

Caring Across the Boundaries Toolkit for Collaboration

November 20 and 21, 2007
Coast Salish Territory
Victoria, B.C.

Organizing Agencies



Boys & Girls Club
Services of Greater Victoria
A good place to be

Supported by the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society
and generously funded by the McConnell Family Foundation

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Flip Chart and Discussion Notes from CAB

Introduction

On November 20th and 21st, 2007, 33 participants representing First Nations, Metis, Inuit communities and the not-for-profit sector, came together for the Caring Across the Boundaries Workshops (CAB). The aim was to build relationships and understanding as a starting place for collaboration.

Detailed notes were taken by participants and facilitators documenting small and large group discussions. We have included these notes, unchanged, in this package. After the workshop, CAB organizing committee members reviewed workshop notes and reflected on our own collaborative process with the intent to pull out key themes and essential features of collaboration. These reflections and interpretations are also included in this package.

The information presented in this “Toolkit” outlines community needs as well as positive actions that could be taken by CAB participants, funders, government, program developers, and anyone who cares about improving our communities. We hope these Toolkits will be used to guide participants through the collaborations started at the CAB workshop.

In this Toolkit you will find workshop notes from:

- First Nations Participants’ Small Group Work: What are our strengths, needs and interests, requests, offerings and commitments
- Not-for-profit Participants’ Small Group Work: What are our strengths, needs and interests, requests, offerings and commitments
- First Nations Participants’ Small Group Discussion: What are our Roles in the Community
- Butch Dick’s presentation: Sharing his experience collaborating with the Greater Victoria School Board
- Presentation and Discussion of First Nations and Not-for-profit Participants’ Toolkits
- Essential Features of Collaboration Discussion
- Next Steps and Participant Action Commitments

We hope you find this Toolkit informative and helpful as you continue caring across the boundaries.

Sincerely,

Kerra Downey, Victoria Native Friendship Centre,
Lisa George, Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services,
Chelsea Peddle, Lisa Tait and Serena Vaillancourt, Volunteer Victoria
and Jason Cole, the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Victoria

What is Caring Across the Boundaries?

First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada

The mission of the FNCFCS is “building helping communities”. They conduct research projects, maintain a FN child welfare data base, hold conferences and workshops, highlight best practices in FN child and family services, and act as an information resource to the community.

One of the ongoing projects promoted by FNCFCS is the **Caring Across the Boundaries** project. This is an interactive workshop that facilitates collaboration between First Nations child and family services agencies and the not-for-profit/voluntary sector. The program was developed based on research which found that First Nations children and youth on reserve have almost no access to the broad range of prevention and quality of life services provided by the non-profit/voluntary sector (FNCFCS, 2003).

A key finding of the research was that both First Nations child and family service providers and not-for-profit/voluntary sector agencies want to ensure First Nations children and youth are able to access culturally appropriate voluntary sector supports. Identified barriers to collaboration expressed by voluntary sector and First Nations agencies include:

- Lack of time
- Lack of networking opportunities
- Hesitancy to initiate contact
- Lack of funds
- Lack of knowledge, information and understanding about each other

What does CAB offer?

CAB provides a process for participants to make new connections and create joint visions of future collaboration. During the Caring Across the Boundaries workshop, participants work together to identify strategies to overcome barriers to collaboration. The curriculum is designed to help First Nations and the not-for-profit/voluntary sector learn more about each other in a safe, supportive environment and begin breaking down barriers to collaboration. Education about colonization, opportunities for reflection, and special networking activities made Victoria’s CAB a unique experience.

Summary of the Caring Across the Boundaries Workshop

Coast Salish Territory
November 20 and 21, 2007

In planning and organizing the CAB workshops, there was a spirit of respect and enthusiasm amongst the organizing committee. This feeling of enthusiasm seemed to be shared by others as registration for the workshops filled fairly quickly, leaving a waitlist of interested parties. (The organizers informed waitlisted participants of our desire for the community to host more Cab workshops and that waitlisted participants would be included in post-workshop follow-up).

On the first day, First Nations and not-for-profit participants were (separately) guided through small and large group exercises. Participants shared local issues, barriers and ideas from both groups. This information went into creating each group's "empowerment toolkits". Participants, facilitators, elders and the organizing committee were welcomed and thanked at the open and close of each session on both days with prayers and song. A unique component of the Victoria workshop was facilitator Bradley Dick's sensitive presentation on colonization and First Nations traditions, which was shared with the not-for-profit representatives.

