

Increasing Safety for Aboriginal Women

Jan 21/22, 2014 Gathering Report



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Overview of the Gathering

Increasing Safety for Aboriginal Women Project, IAAW CEO Rachelle Venne

The primary purpose of this two-day gathering is to provide solution-based and collaborative recommendations for increasing safety for Aboriginal children. Key messages:

Status quo is not okay

- It's not only for women who are currently living high risk, but also for those at-risk and vulnerable. Prevention work critical, Listen to the women;
- Everyone has a part to play. Ask yourself what you can do.

Importance of building the relationship with women in the community

- Feel part of the community, involved in the decisions that affect them, build safe and welcoming homes;
- Municipalities and governments (including FN/Metis) have to be open to feedback, and create an environment for safe and constructive feedback;
- It is not just a women's issue, an Aboriginal issue, or a government issue.

Complex and diverse community

- Its not easy, pilots okay, but better results come if they are within long term initiatives;
- Get creative in getting help to women;
- Use existing supports - Planners, Community Engagement Specialists, Consultants, Resources, Facilities.

Panel Discussion: Positive Advancements What has been recently implemented?

Cst Violet MacFarlane, RCMP KARE

Cst. MacFarlane is one of two members assigned to the Pro Active Team KARE. They expanded from within Edmonton to across Alberta. The Pro Active Team's number one mandate is prevention. Some activities the team works on include:

- Expanding the Registration of Vulnerable Persons from Edmonton to across Alberta;
- Taking part in various interagency meetings, both locally and provincially;
- Working with youth and women in corrections to help them better transition once leaving corrections;
- Providing personal safety, education and awareness sessions;
- Preventing women from getting entrenched in high-risk lifestyles by going to home communities and providing options;
- RCMP KARE Pro Active team is spearheading the Safe Communities Initiative in conjunction with First Nation Communities, local social support and other partners. Through consulting with the community, several key topics of education and awareness will be outlined and addressed. Each community event will be unique to that community, as their concerns may vary. The first community to participate was Fort Chipewyan. Topics identified to be addressed were: gang violence, domestic violence, addictions, human trafficking and vulnerable persons.

Cpl. Lea Turner, RCMP KARE

Project KARE started out as a homicide task force and has since expanded its mandate. The team had launched a number of proactive initiatives, all on a part-time basis, while project KARE as the main focus. Because of successes, they now have a full time missing persons unit whose main objective is to review all of the missing persons files. The creation of KARE has created central oversight and as a result, the unit has seen very positive results.

Some key activities include:

- An initiative that gathers historical missing persons files across Alberta. The files are scanned, collated and digitized into an electronic database to help with analysis and ultimately to identify missing persons;
- Launched a missing persons website;
- Launched a website for Project KARE: www.kare.ca
- Promotes Native Women's Association of Canada's Publications:
 - Community Resource Guide: What Can I Do to Help the Families of Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls?

- The councils are action oriented. Everyone knows the issues; it is time to take action;
- To date there are a draft terms of reference, and established subcommittees for education, entrepreneurship, family support, safety & justice, health & wellness;
- There are 23 women on the First Nations Council, 13 on the Metis Council;
- It is in its early stages, with the first subcommittee conference calls this month. There will be 2 meetings per year as a full council, where ideas and proposals are brought to full council for discussion, and then the outcomes brought forward to government;
- More information on the councils can be found at: <http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=3552471A4D81A-C496-0D97-C0C881353154D3F4>

Tracey Makokis, Alberta Justice and Solicitor General

Works with the Alberta Victims of Crimes Initiatives, working with victims of crime. Part of her role is to ensure services are culturally relevant. The role was developed as a result of a consultation and a recommendation for specialized services and support developed for Aboriginal people. The services they provide include:

- Dedicated Program Liaison for Aboriginal and Isolated Communities: providing capacity building to support rural communities, creating dialogue, information sharing, sharing promising practices and being a key contact for stakeholders;
- Aboriginal Victims of Crime Outreach Specialist Initiative: to provide victims of crime outreach services to 12 targeting First Nation and Métis communities who were identified as underserved. This has a 5 year mandate until 2014;
- Victim Support positions have been funded to assist victims of crime. These positions ensure that victims of crime have information, crisis support and referrals, and to assist them through the criminal justice process;
- Hold an annual aboriginal awareness event;
- Aboriginal Module in Victim Advocate E-Learning: Victim advocates in Alberta must be certified in order to work with victim service units. A module in the diversity section is dedicated to Aboriginal people to ensure an understanding of how history has impacted Aboriginal victims of crime;
- Cree translation initiative that ensures all Cree speakers understand they have rights to service. They are also working on a Stoney translation (DVD);
- Strategies for Safety Booklet developed by others in Justice & Solicitor General: designed to provide safety planning information to professionals

and front line responders who work with people impacted by family violence:

https://www.solqps.alberta.ca/programs_and_services/victim_services/Pages/MissingPersons.aspx

