

### Lateral Violence

describes the organized, harmful behaviours that individuals do to each other collectively as part of an oppressed group: within families, within organizations and within

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### What Took Place

The Aboriginal Policy and Community Engagement Division hosted a two-day community conversation focused on the subject of **lateral violence**.

We started early on the first day with Elder George Bretton leading us through a pipe ceremony and prayer. Sharon Steinhauer and Elder George Bretton then presented an overview of dialogue circles. Following this, Dr. Patti LaBoucane-Benson imparted her wisdom and research on lateral violence in Aboriginal communities.

With all this information, we needed some time to reflect, and what better way than with a hot lunch!

Following lunch, Dr. Redekop presented his overview of lateral violence, incorporating world-wide examples.

With so much information – much of it a new way of thinking about an old problem – we moved the focus to the tables for groups to discuss one question: *What do I think and feel about what I heard today?* One person at each table took notes of the conversation and we captured the **common responses** (see below).

One interesting theme was that this was new information for both people who had little experience with the various forms of lateral violence and for those whose lives were deeply affected. Perhaps one of the most positive outcomes of the day was hearing people say, "Now that I can put a name to this problem, I can start to heal from past wounds. I can help others move forward." What a blessing!



A prayer from Elder George closed the first day of the event.

On the second day we listened to youth, heard the wisdom of the Elders and conversed in small groups discussing personal spheres of influence and how we can individually create space for change.

#### Extra credit!

Often it is difficult to take a full two days out of our busy schedules. To ease this burden, we partnered with NorQuest College to provide certification for **six Category "A" credits** for continuing education for registered social workers who attended the full event.

### What We Heard – Common Responses

- This was new information for many participants – a new vocabulary or language so the issue can be discussed. Many had lived experience dealing with lateral violence, but could not name/identify it. Through this came the awareness that there exists an inter-generational transfer of lateral violence.
- People discussed the need to move forward and heal now that we have identified the issue.
- There was increased curiosity and new questions arose.
- Often discussed the recognition of personal responsibility to reduce lateral violence.
- We need to work collectively, and build relationships to address this complex issue.
- When people discussed how each person can create change, the most common responses were around affecting change in their community, family, work life, personal life and affecting change by educating others.

## Survey Responses

### The best part of the dialogue was...?

*"The actual conversations got the most meaning out of this."*

*"The warriors' testimony to empowerment. The transformation from brokenness to wellness."*

*"The two presentations on day one were very informative and thought provoking."*

### What new questions emerge for you?

*"How can we move forward on reducing this issue?"*

*"How will we work differently for our families and communities?"*

*"What am I doing myself that could be observed as lateral violence. How do we use this language for young people to recognize it to address it?"*

### Was there anything that made you think or feel differently?

*"My awareness about lateral violence has been raised."*

*"The information I received on lateral violence helped me understand experiences in my own life."*

*"A feeling of hope."*

Email the Aboriginal Policy and Community Engagement division at:

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## Survey Results – What You Told Us

At the end of the second day of the event, we asked participants to fill out our survey, sharing with us their thoughts and feelings on how the event went. Of the nearly 80 people who attended the two day event, 38 completed the survey. We want to thank the many people who took the time to respond.

Remarkably, 100 per cent of survey respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' to four of the five multiple choice questions (see chart below for multiple choice responses)!

In addition to multiple choice questions, we asked participants several open-ended questions. Through these, we learned that this was indeed an important event to host. Overwhelmingly, people could relate to lateral violence and wanted to do something to reduce it:

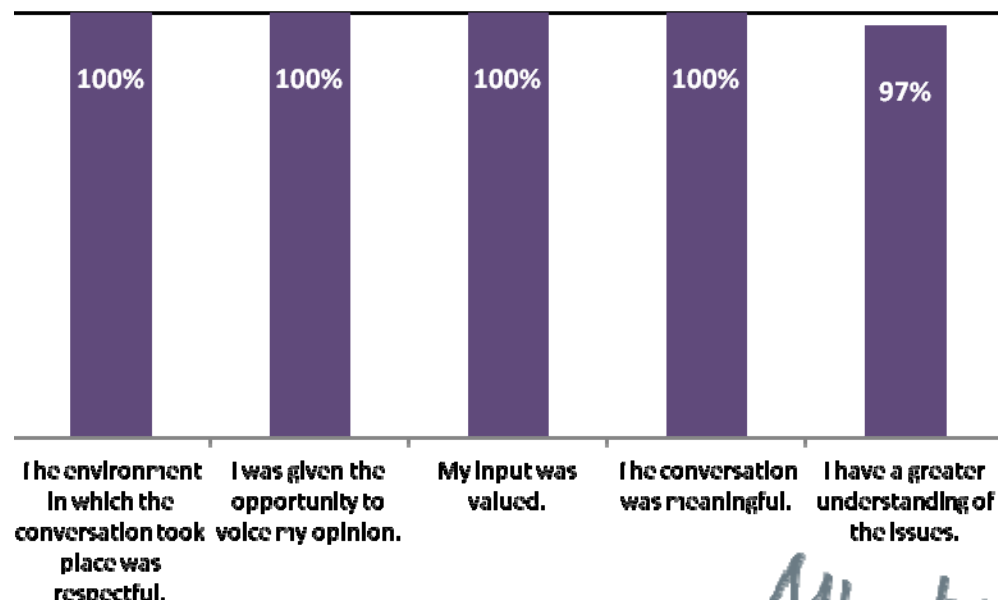
- "The presentation and discussions confirmed my old beliefs on lateral violence."
- "I will view lateral violence as something that I must diligently work at to prevent from occurring."

We also wanted to know how this event influenced or changed people to act differently at work and in their personal lives. Common responses were that people had a much greater awareness of lateral violence and how their actions could contribute to, or reduce the impact. Others said they were now committed to educate others:

- "I will dedicate a portion of my presentation on the negative effects of lateral violence."

We also want to recognize the impact this event had in creating a demand for change. When asked, "What new questions emerge for you?", people overwhelmingly responded by asking how can we put this knowledge into action. We do not yet have the exact answer to this question, but we do know that by engaging diverse groups of people with many different perspectives and harnessing the collective wisdom and action of these people, we will find a way to create positive social change.

### Percentage of Participants who Strongly Agreed or Agreed with the following statements



Alberta