for a broad range of children's services from welfare services, parenting, developmental services, and early intervention. There are two other non-Indigenous specialty services; [Firefly](#), which offers a range of specialty services i.e. speech and language, occupational therapy, autism; and [Community Living Healthy Generation](#), which offers specialty services focusing on supports for families affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). There are three Indigenous services and supports; [Nishnawbe Gamik Friendship Centre](#), which offers a hub for child and parenting support; [Tikinagan Child and Family Services](#) which is mainly a child protection service; and the [Waninawakang Aboriginal Head Start](#) that offers early childhood education.

Figure 1- Sioux Lookout

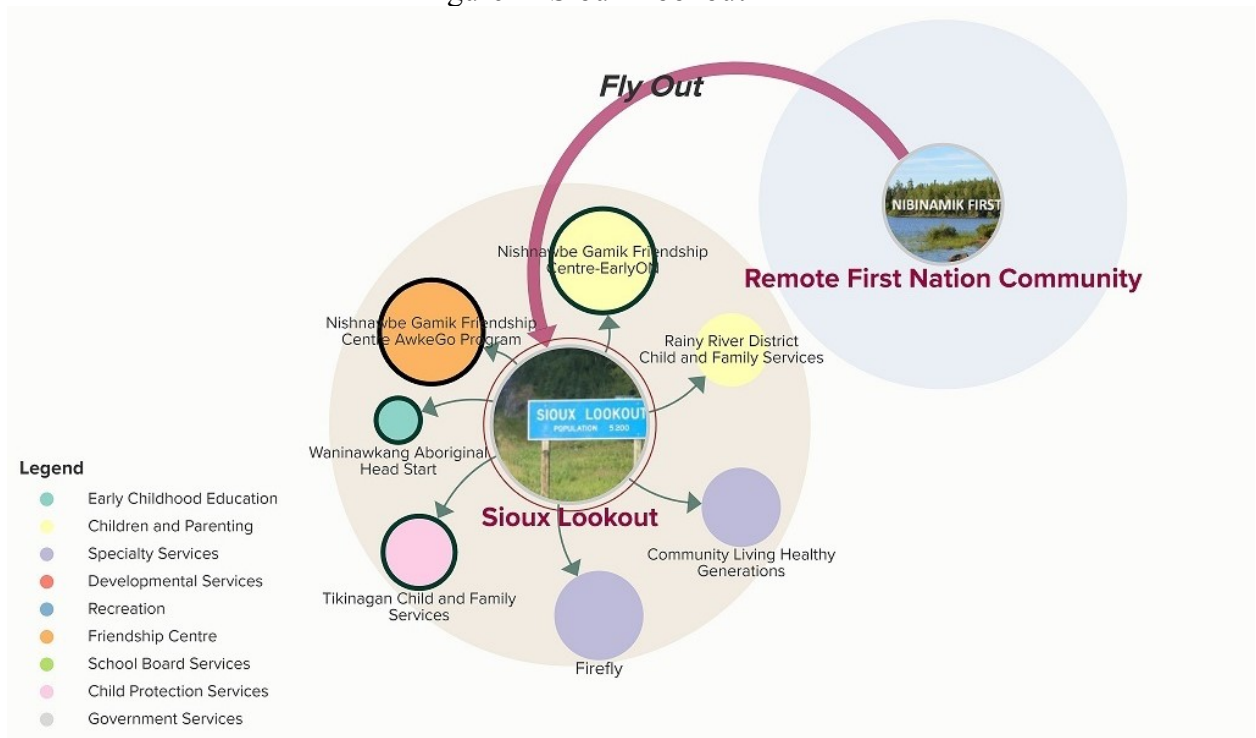
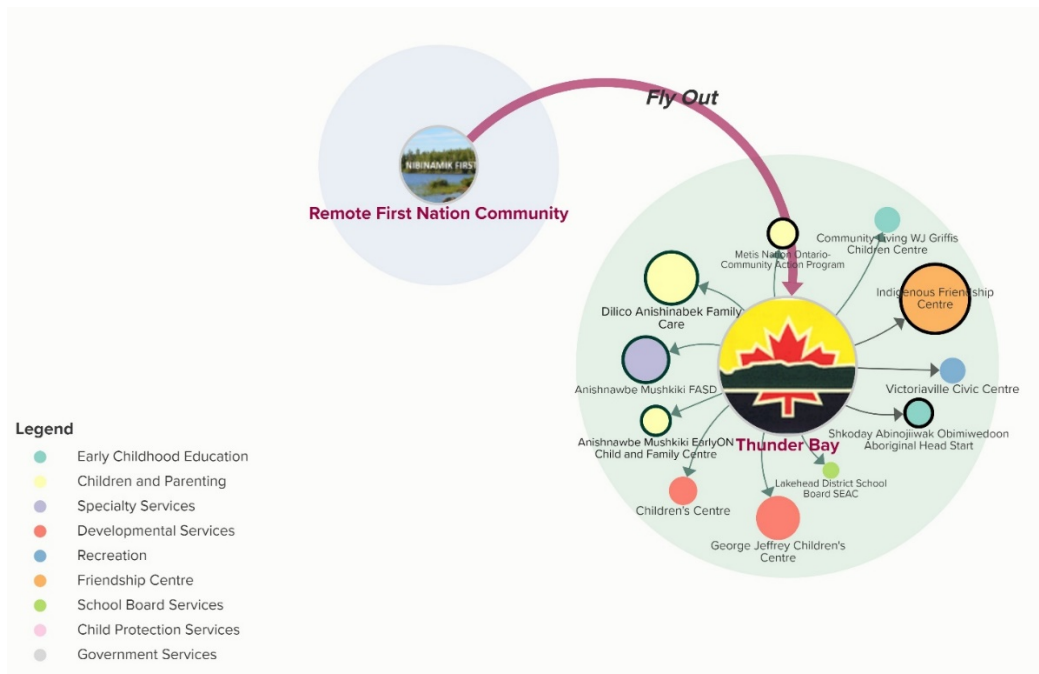


