

# Aboriginal Early Years Strategic Plan

## Community Engagement 2008 Regional Summary

### *Vancouver Island 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.

# Table of Contents

<b>Content</b>	<b>Page</b>
Summary	1
Table of Contents	2
Responses to Question 1	3
Responses to Question 2	7
Responses to Question 3	11
Responses to Question 4	16
Responses to Question 5	20
Desired Services	26
Community Engagement Statistics	27
Telephone Interview Statistics	28

# Vancouver Island Region

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

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

- To be safe & secure
- Security in shelter & food – increase in living allowance
- More food security and shelter
- Nutritional food for everyone
- Everyone has access to affordable housing
- Everyone feels safe
- Everyone is stable

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

- Poverty reduction
- Improvement in all economic areas
- Able to afford cost of living
- Improvements in economic status

### **Social Justice**

- They no longer face any kind of discrimination
- Decolonization
- We live in a violent-free society

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

- Cultural language programs (Nuu-chanulth/Kwakwawak)
- Everyone speaks their language of family of origin
- All our children will know their cultural protocols & history and lineage
- Drumming & Singing
- Knowing history & protocol
- Have a strong connection to culture

### **Healthy Families**

- Children kept out of strangers care
- Empowered parents
- Parents being their child's first teacher
- Healthy connections to family
- Links with everyone intergenerational (grandparents aunts/uncles)
- No more children in care
- Healed from the trauma of residential schools
- Healthy parents & parents-to-be

### **Health & Wellbeing**

- All indicators of health are met
- Children are thriving not just surviving
- To be born healthy at birth weight
- Traveling the world/exchange students

- No more FASD
- We have overcome our addictions

#### **Emotional Wellbeing**

- Learn to be kind, gentle, trustworthy to others
- Healthy & happy
- Self-confident & assertive
- Empowered & have self – respect

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

- That we honour our children's gifts and nurture their dreams from birth on
- Success with endeavours, goals, & aspirations

#### **Play & Recreation**

- That there are lots of sports programs for children and preschool children so they can learn to be team players and connect with children their age and keep active
- More access to community resources (sports, activities)
- Intergenerational opportunities – Elders to grandparents

#### **Education**

- To Graduate/ All children are graduates
- Culturally sensitive/appropriate curriculums taught by First Nations teachers and Early Childhood Educators and Elders
- Equal pay & equal opportunity for educational staff compared to Provincial staffing salaries

#### **Accessible & Equitable Services**

- Transportation to school & other services
- Equal funding & equal access to programs/services
- More support from peoples bands who are living off reserve/everyone is counted
- Timely support for developmental progress
- Keeping existing aboriginal programs that are working
- More parent & staff communication
- Know where & how to access all resources (mental, medical, educational & D&A)
- Opportunities for growth

#### **Types of Services/Programs**

- Buddy care system for kids
- Counselling/support/preventive & awareness RE: sexuality
- Grandparents support group
- Aboriginal daycare's available
- Speech & language development
- Sign language classes
- Nutritional program (vitamins)
- Cooking classes
- Bully prevention
- Clothing & Toy Family Swap

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

- I would like my children to live healthy, happy lives in which they fulfill the role they were sent here to complete. I would like to see them meet with success in whatever area they go into, this entails knowing what their strengths and gifts are. I would like to see them meet encouragement and support in whatever they try. I would like to see them be healthy parents to their children, my grandchildren. I would like to see them have a strong thlamuxstii, a good self-esteem. I would like to see them live in a world that has no color or hierarchical boundaries. I would like them to have strong muxmuuts, roots, ties to their nisma, their land, their territory. I would like to see them have a strong, positive sense of identity and belonging. I would like for them to love and accept themselves as they are.
- Abundance of access for our infants and toddlers to daycare centres that include and exposure to our culture and other Metis children. Access to daycare affiliated to Metis culture and heritage. Metis preschools and daycares throughout the province. Kindergartens that have Michif Cree language.
- To be with their families, connected to communities, to feel safe and to feel accepted. A place where children are no longer taken from their homes. So not to have situations where they are neglected and there is no more abuse.
- Key piece that children have strong connection to language and culture wherever they are
- We need to honour our children and consider them in the context of our every day life especially in how we plan for our future. My dream is to have them reflected in our planning. When we are asking for funding and doing strategic planning we need to reorganize the way we think and go back to the idea of the seven generations. An example would be to have a policy like the United Nations to guides us in the rights of the child.
- That all Aboriginal children live freely and proudly as Aboriginal people, grounded in their language and culture. That all Aboriginal children are recognized as unique in their cultural heritage and identity, meanwhile participate as equal citizens in Canadian society.
- My dreams for my children are to be successful, healthy, and confident. To be knowledgeable about their culture, to understand the history of their culture and to share their culture with others.

I want them to be successful in school.

I want them to learn everything about their surroundings. I want them to understand their connection between themselves and the universe and how they will play a vital role preserving their environment.

I want them to live a healthy lifestyle.

