

# Red Lake Tribal Nation Report to the Legislature on Tribal Child Welfare FY 2023

The image below reflects traditional Anishinaabeg clans and teachings that guide our work.



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# Red Lake Tribal Nation Report to the Legislature on Tribal Child Welfare FY 2023

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## Report Highlights for FY 2023

- Maltreatment reports increased in 2023 (641) from 2022 (468).
- Screened out reports went down in 2023 (69.1%) from 2022 (79.7%).
- Screened in reports went up in 2023 to 198 (30.8%) from 2022 (20.3%).
- Neglect cases continue to be the most common reason for a report and those cases rose in 2023 (74.6%) from 2022 (59.9%).

## Reasons for the Report

During 2023, Ombimindwaa Gidinawemaaganinaadog (Ombimindwaa) continued to make significant changes to the organization, staff training, and building practice capacity. Red Lake Nation officially began as an American Indian Child Welfare Initiative Tribe in 2021. As part of the agreement, Red Lake retained sovereignty over data about their tribal children and families, including limiting what data are entered in SSIS, how the data are reported (see Section 2.10-2.13 below) and oversight for how tribal child welfare information is shared. Below is some of the agreement language specific to data.

*12.03 The State agrees not to collect information on Red Lake families without notice and permission of the Red Lake Nation.*

*12.04 The State agrees not to present information publicly on Red Lake families without notice and permission of the Red Lake Nation.*

*12.05 Red Lake Nation agrees to provide summary data of child maltreatment intake, response, and outcomes; number of family preservation cases; number of family group decision making cases; number of family reunification cases; number of children in placement and number of children reunified.*

Historically, DHS (now DCYF) publishes data reports that look two years back. In 2023, when DCYF (formerly) DHS was prepared to publish their 2021 report, they engaged in consultation with Red Lake Nation about how Ombimindwaa wanted data reported. Because Red Lake chose only to enter select data into the SSIS system (see 12.05 above), it is not possible for DCYF to accurately report or analyze Red Lake information. For these reasons it was mutually agreed that DCYF would redact Red Lake's data from their annual reports and Red Lake would develop and publish their own data report to the State Legislature starting in FY 2021. This year, 2025, Red Lake will submit their third annual data report directly to the legislature for FY 2023. The goal of this report is to meet our reporting obligation, provide additional context to Red Lake Nation's data, to inform readers of the complexities of tribal child welfare practice which differs greatly from county practice, and to document progress toward the goal of 100% family preservation and intergenerational family wellness.

As Red Lake Nation assumed full jurisdiction of the child welfare system, we built a new narrative through relationship development and shifting practice to a relative approach - Ombimindwaa Gidanawemaaganidog "Uplifting Our Relatives". Using a collaborative and inclusive process, we had to develop institutional capacity through infrastructure development, data collection, adding and realigning staff, practice model development, and training for staff and relative care providers. Because Red Lake Nation's child welfare practice is so different from county-based practice, this report must look different to reflect the paradigm shift centered on family preservation, not child removal. The report reflects the inherent interconnectedness between the child and their family, extended family, culture, community, and tribal nation.

## Data Sovereignty

The Red Lake Tribal Nation is committed to track the effectiveness of its American Indian Child Welfare Initiative work with our tribal citizens. This is best done through looking at data in our community context and through the lens of our indigenous values and practices. This annual review, reported on the first year of the American Indian Child Welfare Initiative 2021, 2022 and continued in 2023, will assist in program development and outcomes based on organizational changes and using culturally centered practices. Annual reports will help us to continue to identify strengths and gaps in practice so that we may effectively target interventions to restore our communities to wellbeing and health.

As stated, Minnesota DCYF produces an annual report (two year look back) on overall child welfare statistics to document and understand trends over time in child welfare in Minnesota. This year (2025) we review Red Lake FY 2023 data. Later in 2025, we will submit a report for FY 2024 with the goal of being able to quickly report data shortly after the year ends so there isn't the challenge of looking back two years.

Here are some important definitions related to this report:

- Tribal Sovereignty-retained rights of Indian tribes in the US outlined in treaties.
- Data Sovereignty-right of tribes to oversee and manage any data related to their citizens. This includes design of data collection, methods used to gather information, actual collection of data, any review and interpretation of data, access and storage of data, ownership of data, and dissemination.
- Data-any information that helps to understand what is happening. It can be qualitative-observable or described in some way (interviews, focused groups, observation) or quantitative data-numbers, graphs, or other methods that can be collected (quantitative surveys, numbers, measurement).

This report is grounded in key concepts articulated in the *Roadmap for Co-Creating Collaborative & Effective Evaluation in Tribal Communities*. Tribal Evaluation Workgroup, Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, US Department of Health and Human Services. September 2013. The key concepts include:

