

COMMUNITY REPORT:

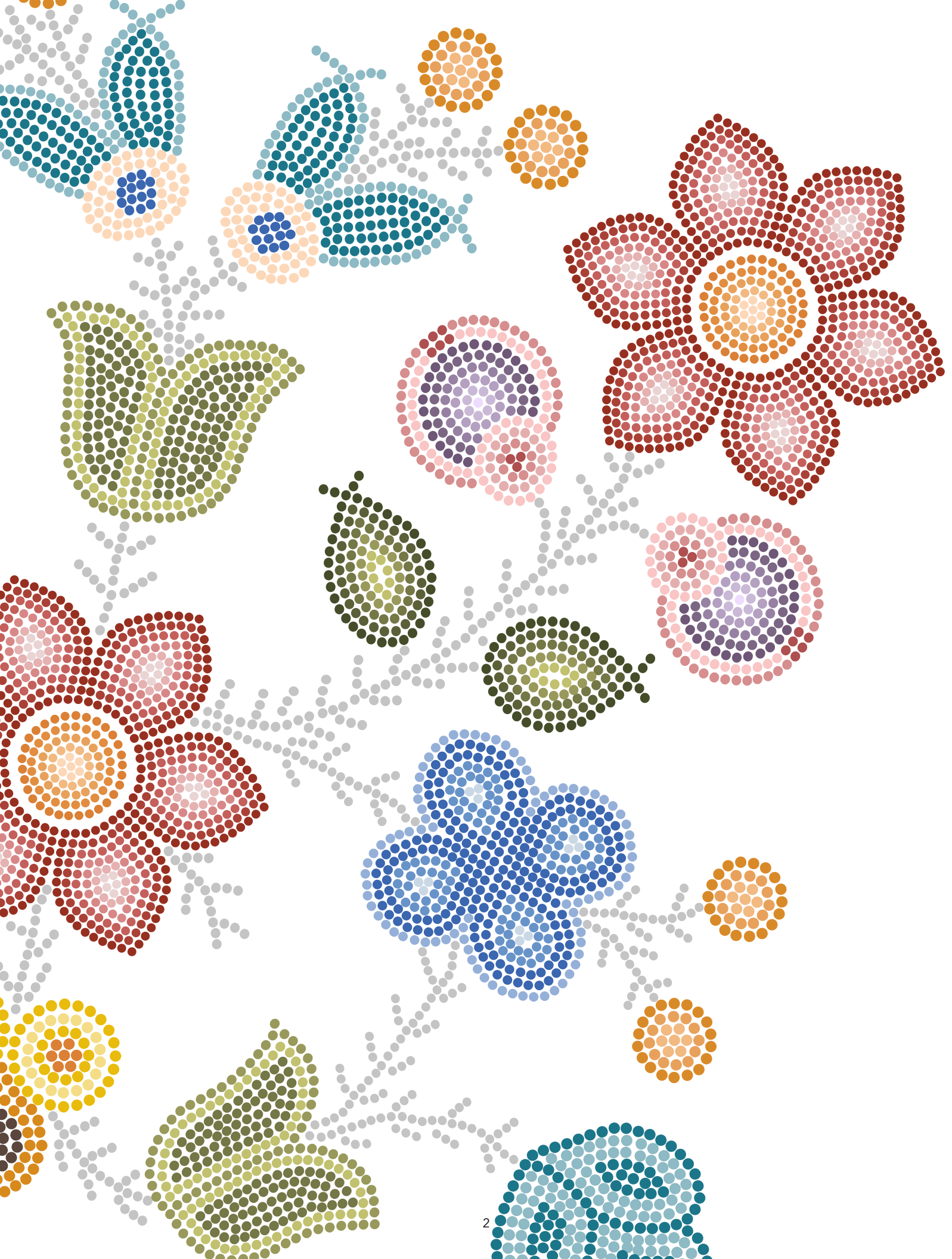
# **PATHS TO ACCESSIBILITY**

**Understanding the needs of MNO  
citizens living with mobility disabilities**

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AND RESEARCH PARTNERS ICES



Métis Nation  
of Ontario 





# SUMMARY

This report outlines the findings from the Métis Nation of Ontario's (MNO) engagement on the needs and barriers encountered by citizens with mobility disabilities. The MNO conducted this engagement to understand the primary challenges faced by these individuals and to identify strategies for enhanced support. The findings will help inform MNO's efforts to address specific needs and improve accessibility, inclusion, and resources for its citizens with mobility disabilities.

Using a multi-phase approach, the MNO first conducted a robocall survey on September 9th and 10th, 2024, to identify citizens living with mobility disabilities. Of the 33,135 households contacted, 1,770 citizens responded, with 716 identifying a household member living with a mobility disability. Among these, 678 expressed interest in further engagement, and 230 completed a follow-up survey via email, phone, or paper.

Citizen respondents, who were 16 years and older, highlighted several significant challenges, including accessibility barriers, chronic pain, and difficulties with daily living activities. The survey also explored how the MNO can provide support. Citizens identified the need for safe, affordable, and accessible housing, along with increased access to home maintenance services, transportation, and financial assistance for mobility devices and medical expenses.

