

Aboriginal Early Years Strategic Plan

Community Engagement 2008 Regional Summary

Fraser Region

The community consultation and engagement process for the Aboriginal Early Years Strategic Plan, funded and co-ordinated through the Ministry of Children & Family Development, was undertaken in November and December 2008. Information on this process is summarized in the '*Community Engagement Report*'.

This document summarizes key points and dialogue generated by two community gatherings and individual telephone interviews with family members, Elders, service providers and administrators in this health region. All participants were asked the same questions with the goal of further informing and guiding the development of a provincial strategic plan to address the health and wellness of Aboriginal children in B.C. Key points from the community gatherings have been collated under broad themes for each question. The transcribed responses from individual telephone interviews are also summarized under each question.

The information generated through this community consultation and engagement process highlights the knowledge, wisdom, compassion and determination of Aboriginal peoples to actively improve the quality of life for their children. It is hoped that this information, summarized in the '*Aboriginal Community Engagement Report*', and this regional summary will be used by community leaders and organizations for their own strategic planning and community development to promote the health and wellness of all their children.

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Fraser Region

Question 1: *What are your dreams for your children?*

Basic Needs (Food & water, safety, housing)

- Adequate housing
- Live in a healthy home/shelter and have all their basic needs provided for
- Clean water
- To live in a clean environment (drug/alcohol free)
- Nutritious food security
- Absence of addictions and abuse
- Safety, a sense of belonging/ Connection, belonging

Poverty Reduction/Economic status

- No more poverty

Social Justice

- Equality
- A sense of interconnectedness globally

Culture & Language: Knowledge - Pride – Identity

- Knowledge of culture and language
- Aboriginal culture is well-established in the educational system
- Elder teachings
- Strong cultural programs
- Knowing who they are, strong identity
- Sense of pride

Healthy Families

- Healing from the legacy of residential schools
- Strong, healthy families
- Stability in homes
- Peer support groups for parents
- Confidence to parent
- No more foster care
- Support for grandparents raising children or extended family

Health & Wellbeing

- Healthy pregnancies
- More support for middle years
- Confident and high self-esteem
- Playfulness
- Happiness

Having Hopes & Dreams

- They can become anything they can dream – no obstacles in their way
- Have lots of opportunities that allow them to realize their potential

Play & Recreation

- Free accessibility for all recreational programs

Education

- Literacy
- Everyone graduates
- Graduate and go on to higher education

Accessible & Equitable Services & Programs

- Access to good health services, no limitations on their health
- Services are accessible and under one roof
- Equality resources to support programs
- Facilities to hold programs
- We support their assets and strengths
- No waitlists for services

Types of Services/Programs

- More Aboriginal Head Start Programs everywhere: especially in places like Victoria, Kelowna, Kamloops and another one in Surrey area.
- More intervention available and therapy available
- Health and dental care available.

Question 1: Telephone Responses

- Education and housing funds available to on reserve and off reserve students and youth.
- To be able to afford education of the highest level and have a career to be happy so they are comfortable in life.
- To be able to afford a home and to be able to travel and experience the world as a whole. To afford the necessities needed to live a healthy lifestyle in a safe environment. And to always be able to upgrade their education.
- To have a world that recognizes their culture and language as being important and alive.
- A world that does not need a position like mine to deal with Aboriginal issues.
- That they all go to school. All the way to have a profession.
- Get appropriate teaching so they know how to handle life more life skills.
- To learn our culture and medicines.
- To live happy healthy lives and enjoy their occupation.
- I want my child to have a good education, a good job and to be a good parent. That they get a good education and are able to get their own houses from the reserve.
- To have an education that will enable them to have these things.
- We need lots of intervention programs so we can have good healthy role models for our children.
- To live in a society that honours both cultural and western lifestyles. Our children learn to use western technology with cultural traditions.
- For them to be happy to have a home that they love.
- Get appropriate teaching so they know how to handle life more life skills. For example when my marriage broke up, I didn't know how I was going to handle it and how I would raise 5 children on my own. I stumbled along, but it would have been easier if I had

someone or a program to help me figure it all out, would have been easier on my children as well.