- Link for Help for Victims of Crime:
www.victims.alberta.ca
- In the middle of a 2 year missing and murdered Aboriginal women initiative involving community engagement - asking for feedback on how we can support that, what feedback is needed, how to help families.

Question and Answer Session:

Q: EPS/RCMP – What kind of training do officers receive with respect to Aboriginal people?

- EPS – To date, we talk to officers about cultural safety, history, how this all affects Aboriginal people. By the end of March 2014, all front line staff will be trained. From there, all staff will receive training.
- RCMP – We offer weeklong training sessions to help to switch from reactive to more collaborative policing. We are working on changing our policing approach.

Q: What is the process for reporting a teen runaway?

- RCMP – depends on when they were last seen – depends on which police are covering – go to local police detachment – file is generated and a file is launched

Q: When there is a story in the newspaper, why is it so small, if reported at all?

- There are 1500 – 1800 missing persons files per year. Very few of them get media attention;
- Media looks at things as they happen – a missing file that is 3 weeks old is 'old news' to media;
- Racism and stereotyping is a factor – some missing people are judged and not given as much attention;
- Police do get more airplay now when we send out notices. These generate tweeting, then tips – there are positives that come with the relationship with the media.

Q: Where does funding come from for the Women's Economic Security Councils?

- Within Aboriginal Relations, there are funds set aside specifically for women's issues.
- There are funding sources all across government – other ministries have approached them, which shows that the province is paying attention.

Q: Is there any discussion on gathering missing persons familial DNA:

- The collection of dental records, DNA, etc. are considered best practices
- If the investigation is continuing and the person is missing after other procedures we will do so.

Q: Is there any kind of programs, counseling available to children of missing or murdered women?

- A Financial Benefit Program is available only once someone is confirmed as a victim of crime.

Q: Is the issue/subject of racism part of cultural training?

- The EPS provides the same training for all ethnicities, to help officers to be aware of their biases. We are working to make us better at policing a diverse community.

Q: Are there FOIP barriers when working with missing women?

- EPS – FOIP has a caveat that exempts law enforcement
- If someone tries to get information on unsolved crimes, police are unable to hand over information to the family until the crime is solved. It can be difficult for families because this information is not available to them.

Q: Has there been an analysis of the similarities of the women going missing?

- We are engaging those communities to see if there are contributing factors, see if we can get answers and are also drawing from existing literature. We expect to roll that up in a year.

Q: How would someone find out about a missing family member if they were not a primary contact?

- A best practice is to have one designated point of contact. It is up to that family member to communicate to friends and family

Q: What is your relationship with law enforcement in the USA?

- The US has a similar database that we can use.
- There is also a website - www.namus.gov - where people can do their own searches.

Q: What kind of services does the police have around domestic violence?

- EPS has a designated domestic offenders section. Police have developed a partnership so that social workers work with police to help women access services such as housing and shelters
- Alberta Justice: has Victim Services. Staff are trained to assist with domestic violence. They will help with referrals, court preparation and specialized support. Some places have specialized domestic violence court days to further assist women. Some police detachments also have dedicated domestic violence teams.
- A big challenge is that there is less funding on reserve, but that issue is being worked on now.

- Police need to build trust; for example, someone may be afraid to go to the police because they have a warrant. We need to make people willing to go to the police.

Q: What if there are no remains but we know there was foul play?

- Victim services is offered to people
- It's not necessary to have a body to have a homicide case – there are cases where there are no bodies but charges can be laid.

Q: What would be your perfect network of people and resources to no one goes missing, and how do we build trust within that network?

- Communication, starting with the initial complaint – Victim Services is a best practice;
- Increased engagement of social services: having a central repository so people could access available resources;
- Develop a comprehensive communication fan out with social services agencies when someone is reported missing;
- To develop trust so that people will not be afraid to tell the full story when making a report.