The findings reveal that peer support, mental health services, and employment opportunities are also crucial to enhancing the quality of life for those living with mobility disabilities. Additionally, respondents stressed the importance of making MNO events more accessible and inclusive for all citizens.

This report summarizes these findings, offering a comprehensive look at the current needs of MNO citizens with mobility disabilities and providing insights into improving services and supports.

The MNO conducted this engagement in partnership with researchers at ICES to better understand the primary challenges faced by these individuals and to identify strategies for enhanced support.



**ONE MNO**

Need more personalized supports?

The ONE MNO service is an all-encompassing platform designed to connect Métis citizens with a wide range of services and resources. Our Navigators are available and ready to assist you and your families!

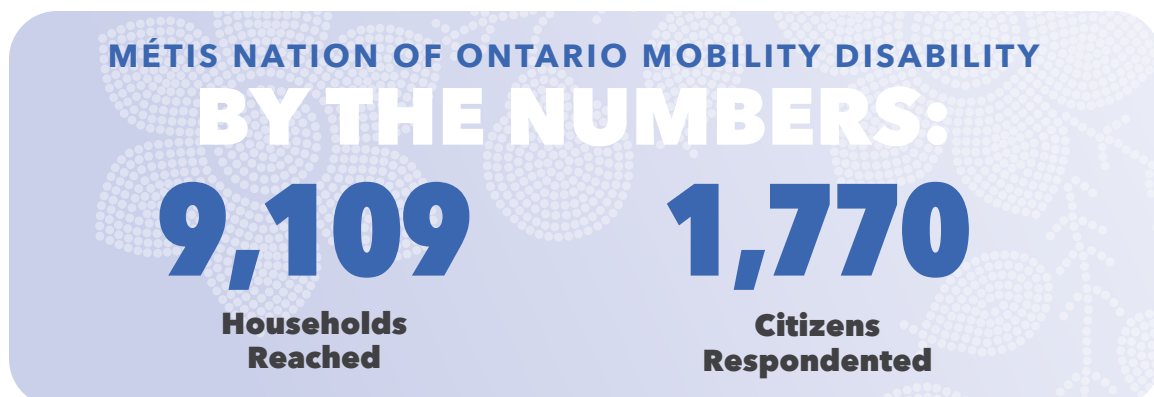
**1-800-263-4889 ext.7 (toll-free)**

**ContactUs@metisnation.org**

In September 2024, the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) focused on understanding the challenges faced by citizens with mobility disabilities and exploring ways the MNO can enhance support for these individuals.

