

Community Conversations

Edmonton – January 16, 2013



Participant Quotes

"We have to engage with people in the community who have passion in this work and keep walking together in this journey."

"I don't think I can fully understand another culture, but what I can and should do is respect the differences that do exist."

"There is a negative lens through which people view children's services. There are many good workers who have a profound positive effect on families."

"We need to provide more mentorship – an Elder or someone in the community for every child in care to look up to."

"I want to be respected and understood for who I am – an Indigenous woman. I am very proud!"

"We are trying to create pathways out of poverty through collective impact."

"Change takes all of us working together with good communication."

A Space for Change...

Edmonton and Area Child and Family Service Authority (CFSA) and the **Aboriginal Engagement and Strategy** division together hosted a community conversation in Edmonton with people from the city and surrounding communities.



The event began on January 15 with a traditional pipe ceremony led by Elder George Brerfton. The

purpose of the ceremony was to bless the event and to ensure all who attend the conversation come with an open heart and groundedness to discuss the very serious problem of the over-representation of Aboriginal children in the child intervention system.

The conversation began on the morning of January 16th with eighty eight people attending. Elders, parents, youth, foster parents and people from the fields of law enforcement, education, elected officials, community organizations, business and various levels of government, came to share their stories and perspectives on how we can better support children, youth and families in Alberta.

There was significant discussion about the complexity of this issue and the challenges in creating and sustaining large-scale change; however, many of the solutions to this centered around systems and people working better together, building relationships through trust, respect and open hearts and minds.

It is always an honour to spend time with Elders, and there were several in attendance at this conversation. Participants were blessed by Elder George Brerfton, and Elder Elmer Ghostkeeper shared with us some of his wisdom in the afternoon. Elder Gilman Cardinal reminded us that even in challenging situations, humour is not only welcome, it is therapeutic!





Survey Responses

"We need to be courageous! Courage requires strength. Strength requires leadership. Leadership requires vision. Vision requires courage!"

"There is so much more work to do, but we are on the right track."

"Let's create more interaction at the community level to share knowledge about culture, treaty, customs, beliefs etc."

"There are many promising practices in the community."

"Spread the knowledge; correct the stereotypes; do not accept racism - correct those that resort to it. Build relationships, influence positive change. Be Courageous!"

"Diversity of views & experiences. Wonderful opportunities will come from these insights."

Email the Aboriginal Engagement and Strategy Division at: HS.CommunityConversations@gov.ab.ca

What We Heard – Themes & Quotes

These themes have been mostly consistent with what has emerged from other conversations across the province. The most significant difference is the importance of decolonizing systems.

Relationship-based practice

- "There is more focus on relation-based practice. For example, Police officers are building tips with youth – in doing so they are building relationships with the youth."
- "Relation-based practice will be the key to doing things differently and will lead to better results."

Decolonizing systems

- "I want to see governments and organizations become less siloed and work together for effective, efficient service delivery."
- "It's a constant course correction; many small corrections can correct a complex problem."

Capacity building and prevention

- "Provide holistic supports to work with families and communities to build their own capacity."
- "Really encouraged by the success of wraparound services. We need more of these types of models; bringing all the necessary supports into the home."

Recognition of Aboriginal history

- "I would love for people to start seeing Aboriginal teachings and way of life as forward-thinking concepts; to see these taught and encouraged as good processes."
- "We need to better educate and create awareness of our history. Canadians need to know about the real stories."

Indigenous ways of being

- "Working on the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal people in Human Services. Elders have told us that hiring aboriginal people is the answer. Hiring educated Aboriginal people creates opportunities for them to work in child intervention where they bring their competency plus their upbringing, experiences and culture."
- "There are two different world views and we can learn so much from each other."

Survey Results – What You Told Us

At the end of each conversation we asked participants to fill out our survey, sharing with us their thoughts and feelings on how the event went. Seventy people completed the surveys for a response rate of 80%.

We heard from participants that the event went extremely well. More than 94% of the respondents felt: the environment in which the conversation took place was respectful, they were given the opportunity to voice their opinion, their input was valued, the conversation was meaningful and that they have a greater understanding of the issues.

In addition to multiple choice questions, we asked participants several open-ended questions. When asked, "what new questions emerged for you?" people often asked, "how can we maintain momentum and keep the conversation going?" We also asked, "was there anything in today's session that made you think or feel differently about something?" Most people said that hearing from many different perspectives helped increase their own understanding of the issues.

We also wanted to know, what actions will you personally undertake to create change. Nearly half of all respondents said one of two things:

- They would work to build or strengthen existing relationships; and
- They would do their part to increase a shared understanding and awareness of this complex issue of Aboriginal over-representation in the child intervention system.

All of this valuable information will be put together with past and future conversations to help set the course to improve outcomes for Aboriginal children, youth, families and communities.