

# Aboriginal Early Years Strategic Plan

## Community Engagement 2008 Regional Summary

### *Northern 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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# Northern Region

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

### **Basic Needs (Food & water, safety, housing)**

- Basic needs met (i.e. food, safety, safe environments)
- Proper nutrition
- To be well fed
- Grow up in a safe/secure environment
- To be safe
- To have enough food
- To have a safe environment
- To be loved

### **Poverty Reduction/Economic status**

- Be free of poverty

### **Social Justice**

- That they live in a racist free society
- They are productive members of society
- Acceptance
- Children no longer witness abuse
- How to be environmentally friendly
- Prejudice-free environment
- To be respectful, responsible citizens
- To accept diversity in the world around you/ embracing diversity
- To understand different heritages and cultures
- Experience no racism or prejudice
- To know they matter and are important in the world

### **Culture & Language: Knowledge – Pride – Identity**

- Have a strong identity/ Know their culture/ Strong cultural identity
- To know where they come from
- They are connected with the Elders and youth/ Access to Elders
- They are immersed in their language and have tapes and videos available for them to use
- That language is fully integrated into their day
- There will be more books on culture and language available to them
- They have self respect
- They know their culture such as dancing drumming and singing/ To know their culture (dancing, drumming, art)
- More cultural role models in the schools (teachers, aids, ABED workers) – sustain funding for aboriginal teachers/workers

- Language, traditions, teachings
- To be intergenerational – be able to pass on their learned values/culture/beliefs to the next generation
- To speak their language
- To learn how to make bannock (fried or baked)
- Know their history and roots (language, culture, community)

### **Healthy Families**

- Families are strong
- They know their family tree/history/genealogy
- Responsive & responsible adults in their lives
- Positive attachments
- Children begin their lives in an emotionally positive environment; empower parents so that children have a healthy start in life
- Non-judgmental approach to families
- More funding for parental education and programs
- To grow in a loving and nurturing environment
- To have respected elders involved in their lives
- To have key role models involved in their lives
- Not violent video games or TV

### **Health & Wellbeing**

(This was a large category and has therefore been divided up into the following subcategories)

#### **Emotional Wellbeing**

- They are motivated and successful
- They are happy
- Have fun as a child
- Don't grow up too fast
- Showing respect to the children and yourself
- Loving yourself
- Self-esteem
- Learn at an early age how to acknowledge your emotions and express them in a positive way
- Teaching empathy/to have empathy
- To be able to express their emotions and to be heard
- To be happy and healthy
- Positive self-esteem (confidence)
- Freedom to express emotion (be sad, angry, happy)
- Contentment
- Unconditional love, feel special or important or valued
- Love themselves and others
- Be 'happy' – definition change from person to person
- Be at peace with their life

- Stress-free life
- To be strong in who you are
- Give them a sense of security inside and out
- Self-esteem, self confidence
- Sense empowerment

**Spiritual Wellbeing**

- Spiritual upbringing

**Cognitive Wellbeing**

- Problem solving skills

**Childhood Experiences**

- Listening to the children
- Positive and stimulating social opportunities
- Positive role models
- Access to an undisturbed/natural ecological environment
- See beauty in world around them
- Feel respected
- Respect themselves and others
- To succeed
- Have opportunities
- Balance between being a leader and a follower
- Ability to laugh
- Appreciate arts; cultural and expression
- Desire to explore world
- Try new things with enthusiasm and without fear
- Willing to ask for help, not too proud to ask
- Be visionaries
- Trust instinct
- Be proud of who you are
- Trust others, those who earned your trust
- Innocent but not naïve
- Lifelong learner
- Enthusiasm
  - Ability to be empowered to go outside, run and play, use their imagination
  - Access to appropriate technology
  - Safe and healthy growth
  - Comfortable, positive environment
  - Be able to move forward in a good way (intergenerational)
  - To be respected as children
- To be accepted for who they are
- To be able to be children

- Let the children take the lead in development – provide the environment but don't force or pressure them
- More choices
- Routine
- Sleep
- To have all needs met
- To have elders to guide them
- Be respectful and respected
- To be balanced
- To have fun
- To have good role models
- Successful
- Have good mental health
- Explore ways of nature
- To have understanding parents and teachers Physical environments (family self, community) that will impact emotional, spiritual, physical, and mental well-being:
  - Healthy: no alcohol, drugs, violence
  - Active lifestyles
  - Safety: environment of trust
  - Strong problem-solving skills for children
  - Promoting positive self-esteem
  - Teaching children responsibility
  - Going outside of family to access learning

#### **Having Hopes & Dreams**

- Opportunity to meet their hopes and dreams
- To have hope for their future/dreams
- To have goals
- Feel free to dream big
- Opportunities to travel and experience different cultures

#### **Play & Recreation**

- Play, have fun, no matter how old
- Recreational activities (a variety)

#### **Education**

- They are educated
- Education
- Teachers to teach them with respect
- Balance of education with cultural identity
- More Aboriginal teachers to teach children their cultural ways
- To be successful in education
- To have a good education

#### **Employment**

- They are working

### **Accessible & Equitable Services**

- There is more support & services
- Have their medical needs met adequately and without hassle
- Quality early childhood education programs and educators
- More aboriginal presence in healthcare profession, all professions
- Access to immunizations
- Access to all resources needed
- Early intervention to reduce risks that may prevent success
- Universal access to quality child care experiences
- To have a safe place to learn and play
- Health care met in a timely fashion (dental, speech, language, physical, mental, emotional, spiritual)
- To have good and safe programs to go to (e.g. Mother Goose, AIFDP, AHS)
- All developmental needs are met
- Healthy in-utero experience
- Be able to live to see their own grandchildren (long life)