I want them to go to post-secondary school and be comfortable knowing that this is one of the many options to being successful. To use this education to be a positive role model for our community and to use this education to help aboriginal communities move forward with opportunities for advancement.

I want them to hold potlatches and carry on the traditions of our grandfathers.

I want them to see the world and embrace the surroundings and natural beauty that mother

earth has to offer.

I want them to be leaders.

I want them to be generous and giving and thankful.

I want them to inspire and promote culture, education and dreams of reality.

I want them to be happy.

I want them to prosper.

I want them to have fun.

I want them to know who they are and where they come from.

I want them to know their indian songs.

I want them to be recognized for their achievements.

- Sense of pride in who they are
- They have the foundational skills to be safe and secure adults
- They have good memories of their time with us in the educational system
- Life is all about learning and they enjoy it
- They are going to be safe and healthy and have all the opportunities to develop all aspects of themselves. Its not just about physical heath and school readiness, there is emphasis on holistic development, in particular the cultural and spiritual aspect of development. It's a huge challenge for urban Aboriginal people to expose our children to cultural ways and knowing their identity, traditions and ceremonies, when most often their home community is far away. Values can't be talked about, they are primarily learned through experiences. Children need to be exposed to cultural/ceremonial experiences to learn many of the cultural values. For example, if you're going into a sweat and you need to turn around and face all four directions or when at ceremony you need to be quiet at specific points in the process, our children need to learn that. I worry about my children, wondering how are they going to know that they are Aboriginal and what that means while living in urban setting? We have a difficult time re-creating cultural activities in the cities. I know I can give them all the other important things, good home, basic needs are being met, but what about their spiritual development and identity? There is nowhere to take them to learn those things except once a year to our home community – 2days drive away.
- All children should have the opportunity to learn their culture or traditions, their family members and where they come from while exploring their own identity connecting to people and the natural world. Every child has the right to be welcomed, appreciated, acknowledged and allowed the time to play, share, make friends, learn and develop at their own pace without fault or criticism from others; to be recognized for their own gifts and qualities making them individual and unique. Allowing these opportunities and freedom encourages reaching full potential and striving to higher goals identified by the individual.
- To be safe and supported. That they have the best chances in life at a good start and have healthy pregnancies. Education is free and every job is respected equally whether you are

in academics or trades. We need everyone even the garbage man is very important. They grow up to be healthy role models

- A world where there is no racism, where we see everyone as people not the color of their skin
- For them to be healthy, happy and to be good citizens and contributing members of society.
- To develop compassion for others and become life-long learners.
- Happy, healthy, safe community to live, grow, admire, and learn from. Admire meaning to proud or where they are from. People who are grounded can move forward.
- That they have access to their culture and cultural teachings. That the programs are inclusive of their ways of being and that learning is designed for their ways of being. Same opportunities as other children, doesn't need to look the same, but that they have the opportunities. Grow up feeling proud of who they are
- That they can have opportunities in their life that is healthy, developmental to their careers, education that meets their needs to survive in the world. Opportunities to learn their language and culture that gives them pride and a history of who they are and where they come from. I wish that their lives will be free from racism and fairness

**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?***

### **Cultural Revitalization**

- Cultural awareness
- Bring back Ceremonies, Practices & History
- Teach the Rites of Passage
- Traditional Medicines & Holistic Plants Programs
- Have genealogy programs
- More support for families who are living off reserve from their band for example: they would have access to food fish, seafood and medical and dental coverage
- Methods & Values being passed onto families and children

### **Strengthening Families**

- More parental involvement – mothers and fathers both being responsible for raising their children and staying together to raise them
- Having both parent's names on their child's birth certificate
- More father involvement and they stay with moms
- Moms stay with children and drop them off with grandparents to raise
- Birth control for both parents
- Vision of what a healthy relationship looks like
- Foster an abundance mindset with all the supports
- Provide mentoring for home skills & mentors for children 0-6

- Learn how to prepare a meal & no chaos meals
- Understanding the importance of sitting down together as a family to eat and have healthy conversations

#### **Emotional Wellness**

- Healing at an individual level
- Conflict management workshops
- Building trusting relationships - letting go of jealousy & resentment & gossip

#### **Strengthening Communities**

- Have a community garden and learn to grow your own food
- Community kitchen – provide food safety/ Crockpot classes
- Fun night “good food box”

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

- Collaborating with other Health Agencies, Diabetes agencies, HIV agencies

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

- Nutrition
- Accessible medicines
- Full coverage of medical, dental, health, vision care, & hearing
- Budgeting programs: Learn what is a living wage? How much does it cost to live? Learn about finances and budgeting
- Time management workshop s
- Provide baking and preserving workshops
- Provide life & living skills programs