## METHODOLOGY

- **Survey Process and Methodology:**
  - o Robocall survey conducted on September 9th and 10th.
  - o The population targeted (N=33,135),
    - the number of households reached (9,109), and
    - the number of citizen respondents (1,770).
  - o Further engagement was pursued with 678 citizen respondents, and the final number of completed follow-up surveys was 230.
- **Demographics** (the age groups of citizen respondents):
  - o 6% youth (16-29)
  - o 48% adults (30-64)
  - o 46% seniors (65+)
- **Survey Questions:**
  - o What key barriers or challenges are you currently facing with your mobility disability?
  - o In what ways can the MNO support citizens with mobility disabilities?
  - o Is there anything more you would like to share with us to inform the development and advocacy for Métis-specific programs and services for citizens with a mobility disability?



# MAJOR THEMES

**Key barriers and challenges identified in relation to citizen's mobility disability include:**

- *Difficulty with their home not being accessible*
- *Chronic pain*
- *Difficulties with their day-to-day activities*
- *Disabilities they are living with beyond their mobility disability such as dexterity, hearing and mental health-related disabilities*

**Major themes regarding potential MNO supports include:**

- *Safe, Affordable, and Accessible Housing*
- *Services and Supports*
- *Funding for Medical and Mobility Supports*
- *Peer Support and Information Sharing*
- *Access to Healthcare*
- *Mental Health and Pain Management*
- *Employment Support*
- *Accessible MNO Events*

# **BARRIERS FACED BY CITIZENS WITH MOBILITY DISABILITIES**

The engagement revealed that MNO citizens living with mobility disabilities face numerous barriers that impact their day-to-day lives. Citizen respondents highlighted a range of challenges, from physical accessibility issues within their homes to broader health-related concerns. These barriers not only affect their ability to navigate their physical environment but also extend to emotional and social difficulties.

## **ACCESSIBILITY IN THE HOME**

Many citizens reported that their homes are not designed to accommodate their mobility needs, leading to challenges with basic activities such as bathing, entering and exiting their homes, and navigating stairs. Citizen respondents expressed concerns about safety, with several describing the dangers they face when attempting tasks like using the bathroom or entering their homes without proper ramps or accessible modifications. For example, one citizen respondent shared:

***"I am currently living in a house that is not accessible for the bathroom and have to go up concrete stairs to go out and in, and would like to find something more accessible."***

## **CHRONIC PAIN AND MOBILITY LIMITATIONS**

In addition to physical accessibility, chronic pain was a significant issue for many citizen respondents. Pain often limits their mobility further, complicating daily tasks such as walking, standing, and self-care. Some citizen respondents mentioned the overlap of other disabilities, compounding the difficulties they experience. A citizen respondent noted:

***"I use a wheelchair daily, can walk a wee bit on crutches but experience a lot of pain when I do."***

These physical limitations often exacerbate feelings of frustration and helplessness, contributing to a decline in overall well-being.

## **DAILY LIVING AND INDEPENDENCE**

Citizens also discussed the difficulty of maintaining independence due to their mobility disabilities, referencing issues like reliable transportation as examples of barriers. Additionally, tasks that many people take for granted, such as doing household chores, shopping, or attending appointments, become increasingly difficult or impossible. One respondent shared:

***"It's hard for me to do daily living, like dishes and laundry."***

Others mentioned that without help, basic home maintenance, such as snow removal and yard work, becomes unmanageable, increasing their reliance on family members or external services.

## **PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL IMPACT**

Beyond the physical challenges, many citizens reported the psychological toll that mobility disabilities have on their mental health. Feelings of isolation, depression, and anxiety were commonly mentioned, especially when their disabilities prevented them from participating in social activities or maintaining employment. As one respondent described:

***"Normal everyday activities are increasingly difficult, and that is impacting me psychologically, socially, and emotionally."***

The emotional strain of managing a mobility disability, particularly when compounded by chronic pain, was a recurring theme, underscoring the need for mental health supports alongside physical assistance.