### **Question 1: Telephone Responses**

- I would love our children to continue onto academic success in the future years, also we have a few families that have really instilled the aboriginal pow-wow and traditional ways and she would let them know it's nothing to be ashamed of. Would love to see strong leaders, children who have strong self-esteem and not to be ashamed of who they are. Be able to stand up and be proud of who they are and to be able to share a bit about their culture, speak the language and be able to understand their culture
- They could feel and see their culture and heritage in the early learning environment and experiences. Children feel confident and successful and connected to their identity and culture in the classroom. They can trust and feel secure in the adults that are caring for them, be it parents or educators.
- My dreams for my children are to be happy and content in life. To reach their goals that they have planned for themselves.
- In terms of all our children, my dreams are to make sure children feel safe, secure and wanted. There needs to be a sense of belonging and a respect for that. Our children have the inherent right to parents, and fight for that to happen when it gets taken away from them. I want to see families supported around and not taken away. I don't want to see parents disciplined for missing apt's or being disciplined in anyway in front of their children. We need to do programs that are strength based and make sure that we see our parents with all their strengths. We need to do whatever we can to support the families.

- Institutions not so institutionalized, more soft rooms that are family friendly. Parents to be well informed about processes and informed in many ways, sometimes they won't get it the first time or in one way; we need to do it written, verbally, etc.
- When parents are happy, children are happy. We need to not judge parents so they feel safe, secure and happy too.
- That they are safe and their parents can feed them healthy good food. That their parents can buy a house and not be in debt all their lives. That they get a good education and not feel the shame of my generation.
- On a personal level, my children are older with their own families
- Self confidence, self esteem self awareness and self identity. Be able to intermingle with non 1<sup>st</sup> nations with confidence; put hand up in school. Knowledge about health and nutrition
- Strong identity of self and self respect. Early literacy skills and so they can be good readers
- My dreams for my children are that they become confident happy & successful individuals. That they create high dreams for themselves and follow through with taking the steps to fulfilling those dreams. I want them to be cultured and educated. To have pride in their unique heritage as young Aboriginal men. I want them to challenge the statistics and the western world's expectation for them to fail. I want to live to see them become more than an average happy person; I want to live to see them become leaders.
- To complete school and be successful in life.
- To have a safe, loving environment .
- That they are competent and have good self-esteem and got the best possible start. That their social skills will enable them to interact with others.
- To have a happy successful life.
- For my children to always feel included respected and able to exercise their rights and interests as aboriginal children and to be proud of their ancestry.
- Respect and confidence.
- To live a healthy lifestyle and become happy healthy adults. To give them the tools they will need to make the right choices and live productive safe lives and become the people I know they can be.
- To be healthy and know who they are loved!
- That they have clean water, healthy food and shelter.
- They grow up learning their language and dancing and drumming so we can keep our culture strong.
- Children have the same opportunities as non-Natives.
- I would like to see children getting into K3 and K4 so they can be school-ready.



- Our children are very important because they are our future leaders and should be given the best choices in getting an education and having support through school if they need it. Some children in any level of education do not receive enough support throughout their schooling experience. It should be readily available to all students. With readily available supports and staying in school will give our future leaders an equal opportunity out in the world.
- I want my child to be happy who he is and do something he loves to do in life. I want him to be a lion and not a sheep. I want him to be able to make his own choices, and be who he wants to be.
- To live in homes where the parents are healthy. Living in family homes where there is respect for each other. Living in a world where poverty does not exist.

**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**

- We need more funding for families so they can buy healthy and nutritious foods for their children
- Connecting with various community services like bakeries and grocery stores for donations of day-old products
- Poverty: barrier to families, provide basic needs

#### **Cultural Revitalization**

- Have more cultural activities such as hunting, seaweed harvesting, trading with on reserve families
- Having a cultural person available – more hours in centres (funding)
- Respect yourself and others
- Elders to teach tradition

#### **Cultural Competency**

- More cultural sensitivity/awareness in all schools

#### **Building Capacity**

- All levels of government to recognize the importance to the early years and fund accordingly
- Better wages in ECE so that there is more consistency, less turnover
- Consistent ongoing funding to protect existing programs and create/increase new ones
- Have funding set at 5 year instead of one
- Build capacity among ourselves working together
- Workshops: education, nutrition, budgeting

### **Strengthening Families**

- Adults in children's lives they can find and trust to be able to access the services
- Adults be healthy and positive in order to empower their children (AIFDP, Head Start Program)
- Family-centered approach

### **Strengthening Communities**

- Positive role models; teachers, police, doctors, social workers
- Healthy community support (elders, role models)
- Access to community kitchens/lunch programs/ transportation
- By weekly gatherings with Elders, children, and parents
- Community garden (same building) year round
- Fun family/community nights (i.e. sledding, skating, indoor hockey, soccer, swimming – as families), feasts and potlatches for families and community in general
- Food/clothing/baby thing exchange program

### **Recreation**

- Social centre (family dances, fun days)
- Rec Centre
- Affordable sports (find funding)

### **Improved Model of Service Delivery**

- Coordinated services so that we can co-facilitate to promote positive partnerships
- Have more community 'hubs' so that families can access services easily
- Access to transportation
- More Aboriginal-specific programming
- Access to Elders/cultural advisors
- Promoting/honoring Elder involvement
- Involve whole family unit in programming
- Ongoing support to children over 6 years
- Using media to promote local programs so all parents can access
- More volunteers needed to avoid "burn-out"
- More father (male) involvement
- Less waitlist
- Information on TV and other media
- Business community onboard
- Have an 'open door' policy
- Promote/support each others' programs
- Provide continued support – no gaps in services
- All organizations working together
- To inform families of community resources that are available and accessible to all
- Informed advocates – parents, educators extended families, agencies, politicians, doctor's offices, maternity floors/coordinators at hospitals, children's floors at hospitals

- Encourage and incorporate inclusiveness in all early childhood settings with an anti-bias perspective – through the eyes of a child
- Businesses to partner up with agencies to get better nutrition