#### **Question 2: Telephone Responses**

- Education 1) a honest history of our people and their ties and rights to the lands and resources that everyone lives on. 2) on human rights and the recognition of all peoples as deserving of respect and fair treatment. 3) The image of our people as primitive and savage at the time of contact and after has to be addressed as wrong. Just because civilization is a European word does not mean that only Europeans had civilization. At one point in early contact a Chief was taken to Europe to impress him with “civilization”. When he returned he told his people he was amazed. Amazed that the wealthy could live on the same street as homeless people and that they did nothing to help those less fortunate people. In a Nuu chah nulth community it is often said that, before contact, for one person to starve the whole community must be starving. 4) Much has been done to educate people erroneously as to the fact that there was no war against our people by the good country of Canada. There was. It was a very well planned and implemented legislated war. And because it was legislated it could be enforced by the police. The police were preceded by gunboats who taught our people that if they didn’t listen their village, their canoes, their people could be attacked and destroyed by gun-boats. Gunboats even went to communities to hang people in front of their peers because they broke a white law even though that same law did not exist in their community. The eradication and denunciation of white privilege. Acceptance of people as people and therefore as equals. This would entail getting rid of

hierarchy and a recognition of the value of every person's contribution to the healthy maintenance of any community. This would include wage parity and color blindness and the honest recognition and acceptance of gifts and skills which are not our own.

- We need way more access to affordable and safe child care. More access to safe and affordable options for our kids that are well trained and have a good education in our history as well as child development background.
- There needs to be employment for their parents. They need to have affordable homes whether they rent or purchase their own home. They need a place that is stable and safe. It is very difficult to clean up their lives from addictions when the places they live in they are surrounded by drugs and alcohol and poverty. Even when their children have been apprehended they can't come home for a visit because of where they live it is seen as an unsafe environment. There needs to be more life skills courses for these families to learn some of the things they didn't get from their parents due to residential school
- There needs to be strong relationships between organizations, in particular the school districts
- Children spend so much time in school that the school could play a bigger part in their emotional and family development
- We need to focus on the whole child, look at their family setting, culture and see where they are coming from
- For the social and emotional development of a child, everyone who surrounds a child, needs to focus on all the child's needs
- Children are born innocent into this world. We need to improve the health and wellness of our children we need to address the systemic barriers that have are in place that put limitations on the community's ability to help themselves. In order to promote community based research in an ethical way by going to the community's people and learning from them what it is that they need and then plan the funding accordingly. Community based research that is ethical and respectful.
- Aboriginal people must have the tools, resources, and supports available to address poverty. Many of the health and educational challenges in Aboriginal communities stem from families buried in poverty. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people need opportunities for systemic change, whereby, Aboriginal ways of being are promoted and supported not solely within Aboriginal contexts, but all community contexts. By developing shared understandings of multiple ways of being and the differing value systems that exist in Western Canadian and Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal people may be supported to overcome the barriers imposed by poverty. All Canadian citizens must recognize their agency and responsibility in supporting Aboriginal people to live outside of poverty.
- .I feel the community needs to promote health and wellness.  
I think the community must work together with health services, school districts, and

aboriginal organizations and come up with a wider plan for all aboriginal people living in the community to network and share resources.

- To have role models come and teach us how to live healthy and why we need to live healthy.
- More funding dollars for aboriginal communities to explore the world around them. To see the bigger picture and to have children know that there is a brighter future for them. To promote opportunities for children. To let them have fun while learning. To not lose track of our children. To follow them and check up on them and see how their doing. Ask the children what they would like. Ask the children what their dreams are and what we can do to improve their chances of being successful.
- Healthy eating and nutrition is key.
- Building healthy relationships with the families that come to our centres – we need to allow time for that relationship to be fostered, not like in European culture where you meet someone for the first time and quickly move on
- We need to be available to people who are ready and not force them if they are not ready – for example a speech and language pathologist may go to a families home, but because of the historical background, the family may not be comfortable: so we need to build relationships, **relationships are the foundation of our services**
- We need a strength-based approach; we can't have a goal for a family that they are not on board with
- Critical need is an Aboriginal fulltime daycare program. There are on reserve child care programs in the greater Victoria area, however, one of them is full and has long waitlist and isn't accessible to Urban population, the other band day care that has room would mean my children will be learning another FN culture and identity that is different from their own heritage. We need an urban Aboriginal center that can be attentive to the cultural identity of the variety of backgrounds of all the children. Our children should have the opportunity to be cared for by Aboriginal people all the time. So if they can't be cared for by parents and family, then they should be able to be cared for by Aboriginal caregivers. Aboriginal run centers have a totally different vibe, the cultural values are different, the symbols on walls are different, the resource people they bring in are different then mainstream daycare centers. I personally struggle with putting my own children in a mainstream daycare program all day, which will mean for even more assimilation into mainstream culture, on top of the assimilation that takes place living in an urban setting.
- Communities need to be safe and welcoming for children and their families. Parents, as the first role model for their child passes the feelings of involvement, appreciation and genuine care from others to themselves, and onto their children. These feelings emit a sense of goodwill to everyone who comes in contact with individuals sharing in these beliefs. A caring family “develops” into a community of caring individuals reaching out to all families. Parents are the first wave making changes for communities to have their voice heard by local authorities and those in positions of government who can make a difference to move toward

healthier community living. Parents should be encouraged and supported in taking steps to bring about desired changes.