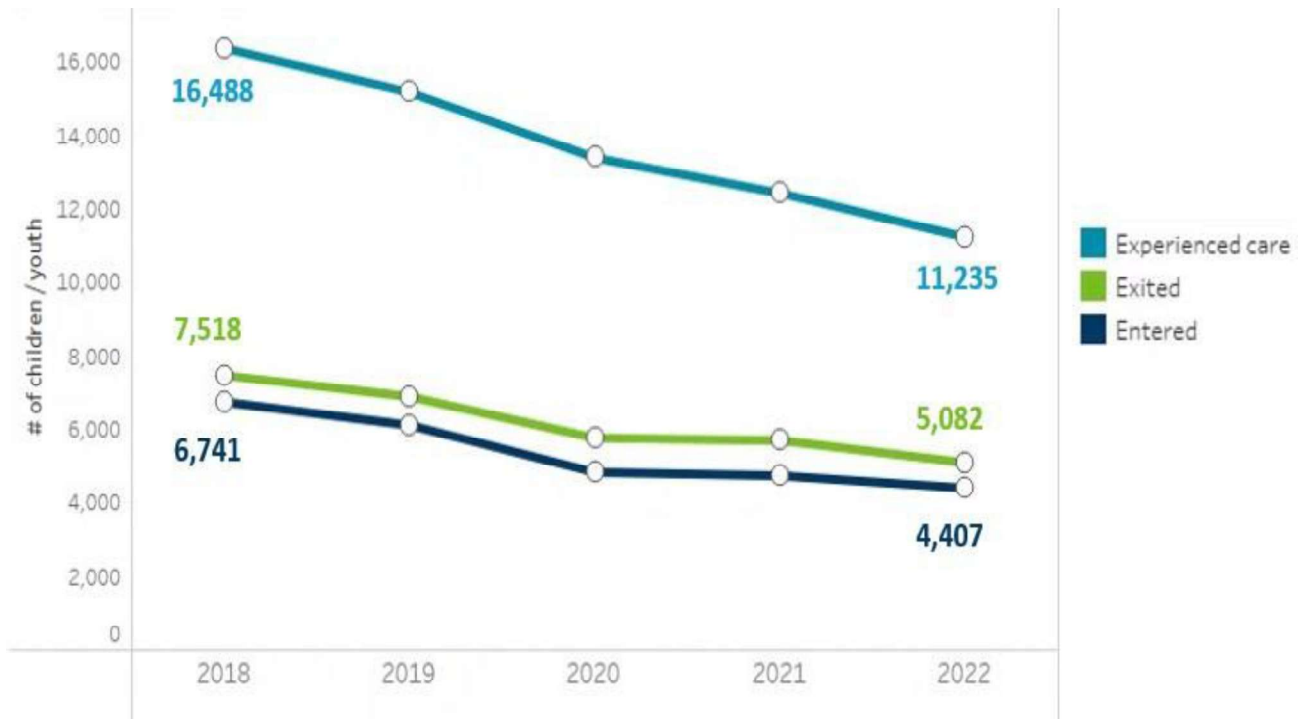
- Indigenous knowledge is valid and valued.
- Culture is a part of data and thus data is not culturally neutral.
- Responsible stewardship includes how to interpret and understand data.
- Tribes must exercise sovereignty when conducting evaluation and managing data.
- Appropriate use of data should benefit Native people.

## **Introduction**

### **Disproportionate American Indian Representation in the Child Welfare System**

Minnesota's out-of-home care and permanency report on 2022 data shows a 6-year downward trend in out of placement for all groups.-The number of children entering care went down by 5% and the overall number of children in care went down by 9% (see Figure 1). However, this decrease is inconsistent across race (see Figure 2).

**Figure 1: Five-year trend of children/youth entering, exiting and experiencing care, 2018 - 2022**



(Minnesota Out of Home Permanency Report, 2022 (2024))

American Indian children remain significantly over-represented in out of home care (see Figure 2). In 2021, the rate of American Indian children in care was 80.3 while the rate of white children was 5.0. When you add in the category for two or more races, of which American Indians are the most highly represented population, the total goes up to 116.2, well above any other group. While the graphic below shows some reduction from 2020 to 2022, American Indian children are still 16 times more likely to experience out of home placement in comparison to white children. Additionally, children who identify as two or more races are 8 times more likely than white children to be removed and many of these children identify one of their races as American Indian.

**Figure 2: Rate per 1,000 children in out of home care by race/ethnicity, 2020-2022**



(Minnesota Out of Home Permanency Report, 2022 (2024))

The Minnesota report states, “Despite the overall reductions of children in the foster care system in Minnesota, African American, American Indian, children who identify as two or more races and children who identify as Hispanic of any race continue to be disproportionately represented in out-of-home care relative to white children. In 2022, **American Indian children were around 16 times more likely than white children to be in out-of-home care.** African American children and children who identified as Hispanic, of any race, were both two times more likely than white children to be in out-of-home care. **Children who identify as two or more races were around eight times more likely than white children to be in out-of-home care, based on Minnesota population data from U.S. Census estimates.**” (p. 4, 2024). The report also states that data continue to show “the persistence of racial disproportionality in the child welfare system” and that “multi-racial children showed little change in the rate of involvement” and are a growing “proportion of the children in out of home care” (p. 5, 2024). So, both those children identified as American Indian and multi-racial (many of whom have American Indian heritage) continue to be significantly over-represented in child welfare in Minnesota. (Minnesota Out of Home Permanency Report, 2022 (2024))

### US Data

Nationally American Indian/Alaska Native children have the highest rate of victimization with 13.8 per 1,000 children. African American children have 11.9 per 1,000 children. Nationally most child maltreatment reports are for neglect (70.9%). Most cases are screened out (56.3%). (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children’s Bureau. (2025). Child Maltreatment 2023. Available from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/data-research/child-maltreatment>.)

### Minnesota Data vs. Red Lake Data

Children enter out-of-home care for many reasons; in the previous five years, Minnesota saw a shift from neglect to caretaker drug abuse as the most common primary reason for removal for children across the age span (Minnesota’s Out of Home Care and Permanency Report, 2021). In

2022 it seemed to be shifting back as the most common reason for a report was neglect. However, 2023 data indicates that once again parental drug use is the most common reason for removal. (Minnesota's Out of Home Care and Permanency Report, 2024).

Red Lake data have consistently shown that neglect cases make up most child maltreatment cases. Red Lake data clearly show that for 2023, neglect cases represent almost 74.6% of all screened in cases. Screened in cases for neglect are similar in Red Lake as they are nationally (70.9%). Red Lake has a high rate of poverty and that may reflect some of why the neglect cases are higher. There also might be a difference in how cases are coded at intake with tribal community members and tribal workers more likely to attribute parenting outcomes to biased policies and practices that are reflected in neglect reports.

The intersection of poverty and neglect has been well documented in recent years. Families and children living in poverty are shown to have a greater risk of being reported to child welfare, especially for neglect. The following excerpt comes from the article "System Transformation to Support Child and Family Well-Being: The Central Role of Economic Supports". (Weiner, et. Al., 2021)

*Families below the poverty line are three times more likely to be substantiated for child maltreatment (Drake & Jonson-Reid, 2014). Economic disparities and historical systemic disadvantages have fueled disproportionate child welfare system involvement among families of color; Black, Latino, and American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) families are disproportionately more likely to be poor due to longstanding systemic conditions (Semega et al., 2020). Evidence about the root causes of child maltreatment has been well documented, including poverty-related risk factors such as unemployment, single parenthood, housing instability, earlier childbearing, and lack of child care (Escaravage, 2014; Marcal, 2017).*

*The income status of families is a significant predictor of involvement with the child welfare system (McLaughlin, 2017; Pelton, 2015; Conrad-Hiebner & Byram, 2020; Brooks-Gunn et al., 2013), and county-level poverty rates are associated with foster care placement rates among children of all races (Wulczyn et al., 2013).*

Clearly, any solution to high disproportionality and inequity in the child welfare system must address poverty and include the provision of concrete and economic supports to families rather than child removal.