### **Types of Services & Programs**

- Have more counselling for children who witness abuse not just one counsellor for 60 children
- Have counselling available in schools , liaison workers for parents who have children 0-6
- Have a First Nations counsellor available
- Have a child and youth mental health worker
- Have Aboriginal Head Start Centers in each community and expand it to reach more children and families as it is making a difference already and our children's marks are going up
- More transportation needs to be made available so parents and families can get to appointments
- We need more speech therapists
- We need more aboriginal alcohol and drug counsellors to help keep our families healthier
- We need more education on budgeting and financial planning such as RRSPs , buying a home, stocks and bonds
- More outreach services for children
- More developmental outreach; therapy services, ASCD, SCD – more people and funding resources
- Start teaching these things at an early age: e.g. teach children to have vision boards so they can start envisioning a future
- Teach parents to how to do a vision board
- Have classes on aboriginal politics so families are informed and can run for different positions if they understand how the system works
- New holistic health facility
- Access to proper health care professionals
- More support for social programming: poverty, violence, addictions, parenting support
- Teaching advocacy skills to parents
- Aboriginal daycare
- **Universal access** to quality childcare experiences
- Continue or expand existing programs – more funding
- Unlimited access to Health and Dental (uninsured health benefits – more)
- Health and Wellness Centre
- More Head Starts and AIFDP
- Counselling, dental, prenatal, safe place, support

### **Government: Communication & Accountability**

- Better communication for resources (between services and MCFD, school districts, etc.)
- More lobbying from all levels of government (local, provincial, federal)
- Government to make Early Years a priority (tax dollars, corporate)

## Question 2: Telephone Responses

- Families have to become educated; we have to start having more workshops at an aboriginal perspective. More aboriginal professionals have to come forth and start getting the information out to our aboriginal families. Educate families on Drug and Alcohol, prenatal classes, parenting classes etc
- Educators are making those connections with the parents and caregivers of the children to build trust and confidence. Supporting and building relationships and trust with the parents/caregivers. Connecting with them in their own environment, either in their own home or where they go in order to get supports, reaching out to them and meeting them where they are already comfortable. The first step in working with children is making those connections with the adults in their life. This is where it starts. If we have unwell parents we have unwell children.
- More child care such as daycares in our communities and daily teaching and do the health wellness continuously. I think is to teach the people involved to have the education in nutrition. Very important element in young children's lives
- More family programming, more facilities to have the family programming in More family friendly facilities. Our organizations working closely together. We need to reach out to more families and communities that are struggling. Let's do more about creating fun green space for our families and children.
- We need to network in a more serious manner, so we all know what each other is doing and not redo what other centres/organizations are doing. We have no crisis line here that commits a support worker (not a social worker) immediately when people call in needing help, we need that. Here we have 40% of Aboriginal population, and in Terrace we have a staggering alcohol consumption...we need to have ways to take families through crisis management and help them to effectively problem solve and manage or prevent crisis. This includes the aunties, uncles and grandparents, and we need educational resources to help them. We are matrilineal house groups, and we need to keep this in mind when we design programs to honour this. It might cost more money, but it is prevention and in the end will save money.
- Our people need to be able to facilitate full family intervention, we need training on this. Training needs to be more family focused.
- In terms of health of children, we need to be training our parents in their homes and more in depth about how to buy food, prepare meals, and why these are important. Transportation is a huge issue and we need to make sure that there is fair dollars in all programs to ensure transportation can be provided to families for all programming.

- Nutrition is a big issue, as is dental hygiene. We need to support families and help them with the programs and reach out to help their children be healthy.
- Information about these resources needs to be more culturally relevant.
- Supported living needs to be expanded to all the families living with FASD.
- Child health means parent health; we need to be able to ensure we have programs and services that support parents and extended family.
- So many of the kids up here are hungry or eating food that isn't very good for them. I think it is all the parents can afford, how is this possible in this very rich part of the province? Why are the oil companies not paying back to our communities and towns where the native people live, it is our resource they are taking from our land up here. The province should make the companies reinvest some of their profits back to our children and communities.
- Culture camps over the summer and on Pro D days and other breaks like Easter and Christmas, more ways for families to come together. Language classes and cd's need to be made available for everyone and we need more ways to teach the language. There are no programs up here for culture for little children, why not? It is not okay anymore, our kids need to learn their culture and language.
- The community needs be collective when looking at the health and well-being of children and families. These decisions should be by the community, for the community and with the community. The community are the ones to transform beginning with role-models, leaders and catalyst in order that they can leave a legacy.
- Parents need to be exposed to more workshops, and opportunities for them to learn as well as fun family time. No more pilot projects that are here for one year and then gone, disheartening for families. We need to have information throughout the community on child development; this includes the malls and places where families and young people go. Would be good to have health and nutrition posters and more Drug and alcohol awareness
- In order for my children to continue to live in a healthy environment, I need to be supported as a parent. I need childcare that is available in an affordable and meaningful manner. I need to know that my children are safe in their learning environments. That they can be integrated into the community without the potential of racism or neglect by teachers, schoolmates or childcare providers. My children need access to knowledge and need opportunities to grow intellectually, emotionally and physically like all other children..
- Remove drug dealers and bootleggers.  
More activities for the kids to do instead of kids walking the streets.
- We need a community center facility where children of all ages can interact and parents can access services from all organizations, agencies and programs.