- Inferiority of our people was taught for so long and has been accepted. We have a high concentration of FASD in our children and their parents and grandparents and children being raised with poor attachment bonds then children are taken away from their families and are being raised in care. We need to develop a system to work with the whole family in recovery from substance abuse with no shame and blame. Ideally family fostering to keep the family together for example in a traditional longhouse. Have family meetings and make use of First Nations Organizations that deal with families and build partnerships and capacity to build on the strengths of our families. We need to honestly educate everyone about the truth of ancient and current history so that people understand why things are the way they are both in the aboriginal and non aboriginal community.
- A lot of our kids are misunderstood because their native. Schools and teachers need to learn and have a better understanding of our culture which will help them to understand our where our kids are coming from.
- Provide opportunities for childcare or centres that are geared specifically to children of the same age and it is important to listen to the children and learn from their families so we are better able to serve their needs
- Employment, housing, leaders/Elders/Family to share cultural traditions, beliefs, transportation, schooling, early learning opportunities
- They need to believe in who they are and are proud of who they are. Access to culturally relevant programs; Strong Start is not being accessed. Parents won't take their children to the Strong Start in the same school we are based in. Parents and caregivers are involved in programs and this is really needed. We need to build a bridge from our past, and in order to do this the parents need to be involved. There are multiple barriers for our families that focus on their basic needs; we have children coming to our program very hungry, not dressed properly for the weather, etc. We need to ensure our programs take care of the whole child and their family, and this means the funding needs to make sure we can do this. How do children learn if they are hungry?
- The families need healing from the historical abuse from the past in order to have a healthy life. Children need to be exposed to their language and culture that will build a foundation that will keep them strong and proud. In a language nest program. The First Nations leaders should make plans with the families, youth and children that makes sense for their future and not ours.
- The residential school people need help to heal, let them know it is safe now to speak the language. Children at a very young age need to be exposed to the language ie with speakers, grandparents. Help them be proud of who they are and where they come from. The language should be in schools, daycares, community activities. BC should bring back the Indian games, songs etc. daily, annually.

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

**Language Revitalization**

- Teaching parents language & culture to pass onto their children (cultural camps)
- Language programs
- Make music “CDS” to take home & share with parents in their language
- Make a story book with parents & children in their language
- Language and culture needs to be integrated at an early age
- Have intergenerational parenting workshops for example grandparents teach parents

**Traditional Celebrations & Activities**

- Drum making
- Host a family cultural night and invite a drum group from another area
- More teaching on wild plants as food
- Demonstrations with traditional foods & traditional methods of cooking
- Coming of age ceremonies and if there is no one in your community who knows the ceremonies go to other communities and find someone who has the knowledge to teach these ceremonies
- Teaching & passing on spiritual practices for gratitude when for e.g. (hunting, fishing, harvesting digging clams)
- Traditional Medicinal plants
- We need to have drumming, singing, dancing, language programs on a regular basis
- Connecting Elders from various backgrounds all across Canada, as we are so diverse
- Cultural Potlucks on a regular basis
- A respect program (from Man to Nature)

**On/Off Reserve**

- Get rid of “on” and “off” terms for on reserve and off reserve and have equal support

**Funding**

- To get funding from government & other resources to hire someone and funds to buy resources & pay honorariums to helpers
- A large facility to do this all in
- Keeping existing funding to ensure present programs that are working can keep going
- More Funding to be able to do all this- research what others are doing in other parts of the country

**Question 3: Telephone Responses**

- There was no money spared in the war to eradicate our language. The money was designated and the target was our children. I think the same has to be done to revive it. The government worked hard to take our language away now they need to support us as we work hard to bring it back. All levels of government should be supportive, especially financially supportive: municipal, provincial, and federal as all were involved in the eradication of our language and our ways of being. Our Elders are our speakers. They are the holders of the equal of

Master's degrees in Nuuchahnulth language. We need to have our fluent Elders and our younger writers unite in paid employment to develop curriculum, plans for camps for children, teens, families, and immersion. The recognition of our language outside our reserves. It would be simple words and phrases at first and progress over time. (It is done in Quebec and New Zealand) For example on bathroom doors, on store fronts, in naming of employees (ie teacher, doctor). Money must be made possible for this to be implemented. As part of their job orientation and job prep, the people who work in these stores must be schooled in the pronunciation and meaning of the words used. Our people must be actively included in decision making. They must be included in jobs to develop programs as well as in teaching and our learners also should be paid as they have families to support. Our ways of thinking, acting, and working must be acknowledged and accepted within these programs. Our people have to be seen as more than just tokens, invited only to say "Yes we have x number of Aboriginal representatives" and then, when we speak and they don't like what we say or they simply don't have time for what we have to say, we are excluded. I sit on 2 committees in town. I told both of them I can come to meetings any night except Mondays. All their meetings for both committees are on Monday night during the same hours as my haahuupa class. Coincidence? What would you think if you were me and had a lifetime of coincidences like this? And I am not saying that my consideration has to be the only one. But neither should it always be excluded.