Ombimindwaa practice shares the philosophy that children are best provided for within their own family structures and that the provision of concrete resources can mitigate issues of poverty and therefore reduce parental stress to allow children to remain safely at home. Red Lake also screens out a high percentage of their reports by referring families to voluntary services.

The second most common reason for placements of young children, under three years old, are related to caregiver drug or alcohol use. Since Minnesota began implementation of these new FFPSA standards in October of 2021, the most common out of home settings experienced by

children entering care were family foster homes. Most of Red Lake's children in need of care are with relative placements.

## **Ombimindwaa Gidinawemaaganinaadog Practice Model**

Ongoing disproportionality of American Indian children in the child welfare system served as a driving force for the Red Lake Nation to assume jurisdiction over child welfare for its families. Red Lake knew they could work with families more effectively and reduce unnecessary trauma caused by child removal and family disruption, so they restructured their old child welfare system to a new way of practice starting with renaming the agency to Ombimindwaa Gidinawemaaganidog "Uplifting Our Relatives." Our agency is focused on decolonizing from a county way of practice to an indigenous way through development of a culturally driven practice model, shifting staff to upfront prevention efforts, active efforts for family preservation, developing resources and programs to assist families in need with culturally supportive ways to restore family and community wellbeing across the lifespan. Ombimindwaa has engaged in strengthening internal and external partnerships that support our practice model. This has meant training and retraining staff to think in decolonized ways using customs and traditions that have been passed on through many generations to 'uplift relatives' without judgment, fear of punishment and loss of their children. This restorative way of practice has been highly successful.

## **Background**

Red Lake child welfare began exploring the need for a family preservation program in 2019 and started to outline the program in 2020 to empower and maintain families rather than remove children. The model includes utilizing traditional family circles (Family Group Decision Making) to address and mitigate emergency concerns for families that would otherwise lead to potential involvement with child protection. Increasing natural supports to family members promotes a return to Indigenous community practice and successful Indigenous models of family preservation. Our practice model had to re-define many of the colonized terms we inherited from county practice and reframed them in cultural ways consistent with treating those we serve as our relatives because culturally they are our relatives.

We are committed to uplift our relatives in our community and renamed our agency from "Family and Children's Services" to Ombimindwaa Gidinawemaaganinaadog, which means "Uplifting all of our Relatives". This name symbolizes our organization's worldview that we are interconnected to all life and to our cultural relatives. Our ways tell us that everyone and everything has a purpose and deserves respect and care. We commit to truly assist those we serve, through transformation in service modalities, policies and procedures, and emphasizing practices that uplift our relatives.

To further reinforce this shift, we also changed program names including shifting the terms:

- client to relative,
- staff to community service providers,
- foster parents to relative care providers,
- investigation to intake and response,

- child protection case managers to reunification service providers.

These changes reflect our goal of 100% prevention and reunification. Red Lake Nation does not use Termination of Parental rights, and Ombimindwaa does not participate in adoptions.

Ombimindwaa (formerly Family and Children Services) provides a variety of intergenerational services within child welfare including both voluntary and involuntary services as well as a range of mental health services certified by Minnesota Department of Human Services, such as Mobile Crisis Services, Children's Therapeutic Services and Supports (CTSS) and Adult Rehabilitative Mental Health Services (ARMHS) as well as Outpatient Mental Health Services. Ombimindwaa began providing public health nursing services during FY 2021, as well as crisis response services. In addition to integrating traditional practices in all our operations, we offer cultural services on an ongoing basis.

During 2021, Ombimindwaa updated the vision statement to reflect our new practice model. In 2022, staff training and discussions often centered around the vision statement and new practice model.

*Our vision is to return to our healthy and harmonious way of life, living within our clans, within our communities, in traditional family structures where everyone between our youth and elders are reconnected. Ombimindwaa Gidinawemaaganinaadog restores wellness and healing through traditional Anishinaabe family preservation where we build and strengthen family connections while overcoming barriers.*

Red Lake's Ombimindwaa worked hard in its first two years to build its infrastructure and staffing. Currently Ombimindwaa has over 180 staff under its umbrella of services. For child protection, Ombimindwaa has about 40 staff working in various capacities, such as case aides, case managers, intake and response, ICWA team, family preservation, relative care providers and administration. The relative (client) to community service providers (direct staff) ratio is currently 14:1 (significantly less than the national average of 24-31). Ombimindwaa continues to increase its staff to relative ratio to encourage relationship development including adding cultural staff whose responsibility is to translate practices into the Ojibwe language, support staff, and offer traditional ceremonies to relatives in need. Staff retention is higher at Ombimindwaa with about a 2% annual turnover rate (below national levels). Ombimindwaa also partners with several local universities and offers internships to promising students (many native) to continually develop our workforce.

Starting in 2021 and continuing in 2023, Red Lake Nation contracted to become part of Minnesota's American Indian Child Welfare Initiative and receives state funding for various child welfare efforts, including placement costs, staffing, and supplies. The budgeted monthly foster care costs aren't sufficient to cover all expenditures, so tribal Self-Governance and Tiwaha funds help pay for costs. Because the Red Lake Nation is committed to family preservation, Self-Governance funding will continue to be a critical piece of our child welfare operations. Our goal is for placement costs to continue to decrease substantially as we focus on reunification and prevention. With this approach, we have experienced more successful outcomes and fewer

removals. We continue to require increased funding in prevention-based and culturally supportive services, to strengthen family systems and prevent removals.

## **Systemic Integration of Culture**

We believe that ‘culture is the cure’ and that when families are connected to culture many risk factors are minimized or mitigated. We accomplish this through the systemic integration of culture throughout agency structures, policies, and practices based on indigenous worldviews and lifeways.

Our intergenerational services are rooted in Anishinaabe worldview, language, knowledge, history, teachings, and technology. Each one of our Community Service Providers are equipped with a unique set of skills and qualifications that emphasize an Anishinaabe way of life. When working with families we embrace the seven (7) Anishinaabe grandfather teachings - Zaagi’idiwin (love); Manaaji’idiwin (respect); Debwewin (truth); Gwayakwaadiziwin (honesty); Inendizowin (humility); Nibwaakaawin (wisdom); and Zoongide’ewin (bravery). Our value system helps us live Bimadiiziwin (a good life).