- To be happy, healthy and feel valued. As they grow, they feel self-confident are able to give back to society and they have fun along the way. That we are able to give them a childhood that they don't have to recover from. They have strong roots in their identity and strong pride in their culture. That they have mastery of all the potential they are carrying.
- That we write a children's book to incorporate our values for example the Nuchanulth teachings around the cedar bud and what our responsibility for the cedar bud is as a people.

Question 2: *What do you think are the most important things that need to happen in your community to improve the health & wellness of your children & families?*

Basic Needs

- Poverty issues addressed
- Food, transportation
- Housing/Healthy/Stable
- Healthy food
- Food and basic need security

Cultural Revitalization

- Cultural activities (can cultural activities be a part of recreation?)
- More cultural centres in communities that offer cultural activities – sweats, teachings, land, Elders
- Access to cultural services
- Train more Aboriginal therapists, ECEs (OT, PT, ST) – more spots at universities

Cultural Competency

- Educating professionals (i.e. doctors, practitioners) – culture sensitivity awareness and training
- Building relationships, make non-Aboriginal professionals aware of a culturally-sensitive approach

Capacity Building

- Long-term, stable funding – that is entrenched and universal
- Capital purchases for Aboriginal community for buildings
- Better wages for ECE
- More funding for cultural services for start-up

Strengthening Families

- Families need more and different support to feel “safe”
- Sufficient resources to support families – when and how they need supports (e.g. no waitlists) and for as long as they need it
- Stability within families and foster families – not multiple foster families
- Support for foster families – funding, cultural support
- Empower parents, parent-directed learning
- Parents need to know what is available for them and their families

- Make families aware of their rights (i.e. right to refuse, confidentiality)
- Families need access to resources (funded transportation, childcare, and recreational resources)
- Overall supports depends on family's needs and comfort level
- Identifying needs of families – some personal outreach to families to discover what needs are

Improved Model of Service Delivery

- Information on services and supports needs to be accessible and known
- Response ⇔ Ability (families)
- No internal boundaries, a continuum of care (prenatal to eldercare)
- Central service to connect with home territory/band
- Improvement to link information for families – one-stop-shop – hub
- Strength-based
- Bring culture to programs

Types of Services & Programs

- Daycare centres
- Recreation, leisure activities
- More Aboriginal services
- Early education about drugs and alcohol
- Transportation
- Good prenatal and postnatal care
- Head Start Program
- More quality preschool programs
- Family counselling services
- Street crisis centre
- Helpline promoted on TV and at school
- Support networks and mentoring
- Drug and alcohol awareness for teens and preteens
- Resource book (Aboriginal-based), one book for ALL

Government: Communication & Accountability

- New relationship with families and MCFD – remove the “stigma” of MCFD
- More family dialogue needed in family plans with Ministry
- Include traditional language in agreements with Ministry
- Accountability – by government, by families, by individuals, by service providers and other caregivers, by systems (education, health) that people connect with

Question 2: Telephone Responses

- Sustainable funds for low income families and youth for housing and meals on wheels.
- Affordable healthy food.
- Health awareness for parents about health services etc. medical help from community for medicines etc.
- We need a cultural well being program for children. Cultural Teachings from parents, elders, community and other services. That they will always be able to learn about their culture and never forget it.

- We have a lot of community involvement with interagency groups working side by side and complimenting each others' work to ensure that we are covering the bases, it is far from perfect especially when we have an Aboriginal MCFD re-inventing itself to make a go of it – because it isn't working for our families. Children need to be seen as our most valuable resource – they are often put on the back burner. We need to make them a priority by putting time and effort in sitting with our children and asking them about their day – like what was the best/worst thing that happened during their day. Adults, parents, teachers, and community workers need to spend time and communicate with the children at the child's level. Show sincere interest in their lives because this shows the child that they are respected and the child then learns to respect others in turn. Unity in the hearts and minds of our leadership so that we bridge the jurisdictional issues so that our children don't fall through the cracks; on reserve and off reserve. Responsible adults.
- Educate parents to the old ways. Have more elders involved in the programs and be able to pay us for what work we can do. Parents need teaching on how to fix good stuff cheaply. Kids get too much given to them and don't know how to do things for themselves, they need to work towards getting their own things, education etc, save up for it which will give them a sense of pride and good work ethics.
- There needs to be less crime. A better (safer) living community. A better educational system. There is a saying it takes a whole community to raise a child.
- We need to ensure that children get at the very least the basic necessities like food, shelter, love and knowing where they came from so they have a sense of who they are. Drug and alcohol awareness. Parent involvement with children's activities. Intervention and prevention. Hands on experience, true life stories of what it is like on the streets. We need elder involvement in the intervention and prevention programs.