- To strengthen the link between our youth and elders.  
More cultural awareness that provides respect and a fun component to understanding the cultural values of aboriginal children.
- A one stop facility for families.
- A community centre which integrates a number of services vital to the well being of children of all ages and abilities rather than having to travel from one place to another.
- Improve/ increase mental services for children and families and for the community to truly value the gift children are for all of us.
- Lots of our families are physically distant and live an hour away. We need more services available to reach those families in remote areas
- There's a lot of alcohol and drugs here so prevention and intervention for the parents. We need to make sure that we communicate well and pass on information to families so they are not making assumptions about what we are doing and so they know that we are there to help them. We need to have an interpreter for elders who don't speak English.
- There is a lot of poverty and it's important to have a healthy food program
- Because of the rising cost of rent, our families have to take it from their food budget
- It would be good if we had hot lunches provided in schools
- Educate parents on alcohol and drugs during pregnancy
- Help needy families with milk supplements for pregnant moms and young families
- Parents need to be able to help children with their homework so that it's fun, so we need training for parents around early childhood education – at their level so that they understand the importance of doing homework with their children and their developmental processes
- We need more aboriginal cultural sensitivity training. For example most organizations only schedule cultural sensitivity training once a year. It needs to be ongoing and more than once a year. We need to increase the awareness among non aboriginal and aboriginal people on the diversity of our cultures. I think in our community there needs to be more affordable recreation activities. (i.e. skiing is very expensive) for the kids health. Videos in school regarding puberty are not very relevant. In its place there could be information and teachings on healthy relationships and movies on attachment and abuse. Would be more informative and touch on a more personal level. At school more supports in place if bullying is already happening so it doesn't continue on into high school.
- Leaders, councils, and board members anyone who is in power in the community needs to model openness and take action on behalf of the community. They need to support programs in the community and have a true understanding of exactly what the service and programs are providing. Then as leaders they need to speak to the issues in the community and let everyone know it is okay to talk about the issues and seek help in order to heal.

Adults don't always get the opportunity to deal with past issues and they need support and backing to do this in order to move on.

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

**Foundations**

- Acceptance
- Understanding
- Respected and respectful
- Get them interested
- Role models

**Role of Elders**

- Include Elders
- Elders Drum Groups
- More Elders and knowledge holders

**Language Revitalization**

- Teach the parents so the language can be spoken in the home
- Have books available in the various languages
- Teleconference calls with elders from different reserves so families who move off reserve can still keep on learning their language
- Satellite language courses
- Cost sharing with on and off reserve so families who live off reserve can be transported back to their reserve and participate in culture and language classes
- Language support groups after training to follow so everyone gets a chance to practice what they have learned
- Library with all languages available
- Have all languages available on the Internet
- Language lessons available
- More specialized educators to teach culture and language

**Traditional Celebrations & Activities**

- Children's Drum Group: songs, dances
- Storytelling: invite people from all nations
- Host multicultural feasts/celebrations (potlatches), honour traditions/rites of passage

**Spirituality**

- We need to connect to our spirituality and if no one remembers what it was or there is no one to tell us what it was we could adopt another First Nations' practices for spirituality in the area

### **Aboriginal Curriculum & Programming**

- First Nations History taught in the schools – the real history of residential schools which shows how strong and resilient our people are
- Parents need to be teaching their children their culture at a very early age
- Parents need supports such as counselling to overcome the direct or residual effects of residential schools
- Existing programs to enhance and continue (like AIDP, AHS)
- Getting more fathers involved: better times (evenings/weekends), having male mentors (experienced fathers), host conferences for fathers (provide daycare and food)
- Cultural identity for children (bringing in grandfathers, aunts, uncles)
- People being recognized for what they know
- Starts with individual families
- Willing to share culture and language
- Sharing of resources (i.e. books, videos, elders, knowledge holders)
- Teachings available to ALL programs such as Strong Start, etc.

### **Cultural Competency**

- Educate non-aboriginal people about our culture so our children feel more comfortable and this may help to stop racism if there is more understanding
- Teaching children about other cultures and traditions from different territories – Cultural “Show & Tell”: Sharing of family values and traditions
- Curriculum to include Indigenous Culture in mainstream
- Holistic teachings (i.e. medicine wheels, colors, 4 seasons)

### **On/Off Reserve**

- Create a dance class which brings both on and off reserve together or invite dance group leaders to come to off reserve
- Bridge gaps between on and off reserve
- Have mock feasts at the centre for various tribes and languages

### **Question 3: Telephone Responses**

- We have to get more families becoming in learning the language and passing it onto their children, also more parent involvement for evening classes to learn the language. If we can get more elder involvement with the teaching of the traditional ways. The staff incorporating what they learn and bringing it to class each and everyday. Continue to have our elders come in.
- The key piece is making those connections with the Elders and leaders within the local nations. Connecting with Aboriginal education and those people who are already established and have those relationships with the Wetsuweten (spelling?) Nation. Being able to respectfully and accurately ensure that there are resources and materials in those early learning environments from the cultures of the children who are attending. They need to feel it is their environment.



- By making sure it is taught in the daycares and it is important for parents to understand the importance of it.
- Family immersion and family immersion camps. We have to get away from just teaching the children, we need to teach the whole family, and in ways that are culturally relevant. This would include whole family units, from child to grandparent or great grandparent, if we can do this for a number of years without having to redo proposals, then we will see a true revitalization of our culture.
- These go hand in hand, and we cannot separate culture from language; our worldview is about relationships and both culture and language honour this. Our worldview is not about progress and technology it is about relationships. Our culture and language is very integrated and needs to be taught that way, and needs to be supported that way. We need to go back to immersion camps, out on the land.
- Culture camps over the summer and on Pro D days and other breaks like Easter and Christmas, more ways for families to come together. Language classes and cd's need to be made available for everyone and we need more ways to teach the language. There are no programs up here for culture for little children, why not? It is not okay anymore, our kids need to learn their culture and language
- Culture is crucial to sustainability and once again those who hold the language and traditional knowledge will need to model their expertise. The language is key to knowledge and sustaining ways of knowing and being Aboriginal/Indigenous
- Keep it going in AHS and get the parents involved, may need more dollars and resources for programs for parents. About 85% of our parents work and we need to find ways to engage parents in the evening; maybe craft programs that include language as part of it. Be able to provide books and videos to the families that foster the language. More staff who can focus on this so that culture isn't a component of our program, but something we can build in all the way through.
- My culture and language cannot be passed on to my children through the community. The obligation to pass that on to my children is my responsibility. The Wet'suwet'en culture is not ours, we belong to the Cree culture and our land, language and culture is in Saskatchewan. I don't need the community to focus on teaching my children their culture. I need the community to respect my culture but not present opportunities to teach it. My children need to be treated like all other non-Aboriginal children – with respect. I want them to be viewed as an average student who is seeking to learn and become a confident individual.
- More elder involvement, elder's should not laugh at our attempt to speak our language. Respect your culture and language and pass it on.