We offer person-centered cultural approaches, resources, and services. Cultural services that demonstrate the agency is committed to cultural competence and culturally based practices. We have regular sweat lodges, seasonal ceremonies and feasts, access to cultural advisors and mentors, connection to the Anishinaabe community and the Ojibwe language.

*This statement, taken from the Ombimindwaa Children’s Mental Health Respite grant provides a description of this way of practice. In Anishinaabe ways of being, we understand that we are created equal, must help support and uplift one another, and our original teachings guide how we are to live. They provide that framework of how to do that work, in a way that is natural and traditional to our worldview, and therefore healthiest for our community. We know that we need to ensure our children are safe and being cared for. We also know that we have an equal responsibility to the parents to make sure they have the help and support needed to raise their children. If we only focus on the children, then we lean toward judging the parents. If we focus on both, have compassion and empathy for both as we are instructed by our teachings, then the dynamics change and our approach changes. Not only does our approach change, but then our decision points change, because parents become engaged in the process. They make decisions on what is best for their families, what they need, support and services they want. When our decision points change, our outcomes begin to change, from placing children in care to maintaining them at home with services. The CMH respite program creates additional resources for families and helps discover pathways to community support. (p.1)*

Culturally integrative accomplishments include:

- Continued development and use of an Indigenous way of practice that enables workers to successfully connect with families.
- Staff training to instill knowledge and relay an expectation that staff will practice in a culturally based manner.

- A commitment at Intake and Response to divert cases to family preservation, provide emergency resources to families, focus on crisis stabilization, and develop ongoing support as reflected in the high number of screened out cases.
- Focus on intensive family engagement, family group decision making, assessing maltreatment risk and resiliency, providing services and resources to address issues that place families at risk of entering the child protection system.
- Active efforts link relatives to spiritual services such as ceremonies that strengthen, heal, and stabilize families in crisis and restore natural helping systems. Red Lake provides many resources to address the needs of families living in poverty.
- Increasing the numbers of voluntary cases and self-referrals to meet family needs and prevent involuntary cases.
- Services include ongoing case management, financial and programmatic resources that keep families from entering the child system and address factors that can lead to a report.
- Access to services to build protective factors within the family for wellness and long-term stability.

In 2023 Ombimindwaa started to develop an outdoor prevention program called Izaadaa Agwajjiiing-*Let's go Outside*. With grant support from the Northwest Minnesota Foundation the program put up two buildings and developed outdoor trails for use by families and the community. They also supply equipment such as cross-country skis, snowshoes, ice skates, mountain bikes, and other things required to enjoy the outdoor space. The buildings often host staff and other meetings in a natural forest setting. Attention to restorative prevention practices serve as strong prevention opportunities needed for long term change.

Starting in 2023, Ombimindwaa developed its own annual summer training event. This all-staff meeting held on site provides professional development for all staff. In addition, there are two community-based events associated with the training. One is a community picnic where the staff provide food, entertainment, and cultural resources to the community on the shores of Red Lake.



The other event is a community feast and give away at the pow-wow grounds. Both events not only serve to increase knowledge of staff but also break down barriers between the agency and community and demonstrate the relational model of practice. In 2023, over 1500 community members attended the annual picnic and give away.

### **Culture as a Protective Factor**

Research studies show that culture is a protective factor and can ameliorate trauma when it does occur ([https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/diverse\\_populations/americanindian/resilience/](https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/diverse_populations/americanindian/resilience/)).

Cultural interventions show positive outcomes including “personal wellness, positive self-image, self-efficacy, familial and non-familial connectedness, positive opportunities, positive social norms, and cultural connectedness” (SAMHSA, <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/nc-oy1-task-3-culture-is-prevention-final-2018-05-31.pdf>).

Ombimindwaa practices intergenerational services because many Red Lake families are multigenerational. All services are framed as “wellness” as the goal is to restore harmony and balance to families. The graphic shows how services are provided across the lifespan to support intergenerational needs and are consistent with Anishinaabe teachings about the circle of life. Organizational chart development was supported with assistance from the Children’s Bureau Capacity Building Center for Tribes. The chart shows the practice model as its core with different spokes reflecting our multigenerational focus-child, youth, adult/community, and elder wellness. The various programs are represented in different colors showing a holistic approach across the lifespan and the range of services offered in the organization. All are centered on culturally restorative practices that lead to wellness.