The second day began with a fun, "speed networking" exercise which allowed each participant to meet all the other participants face-to-face for a brief time. This was well enjoyed by all as demonstrated by many requests for "more time!" After the networking session, participants were invited to present their toolkits from the previous day. Participants also heard from inspirational speakers, including Elder Butch Dick, and participated in bridging exercises designed to create sustainable collaborative relationships.

Participants at both days' workshops were engaged and productive, offering many thoughtful and personal insights. Most participants agreed that they wished to meet again, informally over coffee, before the winter holiday season. Sustainability suggestions that arose from the group work included the design and implementation of a logo sticker indicating a safe, First Nations-welcoming agency and the planning of another CAB in the New Year.

CAB was ended with recognition of the participants, facilitators, Elders and organizing committee, with beautiful hand carved soapstone gifts by Ben Pelkey and cards, a Warrior Song sung by Lisa George, a song of thanks by Bradley Dick, and prayers. Many participants expressed their gratitude for the event and their thankfulness for the sincerity of the other participants.

The Organizing Committee: Our Roles

As a result of the Caring Across the Boundaries workshop hosted in April 2007, the Victoria Native Friendship Centre, Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services, Volunteer Victoria and the Boys and Girls Club of Victoria entered into a collaboration to sponsor another CAB workshop. The collaboration process began with a series of meetings to write the proposal for the JW McConnell Family Relationship Development Grant to host another Caring Across the Boundaries. This proposal was successful in achieving the amount of \$2500 to put towards the project.

From the onset, the committee acted as a collaborative unit, dividing up the necessary workload while compiling ideas and thoughts as to how to promote the spirit of collaboration. Each agency contributed with a large degree of “staff time hours” in terms of planning, but also with in-kind contributions based upon their strengths.

Surrounded by Cedar:

- Meeting space for planning meetings
- Office/workshop supplies
- Administrator of budget
- Assisted with Curriculum Development

Volunteer Victoria:

- Provided three staff to assist in the planning of CAB
- Meeting space for planning meetings
- Administered registration duties
- Obtained caterer for lunch as well as snacks and beverages
- Obtained all materials necessary for the workshop
- Assisted with Curriculum Development

Victoria Native Friendship Centre:

- Venue for the CAB workshop
- Liaison between Centre and CAB committee

Boys and Girls Club:

- Cedar boughs for CAB workshop
- Support with set-up and take down
- Venue for post-workshop initiatives

The Role of Elders

Butch Dick, a traditional Coast Salish elder and member of the Songhees Nation was invited to participate in the Caring Across the Boundaries workshop. He opened and closed all the sessions in prayer and played an integral role within the workshop. He modeled ways of showing respect within the community, traditional

Coast Salish values, and ways of helping within the community. He also spent some time sharing his experiences of collaborating within the school systems. We are also thankful for the presence of Victoria Native Friendship Centre's elder, Mickey Cook.

CAB Facilitators

Bradley Dick and Tina Pearson generously volunteered their time to the development and the facilitation of the CAB curriculum. Bradley, a member of the Songhees Nation, and Tina, a leader in the non-profit sector, both brought their unique traditions and knowledge to create a tailor-made experience for participants.

Lessons Learned: Reflections from the Organizing Committee

The organizing committee met to discuss our process, the outcomes of the workshop, and lessons learned. We hope that by sharing our successes *and* challenges, we might paint a realistic picture of a first time collaboration as well as ways to improve upon the CAB workshop. We feel that our collaboration was a resounding success measured primarily by the personal relationships we formed which will continue long after the completion of this project.

What We Did Well as a Collaborative Team

Share responsibilities: Everyone took on tasks; we were balanced and cooperative. We played to each other's strengths and actively used skills sharing and mentoring to build group and individual capacity.

Respect: Each person had respect for the other committee members, their contributions, and for our respective personal commitments and circumstances (a holistic view and approach). We strived to create a supportive and friendly atmosphere. Respect also meant following through on our commitments and asking for support.

Openness/Transparency: Each committee member was welcoming and inclusive. We strived to keep all organizing members "in the loop." Honesty was a key value and we talked openly about concerns, challenges, and fears. We asked and answered difficult questions. We made sure to keep our willingness to laugh and have fun!

Focus/Organization: We kept on task with frequent committee meetings which greatly increased organization. We were very good at time management. Having a detailed timeline and agendas for each meeting helped with this.