Children need to interact with elders in an environment that is safe and welcoming where they have the freedom to explore and learn. We need a facility where that can happen.

- Reconnecting the youth to get them excited about it and bring back the ways of life as it was at their age.
- Cultural Awareness activities, interaction with aboriginal agencies for information and event sharing to ensure we respect our multicultural society (so kids won't feel different and excluded)
- Language classes that incorporate elders for aboriginal teachers
- As a non aboriginal parent of an aboriginal child I need to learn and have others teach my child more about the culture and customs so that he will have that as well as his German – Canadian heritage.

Real respect for all elders' wisdom no matter what their culture is.

- Elders need to be part of the programs and services on a regular consistent basis. We need to go back to the traditional ways and incorporate it into today's society and programs.
- Keep talking about it, keep telling the stories of our culture and traditions and the past. Be proud of who we are and how strong we were at one time and are still strong today to survive what we have
- A lot could be taught outside the home as many parents are residential school victims – they don't know our culture and language
- Our elders need to teach them their language and culture again
- We have summer and winter camps where we teach ice fishing, how to dry fish, and how to dry meat
- At the school level we could have cultural classes on jigging, etc.
- We need more involvement from community elders. We need to have them come and share their traditional stories and pass down the traditional ceremonies. There was a Wet'suwet'en class in our high school to teach language and culture that was just cancelled due to no language teacher available. It would be good to bring in people who know the culture to pass down teachings and cultural components. Trustful and healthy cultural teachers who could come and teach cultural aspects who have had criminal record checks to ensure our children's safety. So not just anyone is chosen.
- Combining the generations in a fun way for children to learn. If you are having fun and are engaged everybody benefits and the results last.

**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?***

### **Cultural & Language Programs**

- Have language immersion classes in the schools so children are getting more than the basics
- Set up a language and culture advisory committee
- Set up an elders language and culture advisory committee
- Have cultural programs available on the weekends and evenings
- Family fun night, community social nights, pow-wows, Aboriginal Day, potlatches
- Aboriginal children to attend other cultures' events (Children's Festival, Disneyland)
- All children, regardless of cultural background, be able to attend activities together without prejudice
- Have more 'hands-on' cultural experiences
- Have a cultural exchange network (e.g. UNBC – working indigenous knowledge holders work with them to have access to the database – list of elders and their skills that we can bring to our centres)
- Develop an elders northern society (inclusive and funded)
- Have access to books written by elders (there's not a lot available)

### **Aboriginal Representation**

- Have our parents on the PAC
- Have a first nations parents club or advisory committee connected to the schools so we will have a say on where and how the money is spent
- We need more aboriginal workers or ECE working in our public schools

### **Improved Models of Service Delivery**

- Provide language and culture in all our services
- Community hubs; services all under one roof (MCFD, therapy, ASCD/SCD, housing, community kitchen, health nurse)
- Culturally diverse/relevant environments
- Accessible programs in all communities (community colleges, ECE programs) so people can train/stay in their own communities – people will then stay and use their training in their community and train others
- Connect with parents and work with them from their perspective
- Government ministries need to collaborate more
- More services for grandparents/extended family raising children – same funding as for Foster Family with MCFD

### **Types of Services & Programs**

- Have more Parenting programs – Teaching Virtues
- Form a dads group – we need more fathers involved

### **Cultural Competency**

- Non-Aboriginal professionals to be trained/taught to be culturally sensitive, know about aboriginal culture

### **Question 4: Telephone Responses**

- Educate the community about honouring diversity and cultural differences and that the Aboriginal Head Start Program is not just a daycare but it promotes Nutrition, Culture and Language, Education, Social Support, and Parental Involvement
- Similar to #3, connecting with Elders in from the local Nations. Agencies and service providers need to understand the Aboriginal culture. They need to ask the Aboriginal people themselves what they need. Sometimes we plan and coordinate the programs and services without asking – what is it that you need? Sometimes we think we know what people want but we don't really. In actuality if you sat down with those families of those Nations, we might be surprised we are way off base.
- We need to empower them by making them part of how things are delivered, part of the planning and part of the successes. Get the whole team involved in decision making instead of dictating the vision/goals of the services.
- We are raised in our culture in our homes and it is important that the parents are involved in the process of the program.
- The baby boom and shortage of staff is really hitting us here in the North, we are having such a hard time filling positions and this really needs to be taken care of and addressed.
- We need to do more networking with other organizations, both in our town and provincially. Our provincial organizations need to work together better. Our Indigenous organizations also need to be more child focused! We should be meeting together once a year in our region to be talking about what is happening, who is doing what, be strength focused, best practices and work together for the betterment of all our children. Everyone is afraid of losing dollars, to the detriment of child services and children. We need to come together and do a Regional plan for both Indigenous and Non Indigenous service providers.
- There needs to be more ways for the kids to learn their languages and this has to also be done at night and in the summer, when all the family can be together and learn together. We need to have ways for families to all be together, and not have programs separate for children. When I was trying to get help for my Grandson we got sent here, there and everywhere, no one seemed to know what the other was doing, why don't they all meet regularly and across our area. Maybe it has to be part of each organizations contract that they have to work together or they don't get refunded.
- Cultural Competence ensures that the principles from each community is acknowledged in a sensitive way. The principles and guidelines must come from the territories of where the

practices are occurring. It's also important to educate practitioners who are not familiar with Aboriginal/Indigenous protocols. First, these protocols have to come from the community leaders and elders. Secondly, the leaders must be the ones to educate and to guide outside members to build alliances, and the process will have to be meaningful for everyone.