Guest Speaker: Roy Louis

Mr. Louis is from the Samson Cree Nation. He spoke about the historical relationship between First Nations and the RCMP. He shared his experience to provide ways to build relationships between police and Aboriginal people. Key messages included:

- The RCMP has a historical relationship with First Nations. RCMP were witnesses to the signing of Treaties 6, 7 & 8;
- People in First Nation communities are taught to fear and hide from police. This stems in part from when children were apprehended and taken to residential schools.
- This fear of the RCMP is still entrenched within communities and the challenge for both sides to build a more trusting and respectful relationship;
- As First Nations people, we can invite RCMP members into communities, such as ceremonies and feasts. It may be difficult to do so, but is a key to building relationships;
- As police members, if you hear about a ceremony, that is your invitation – go to these events and get to know community members. RCMP needs to understand and use protocol such as tobacco and sweet grass.
- Developing the trust is key. Trust will open up the community;
- Respect has to be mutual otherwise nothing can happen.

Guest Speaker: Mother of Nina Courtepatte, Peacha Atkinson

Ms. Atkinson shared her experiences of when her 13 year old daughter, Nina Courtepatte, was found murdered. The incident received a great deal of media coverage, with some of it being quite critical towards Ms. Atkinson. She shared her experiences in hopes of helping other parents move through the process, and to help improve how authorities treat Aboriginal parents:

- When the event occurred, both RCMP and medical examiners responded very well. RCMP provided pamphlets of services. But initially, she did not have the time or energy to follow up because the grief was too great;
- Social services came to Ms. Atkinson's house soon after her daughter's murder, trying to apprehend her other children. They tried to force her into services that she did not need or want. Instead of providing her with the help she asked for, they focused on trying to apprehend her other children, which she refused to allow;
- Throughout this time, her other two children were having difficulties, but she wasn't able to access resources;
- She also had to work full time throughout, and is only now able to start the grieving process.

Recommendations:

- Provide more counseling sessions through Victim Services. Currently, only a set number are funded;
- Have family members of victims meet with youth;
- Extend the eligibility date for a new income support grant available for parents of missing or murdered children. The incident must have taken place on or after January 1, 2013. This date should be changed, as parents are still grieving years after, and it sometimes takes years before being ready for the grieving process. (Link to the grant: <http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/sc/pmmc/index.shtml>).

Discussion: Improving Supports to the Families

Keith Laboucan, APTN

- There is only one reporter for Alberta, and are therefore stretched very thin resource-wise;
- If you have a story to share, contact APTN to make them aware of the issue;
- For mainstream media, issue press releases at strategic times to get more coverage and get the media's attention, such as: anniversaries of disappearances, birthdays of the women, or for vigils.

Bret McCann, McCann Family

Mr. McCann shared his family's strategies for reaching out to the media and for engaging the public in a search ever since his parents went missing in Alberta in 2010. Many of these strategies could be adapted and applied for missing Aboriginal women and girls:

- Created a Facebook page, "Help find our parents" – which attracted 35,000 members in a short time
- Held a candlelight vigil in front of city hall
- Poster blitz – 100 people showed up to put up posters along highways and in stores
- Held a press conference to kick off a fundraiser for a reward – mayor and Crime Stoppers participated. Turned out to have a \$60,000 reward, which received extensive news coverage
- Talked to hunting stores and licensing businesses and provided a poster to be given out with every hunting license in the area
- Family members conducted searches on quads
- Held meetings with Alberta Sustainable Development (ASRD), tracked areas to search using maps provided by ASRD
- Sent a bulk mail out to all residences in the area with a poster asking people to check their property
- Held a media presentation with RCMP in front of one of the billboards
- Presentation at a senior citizens Christmas lunch with RCMP, Crime Stoppers and media
- Made a contact list for media – invited media by email to attend events
- Recorded audio messages aired on local radio stations
- July 2011 – anniversary of parents wedding held a memorial open to public

Results and observations:

- Was able, through the media, to keep the search in the public eye
- Someone was charged, trial is starting April 2014
- Were able to personalize our plight
- Emailed media to come to events

- Enlisted Crimestoppers, Mayor of St. Albert, prominent citizens
- Involved the community as much as possible
- Never publically expressed frustration with the RCMP
- Always available for the media, never said no

Rhonda Fiddler, Regina Police Service Victim Services Unit (Counseling)

Since January 1, 2012, there are 3 Missing Persons Liaisons Saskatchewan. The team recognized a huge gap for victims and family members. To respond, they looked into best practices around the world, and created a model for Saskatchewan. This model includes:

- A Family Toolkit that captures all information families need. The team doesn't just hand the kit over, but goes through the kit in person;
- The family decides how much we meet with them and what the contact will look like;
- The unit hold group meetings throughout the year to meet with an entire family so the family gets a group update, which takes pressure off of the primary contact;
- A new initiative being worked on now is specialized counseling in partnership with an organization that specializes in death loss. The counseling will be specific to those who have missing family members. Counseling is provided at no cost. It is long term and available to all people, not just blood ties;
- Currently asking families for input, including options other than one-on-one counseling. A challenge is to find counselors who are willing to take on this different model, as there are many unknowns.