### **Ombimindwaa Gidinawemaaganinaadog Organizational Chart**



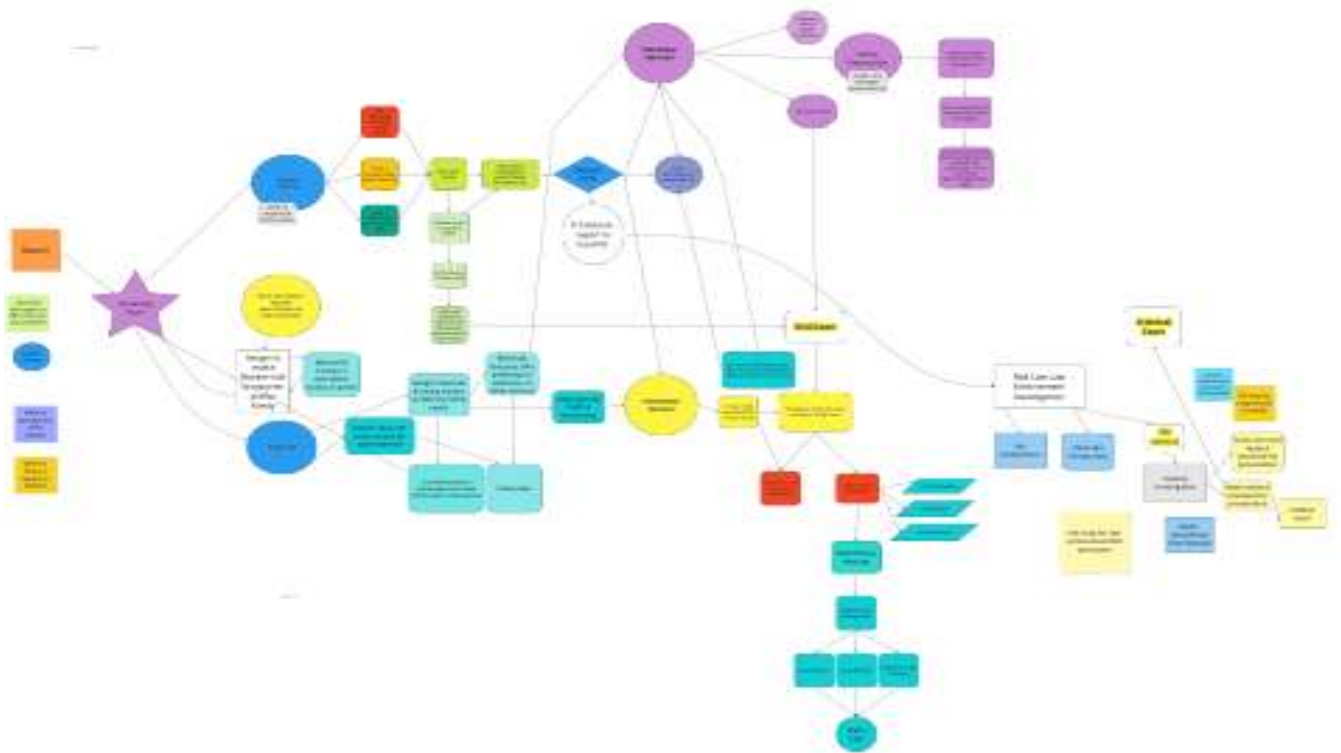
## Process/Practice Mapping

One of the projects Ombimindwaa participates in is the Tribal FFPSA project through UMD to best understand tribal child welfare prevention best practices. The graphic below shows how Red Lake cases are processed at different decision levels from intake, screening, involuntary and voluntary tracks, to case disposition and closure. It shows the complex processes that staff use in determining how cases will proceed. Because Red Lake is a closed reservation, any child abuse case that rises to the level of criminal prosecution is cross reported to the FBI and goes through federal court. Those cases included in the data report.

Process or practice mapping is a widely recognized tool for visually understanding how organizations are organized and in onboarding new staff. This map was developed in collaboration with the University of Minnesota's FFPSA Tribal Partnership and James Bell Associates.

See link for an article and additional information: <https://www.jbassoc.com/resource/using-process-mapping-to-improve-services-for-families-involved-in-tribal-child-welfare-facilitators-guide-and-mapping-tool/>

## Ombimindwaa Gidinawemaaganinaadog Process Map



Red Lake also worked with James Bell Associates on developing a practice map toolkit, train about the model at NICWA, and publish several articles adding to knowledge base about tribal best practice.

### **Link to Ombimindwaa Brochure**

[29024-Red-Lake-OMBIMINDWWA-Family-Children-Adult-Service-Brochure.pdf](https://redlakenation.org/29024-Red-Lake-OMBIMINDWWA-Family-Children-Adult-Service-Brochure.pdf)  
(redlakenation.org)

### **Data**

When Ombimindwaa joined the American Indian Child Welfare Initiative the out of home placement numbers were very high. In the first two years of the Initiative, we were able to close cases that had lingered too long in the systems and to refine our intake and response to reports so that we screen out most cases (79.7%) in 2022 and (69.1%) in 2023. We are working to develop and implement a data system, Beranton, that will allow us to better track data. Currently we use Procentive and have limited use of SSIS to protect our data sovereignty.

Ombimindwaa agreed to provide the following data elements provided in the table below. Most of the data are from SSIS supplemented with some data from other Ombimindwaa data tracking systems. As is often the case, these required elements are not consistent in the way in which Ombimindwaa collects data and as a result make accurate tracking difficult.

**Ombimindwaa Data FY 2023 on Required Elements**

<b>1. # of child maltreatment reports received</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Screened Out Reports</b>	<b>Screened In Reports</b>
<p><b>2. # of alleged child victims screened in by maltreatment type</b></p>	<p>641</p> <p>*331 this number is higher than total screened in (n=198) because of being counted in multiple categories.</p> <p>**umbrella of neglect can include educational neglect, welfare, and safety 247 (74.6%)</p>	<p>443 (69.1%) Many are served in family preservation</p>	<p>198 (30.8%) unduplicated</p> <p>Drug Use Concern 39 (%)</p> <p>Educ Neglect/Juv. Del. 5 (%)</p> <p>Physical Abuse 22 (%)</p> <p>Sexual abuse 23 (%)</p> <p>Welfare/Neglect 209 (%)</p> <p>Safety (9.5%) 33</p> <p>Total 331* (100%)</p>
<p><b>3. # of completed family investigations documented</b></p>	<p>52 (15.7%) *family investigation</p> <p>N=198 screened in</p>		<p>Family investigations (in SSIS) are only 72 hour holds that lead to out of home placements. The rest (about 73.7%) comprise referrals to family preservation (not documented in SSIS) and some cases screened in but dropped at ECP hearings (not in SSIS).</p>
<p><b>4. Timeliness to initial face to face contact for alleged victims</b></p>	<p>*103 (52%) met goal for timeliness N=198 screened in</p>		<p>*This data only reflects 72 hr. holds only- found in SSIS. Data does not include cases referred to family preservation or cases dropped at ECP hearings.</p>

<b>5. # of new substantiated child victims</b>	*79 (23.8%) N=198 screened in		*Some are for multiple children or more than one report
<b>6. # of alleged child victims where safety plan was warranted/completed</b>	*5 (.03%) (only represents those documented in Procentive) It is best practice to complete a safety plan during response visits, this may not be documented in SSIS		*More safety plans are in individual case plans, not SSIS, so require a burden to review. This number does not reflect the safety plans in individual case notes or made verbally.

**Discussion of Data-2023**

The data above only reflects the six data elements agreed upon in the Red Lake contract with DCYF and mostly represents data found in SSIS. Red Lake also uses Procentive to track child welfare data. Because SSIS data input is limited, its challenging to gather data on elements #4 (only reflects 72 hour hold data documented in SSIS) and element #6 since those data are only documented in Procentive, not SSIS. The data provided show a limited snapshot of Ombimindwaa outcomes for 2023, but clearly don’t tell the whole story. Nonetheless, they are useful in seeing an overall trajectory of practice across years. Once Ombimindwaa fully launches the Beranton data system, it will be easier to track the six data elements.