Figure 2 shows in detail that in Thunder Bay, there are five Indigenous services and supports available. The [Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre](#), provides Aboriginal supports for families with children ages 0-6. It is predominantly a program-based support service, with a focus on delivering programs that meet Core Standards including family healing, parenting skills, child development, family nutrition, cultural development and retention, community development and outreach. There other four Indigenous services and supports are:

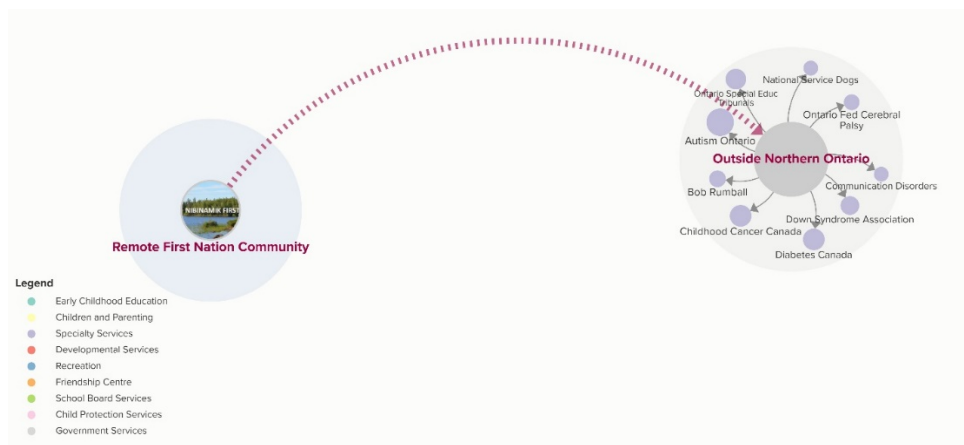
[Anishnawbe Mushkiki Aboriginal Health Centre](#), which offers a variety of child and parenting wellness programs and specialty services particularly focused on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder; [Dilico Anishnabek Family and Community Care services](#); [Metis Nation of Ontario, Community Action Program for Children](#); and [Shkoday Abinojewak Obimiwedoan Aboriginal Head Start](#). Non-Indigenous service providers offer a range of specialty and developmental services, special education advisory council, and recreation.

Figure 2- Thunder Bay



The rest of the system of non-Indigenous specialty services and supports that address specific medical diagnosis such as; Autism Spectrum Disorder, Cerebral Palsy, communication disorders, hearing and vision impairments, are located outside of Northern Ontario as shown in Figure 3, and requires farther travel and associated accommodation costs.

Figure 3 – Outside Northern Ontario



Findings from the community systems map indicates that there are limited services available and accessible to Indigenous families living in remote Northern communities. To avail of this range of services and supports, families and children need to fly out, distancing them from their community and the support of their community members. This does not align with their cultural values of connectedness and interdependence with their community, which are strong determinants of their health and well-being. Based on the inaccessibility of these early childhood services and supports, this system does not satisfactorily meet the rights of the Indigenous child. To fulfill the rights of the Indigenous child, a system of supports and services need to be placed in an accessible and coordinated manner that is culturally appropriate ([United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)).

Implications from these findings suggest that a mechanism for implementing children's rights, particularly Indigenous children living in remote locations needs to be in place. [We can find some examples in remote Indigenous communities in Australia where community led early years services are integrated](#). We believe the approach is to have an early childhood education and care program with integrated support services for children and their families built around it. These support services may include: specialty health services such hearing; speech pathology and maternal health; transition to school programs; cultural and arts programs; behavioural management programs; parenting programs; playgroups; legal and housing supports; and family violence counselling. The services have Indigenous community boards who ensure that culture is embedded throughout all service provision. This approach recognizes and highlights young Indigenous children as rights holders and the integration of early years services ensures services and supports addresses the needs of the whole child and family.

In Northern Ontario, there is a need to evaluate whether the current funding for services and supports for children with disabilities living in remote locations, can be thoughtfully allocated to more meaningful ways that will support a sense of community for Indigenous families. In essence, we have to funnel funding where the system of service and supports harnesses the power of the 'village' in raising our Indigenous children.

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