Leslie Block, Leslie Block Counseling

Leslie Block has a psychological practice and often works with Aboriginal people. He is often called upon to support families especially those facing loss and ambiguous loss (as when a family member goes missing). He spoke about the importance of building on cultural realities while also using contemporary psychological approaches in helping people. He spoke on helping the family through the pain of the search to the pain of facing the actual loss, from an outer search of the land to an inner search for closure and find meaning.

Developed a counseling practice that goes into Aboriginal communities and works with ceremony and sharing circles. He will be holding sessions and healing work in central Alberta and is optimistic that we are moving towards healing through a sacred journey.

- Works in the area of "ambiguous loss," such as someone in a coma, family members in addictions and missing people;
- The healing journey does not end when a body is found;

- Work also needs to be done on disputes that arise among family members and with the guilt that occurs, especially among the youth.

Csp Cindy Provost, Calgary Police Service (CPS)

The CPS has had a serving Aboriginal Liaison position for 29 years. Currently there are 9 others in the unit. The CPS works with education and crime prevention. The Aboriginal Liaison worker supports crime reduction – and only resorts to enforcement as they move along the continuum. They work in partnership with agencies when answering have calls.

- Treaty 7 Elders sent Calgary a teepee for youth to use when they come to the city. Her vision is to encompass the youth and provide positive influence;
- Developed an Aboriginal justice camp for officers. This involves 4 days of experiential learning with ceremony. This has really helped build understanding;
- We need to create places to celebrate with food, song and dance. We have held round dances;
- Keys to reducing crime are:
 - Closing the labour market gaps
 - First Nations education that is holistic, experiential, rooted in language & culture, and an integration of First Nations and western knowledge.

Question and Answer Session:

Q: Brett - how were the billboard and poster costs covered?

- A family friend was able to build a poster using .jpg and was able to make a billboard. They cost \$600 to make. We used contacts and asked around to get lumber to build the billboards and farmers agreed to post the billboards on their land. It all totaled about \$2000, plus our time.

Q: Rhonda – How do you get your referrals? Is there a referral protocol? What happens for those living outside of the city?

- There is a referral protocol because we can't respond to all calls;
- The missing persons cases has to have major crimes involvement, be suspicious in nature, and there must be concerned family members who agree to work with us;
- We provide training across the province among those who respond to calls. We also provide consultation and support to them as they move through the process with families.

Q: Cindy – what does the CPS do for Aboriginal recruitment?

- We start with education programs, K to grade 3, and expose and introduce children to police officers in a positive way. We would like to expand this up to grade 11.
- We are also involved in an initiative with the Red Cross called Teepee of Courage, which reaches out to youth in communities.
<http://www.redcross.ca/where-we-work/in-canada/alberta/events/tipi-transfer-a-tipi-of-courage-event>

Q: Rhonda – who funds Greystone?

- Most funding come from the province, but they also access grants and donations.

Q: Have the police every used mediums to solve crimes?

- In Saskatchewan police will speak to mediums and will investigate, as they are willing to follow any leads that could help.

Q: Is there cultural sensitivity training with the medical examiners office?

- Not in Edmonton, but this may be a gap.

Guest Speaker: Teresa Strong – Creating Safety for Women

Teresa shared her story about her past, the steps she took to turn her life around, and the importance of having people there to help her. Her message is that police and social services can help change people's lives, and that there is hope for everybody.

- EPS Inspector Dan Jones had offered to help years earlier, and she remembered that. She reached out to him when she was ready, years later. He was later a contact for her parole;
- Her path to healing took a while, and more than one attempt. She needed support throughout, and for people to believe in her even when she was moving backwards, or back into negative directions;
- While in prison, she worked with social services for a plan to get her children back. She was given a list of conditions, and went into programming with the goal of being able to see her children when she was released;
- With hard work, she was able to meet the conditions laid out, and move her life in a positive direction;
- Teresa now works with Métis Child and Family Services now giving hope to other women;
- Her message is to show faith in people, as they need to know people have faith in them.