Question 3: *What do you think needs to happen in your community to ensure that your culture & language are passed onto your children?*

Language Revitalization

- Elders teaching language

Role of Elders

- Elders storytelling in public spaces (i.e. libraries, schools), need to provide all of the supports (transit, compensation, etc.)
- Expand the pool of 'Elders'/people who know the stories and culture to share – need specific strategies and tools to actually increase the number of storytellers

Traditional Celebrations & Activities

- Create more opportunities for cultural experiences (i.e. canoe trip, long house)
- Support parenting traditions specific to Aboriginal culture
- Develop opportunities for cultural experiences and learning for whole community (e.g. Smithers – school hosted potlatch and totem pole carving and raising – all children involved, Mission Pow wow)
- Honoring ceremonies, MC explains why we do things
- Cultural ceremonies in community

- Pow wow
- Canoe races
- Raising of poles

Aboriginal Curriculum and Programming

- Aboriginal programs run by Aboriginal people
- Integrate Aboriginal curriculum within mainstream education systems
- Develop and fund a recruitment strategy to have more Aboriginal teachers in mainstream schools, teachers who value and share their cultural heritage – same concept to be applied in “ECD” and health

Cultural Competency

- Develop ‘First Nations’ kits (e.g. libraries) that can be shared within all mainstream programs – ECD, library, schools, etc.
- Cultural sensitivity training and learning opportunities to raise awareness
- Have an Aboriginal float in parade
- Education to community on why Aboriginal people are the way they are today
- Aboriginal Day should be a start
- Xa’ytem site is open to public

Question 3: Telephone Responses

- Youth summer camps that are focused on a variety of First Nations Cultures through out BC. For Example funding for canoe journeys.
- Need communities to support our elders and help reconnect our elders to our children.
- More consistent cultural programs within our community, more effort to keep them going, different ones and informative ones.
- Continued support and true understanding of culture and history of Aboriginal peoples today – we need advocates to help support our languages and cultures before they become extinct – but we cannot do it on our own – however we cannot have “mono-cultured people continuing to make mono-cultured decisions”(Bruce Pascoe) for our people and all people in our region as we are very diverse.
- We need to understand where we came from. Value that it is an important part of life – exposure to cultural pieces daily, like songs, stories, and food.
- We need exposure to other cultures so that we can value ours.
- We have various dialects in urban settings as our population is diverse so we need a variety of elders to teach a variety of languages.
- We need as much exposure as possible to cultural activities on a regular basis.
- Adults and elders need to pick up the responsibility and their traditional roles.
- They also need to seek out the education and expand their knowledge base to pass onto their children.
- Elders and leaders need to ensure that they deal with their issues that resulted from colonization (residential school) and is taken care of and processed and they are on their healing path so we can leave that legacy behind. Then provide supported programs for elders and adults like cultural Immersion Camps where they speak, eat and live their culture on a daily basis.

- Parents need to teach the children from birth and if they don't know it they need to learn it and then teach it to their children. So we need more programs and places for parents to go to learn how to do this with their children. We need to support these parents today.
- Talk to the elders and ask about traditions, culture and medicines. Communication with the elders and families. It has to go from generation to generation, get passed down from me to my child.
- They need to have more language and culture classes.
- I think that the Aboriginal Head Start Programs are excellent. Maybe somehow incorporating similar programs into Middle schools and high schools.
- Language classes, cultural awareness and information, teaching from elders.