**Data element 1: Number of child maltreatment reports received and screened in or out**

Actual maltreatment reports received went up in 2023 (641) compared to 2022 (468). It’s hard to know for sure why the number of reports vacillate through the years. Sometimes large sibling groups increase numbers, but perhaps other systems are reporting more often, or even other community members may be more aware of what Ombimindwaa has to offer and more likely to report families for assistance. The average number of reports across the 3 years is 607 and is likely to continue to vary each year (see data table below). This indicator will continue to be examined in subsequent years.

As in previous years, reports come from a variety of sources including law enforcement, schools, early childhood programs, community members, medical providers, and other system providers. Red Lake is not covered under MN PL-280, meaning that there is federal law enforcement (but no state law enforcement) within reservation boundaries. Red Lake does have their own tribal law enforcement office and Ombimindwaa does coordinate as needed with their office. Sometimes the FBI is involved in bringing federal child welfare charges against Red Lake citizens and those are reflected in these numbers.

According to the US Department of Children, Youth and Families Nationally American Indian/Alaska Native children have the highest rate of victimization with 13.8 per 1,000 children. African American children have 11.9 per 1,000 children. Nationally most child maltreatment reports are for neglect (70.9%). Most cases are screened out (56.3%). (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children’s Bureau. (2025). Child Maltreatment 2023. (Available from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/data-research/child-maltreatment>).

The Children's Bureau Maltreatment Report for 2022, showed that nationally, 56.3% of all child welfare reports are screened out. Overall, in 2022, Minnesota screened out 58.7%, Beltrami county (closest to Red Lake) screened out 49.7%. In 2023, Red Lake screened out 69.1% of cases. The screening team seems to be using consistent criteria (ranged from 69.1%-79.1% across 3 years) when determining to screen cases in or out. The high number of screened out cases reflect that sometimes situations don't meet the definition of child maltreatment and many more are able to be addressed through the provision of voluntary, family preservation services rather than entering the formal child welfare system.

## **Data element 2: Number of alleged child victims screened in by maltreatment type.**

The 331 reports screened in by Intake and Response fall into a variety of maltreatment types. To understand maltreatment type and why the overall numbers are higher than the total screened in cases (331 vs. 198), some cases have multiple children in the family, and some families have multiple reports for the same concern. While there were more reports in 2023 maltreatment types remained consistent and mirror national data, most of Ombimindwaa 2023 reports fall under the umbrella of neglect (74.6%). This is an increase from 2022 (59.9%) reports for neglect related cases.

Several maltreatment types used in 2021 were not reported in 2023 (endangerment and abandonment), and no reports were made for domestic violence, or educational neglect. This variation might be related to training, worker discretion, or some other unknown factor.

As stated in the 2021 and 2022 reports, it makes sense that Red Lake would receive a high percentage of neglect reports as it is one of the poorest areas in Minnesota. This will be an important data element to track into the future to see if Red Lake's model over time reduces neglect cases.

In 2023, parental drug abuse, the second highest maltreatment type, accounts for 11.7% of screened in reports down from 26.1% in 2022. It's too soon to make any conclusions about the variation but often how a worker codes a report means it can fall under other maltreatment types or may require voluntary services and/or referral to chemical health and treatment.

In 2021, physical abuse was 10 (5%) in 2022, there was only 1 (.63%) physical abuse screened in report and in 2023 there were 6.6% of cases screened in for physical abuse. National data shows 16% are victims of physical abuse and in Minnesota 23.2% are victims of physical abuse in 2022. Again, this may be worker discretion in coding or referring these cases to voluntary services.

In 2021, sexual abuse accounted for (3%), in 2022 there were (13.37%), and in 2023 (6.9%). It is unknown if this is related to many cases or several that had multiple victims or for some other reason. Nationally 10% of children are victims of sexual abuse and in Minnesota 14.7% are victims of sexual abuse. (Children's Bureau Maltreatment Report for 2021; Minnesota DHS Legislature Report on Maltreatment, 2021).

Differences in maltreatment types are likely due to several factors including how abuse categories are defined, worker discretion, how data are tracked, and the Ombimindwaa practice of offering voluntary services rather than standard child welfare tracks.

### **Data element 3: Number of completed family completed investigations**

Best practice for any screened in report to Ombimindwaa is to complete a family assessment or family investigation. Family Investigations (54.7%) are in SSIS and are comprised of 72 hour holds that become out of home placements. The rest (about 45.3%) comprise referrals to family preservation for family assessment (not documented in SSIS) and some cases that are screened in but dropped at ECP hearings (not in SSIS). Family Preservation is consistent with the Ombimindwaa practice model and looks at both needs and strengths.

Red Lake continues to develop its Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) capacity and to improve data tracking in the future through Beranton and are engaged with a Quality Improvement Project for Workforce Analytics through the University of Washington in Seattle to further document and improve workforce analytics.

### **Data element 4: Timeliness to initial face to face contact for alleged victims.**

The data table shows that 52% of Ombimindwaa staff met the goal for timeliness for face-to-face contact for screened in reports; however, this data is only for cases requiring a 72 hold which is what is documented in SSIS. Given that 45.3% of cases are referred to family preservation, it is not an accurate measure of the timeliness in all cases, only those receiving family investigations that result in child removal. This data is also based on the level of response to needs; therefore, the definition of timeliness is dependent on the threat level and is somewhat fluid. Ombimindwaa has three levels of response depending on the level of threat and if imminent harm exists and cases that meet level 1, and sometimes level 2, result in 72 hour holds. Our goal would be to reach 95-100% once data is tracked through Beranton.

Level 1: If the report indicates imminent harm or danger is present, then the agency must send out a Response Worker immediately. If it is after hours, then the agency may request that tribal police investigate and discuss potential follow up by phone with Ombimindwaa staff.

Level 2: If the report indicates concerns for safety of the child, but not imminent danger, the response timeline is within 24 hours. Ombimindwaa will send out Response Workers to engage with a strengths-based response.

Level 3: If the report indicates concerns screened in for follow up, but does not rise to the level of immediate concerns, the response timeline is 7 days. Ombimindwaa will send out Family Assessment/Response workers to offer a strengths-based response.

### **Data element 5: Number of new substantiated child victims.**

In Red Lake in 2023, out of the 198 screened in cases, 79 (23.8%) new child victims were substantiated.