Opportunities for Making Change

Discussion: First Nation and Métis Leaders Involvement in Making Changes

Chief Cam Alexis, Assembly of First Nation (AFN) Regional Chief, Alberta

Chief Alexis acknowledged and thanked all of the front line workers, police force and KARE unit. As a former police officer, he has first hand experience of life on the streets. He currently holds the AFN national portfolio for Justice and Policing.

From this perspective, these are a number of key issues in his community that need to be addressed:

- Missing and murdered women
- Gangs and human trafficking
- Drug trafficking and the use and abuse of prescription drugs, which carry on into urban centres
- Education
- Missing men and boys
- Poverty
- Racism
- Housing on reserve is so limited that people move out of the community to find housing and run into unethical landlords
- All of these issues are linked to a lack of Treaty implementation

Actions that we need to take:

- The AFN is partnering with Amnesty International and the United Nations to deal with the missing persons issue;
- A public enquiry must be held;
- The criminal code must be strengthened to go after johns;
- ASIRT – Chiefs made a resolution to assign a full time Aboriginal person to the ASIRT team to ensure our files are being dealt with to our satisfaction.

Chief Steve Courtoreille

Chief Courtoreille is committed is to look after his own community, then spanning out from there. He is committed to the issue of missing and murdered women. It is important to provide a safe home for women in the community. He identified housing as a major issue in the community. He recommends the following actions:

- Empower women in our communities;
- Teach our children to respect one another and keep them involved in school;
- Restorative justice has worked well in his community and should be more widely implemented (for example, people caught up in prescription drugs);
- Building a trust fund in the community.

Chief Rose Laboucan

Chief Laboucan identified two major issues linked to missing and murdered women. The first is racism, in that Aboriginal women do not receive fair treatment. The second is that children in care are not looked after properly. She identified actions that we need to take:

- Parenting is a key component to resolving missing and murdered women. Parenting will help kids with options. Helping families get their kids into sports and hockey, for example, will give kids a sense of belonging. They have to know that someone loves them;
- Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada need to de-colonize themselves;
- A public enquiry needs to be held on missing and murdered women in Canada;
- We need to do a better job to protect children in care;
- Recently Prime Minister Harper signed bilateral agreements in Israel – he should be doing the same thing in Canada with First Nations and the province;
- Every woman needs to respect herself and remain true to who they are. We need to tell women that they can go talk to others in their community.

Question and Answer Session:

Q: What are strategies that are implemented within your community as prevention, given that a lot of the break down starts in First Nation communities?

Chief Alexis:

- Youth are offered a 25 week life skills program, especially important given that young people are who are having children;
- We also help them understand that the treaty card doesn't always follow them off-reserve, and that not all services are available once they leave the community.

Chief Courtourelle:

- Parents have developed a PTA group made up of parents, who have become very involved in the school;
- We need to speak the truth to our youth, and empower them;

- We need to give youth life skills training so they can thrive when leaving for jobs (in camps, for example).

Q: What is your hope for how a national enquiry would be useful and impactful?

Chief Laboucan:

- One simple message that needs to get out to the public is that we are human beings and that we have a right to live.

Chief Alexis:

- The Robert Pickton situation in British Columbia needs to be looked at in terms of gaps and communications. This must include Corrections Canada as they have a large role to play.

Building Recommendations for Change

Discussion: How can we get the information and resources to those that need it? How can we better connect?

Facilitated Table Discussion & Report Back

The following is a compilation of the brainstorm session that each table conducted:

Prevention: work with women and youth before they leave communities and/or run away from home

- Youth don't know the risks – educate them before they run away
- Develop a road show and go the communities (similar to this gathering)
- Provide a women's resource centre in every First Nation and Métis community
- Use Teleconference and Skype to create an ongoing dialogue with women
- Provide information through schools and bring in Elders
- Provide information during high school orientation at the beginning of each school year
- Include Indigenous studies in schools
- Provide Literacy training, financial literacy training and life skills training to youth
- Have youth workers go to schools to speak to students
- Reach out to ASETS program staff in communities
- Start with school age children and provide personal safety awareness

When people arrive in cities:

- Organize a welcoming ceremony
- Develop a settlement program
- Provide information on how to get around the city
- Provide every vulnerable person with free cell phones