Flexibility: Our process grew and morphed throughout the organizational process. We were honoured to have facilitators who were responsive to participants' needs, which allowed the curriculum to shift and change as required. As new people become involved, our vision changed to include these new perspectives.

Picking the right venue: There are pros and cons to holding the workshop at a First Nations serving organization or, conversely, at a non-First Nations organization. We were very thankful to be hosted by the Victoria Native Friendship Centre and feel that this contributed to the creation of a welcoming space for First Nations participants.

How We Might Improve the CAB Workshop

Anticipate logistical challenges: Heat, parking, transportation are all areas to consider. While we provided some supports for participants, we feel that more could be done to make participants comfortable.

Involve facilitators from the beginning: We were honoured to have such inspiring and inclusive facilitators and are very thankful for all of Bradley Dick and Tina Pearson's contributions. Upon reflection, we realize that bringing in facilitators towards the end of the organizational process did not use our collective abilities to their fullest. We suggest creating partnership agreements from the start to improve communication and the clarity of roles.

Directly address the level of participant commitment that is required: Through our own process and through observing the workshops, CAB organizing members learned that commitment, follow through, and reliability are among the most important features of collaboration. We suggest making it clear in workshop invitations, registration confirmations, and opening day introductions that all participants must commit to attend all workshop sessions.

Expand opportunities for open discussion: We did not realize how much participants needed a venue to be heard. More time was needed for large group discussions concerning the impacts of colonization, its effects on our current relationships, and steps for acknowledging and working through its impacts together.

Key Themes and Important Areas for Follow-Up

CAB organizing committee members reviewed flip chart and discussion notes looking for key themes and information. Our collective energy, resources, and time could be directed to addressing these barriers, needs, and suggestions (as identified by CAB participants).

Barriers to Collaboration

- 1) Lack of trust/fear
- 2) Lack of understanding and respect of First Nations culture, traditions and spirituality
- 3) Lack of opportunities and time for making connections/networking

What is Needed in the Community

- 1) The need for holistic programs that serve the family as opposed to segregated services for children, women, and men.
- 2) The need for healing resources. Some participants noted the need for support for men including parenting skills, anger management, substance abuse, and restoring traditional roles through firearm certifications, hunting, canoeing among other traditional skills. The organizing committee feels that services for aboriginal women (for example, transition houses), also need improvement.
- 3) The need for safe, affordable housing.
- 4) The need for a way to recognize agencies that are welcoming, inclusive, and supportive of First Nations peoples. This may encourage the further utilization of non-aboriginal agencies by aboriginal peoples. The Orange Group (CAB collaborative small group) has already started planning to address this need.

What is Needed for Collaboration

- 1) First Nations peoples and non-First Nations peoples attend cultural awareness learning/sharing opportunities. This is both a suggestion to improve collaboration and a community need as these kinds of sharing opportunities do not currently exist. Sharing opportunities might explore: First Nations traditions and spirituality, connecting the past with the present, and/or helping to restore traditional relationships to families and communities.
- 2) Be reliable, consistent, and keep promises.

- 3) Recognize that the contributions of collaborative partners, or the ways partners “come to the table”, may not look the same. Roles should reflect each partner’s resources, capacity, strengths and weakness while taking into account historical inequities and the impacts of colonization. This might look like not-for-profit representatives doing their own research and reflection before starting collaborations and/or partners taking the initiative to reach out.
- 4) The space and time to build relationships.

Thank you!

Thank you to all of you who made the Victoria Caring Across the Boundaries workshop a success. A special ‘thank you’ to Elders Butch Dick and Mickey Cook (VNFC) who shared their spirit and held the space for us to learn.

To our wonderful and compassionate facilitators Bradley Dick and Tina Pearson who, in addition to offering their guidance and support during the event, also put in numerous hours developing the curriculum.

To all who attended the event we would like to say, “Hay sxw qa”. Thank you for your willingness to trust, participate and build connections.

Thanks also to the Victoria Native Friendship Centre for their generous contribution of space and staff including their two extremely helpful and supportive custodians.

And a hearty cheer to the organizing committee for all your hard work and energy. Thank you for bringing CAB to our Victoria community.

And last but not least, thank you to the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society and the McConnell Family Foundation who made the workshop possible through support, inspiration, and funding.

This is only the beginning!

In Thanks,

The CAB Organizing Committee