Question 4: *What do you think needs to happen in your community to ensure that children's programs & services are provided in a culturally relevant, co-ordinated & integrated way?*

Aboriginal Representation

- Aboriginal representation at decision-making levels RE: funding within government
- More positions (i.e. FASD workers, cultural workers, family support workers)
- Input from families
- Give families a voice

Improved Models of Service Delivery

- Services that follow family, not region
- Support in homes
- More Aboriginal centres for Aboriginal services and programs, capitol purchases
- Hire more family support workers
- Neighbourhood hubs
- Collaborative approach planning for children in care consensus planning
- Child-centered services that don't change for children when they are moved
- Proper protocols with government, MCFD, Education, service providers, municipalities

Types of Services & Programs

- Connecting families with home territories to learn about where they come from
- Aboriginal recreation centres provided by Aboriginal services
- More Head Start programs
- Elder programs and positions – hire them
- Access for children to: dance, drumming, foods, and other traditional culture

Funding Changes

- Consistent, on-going, increased funding
- Core funding – Aboriginal money become part of main contracts, multi-year agreements, 10 – 20 year plans, recognize working on complex family issues, wages should reflect this – wage parity/benefits
- Easy access to training: funding for training

Question 4: Telephone Responses

- Funds are accurately set aside to fund and support youth coordinators and workers to fulfill all the needs of the program.
- Youth workers maintain contact and communicate regularly with traditional leaders and elders.
- Monthly community forms of parents and first nation's service providers of children to always have new consistent and reliable information and to somehow distribute to the community and parents etc.
- Community needs to work as a whole together and communicate and inform each other of services and programs.
- Community needs to be accountable for which they offer and be consistent.
- Continue to inform and educate non-indigenous people about our culture past, present and future and sit at the table to be part of the work not "consultants" after the work – we need to walk beside each other.
- We need a stronger education piece – we need mainstream to understand the differences, for instance the Aboriginal way of raising families has so much benefit, but people don't understand it. The history of the residential school must be taught in ways that people can relate to, like how it would impact their life and children if it happened to them – for instance, if we as Family Support Workers have a lower caseload it is because of the historical piece: a visit with our people may take 3 hours while a mainstream visit may only take 1 hour – it takes longer because there's so much more to overcome and there is the stigma of the 'child scooping' in the 60's so trust is a huge issue and takes longer to build with our families.
- Develop the cultural competence of the service providers and their managers and directors.
- Part of competency would be to know the protocol for example when you invite Aboriginal people to a gathering or event you feed them.
- Cultural sensitivity - I don't want them to just be aware of me I want them to be sensitive to me and have cultural competence in how the approach their work with me. I need them to feel comfortable with who I am as an Aboriginal person.
- Develop training opportunities where the service providers can practice and assimilate their learning. For example create a potlatch or powwow to practice and learn. Similar to the way our grannies would have taught us.
- We need unity of the hearts and minds with managers and service providers, not just Fraser Health but with other ministries through communication and networking.
- Hold Aboriginal health communities talking circles: FNIB, Detox and drug and alcohol etc and talk and share information about the services they provide. More programs for our children, all children.
- We need more daycares and Head Starts for our families who don't live on the reserve anymore.
- Not sure As a parent become a coach and be part of your children's leisure time for example baseball, drumming. Be part of what they are interested in. Be part of their school and help out wherever you can.
- Have a cultural centre that offers traditional mentoring and education.
- Communication between parents, caregivers and all relevant agencies.

- We need more people to help out at certain places not only native people but all kinds of people.
- Not much more than what they are doing at the center.
- Set up a working committee made up of teachers, principals, elders and parents to guide the community in making sure the services are provided in a culturally relevant, coordinated and integrated way.
- Get parents involved and have people voluntarily help out either physically or financially.
- We need people who are dedicated to keeping the culture alive and to believe in it. Not book oriented or by what the book says but based on life experiences and culture. We need people who do what they do and say what they mean. People whose culture is a part of them.

Question 5: *What do you think needs to happen in your community in order to build on the existing strengths of children, family's program service providers & your community as a whole?*

Cultural Revitalization

- Cultural activities within communities, specifically: honouring the birth of a child through ceremony, coming of age
- Every Aboriginal centre should have a library
- Monthly Aboriginal events/celebrations, celebrate Aboriginal Day earlier in school year
- Celebrating and honouring our children and their families (dinner, potluck – traditional food)
- More prominent presence of Aboriginal culture in education system - Integrating into academics

Improved Model of Service Delivery

- Consultant case load size dropped to 15 max (active)
- All information provided about resources to Aboriginal families at centres
- Consideration of families' time – minimize paperwork so that it is simple and user-friendly

Aboriginal Curriculum & Programming

- All community programs premised on Aboriginal frameworks and principles – Holistic/ecologically responsible and respectful
- Expand on existing educational opportunities providing funding and spaces for Aboriginal people to be trained in professional service fields (i.e. speech, OT, PT, ECE [Child and Youth care consultants, family-program consultants])

Question 5: Telephone Responses

- Building family structures in the house. They need to have good nutrition to build healthy children.
- Kids need to come first so we need to make sure we spend money on food, shelter, clothing and then everything else after.