As mentioned in data element 1, the percentage of new substantiated child victims reflects the fact that Ombimindwaa only screens in child welfare cases that require a child welfare response. This data strongly suggests that by providing family preservation early in the process, only those families that require non-voluntary court intervention are being served by child welfare response workers. Most cases in Red Lake are being served by family preservation.

### **Data element 6: Number of alleged child victims where safety plan was warranted/completed.**

Data element 6 is not reported in SSIS and therefore there is limited data on how many safety plans were completed. Less than 1% of safety plans documented were in Procentive so this does not represent a true count. Like family assessments, data element 3, Ombimindwaa best practice is for response workers to complete safety plans with families. Safety plans may be informal such as a conversation rather than a formal written plan that is documented in case files. Other times completed safety plans are handwritten or typed but not added to SSIS. This reflects the emergency response nature of the work. This is an area for staff improvement through training, supervision and data input. Red Lake has been engaged in staff training and an internal audit system as part of the Beranton implementation designed to specifically address the importance of documentation.

### **Limitations**

In 2023, year three, Red Lake is continuing to improve infrastructure, training, and to implement an internal data system, Beranton, designed to track data accurately and efficiently. This has been a multiyear task that is expected to be fully implemented in 2024. In 2023, we acknowledge that our data is limited and does not fully reflect the scope of work that was done with families. Data for this report was found in a variety of places, mostly SSIS, but some also in Procentive.

### **Challenges**

Ombimindwaa has many young staff just out of college, and they require training and supervision to become seasoned child welfare professionals. In 2023 Ombimindwaa began its own annual summer conference to address specific needs of workers and as part of community networking. Additionally, Ombimindwaa continues to work with UMD's TTCP and other systems to address training needs. Services continue to be provided on an ongoing basis and staff were successful in maintaining contact with our relatives and ensuring that they received quality services and resources needed for family preservation. Like other child welfare systems, there are always challenges related to not getting qualified applicants who can work effectively in tribal systems, and this often requires a 'train your own' approach.

There remain ongoing challenges interfacing with DCYF policies and procedures that are often at odds with Red Lake sovereignty. This requires constant vigilance and additional meetings for advocacy and frequent clarification and negotiation that county systems don't have to address. For example, Red Lake has been ready to implement the new data system for several years, but DCYF has not been able to provide the list of required elements that would make our new

system consistent with SSIS elements to assure we are meeting Minnesota requirements for their federal reports. These bureaucratic challenges add additional burdens to tribal work.

The table below compares data collected from 2021 to 2023.

**Comparison between 2021, 2022 and 2023 Data**

<b>1. # of child maltreatment reports received</b>	<b>Total Reports</b>	<b>Screened Out Reports</b>		<b>Screened In Reports</b>
	<b>2021</b> 713	<b>2021</b> 557 (78.1%)	(left intentionally blank)	<b>2021</b> 156* (21.8%) (some already in placement)
	<b>2022</b> 468	<b>2022</b> 373 (79.7%)		<b>2022</b> 95 (20.3%)
<b>2. # of alleged child victims screened in by maltreatment type</b>	<b>2021</b> *200 (this number is higher than 156 because they are counted more than once if screened in in multiple for maltreatment type)  **umbrella of neglect can include abandonment, endangerment, neglect, welfare, and safety (68.5%)	<b>2022</b> *157 (this number is higher than 95 because they are counted more than once if screened in for multiple maltreatment type)  **umbrella of neglect can include educ neglect, welfare, and safety (59.9%)	<b>2023</b> *331 (this number is higher than 198 because some are counted more than once if screened in for multiple maltreatment type)  **umbrella of neglect can include educ neglect, welfare, and safety 247 (74.6%)	<b>Screened In Reports</b>  <b>2021 &amp; 2022 &amp; 2023</b> Drug 40/41/39 (20%, 26.1%, 11.7)  Abandonment 11/0/0 (5.5%, 0%, 0%)  Physical Abuse 10/1/22 (5%, .63%, 6.6%)  Sexual abuse 6/21/23 (3%, 13.37%, 6.9%)  Endangerment 26/0/0 (13%, 0%, 0%)  Welfare/Neglect 90/76/209 (45%, 48.4%, 63.1%)  Safety 10/15/33 (5%, 9.5%, .99%)  Domestic Violence 7/0/0 (3.5%, 0%, 0%)  Educ Neglect/Juv. Del. 0/3/0 (0%, 2%, 0%)

				*Total (100%)  200/157/331  Several maltreatment types were only used in 2021
<b>3. # of completed family assessments / investigation documented</b>	<b>2021</b> 91 total (58.3%)  N=156 screened in	<b>2022</b> 52 (54.7%) *family investigation N=95 screened in	<b>2023</b> 52 (15.7%) *family investigation N=198 screened in	*Family investigations (in SSIS) are only 72 hour holds that lead to out of home placements. The rest (about 73.7%) comprise referrals to family preservation (not documented in SSIS) and some cases screened in but dropped at ECP hearings (not in SSIS).
<b>4. Timeliness to initial face to face contact for alleged victims</b>	<b>2021</b> 137 (88%) met goal for timeliness N=156 screened in	<b>2022*</b> 51.3 (54%) met goal for timeliness N=95 screened in	<b>2023</b> 103 (52%) met goal for timeliness N=198 screened in	*This data reflects 72 hr. holds only-in SSIS. Data does not include cases referred to family preservation or cases dropped at ECP hearings.
<b>5. # of new substantiated child victims</b>	<b>2021</b> 142 (91%) N=156 screened in	<b>2022</b> 99 (100%) N=95 screened in	<b>2023</b> *79 (23.8%) N=198 screened in	*Some are for multiple children or more than one report
<b>6. # of alleged child victims where safety plan was warranted/completed</b>	<b>2021</b> Unknown-while it is best practice to complete a safety plan during response visits, not documented in SSIS	<b>2022</b> *15 (15.6%) (this data only represents those documented in Procentive).	<b>2023</b> *5 (.03%) (data only represents those documented in Procentive)	*While it is best practice to complete a safety plan during response visits, this is not documented in SSIS. More safety plans are in individual case plans, not SSIS, so require a burden to review. This number does not reflect the safety plans in individual case notes or made verbally.