We need programming that expands beyond the family, we have an opportunity for our kids that are safe places for our children to get the learning and exposure of early learning as well as our culture and language. More ways our children can connect with elders in the community

- More resources available for families to use in the home and be able to be used in preschools and daycares as well. We see funding for cultural inclusion for kids at risk and in care, but all our kids are at risk of growing up without their culture and language, and we need that to support all our children; whether they are involved with the Ministry or not.
- Culture needs to be imbedded in our programming. We need to identify opportunities to celebrate other cultures and find ways to connect them to their culture. Be willing and open to merge into every culture. At our centre one night we have All Nations Night to celebrate the diversity. There needs to be recognition from the funders who are providing program dollars that we need funding put aside in order to bring in other cultural people and elders from other areas or parts of Canada into the centres so we can serve our population at our urban centres.
- There needs to be an opportunity to build a connection to their community
- There needs to be resources available that for young children and make Because of the whole system of disconnect for children who are fostered out we need to ensure that they are exposed to their language and culture at an early age – if they are exposed to their roots, they will know who they are

- Families who do foster care have a responsibility to educate themselves about that process and have cultural resources available such as CDs, music, games, and puzzles that relate to that child's language and culture which will help to create a healthy 'little soul'
- Elders are an important piece and need to be part of this process. They are a huge piece of the puzzle. Reintroduction of indigenous values needs to be brought back.
- There needs to be space provided for language and culture to be incorporated in all educational systems. Language and culture cannot begin and end at the early childhood level, or be the sole responsibility of communities. Public education systems – from the post-secondary level and downward – need to validate and support the integration of Aboriginal languages in schooling. This is beginning to happen, but must be continually fostered and supported.
- To have language classes for pre-school aged children. I think it's called the learning nest. I don't know my language but if there was a special program for children we would definitely be there.  
To provide children the opportunity to sing and dance. Through 'dance groups' we learn our songs and dances.  
To read legends to our children.  
To bring them to potlatches.  
To have a library or archives that is user-friendly for parents and children to access.  
To have an intense learning by doing activity book for parents and children.  
To find out what is the best and most successful way to learn language and provide that program to our children.  
To have children fully immersed in kwakwala or a language program.  
To have indian music playing in the background of our home, playing all the time.  
To hold play potlatches for our children.
- There's a lot of healing that needs to be done, a lot of our families have been impacted by colonization and they don't have that awareness of why their language and culture is so very important
- We need strong members of the community teaching the parents the importance of language and culture
- Our leaders see other things as important, but if we don't make language and culture a priority, there won't be anything left to fund – our language and culture is our foundation, it will fade as it loses priority in our communities
- We need to provide an income for elders so we can have them in all of our programs
- really need enhanced programming that is specific to culture and language and in particular to the entire Aboriginal population not just one sector. For example, language support, drumming groups, powwow dancing groups for both children and parents. Parents need support in their own cultural identity otherwise they cannot enhance what the children are learning. We need family centered solutions, especially for urban people. So much of what

we do in the Friendship Center and other Aboriginal service providers is targeted to one sector of our communities, and that is supporting low income families, addictions, families at risk with MCFD. What about all those other families that are healthy and functioning, the whole other sector of the aboriginal population, who need culture/language programs. There are some great programs that I would like to take my children but they are only offered during the day for stay-at-home parents, being as I work fulltime, my children and I cannot participate.

- Times are changing and recognition of Aboriginal culture is being highlighted in educational systems, but the changes are slow and quietly done. In general, public awareness of Aboriginal issues or needs are not well known. Reasons for this remain unclear, but sometimes an extravagant function can draw attention and educate at the same time. For example, many people do not know how many independent languages are alive within Canada's Aboriginal communities. We hear much more about other languages that make up our very mosaic Canada.
- More traditional experiences out on the land: canoe tours, hiking, hunting, fishing, berry picking, singing, dancing, drumming, carving and beading. Provide tactile learning. While engaged in these activities we would be teaching the language and history. Have our language taught in the schools and at homes with families. Present opportunities where people can come out and make our cedar bark baskets. Get our language credited in the school system. Pay our people who are taking the language and culture to take it, not as a hand out but as a way to support their families. We need to make it a priority just the same way it was made a priority to take the language and culture away from our people.
- We need more family involvement instead of just individuals. We need to get the bigger families in the community involved. First let them know what you want to do and what they can do to help. Who ever the person is who will be doing training I always tell them to come down to the centre so the kids can see you around and get to know you a little. It also shows that your interested which helps them to trust you. And just because someone holds the knowledge doesn't mean they know how to teach it. So they may need training in how to teach it.
- Our communities are made up of a diversity of people, we need cultural centres where we can facilitate sessions to practice and speak our languages
- We need more opportunities for children and parents to practice and speak their language
- If language is the foundation, then our culture will evolve and will be passed on to our children
- We need a centre where many cultural groups could meet where everyone could have an opportunity to learn other cultures which will enrich everyone -- find a place and space to celebrate traditions