- Make sure programs and services that are available are advertised and make them known. And provide positive feedback to those who do attend and are doing the work.
- We need time, money and manpower for working with existing programs that are successful. That they do more advertising and get more people to help. To make children stronger when their sick, same with families and make sure that they are strong all the time.
- Transparency of programs, accountability and responsibility taken for services and programs in.
- We need to all work together, and we need funding to keep programs going in all areas.
- Communication between all parties involved. We need more money to be able to do these programs better.
- Clean and sober parents.
- A discussion between the funders needs to happen not just with the government funders but also with foundations to identify gaps and overlapping. We need continuous funding.
- We need to allow time to build trust with the families.
- We need an education piece that this is a service to help them and not hinder them. We need to do this by word of mouth and we need to do it often because it won't happen overnight.
- We need more funding to do a two to three hour visit to take the time to build trust.
- We need to rise above the politics between agencies and on/off reserve. Keep the children and families the focus and not who gets more money.
- We need to use more prevention tactics, family group counseling, and more family support to keep parents and children together and more drug and alcohol supports.
- Continued support and true understanding of culture and history of Aboriginal peoples today – we need advocates to help support our languages and cultures before they become extinct – but we cannot do it on our own – however we cannot have “mono-cultured people continuing to make mono-cultured decisions” (Bruce Pascoe) for our people and all people in our region as we are very diverse.
- More Cultural awareness.
- Funding needs to be more consistent and our programs need to be consistent as well.
- Community needs to look past their doors and mingle more each other, learn and be open to culture and new ideas.
- We need to work in partnership and stick to our words and contract with each other. **CONSISTENCY, ACCOUNTABILITY, RESPONSIBILITY, COMMUNICATION.**
- Youth Coordinators and workers receive self wellness days for themselves with pay.
- More available housing for elders, families, youth and singles.

DESIRED SERVICES

- More Aboriginal Head Start Programs everywhere: another one in Surrey area.
- More intervention available and therapy available
- Health and dental care available
- Daycare centres
- Recreation, leisure activities
- More Aboriginal services
- Early education about drugs and alcohol
- Transportation
- Good prenatal and postnatal care
- Head Start Program
- More quality preschool programs
- Family counselling services
- Street crisis centre
- Helpline promoted on TV and at school
- Support networks and mentoring
- Drug and alcohol awareness for teens and preteens
- Resource book (Aboriginal-based), one book for ALL
- Connecting families with home territories to learn about where they come from
- Aboriginal recreation centres provided by Aboriginal services
- Elder programs and positions – hire them
- Access for children to: dance, drumming, foods, and other traditional culture

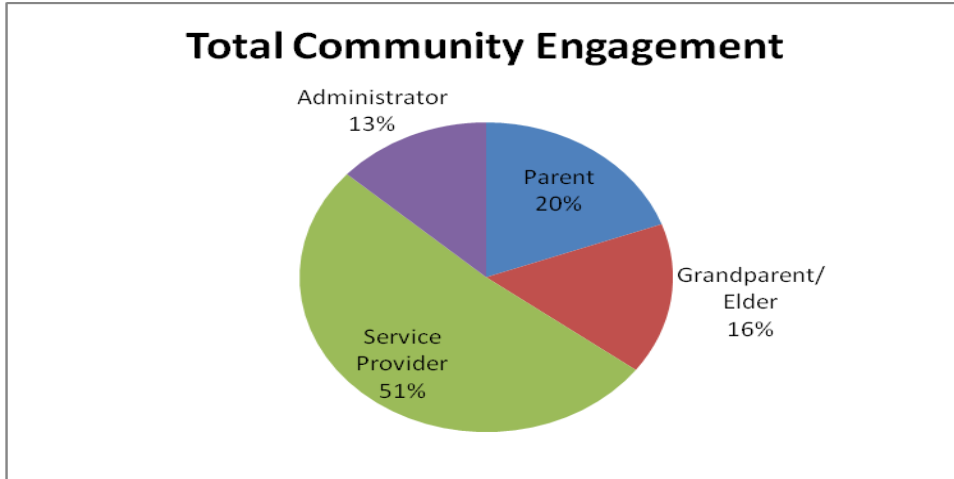
Total # of Participants in Community Engagements: 216