- Staff need a strong understanding of their background and so it is inherent in who they are when they are talking with and teaching the children. We need to pay for elders! Knowledge of child development needs to be taught to our elders and parents so they know how our children are growing and learning; especially if they are volunteering and helping out.
- To myself, it does not mean a lot to me to that there are services available in a culturally relevant context. I take on the responsibility to teach those values to my children within our home. I think that the best thing that the community could do is support me in that role. Our community needs to ensure that parents are feeling good and strong in their roles as parents. The lack of resources is the biggest issue here. There is not enough money being put towards programs and activities for children belonging to any race or ethnicity. When the community does create a culturally relevant program they tend to take ownership over the program without looking to the community to guide and lead that program in a culturally and meaningful way.
- More parental involvement
- More people in that field of that work experience. Open up more and get out there and teach.
- We need aboriginal workers delivering programs and part of the mandate of the funders should be to have elders directly involved.
- Involve the culture and knowledge of our elders
- Resources provided to build relationships between schools, daycares, aboriginal agencies and bands. Create educational fun activities. Create plans to ensure there will be continuous service and support throughout children's lives.
- need to know your cliental so we can gain their trust
- Build a larger building for the office of the Wet'suwet'en Child Development Centre so there will be more space and programs for more children eventually eliminate the need for wait lists and everyone will be included
- Reduction in "territorial" issues regarding who provides the services and ensure true partnerships with aboriginal and non aboriginal services
- A commitment from the program itself to make sure they are going to follow through with making culture and language a daily part of each day and service. A resource list of people who are willing to share their knowledge and time. So first we need to identify who in our community are the keepers of knowledge and know and practice the culture.

- More singing and drumming and playing cd's with our drumming. Have drum groups come in from other areas, make moccasins' do other cultural activities. We need to do more of that at every level of service. Get the parents involved and ask the parents what they say to their children in their language at home and get them to teach us so we can also say it to their children in their language at the centre.
- Funding needs to be made available – in many cases there is a small pot of money that many people are applying for
- An initiative to help each organization and community needs to be in place because it's hard to find money for proposal-based organizations – it's challenging and it takes a lot of time away from actually providing the services
- Once programs are funded, they need to have consistent, ongoing funding
- Children in foster care need to be able to take part in real aboriginal cultural activities from aboriginal coordinated services. Foster parents need to be trained on the culture of their foster child. Foster parent's homes need to have cultural resources in their homes like songs and books. Cultural sensitivity training needs to be mandatory. I think that if all organisations collaborate and work together to ensure that programs are run in a culturally relevant way
- Educating the leaders in the community about how important culture is. Combining generations to work with people who are running the child care programs. Educate the leaders and community that it is not a babysitting service. Modeling going out and doing the culture. For example if you want to weave a cedar hat go out and do it, be part of the program.

***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**

- Have a time in the feast when children are acknowledged and honoured
- Have mini feasts in the school system
- Stop shaming one and another and teaching shame
- Meld various cultures together and learn about others
- Community feast, family fun nights
- More Aboriginal culture in mainstream ECE programs
- Re-educating elders to integrate the knowledge of the past to the present (e.g. a long time ago people believed that children should be seen and not heard especially at a feast but how will our children learn their language or protocol if they are not allowed to speak or ask questions, or just be children which means they cannot be expected to sit quietly for really long periods of time without a break at feasts)
- More elder involvement (bring elders/general community as outreach workers)
- Community feast, family fun nights

### **Improved Model of Service Delivery**

- More drop-in programs are needed on the weekends
- Service provider discussion groups
- Improve networking
- Sharing resources
- Continuing of services: focus on service enhancement as opposed to competition
- Avoid service duplication
- Foster community buy-ins through social and education events
- Empowering families
- Inclusion of extended family
- Educate our leaders (municipal level) about what children and families need
  - More programs for all families
  - Encourage more parent involvement
  - Allow parents to stay home longer with their children (make it financially available, also have programs for parents/children to access if so choose for free)

### **Types of Services & Programs**

- More parenting programs
- Empower parents to become effective communicators
- Have everyone practice assertiveness skills once a week in a support group
- Have more bridging programs like finding your voice for mothers who have been in abusive relationships to help them to learn to break the cycle
- Create a toastmasters group on public speaking
- Have more supports for single parent families for everything
- Have self esteem workshops for parents, elders, children and all adults
- Life skills for parents with lots of role playing, example on being assertive and having healthy boundaries
- Have Kids Have Stress Too workshops to help children learn how to cope with stress they encounter in life

### **Funding**

- We're losing quality people to other fields so pay people who work in the human services field decent wages (i.e. group homes, childcare, elderly care, etc.) so that they stay in the field, have enthusiasm, and a passion for their work (if wages were higher in ECE more men would enter the field)

### **Question 5: Telephone Responses**

- The community needs to support and build up the self confidence of our families. Individuals need more encouragement and need to be told what they are doing right and acknowledged for what they can do well and what they like to do. Encouragement is for everybody, the children, parents, grandparents. Move the focus from the past to the present to move forward.