## **Comparison of Data-Across 2021, 2022, and 2023**

The data above only reflects the six data elements agreed upon in the Red Lake contract with DHS and mostly represents data found in SSIS. Red Lake also uses Procentive to track child welfare data and is working on implementing Beranton as their primary data system. These data provide a limited snapshot of Ombimindwaa outcomes, but clearly this doesn't tell the whole story. Nonetheless, they are useful in seeing an overall trajectory of improvement.

### **Data element 1: Number of child maltreatment reports received.**

As with most child welfare programs Ombimindwaa receives a high number of maltreatment reports annually. Reports come from a variety of sources including law enforcement, schools, early childhood programs, community members, medical providers, and other system providers. Maltreatment reports increased in 2023 (641) from 2022 (468) but are less than in 2021 (713). It's hard to know why there is such variation across years. It may be that families are starting to come for services prior to a child welfare report but there is no definitive way to know. Tracking over the next few years will help to tell the story more fully.

Providing voluntary services is consistent with the Ombimindwaa practice model. All screened out reports are offered voluntary services and/or referred to alternative services. This is reflected in data element 5 - number of new substantiated child victims – since Ombimindwaa only screens in child welfare cases that require a child welfare response and refers a higher percentage of cases to family preservation and voluntary services the number of new substantiated cases is higher than state and national data. (see data element 5)

### **Data element 2: Number of alleged child victims screened in by maltreatment type.**

In 2023, the 198 reports screened in by Intake and Response fall into a variety of maltreatment types. To understand maltreatment type and why the overall numbers are higher than the total screened in cases (198 vs. 443), some cases have multiple children in the family, and some families have multiple reports for the same concern. The high number of screened out cases reflect that sometimes situations don't meet the definition of child maltreatment and many more are able to be addressed through the provision of voluntary, family preservation services rather than entering the child welfare system. While there were more reports in 2023 and maltreatment types varied slightly, most of Ombimindwaa 2023 reports continue to fall under the umbrella of neglect (74.6%). This is more than 2022 (59.9%) reports for neglect related cases. This will be an important data element to track into the future to see if Red Lake's model makes a difference in lessening neglect cases. Several maltreatment types used in 2021 were not reported in 2023 (endangerment and abandonment), and in 2023, no educational neglect was reported.

In 2023, parental drug abuse, the second highest maltreatment type, accounts for 11.7% of screened in reports compared to 26.1% in 2022. It's too soon to make any conclusions about the variation but often how a worker codes a report means it can fall under other maltreatment types or may require voluntary services and/or referral to chemical health and treatment. It might also be related to more of those cases being referred to family preservation.

In 2023, physical abuse was up slightly (6.2%) from 2022 (.63%). National data shows 16% are victims of physical abuse and in Minnesota 23.2% are victims of physical abuse. Again, this may be worker discretion in coding or referring these cases to voluntary services.

In 2022, sexual abuse accounted for (13.37%) of screened in reports but in 2023, there were less screened in cases of sexual abuse (6.9%). It is unknown if this is related to many cases or several that had multiple victims or for some other reason. Nationally 10% of children are victims of sexual abuse and in Minnesota 14.7% are victims of sexual abuse. (Children's Bureau Maltreatment Report for 2021; Minnesota DHS Legislature Report on Maltreatment, 2021).

In 2023, like 2022, there were no screened in cases related to domestic violence, abandonment, or endangerment. Again, these cases may have been referred to family preservation. Maltreatment types remained relatively consistent across 3 years.

Differences in maltreatment types are likely due to several factors including how abuse categories are defined, worker discretion, how data are tracked, and the Ombimindwaa practice of offering voluntary services rather than standard child welfare tracks. These numbers may be an indication that Ombimindwaa practice is working in reducing trauma to families, reducing out of home placements, and seeing positive outcomes by shifting resources to early intervention.

### **Data element 3: Number of completed family investigations.**

Best practice for any screened in report to Ombimindwaa is to complete a family assessment or family investigation. Percentages across the years range from 58.3% (2021), 54.7% (2022) to 15.7% (2023). Family investigations (SSIS) are comprised of 72 hour holds that become out of home placements. The rest comprise referrals to family preservation for family assessment (not documented in SSIS) and some cases that are screened in but dropped at ECP hearings (not in SSIS). Red Lake continues to develop its Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) capacity and to improve data tracking in the future through Beranton.

### **Data element 4: Timeliness to initial face to face contact for alleged victims.**

The data table shows the challenges in tracking only partially using SSIS since it isn't accurately counted. Only data for cases requiring a 72 hold is what is documented in SSIS. Given that, it is not an accurate measure of the timeliness in all cases. Our goal would be to reach 95-100% of all cases once data is tracked through Beranton.

### **Data element 5: Number of new substantiated child victims.**

The number of new substantiated child victim cases has gone down in 2023 to 23.8%. It isn't possible to know why this changed. We will monitor this data point in future years to see if it changes.

### **Data element 6: Number of alleged child victims where safety plan was warranted/ completed.**

Data element 6 is not reported in SSIS and therefore limited data exists on how many safety plans were completed. In 2021, no data were provided and in 2023, .03% of safety plans were documented in Procentive. This does not show an accurate count of all safety plans completed. Like family assessments, data element 3, Ombimindwaa best practice is for response workers to complete safety plans, when needed, with families. Safety plans may be informal such as a conversation rather than a formal written plan that is documented in case files. Other times completed safety plans are handwritten or typed but not added to SSIS. This may reflect the emergency response nature of the work. This is an area for staff improvement through training, supervision and data input. Red Lake's 2024 summer staff training specifically addressed safety planning and will stress the importance of documentation through monitoring.

### **Looking Forward**

The Red Lake Nation and Ombimindwaa began a historical journey by asserting sovereignty and full jurisdiction over its tribal child welfare cases in 2021. In start-up years 2021 and 2022, a great deal was accomplished, gaps were identified, and strategies were developed that will be implemented in the years to come. As part of that, in 2023 our agency continues to develop and refine its services and reporting capacity to meet the contractual agreement in a way that provides an accurate picture of practice and outcomes. Full implementation of the Beranton data system will be a big step in the right direction. Full implementation of Beranton across all departments is expected to be completed during FY 2024. Once that is completed, there should be an improvement in consistency of the data available for annual review. Ombimindwaa leadership and staff continue to grow and make needed investments in workforce development, training, and organizational capacity to best serve Red Lake citizens.