# WAYS THE MNO CAN SUPPORT CITIZENS WITH MOBILITY DISABILITIES

The follow-up survey provided critical insights into how the Métis Nation of Ontario can better support its citizens living with mobility disabilities. Citizen respondents expressed a wide range of needs, which have been grouped into key themes. These suggestions highlight the necessity of both practical assistance and long-term advocacy for programs that address the unique challenges faced by this community.

## **ACCESSIBLE HOUSING THAT IS SAFE AND AFFORDABLE**

One of the most pressing needs identified was for accessible housing that safely accommodates mobility challenges and is affordable. Citizens emphasized the difficulties they experience in navigating their homes, particularly with tasks like entering and exiting, using the bathroom, and moving between floors. Some citizen respondents suggested specific measures, such as ramps, elevators, stairlifts, and bathroom modifications. One respondent shared:

***“Living in a building on the 5th floor is scary when you can’t do stairs. If there is ever a fire or even a drill we would be literally toast.”***

Others highlighted the need for financial assistance to make necessary renovations to their homes. Accessibility grants or loans for home improvements would allow citizens to remain in their homes safely. As one citizen respondent claimed:

***“Home improvements to help with daily activities - like I have a handle to help me get in and out of the tub. A low rise platform would help me”***



Others were explicit that they didn't have access to accessible housing that was affordable. As one citizen respondent simply stated as their challenge:

*"Finding affordable one floor housing."*

Another citizen respondent found affordable housing but shared that they waited eight years:

*"Just recently got affordable housing with an elevator and one floor design, had waited 8 years...so for 8 years I would come down the stairs in the morning and not go back up to bedroom until late at night."*

#### **SERVICES AND SUPPORTS FOR DAILY LIVING**

Many citizens require assistance with daily living tasks, such as grocery shopping, housework, and transportation to medical appointments. Several citizen respondents mentioned that these tasks have become increasingly difficult due to their mobility disabilities, and external support would greatly enhance their quality of life. Some expressed the need for home maintenance services, such as snow removal and yard work, which they can no longer manage independently. One citizen respondent stated:

*"Assistance in the ability to hire help for household chores—grass cutting, snow removal, cleaning."*

The need for reliable transportation services also found to be a significant theme, as many citizens are unable to drive or afford alternative transportation options. This creates barriers to attending medical appointments and running essential errands. Another citizen respondent shared:

*"Can't drive due to an injury. Creates difficulty getting to appointments and shopping. Cost is prohibitive."*

## **FUNDING FOR MEDICAL AND MOBILITY SUPPORTS**

Financial support for mobility aids, medical treatments, extended health benefits, and proper nutrition was frequently requested. Many citizen respondents indicated that they struggle to afford essential equipment like canes, scooters, or orthotics. They also expressed the need for financial support to access medical services that are not covered (or have limited coverage) by insurance, such as physiotherapy and occupational therapy. One citizen respondent emphasized:

***"A minor assistance grant for mobility devices could be beneficial and make the more expensive items more accessible to citizens without insurance or limited insurance or other types of assistance"***

Another requested:

***"Help pay for physio and mobility aids. As we age, physio could go a long way to helping regain functioning of our bodies and the various mobility issues that affect us."***

Additionally, one citizen noted the high cost of training service animals and advocated for funding to offset these expenses:

***"Financial assistance with training of service animals... it costs around \$30,000-\$60,000 to train a service animal, and it is VERY expensive and time consuming."***

## **MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS AND PAIN MANAGEMENT**

The emotional toll of living with mobility disabilities was evident in the responses. Many citizens reported feelings of depression, isolation, and frustration due to their physical limitations. The mental health impact of chronic pain was particularly significant, with several citizen respondents indicating that they would benefit from better access to mental health services and pain management programs. One citizen respondent shared:

*“Normal everyday activities are increasingly difficult, and that is impacting me psychologically, socially, and emotionally.”*

Another noted:

*“I walk with a cane and have recurrent pain following hip replacement surgery. I’m in my 30s so [I] am very young to be experiencing this”.*

Access to pain management treatments, such as physiotherapy, was also a common request, as many citizens struggle to manage chronic pain effectively.