Identify Champions

- Find movers and shakers in the community to act as champions
- Identify people in practicums
- Target in the right areas – for example – a bus driver who talks to passengers – start targeting people
- Court workers

Transportation

- Transportation to get to the agencies
- Get a bus to transport people from place to place

Have information available

- 1-on-1 group support - help with filling out applications, going to appointments
- Round dances
- Billboards
- Public washrooms
- AA meetings
- Need to reach out to people in corrections
- Within shelters
- Small communities
- Bingos
- Walk in clinics
- Greyhound bus station
- Cards with information – youth shelter
- Create a safety plan
- Food banks
- Emergency rooms
- Build on the capacity of libraries
- Provide take away cards
- Capitalize on Homeless Connect
- Install emergency phones

Communications

- Social media
- Advocacy with media to get the story out
- 24/7 hotline
- Indigenous TED Talks
- Websites
- Radio ads sponsored by industry
- Inner city billboards (back of bathroom doors)

Centralize Agencies

- Have people with credibility
- Ideally a one-stop shop
- Corrections – corrections transition team – providing them with information before they are released – hold circles.
- Newsletters in first nations communities
- Moccasin telegraph
- Working with front line staff
- Workshops and conferences for staff to share information
- Create a phone app with information, track women at risk – create 2 way information
- Centralize information
- Awareness walks
- Cultural enrichment

- Hostel model where youth could go in the city
- Compendium of services from Lethbridge to Fort McMurray
- Watch your language! Our messaging to women and children needs to be respectful and welcoming – move to kind, respectful, positive language in our documents developed by agencies
- Work with staff
- Find a way to deal with the turnover at Child and Family Services
- Build a relationship with Child and Family Services so women can access resources without fear of apprehension
- Create networks to other moving parts
- Address jurisdictional issues – Federal/Provincial/Municipal/Aboriginal – there is an existing memorandum of coordination?
- Bring agencies to places (Bissell)

Learn from these women

- Learn from women accessing programs
- Where do these women go? Have agencies go to them

Inform and Educate

- Curriculum in schools
- Our history is important and needs to be taught in all schools
- Educate non aboriginal people

Action Planning and Breakout Sessions

Over the two days, the group divided into breakout sessions to brainstorm opportunities, share best practices and build recommendations for next steps.

Routing Vulnerable Towards Housing Resources

The organizations operate on the premise that housing is a right. Each of the organizations provided an overview of the services their organizations offer (for details of the services, refer to the links provided):

Issue:

- We have big gaps in housing for women;
- The plan to prevent homelessness is multi-faceted. Housing First programs only one part of the solution. Not everyone can get into the program;
- Programs are not able to meet the needs of the community – programs target specific areas. Homelessness rates fluctuates currently down 23% but will probably go up again;
- It is difficult to design prevention programs;
- According to the 10 year plan to end homelessness, about 10,000 need permanent, supported housing.
- There are 55,000 people who are at risk of homelessness and need supports. Homeward Trust can assist 300 – 400 per year. Of those 300-400:
 - 64% = chronically homeless
 - 46% = Aboriginal
 - Median age = 44
 - 48/58% ratio female/male
 - More women are accessing programming (proportionally)
- 80% of Homeward Trust participants retain their housing;

Programs currently in place:

- Homeward Trust Edmonton: <http://homewardtrust.ca/programs/housing-development.php>
- Bent Arrow Nikihk Housing:
<http://bentarrow.ca/programs-and-services/housing/nikihk-housing-first/>
- E4C Crossroads:
<http://e4calberta.org/programs-services/homeless-supports/>
- HEP funding started 6 years ago and went from \$7 million dollars to \$70 million dollars;

Additional steps we need to take:

- We need to explore partnerships to share the work, divvy up portions, ongoing/wrap around support;
- Need to have a conversation in the community: Who we can help and can't help everybody;
- Women recently released from prison should start the intake/criteria screening a month before release. We need to help these women get housing referrals.
- Inconsistency in messaging from referral agencies is a problem. How do we fix this?
- Create more opportunities such as transitional housing;;
- Improve the dissemination of information;
- Need to work on permanent supportive housing for high needs clients;
- Existing/ongoing relationships between agencies, keep communication flowing, website explanation with criteria (transparency);
- Improve referral systems (This is currently an issue);
- We need to answer questions: What is the relationship between shelters or temporary homelessness (couch surfing) and homeless? Can we clearly define what "homeless" means to referral agencies? Challenge of definitions, language we use is open to interpretation.