- Having the community value this as being important and creating the space and time and having access to language teachers to pass on to teacher's. Making language a priority. Obtaining sustainable funding to create the opportunity.
- Access to people that speak the language, this is an incredible challenge in urban communities because of the diverse cultures and languages. Funding that would support access to the programs, we don't have funding to pay for language speakers to come into our programs and we need this. Support from Gov't that really supports children learning their languages. Need to be more flexible about how things need to be done and how we follow protocol. This might require a contemporary outlook on how we teach language
- The residential school people need help to heal, let them know it is safe now to speak the language. Children at a very young age need to be exposed to the language ie with speakers, grandparents. Help them be proud of who they are and where they come from.
- The language should be in schools, daycares, community activities. BC should bring back the Indian games, songs etc. daily, annually.

**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?***

#### **Culture & Language Programs**

- LFLS programs offer Nuu-chah nulth language classes twice a week and offer child minding
- Hire a Traditional Language Teacher
- Children in Little Fry & Head Start need to also be learning Nuu-CHANULTH
- LFLS to open up space for different language, culture, drum, dance class a couple of times a week
- Holistic medicinal plant education traditional methods from Elders
- Post phrases on doors – everyone gets to practice the language consistently
- Have a bicultural and bilingual calendar
- Have parents & children draw pictures or color pictures from a coloring book and laminate it and create a multicultural and multilingual book for your community

#### **Role of Elders**

- Have an Elders Advisory Committee on protocol & guidelines and be sure to have variety of cultures represented at the table
- Capacity building & support for elders

#### **Community-based**

- Community meetings with transportation/childcare/food
- Bring together community resources and service providers, parents and grandparents for regular discussions on how to incorporate culture and language into all programs and to see what is working
- Form partnerships with other businesses in your area for example: Safeway, pulp mill or Staples for funding or resources

### **Cultural Competency**

- Identify key leaders to speak with organizations & school districts about cultural sensitivity and cultural awareness

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

- Our people need to be included in the planning and implementing. I don't mean just a part of the committee or sitting on the committee. I mean they must have input that is both valued and implemented as they say. Some of our ways of different from others and are not always accepted.
- When we sit in decision making positions we need to be able to have veto power if what is being talked about is not cultural. We need to work with people who are receptive to our ways and will not be intimidated by the scope of this project. We also need for the people we work with to be open to learning and also to back us up when our decisions are challenged. I attended an educational Festival in which all schools presented their work on First Nations people. One small school had done a lot of research and presented a slide show with the children acting out parts. This slide show demonstrated colonization, including residential school, and it's effects on our people. Another school presented a short film done by the native students. This film openly supported bullying by depicting some young girls shoving another girl down the stairs and kicking her while she was down. After the Festival I spoke to the organizers and told them that I thought the film was inappropriate. They saw nothing wrong with the film but said that the presentation on colonization was inappropriate and should not be allowed. In the end they passed a motion that only song and dance will be allowed at future Festivals. Song and dance is a "safe" territory. Often when people do not want to take us seriously song and dance is where they go. Then they can say "Look at the beautiful dances" and will not have to think of anything else. This happened at the Indigenous Games in Victoria. When the Commonwealth games were held the newspapers were all about the competing athletes. For the Indigenous games all they spoke about was the culture. This nullified not only the spirit of the games but also the serious athletes who had trained long and hard to get where they were. If we are to work with our people we can not set standards for workers that will exclude our people. This has often been done. I have a B A degree but I do not know as much about my culture as my mother who has a grade 3 education. Mom's education is cultural, she knows our ways of working with others and how we do that in a respectful way. She has the equivalent of a Doctoral degree when we are talking our about our language and culture. Through her life learning and because she paid attention as a child she is a highly revered resource on the ways of our people. There is no one with a B.A. or Master's or Doctors degree that has the same knowledge Mom has. Well, maybe Deni knows a lot, he is French and he has his Master's Degree. But by the same token he has worked in our community since he was a very young man. I work with a group called Make Children First. This group of people honestly want to know and to work with all peoples. I have not only felt welcomed there but my input has been taken seriously. This is

the kind of respect that needs to be a part of any working group.

We need the resources to help administer them. Both regionally and provincially. MNBC is getting lost in the provincial focus and we need that to be stronger. We need to be a partner for creating the plan for Metis. Our children need to have a voice in all processes and our parents!