- We need ongoing and consistent funding to keep successful programs running. Also ongoing and consistent evaluations from participants to ensure top quality and efficiency of already running programs. Also maybe yearly group meetings of all programs and service providers to collaborate and discuss already running programs.
- Workshops and training are really important
- A lot of our people are in the healing stages – we need to continue to build them up in a positive manner once they have overcome the pain, then begin building on their strengths
- Because of the abuse that has happened in residential schools, it's important to see an Aboriginal or Métis person as the service provider
- We need outreach services to the grass roots, again because of the residential school system – some families don't even want to come into the office
- When providing workshops, we need to provide transportation to and from the workshops – child minding and food should also be made available
- We need more funding to keep programs going and more communication.
- We need to bring the existing services together and work as a team and make the families and children our focus and priority. We need to meet with other service providers and see where we can partner up to help our children and families. We need to meet face to face as it is important to make a connection.
- Use Chandler Park School to build a centre where children and families ( all cultures) feel safe and accepted and valued and all ( or most) of the support services are provided for the whole family.
- All services need to work together as a whole, providing information and support to one another.
- To keep families together by working with the whole family
- Develop a centre that signifies aboriginal culture and open it up to all who are interested in learning, dances, stories, drum making.
- Start doing more community building events.
- We need 5 day preschool and daycare programs which require participation from parents and families providing adults with workshops to help them move forward and be able to provide food so people can learn in their local community
- Front line workers and First Nations Organizations need to work as a team.
- I think that what needs to happen is that there should be affordable childcare available for infants, pre-schoolers and elementary kids. There are no spaces available for kids who have parents who work full-time. Spaces that are available are very expensive for parents who are not eligible for child care subsidy. There are no afterschool programs for elementary students either. Furthermore, there is a lack of affordable activities that families can engage in and spend time with their children in or so that children can meet other kids in their



communities. In order for families to thrive they need to feel safe and supported and they should feel like the community takes an interest into the well-being of their children.

- Ongoing programs running, no more pilot projects. We need a minimum of 3-5 year funding for programs that help our children and families. Programs that foster the social development of our children. Money to pay our staff respectfully or at least on par with the non aboriginal programs. Get our children out in the community to show what our program and culture is about.
- Educate schools, hospitals and RCMP about our history and who we are; break down the barriers. We need more programs like Seeds of Empathy to teach our children about feelings and empathy. More programs for families to socialize and have fun and eat together; then we can do the work that needs to be done. Money needs to be spent here, it is prevention.
- The community will need to take the lead as they know best of what their community needs are. One other thing that I would recommend is the training must be for community members but will need to work collectively to provide services required.
- Nobody seems to really know what each other is doing, our programs and the organisations need to work together better. The way government funds programs makes for competition and then people are afraid to work together. Funding needs to be done in a different way and for longer periods of time, more than one year for sure.
- More family support work in an intimate way, our family support workers need to be outreach and thus, we need to have the extra dollars for this. It means we need to work with families in a different way and this costs more money: transportation, food, extra visits.
- We need to find a way to measure children from 0-grade12 and we need to be able to share that information in many arenas; with parent permission of course. We need a data base that will help us effectively measure and provide supports for children. This will include mental health.
- There needs to be flexibility around transition from program to program and the transitions need to be interrelated and more supported. The support needs to be longer and more intense. Programs need to be population and need driven, not necessarily who is good at writing the proposals. The Friendship Centres are doing a good job at providing wrap around services, and we need this to be strengthened and enhanced.
- We need more training and support for our staff and all that they do.
- Very well trained ECE workers in our daycares. Have regular case management meetings with different programs that are closely involved in the communities
- We have so much that is there for families, we need to continually identify what it is that services and supports are actually doing and what are the actual outcomes. We need to continuously evaluate and reflect, look at the purpose again. As people change, the purpose changes – we need to redefine vision, goals, objectives.

- There needs to be a willingness to change how we deliver services. A willingness to look at ourselves as a community and how we work together. Ask ourselves are our strategies and delivery models effective? In order to effectively build on and enhance what is already there, we need to take a look at what is in front of us right now.
- Also, we need to make sure we identify whether all the stakeholders are involved in the (decision-making/planning) process. We need to ask ourselves before we move forward, do we have both the mainstream and aboriginal stakeholders involved? Who's missing at the table? Do we have Elders and aboriginal key stakeholders here who need to be here?
- Only Aboriginal people can speak to their needs.
- We need to keep instilling our teaching, and keep the program open and available to the families that really need it. And get the parents involved to let them know they are the first teachers, so they need language and cultural classes to learn the ways then pass the teaching onto their children.

## Desired Services:

- Increased counselling services for children who witness abuse; not just one counsellor for 60 children
- Counselling available in schools , liaison workers for parents who have children 0-6
- Have a First Nations counsellor available
- Have a child and youth mental health worker
- Aboriginal Head Start Centers in each community and expand it to reach more children and families as it is making a difference already and our children's marks are going up
- Aboriginal daycare
- **Universal access** to quality childcare experiences
- Continue or expand existing programs – more funding
- Unlimited access to Health and Dental (uninsured health benefits – more)
- Health and Wellness Centre
- More Head Starts and AIFDP
- Counselling, dental, prenatal, safe place, support
- Have more Parenting programs – Teaching Virtues
- Transportation needs to be made available so parents and families can get to appointments
- We need more speech therapists
- We need more aboriginal alcohol and drug counsellors to help keep our families healthier

- We need more education on budgeting and financial planning such as RRSPs , buying a home, stocks and bonds
- Outreach services for children
- More developmental outreach; therapy services, ASCD, SCD – more people and funding resources
- Start teaching these things at an early age: e.g. teach children to have vision boards so they can start envisioning a future. Teach parents to how to do a vision board
- New holistic health facility
- Access to proper health care professionals
- More support for social programming: poverty, violence, addictions, parenting support
- Teaching advocacy skills to parents
- Form a dads group – we need more fathers involved
- Empower parents to become effective communicators
- Have more bridging programs like finding your voice for mothers who have been in abusive relationships to help them to learn to break the cycle
- Create a toastmasters group on public speaking
- Have more supports for single parent families for everything
- Have self esteem workshops for parents, elders, children and all adults
- Life skills for parents with lots of role playing, example on being assertive and having healthy boundaries
- Have Kids Have Stress Too workshops to help children learn how to cope with stress they encounter in life