## **PEER SUPPORT AND INFORMATION SHARING**

Many citizen respondents felt disconnected from available resources and services in their area. They suggested that the MNO could help by facilitating peer support groups where citizens with mobility disabilities can connect and share strategies for coping with their challenges. This could help reduce feelings of isolation and promote a sense of community. One citizen respondent explained:

*“Form social groups to establish peer supports and share strategies for coping with mobility disabilities.”*

Others requested more information on available services in their region, as some citizens were unaware of the support options that could assist them. A citizen respondent mentioned:

*“Perhaps send out a letter of all the services that are available here in Ottawa because I have no idea at 70 years old what is available to me or by whom.”*

## ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

Access to specialized healthcare, including medical specialists and timely surgeries, was a concern for many citizen respondents. Long waiting times and limited access to health-care providers were commonly cited as barriers to managing mobility-related health conditions. Citizen respondents expressed frustration with the lengthy delays in receiving necessary treatments, such as surgeries and therapy. One citizen respondent shared:

*“Hopefully I can get surgery. However, I have been told that I will have to wait a long time. Apparently, I am on a list.”*

## EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Several citizen respondents expressed the need for employment supports tailored to individuals with mobility disabilities. Barriers to gaining or maintaining employment due to physical limitations were highlighted, with citizens requesting retraining programs and job placement services. One citizen respondent noted:

*“Employment/earning money to pay bills with chronic mobility disability is prolifically limited.”*

Others emphasized the importance of ensuring that Métis citizens with disabilities have equal access to employment opportunities and training programs.

## ACCESSIBLE MNO EVENTS

Finally, citizen respondents emphasized the importance of ensuring that MNO events are accessible to citizens with mobility disabilities. Suggestions included providing accessible venues, ensuring ramps and handicapped toilets are available, and offering transportation services to and from events. One citizen respondent proposed:

*“Consult and consider them when doing event planning.”*

They also suggested accommodations such as mandatory breaks, nearby lodging, and handicapped parking closer to event venues to make participation more feasible.