Question and Answer Session:

Q: is there training available for sex trade workers?

- There is training available for those in high risk lifestyles

Q: How do housing subsidies work?

- Subsidies follow the person, are not attached to certain residence.
- The subsidy is ongoing, so long as the government provides the funding.

Q: How long are the waitlists for subsidized housing?

- All organizations do not work from a wait list per se. The most vulnerable people are put in housing first. Some applicants might wait a year, but someone more at-risk may get immediate support.

Q: Are there interim housing available while people are waiting?

- Each organization has interim housing available.
- Staff also has administrative funds that can be at times used for interim housing such as hotels.

Meeting the Needs of the Homeless, Pregnant and Vulnerable

Dr. John Lilley and Linda McConnan

Issue:

- John and Linda worked together for 35 years. They started to meet to look at the issue of pregnant and homeless women about a year and a half ago.
- They noted that women come in without prenatal care out of fear. Some of their fears are based on the fact that their babies are apprehended before they leave the hospital. T
- he services these women receive are not coordinated.
- They are looking for ways to engage pregnant women early so the women can have healthy babies.
- Currently, they are trying to get funding to develop a business case and talk to women and agencies.
- The idea is to provide special housing for these pregnant women, and assist them with prenatal care, increased safety and resources, leading to decreased stress. As a result, the baby will be bigger and healthier. With supported housing, we can help break the cycle of poverty for the children.

Participants were asked for their feedback on the idea. Is there a need for dedicated housing or do existing programs just need to be tweaked? Participant comments and suggestions follow:

- A model could be Crabtree Corner Family Resource Centre, which provides programs and services for families who need them the most. Located in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, one of Canada's most impoverished neighbourhoods, Crabtree Corner helps women and their families improve the quality of their lives:
 - http://www.ywcavan.org/content/Crabtree_Corner/258
 - Crabtree Corners house helps develop a harm reduction model
 - Part of the agreement is no drugs or alcohol on the premises, but they will continue with the women and provide more supports
 - They have significant success – 75% of the women are able to keep their babies, and from there, can gain custody of their other children
- A current obstacle is that medical services is mostly daytime. It is hard to find doctors who will work after hours. Weekends and evenings are more needed than 9 to 5 weekdays;
- Women fear that if they access services their kids will be apprehended, so they stay hidden, and do not receive prenatal care;
- The Royal Alexandra hospital has a reputation for being unsafe for these women, in that many children have been apprehended;
- One participant was an Aboriginal Cultural Worker, who worked at the hospital to help create positive outcomes for the women and babies.

She introduced a baby welcoming ceremony for women. Even though they knew their babies would be in care, they were given a chance to hold the ceremony and meet their baby. It allowed for dignity, respect and culture for all. It was a long road, and it took 8 years to allow these ceremonies;

- Work on outreach and develop a connection ahead of time. Participate with organizations such as Street Works;
- Need an Elder to be involved in the planning and implementation;
- Homeward Trust has a housing program that works – that is a model that could work for this program;
- Engage midwives or doulas to assist with prenatal care.

Next Steps for Anti-Prostitution Laws

Kate Quinn – Executive Director - CEASE

The key message is that we are at a critical moment in our country's history. The anti-prostitution laws have been struck down. What we do today will form the law for the next 30 years (given that current laws have been in effect for 30 years). To date, we've had a model of blaming the victim (sex trade worker). Rather than having a debate around pros and cons of legislation, we need to find common ground on things we can all agree on: human rights, stigmatization, safety, security of person, harm, justice, equality, hope and inclusion. We need to balance Charity (example, harm reduction) with Justice (harm elimination) What is possible as we move forward?

Participant Comments:

- Amsterdam shut down recently the windows – what are they doing now, can this be a model for Canada? The Netherlands still has legalized prostitution, but is going after human trafficking.
- In Vancouver, bylaws in the eastside have decriminalized prostitution to protect sex trade workers.
- The province is working on a sexual violence framework.
- How will legislation affect Aboriginal people? For example, in Edmonton the problem is gangs. In Vancouver, underage youth are moved from apartments to apartment and johns are found through the Internet.
- These issues need to be further explored. We need to talk about this over the next year. Discuss issues such as setting up a brothel or other model, including support workers.

Question and Answer Session:

Q: why do you think the Supreme Court struck this down?

A: The Supreme Court considered individual rights over collective rights of women.