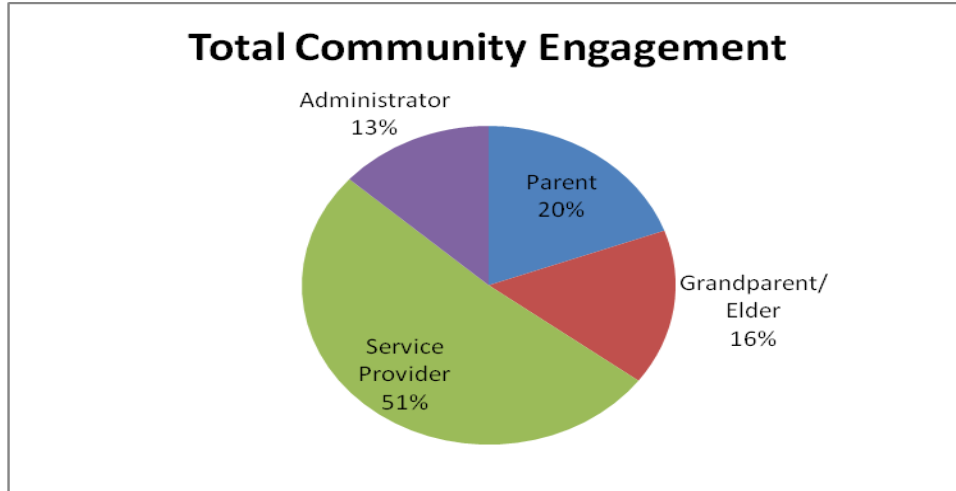
## Total # of Participants in Community Engagements: 216

# Completed with Parents: 42

# Completed with Grandparents/Elders: 34

# Completed with Service Providers: 111

# Completed with Administrators: 29

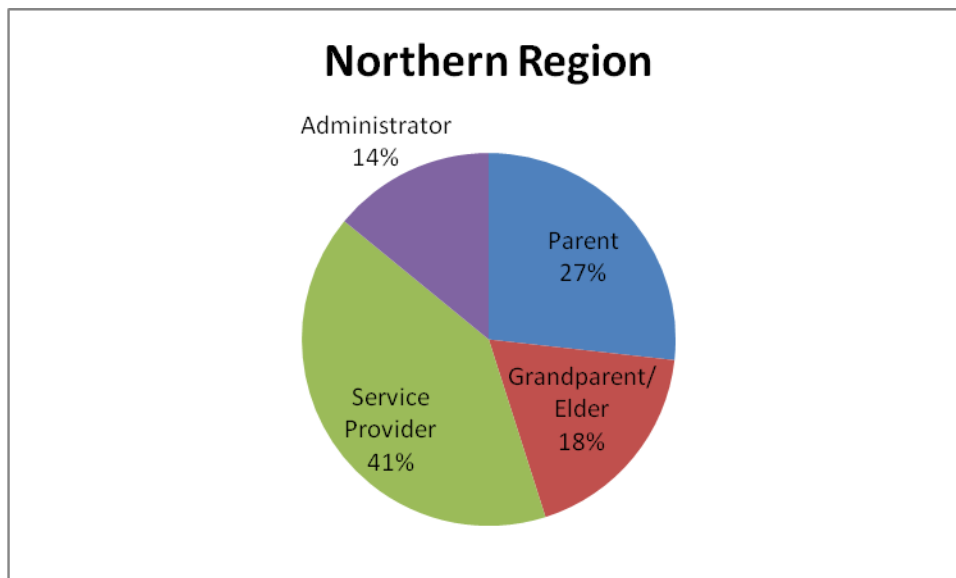


## Northern Region

November 17<sup>th</sup> Host: Kermode Friendship Society: Terrace

November 18<sup>th</sup> Host: Prince George Native Friendship Centre: Prince George

**Total # of participants: 71**



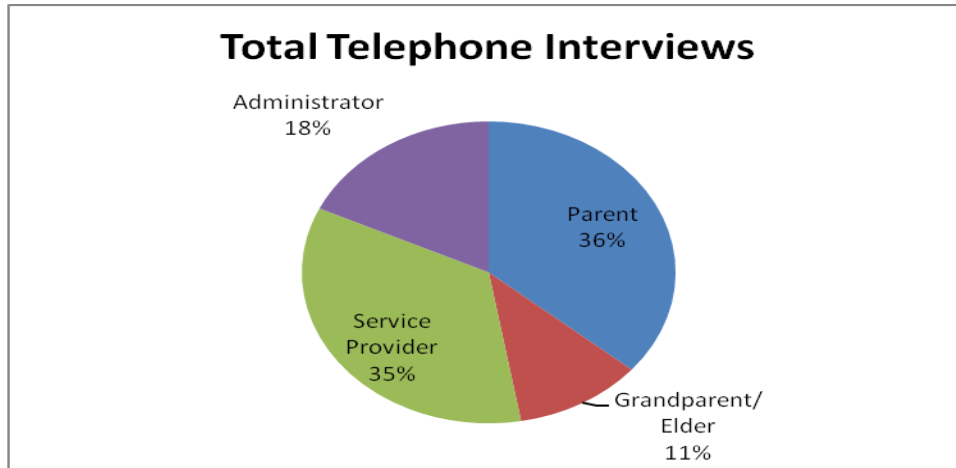
## Total # of Telephone Interviews completed: 72

# Completed with Parents: 26

# Completed with Grandparents/Elders: 8

# Completed with Service Providers: 25

# Completed with Administrators: 13



## Northern Region

Total # of participants: 21

Parent: 4

Grandparent/Elder: 1

Service Provider: 11

Administrator: 5

*\*Four individuals identified as Parent and Service Provider, and one as Parent and Administrator. By their request, they have been calculated here as Parent.*