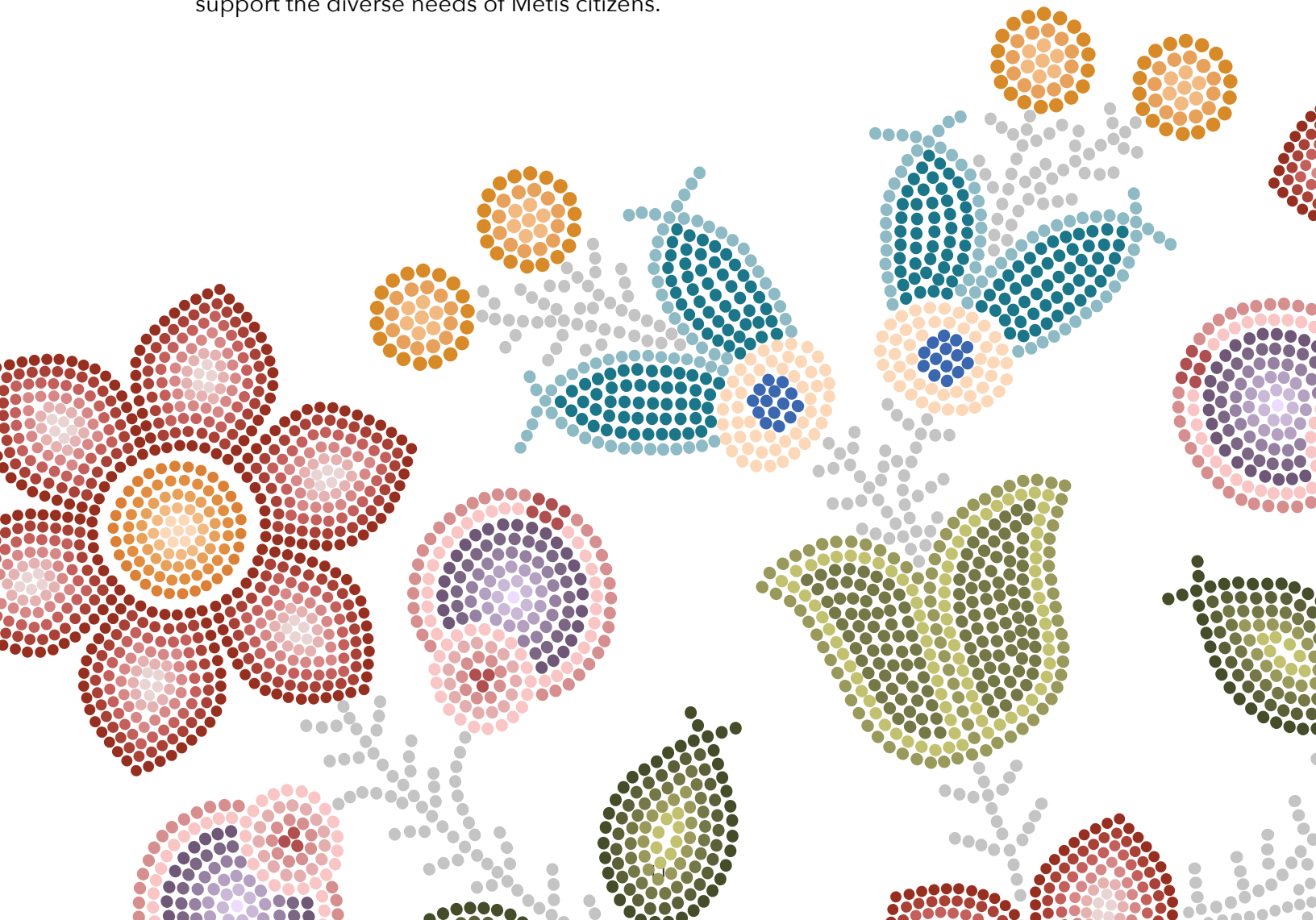
[For additional quotes and key responses based on theme see Table 1 in the appendix]



# CONCLUSION

This report highlights the significant barriers faced by Métis Nation of Ontario citizens living with mobility disabilities and outlines several key areas where support is needed. Accessibility challenges, chronic pain, and the impact on daily living and mental health are critical issues affecting the quality of life for these citizens. The suggestions provided by citizen respondents—ranging from housing accessibility and financial assistance for medical needs to peer support and employment opportunities—underscore the necessity for comprehensive and culturally relevant programs and services.

By addressing these needs, the MNO can enhance the well-being of its citizens, promote greater independence, and ensure that individuals living with mobility disabilities have equitable access to opportunities within the community. The insights gathered from this research provide a foundation for continued advocacy and program development to support the diverse needs of Métis citizens.





# APPENDIX

## **Survey Questions**

1. *What key barriers or challenges are you currently facing with your mobility disability?*
2. *In what ways can the Métis Nation of Ontario support MNO citizens with mobility disabilities?*
3. *Is there anything more you would like to share with us to inform the development and advocacy for Métis-specific programs and services for citizens with a mobility disability?*