- Begin by making culture and language the base of everything we do. Involve the community at the very beginning and ask what do you think we need and how can we design our programs to make sure they are provide in a culturally relevant integrated way. Have a diverse community made up of people who will be utilizing your services and programs to guide the process. This can be harder to do once a program has been there for years, have the cultural teacher connect with the elders and meet with them traditionally not by email or news letter, go visit them have tea with them, meet with them individually or in groups. By doing this you will build a trusting relationship and connection with them and then they will share their knowledge with you for your programs. The moccasin telegraph works best and the face to face meetings in these situations. We need to go back to connecting with people.
- To provide services that are culturally relevant, having the accountability to fulfill their mandates we need to look at the services that are already there and build relationships with the service providers and various programs
- Find a way of asking the community how the money could be spent in a more efficient way and ask the families what they need
- Culturally relevant daycares similar to Head Start that focus on their health and wellness and language and culture
- We need to have relationships with other services to support these children and make sure they are taken care of and don't fall through the cracks
- Being aware of what is out there For example Journeys of the heart meets children where they are. Culture and language needs to be imbedded in the curriculum because if it isn't it lets people off the hook and becomes an add on.
- More Aboriginal educators! As such, we need more post-secondary training that is culturally relevant, and supports Aboriginal learners, therefore Aboriginal educators become community advocates, champions, and supports. Further, we need to remunerate our cultural and linguistic resources at the same rate as 'publicly educated' program staff. There must be recognition that rich resources of knowledge and training are not necessarily post-secondary trained individuals, but they are the life-force of programs and services.
- That schools, parents and bands and/or aboriginal organizations work together to come up with a plan that works for everyone. To have access to resources, speakers, books, songs, videos, language and utilize this in the most efficient way.

To ask the children what they would like to see and what they would like to learn.

To look at data and prioritize what our focus must be. i.e. Language will be extinct. How

to prepare traditional foods ie. Bbq fish, fillet a fish, catch a fish!

To pool together funding dollars and find a solution that will work.

Find out how other nations around the world provide successful programs and copy it.

- To have after-school clubs, or during school clubs. Have celebrations for the successes and promote it.
- Elders are very important
- We need community consultation ensuring that they are asked what it is they want and need
- We need to employ people from the community which would also be good role-modelling and provide employment
- We can have community members provide meals and have elders at every event encompassing culture in all aspects
- We need to sit down with families and talk about where they're from, what they do, and then as service providers do research about their culture and learn to say thank you in their language and learn to celebrate all cultures
- We need to do research and find people, resources, and information for our diverse population and link them up with those resources
- We are on the Coast Salish territory so we need to honor them and acknowledge the territory and share their ways with our families
- We tend to be reactionary and apply for funding that comes out from government and develop our programs from there. 90% of Friendship center funds come from government and therefore must meet their program mandates and expectations for deliverables. We need be proactive and focus on our own vision for what we need and want for our children and families and take that strategic plan to government and they can build their funding streams around our needs rather the other way around. Service providers need to work together. It would be ideal to have an Aboriginal ECD position that is centrally focused and familiar with all the aboriginal ECD programs in the greater Victoria area. 'One stop shop' type of service – here's all the programs that are happening in the city (similar to child care service and referral). So as a parent you wouldn't have to run around like mad trying to find a service, you could go to this center and they will help you find aboriginal specific ECD services. Purpose is to have a holistic picture of all the things going on for aboriginal children. We need our own Aboriginal SB6 group. The times that I've gone to the PLAY (mainstream Sb6 coalition in Victoria). I've observed that the mainstream needs are so immense and that our Aboriginal focus gets lost in all that. We need our own Aboriginal SB6 group as our issues are different then mainstream. Ideally we would be affiliated with PLAY, maintaining a connection is important as there is some overlap and relevancy between our needs/issues. For example, PLAY developed a great plan for how to fund a universal child care to advocate to government and these issues are the same for our community.

- Elders are crucial to the preservation of children's programs. Elders ensure the respect we bestow on our aging population is demonstrated by all family members in any function or community where our people gather. Their presence ensures protocol is followed, and questions can be addressed as they arise. Hearing history, and sharing in today's methods re: parenting, education, self-help, history, government etc. there will be an answer. It may take time, but the answer will come. Time is one of the issues we deal with everyday in our work, school, home and social life; everything is rushed and must be immediate. For many of us, this causes chaos and uncertainty. We need to "weave" our way with certainty and clarity, all family members taking a part in ensuring our children are being heard.
- By developing learning moments during programs to teach traditional practices and protocol. Before meals at gatherings take a moment to teach the traditional value of why we as First Nations People provide food because as you nourish yourself you are also eating the teachings and information that is being presented at the event and then it is now your responsibility to pass that information on. Have everyone doing this at every meal and meeting and gathering so it becomes integrated in their hearts and minds. And understanding takes place...
- Elders need to get involved in all activities. For example come down and do some fun games like Lahal with the kids. It is hard to find someone who can teach it.
- We need funding from government if the multicultural act is going to benefit us all and respect our worlds, some funding needs to be used to help us flourish – research the needs of families and communities and research who has the resources (e.g. language and culture in the community) and research how we can make sure these groups survive in our urban communities
- Be involved in advisories that provide guidance to programs that working within the community to understand and ensure culturally relevant, co-coordinated and integrated
- Need to have community engagement and community involved in all areas of program development and implementation. Support from all levels of gov't; including municipalities and school districts. Provide transportation and food. Culture needs to be woven through, not separated. Programs need to be structured, drop in does not necessarily work for children with extra needs.
- The old people need to be involved in the planning of all programs. We have a system that involves them after the fact and that is wrong. The old people know our ways our values and our culture, which was passed on through generations. The programs need to be offered by our own people and not by non first nations like it is now. I have noted that the western standards get in the way of being able to ensure they are culturally relevant.
- We need more of our First Nations qualified and certified teachers and instructors to be involved with our programs.