Completed with Parents: 42

Completed with Grandparents/Elders: 34

Completed with Service Providers: 111

Completed with Administrators: 2

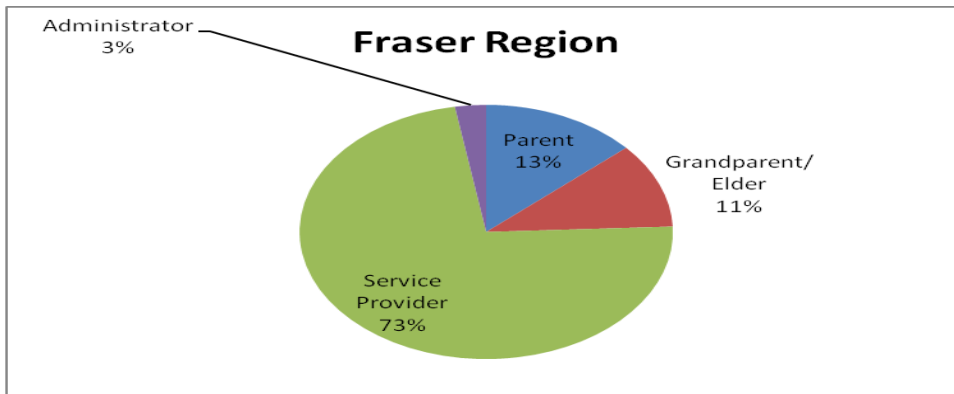


Fraser Region

December 8th Host: Mission Native Friendship Centre: Mission

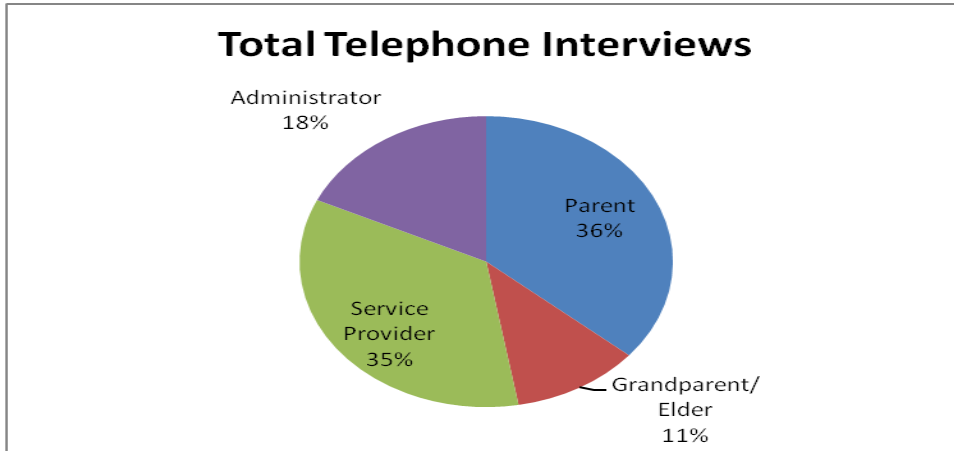
December 9th Host: Kla-how-eya Aboriginal Centre: Surrey

Total # of participants: 37



Total # of Telephone Interviews completed: 72

- # Completed with Parents: 26
- # Completed with Grandparents/Elders: 8
- # Completed with Service Providers: 25
- # Completed with Administrators: 13



Fraser Region

- Total # of participants: 14
- Parent: 6
- Grandparent/Elder: 4
- Service Provider: 3
- Administrator: 1

**Two individuals identified as Parent and Administrator, by their request, they have been calculated as parent.*