Q: Did the women who brought this to the Supreme Court think about the women who did not want this struck down?

A: It is likely that the intention of those who advocated this were in favor of human rights.

Q: For the person in the lifestyle, it's lucrative, what is their incentive to change? Won't there be resistance as this will take away from their business?

A: We can't take away with out adding.

Q: Will this law move things underground?

A: It is already underground.

Q: How do you protect the children whose parents are exploiting them?

A: Anyone under the age of 18 would be a victim of human trafficking.

Involving and Supporting Men

Rachelle Venne, IAAW

Issue summary:

- Strengthening women and children does not solve the problem. We need to engage men;
- Pornography shapes men/boys attitudes;
- Men need to take accountability around violence against women;
- Men tend not to share or talk openly;
- Men don't know what their role is – they need to be empowered in healthy ways.

Questions around the issue:

- What role can men play in addressing issue of violence against women (especially Aboriginal)?
- How can we get men more involved?
- What to do about those who dismiss or ignore the issue?
- Men as victims are often ignored/do not receive the level of support they need. Women victims come forward more than male victims – How do we create a safer space for male victims?
- How can we build trust/relationships to get men to open up?
- How can we address same sex violence?

Current initiatives and resources:

- CEASE – currently working on a project with an organization in Ghana;
- Calgary Friendship Centre is going to start a men's group;

- CEASE “Men of Honor,” which are awards that recognize men to promote healthy relationships and create positive opportunities for people. Men of Honour strengthen their families, communities and workplace. Men of Honour respect the integrity, individuality and humanity of vulnerable children and adults. Men of Honour may be well known, or they may be quiet workers and volunteers. Men of Honour are found in many families, ethno-cultural communities, trades, professions, neighbourhoods, networks and organization <http://www.ceasenow.org/index.php/families-a-communities/men-of-honour>
- Creating Hope discussions/DVD on family violence;
- Regina – documentary re: Aboriginal men who didn’t have father figures – when they become fathers they don’t know what to do.

More steps we can take:

- Develop a strategy to engage high profile men who can serve as good role models;
- John school – educating/engaging offenders;
- Engaging men and boys – CoE focus groups;
- Start local, build partnerships to address the wider issue;
- Communities picnic tables to bring together men and children;
- Need to have uncomfortable conversations about patriarchy, oppression, gender issues;
- More focus group to continue discussion on this issue;
- Need for supports for reserve – city transition;
- Prostitution laws – link laws to both John’s and objectification of women;
- Need for men’s shelters.

Providing Supports for Young People Coming out of Child Welfare

Don Langford, Metis Child & Family

Issue Summary:

- Youth coming out of child welfare have few, if any, supports;
- As parents we prepare our children for their journey but in system this doesn’t happen. Our children have role models within the family, mothers, fathers, aunts uncles etc. Children in the system do not experience this and lack basic life skills;
- When they turn 18 they have to apply for education funding until they are 21 or 22, post-secondary. If they are 16 and wait to live independently their rent and living expenses. They are expected to secure part time jobs.

- Youth experience a lot of traumatization as a result of being in the child welfare system;
- They are looking for family connections;
- Few foster parents take a sincere interest in child activities;
- It is our responsibility to provide the cultural teachings;
- Our own people have lost the teaching we need to bring it back.

Steps We Can Take:

- Have discussion with youth to plan a transition into independent living;
- Talk to school counselors to help;
- Let the youth tell the stories that need to be heard;
- Foster parents need cultural training. Foster parents need to attend cultural ceremonies not call support workers to take them and drop them off;
- Create an Elders group for children in foster care possibly an Elder attached to each child in feasible communities;
- We need to share culture; for example, a “Welcome Home” ceremony should happen when children return to community to create a sense of belonging;
- Important now that we have them listening, we need to re-enforce our cultural teachings and ways;
- Education need to happen on both sides aboriginal and non- aboriginal people;
- Mutual trust and honesty must be built;
- Needs more discussion on a strategy on how this plays out;
- Women need a stronger political or leadership roles.

Safety Programs for Young Girls

Discussion Items:

- We need to create hubs within schools that offer education supports and resources and strengthen a culture that promotes respect and relationships for every person;
- Build respect for police officers. Change the negativity between police officers and young girls;
- Work with the youth;
- Provide support to parents;
- We need to change the way we talk. Instead of telling girls they are heading for trouble, ask them how to support their dreams and hopes.

Thank you to our funding partners



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