Major Theme	Representative quotes
<p>Accessible Housing that is safe and affordable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety getting into and out of bathtub</li> <li>• Ramps for entering/exiting homes</li> <li>• Affordable Apartments with elevators and accessible bathrooms</li> </ul>	<p><i>"I use a wheelchair daily, can walk a wee bit on crutches but experience a lot of pain when I do. I am currently living in a house that is not accessible for the bathroom and have to go up concrete stairs to go out and in, and would like to find something more accessible."</i></p> <p><i>"Living in a building on the 5th floor is scary when you can't do stairs. If there is ever a fire or even a drill we would be literally toast."</i></p> <p><i>"Accessibility grants/loans to do necessary renovations for accessibility in homes"</i></p> <p><i>"Home improvements to help with daily activities like I have a handle to help me get in and out of the tub. A low rise platform would help me."</i></p> <p><i>"Just recently got affordable housing with an elevator and one floor design, had waited 8 years...so for 8 years I would come down the stairs in the morning and not go back up to bedroom until late at night."</i></p> <p><i>"Finding affordable one floor housing."</i></p>
<p>Services and Supports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic daily living (shopping, housework, laundry)</li> <li>• Home maintenance (yardwork, snow removal, cleaning gutters)</li> <li>• Transportation</li> </ul>	<p><i>"It hard for me to my daily living, dishes laundry"</i></p> <p><i>"Assistance in the ability to hire assistance with household chores. Grass cutting, snow removal, cleaning..."</i></p> <p><i>"Can't drive due to an injury. Creates difficulty getting to appointments and shopping. Cost is prohibitive."</i></p> <p><i>"Money to do these things or people to perform some of these chores so [I] can stay in my home."</i></p>

## Funding

- Mobility devices
- Other medically-related services
- Extended health benefits
- Proper nutrition

*"A minor assistance grant for mobility devices could be beneficial and make the more expensive items more accessible to citizens without insurance or limited insurance or other types of assistance."*

*"Financial assistance with training of service animals.. it cost around \$30,000-\$60,000 to train a service animal, I have been training my dog to be certified since he was a puppy and it is VERY expensive and time consuming."*

*"Have more opportunities to get an occupational therapist. Having money to get orthotics or braces, walkers, scooters and wheelchair."*

*"Help pay for physio and mobility aids. As we age physio could go a long way to helping regain functioning of our bodies and the various mobility issues that [a]ffect us. Physio treatments are expensive."*

*"A scooter. Canes shower chair. Since I live in a basement . A stair chair would really help."*

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## Peer support groups, information sharing and community connection

*"Form social groups to establish peer supports and share strategies for coping with mobility disabilities."*

*"Perhaps send out a letter of all the services that are available here in Ottawa because I have no idea at 70yrs old what is available to me or by whom".*

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## Access to healthcare

*"Hopefully I can get surgery. However I have been told that I will have to wait a long time. Apparently I am "on a list"."*

*"Medical specialty availability, lack of doctor."*

*"Help them find doctors that can help them, example therapists."*

Mental health supports and pain management	<p><i>"Normal everyday activities are increasingly difficult and that is impacting me psychologically, socially and emotionally".</i></p> <p><i>"Loneliness and [d]epression, mental health decline due to chronic physical disability."</i></p> <p><i>"I walk with a cane and have recurrent pain following hip replacement surgery. I'm in my 30s so am very young to be experiencing this".</i></p> <p><i>"Dealing with pain".</i></p>
Employment supports	<p><i>"Employment/ earning money to pay bills with chronic mobility disability is prolifically limited".</i></p> <p><i>"Job placement , training programs, for individuals with mobility disabilities, ensuring they have equal access to employment opportunities."</i></p> <p><i>"Retraining for compat[i]ble employment."</i></p>
Accessible MNO Events	<p><i>"Make events more accessible, things like mandatory breaks so I can get up and stretch, as well having the event within walking distance to accommodations would be a big help so I can go back to my room and rest if need be."</i></p> <p><i>"Consult and consider them when doing event planning."</i></p> <p><i>"Consider disabilities when booking events including ramps and handicapped toilets Transportation should be considered etc."</i></p> <p><i>"Have a handicapped parking area closer to the event golf carts could be utilised as well to transport from your car to the event."</i></p>

Métis Nation  
*of* Ontario 