**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?***

**Culture Revitalization**

- Hosting a cultural night (language, recreational, arts & crafts)
- Community Dinners
- Parenting in a culturally appropriate ways (i.e. some parents are unaware of impact/effects of resident schools)
- Use of traditional governance (i.e. Big House Rights of Passage)
- Groups to teach cultural protocols, family lineage
- Help for parents to build self esteem – teach parents to be proud of who they are

**Improved Model of Service Deliver**

- More prevention and proactive supports versus reactive crisis responses
- Programs & Services offered outside 9-5 hours
- More spaces in programs – no waitlists
- Protocols with existing programs (e.g. KDC 3 bands defining partnerships)
- Get drugs out of the community
- Fundraising for lunch programs
- More parent community involvement
- Hosting community meetings to develop protocols between agencies
- Recognizing the strengths, gifts, wisdom & knowledge in the community
- Do a community inventory and identify the family strengths that already exist
- Empower your community and identify role models
- Be accepting of the differences and diversity that exist in our community
- Trusting each other in the community
- More parent/staff communication
- Build a relationship with health service providers including nurses, doctors to provide pro bono
- Collaborate with other agencies to provide information (health agency, KDC)
- Increased parent involvement/participation in decision making

**Types of Services & Programs**

- More workshops RE: drugs & alcohol, prevention information
- More youth drop in to prevent use of D&A

**Question 5: Telephone Responses**

- Involvement of the community, children, youth at all levels. Plan together. Leaders need to speak, communicate with the membership to know what they want. The community should become more self sustaining, economic development, the DIAND system controls us too much that we cannot operate the way we would like to. The leaders need to tell what they want and need rather than wait for it. Don't accept funding if it is going to work against you.

Start with the children now, they are our future, build on it now and in 15 -20 years you will see the evidence.

- Need to acknowledge what is already working and make sure they have the funding and resources. More use of the hub model, but we have to be careful around confidentiality at these centres. Make it more accessible and integrated. Funding needs to be more substantial, culture language and the higher needs of some of our children means we need more dollars to meet their needs and their families' needs.
- Ensure a safe early learning opportunity that connects the young children to community and culture such as a daycare, pre-school, afterschool care. Provide education/vocational counseling to assist families in obtaining employment.
- Families need to spend more time with the children
- More funding for spaces where families feel comfortable
- Programs need to find a way to disseminate information to know what programs have been successful – if a program is successful, right now only the stakeholders have access to that information – the community needs to know the successes/strengths of the program (e.g. have a space allotted in the community newspaper, Times Colonist)
- Create a link to reach the broader public about the programs that are available and successful
- Focus on what's working, we have the responsibility to learn what's going on in our community
- It's difficult because you want to partner up with everybody but your afraid the government might see it as a way to take money away from your program, or not give you any more because you have formed a partnership.
- Listen to what the youth say and hear what they want. Make them feel comfortable for them to approach you.
- We need more funding, more workers and elders to keep the centres open longer.
- We need more funding to go on cultural field trips and do it on a regular basis.
- Provide ongoing workshops and information sessions for native and non native people to learn about contact and history and get feedback and build on the content being taught and delivered. People need to understand why we do what we do and we need to know where we have come from in order to move ahead.
- Every voice has something to say and every ear must listen. Information is what makes up our community and completes it. Each community's needs are different, although similarities can and do exist. Pieces of the information must be gathered and brought together to identify what needs to happen next to reach desired goals and outcomes for the community. Recognition of individual strengths, abilities, and achievements encourage others to join a capacity building plan for all. Identifying the goals, and supporting one another to get there build's community spirit from the youngest member to the eldest.
- I would like to take this opportunity to express my concerns with the new initiative, Strong Start and the expansion of this to younger years. First off, we have a Strong Start in my

neighbourhood and I've brought my children there, my kids love it, it's a great program. My issue is that I'm concerned about the direction we're going in this province in terms of school-readiness related ECD programming. I know they see there are spaces available in schools, so they see it's as convenient to house ECD programs and but my concern is that direction of the proposed three and four year old kindergartens, preparing them for success in mainstream system. We all need to be cautious of supporting the expansion of the Strong Start programs. The funds that are going into Strong Start are at the expense of funding going into child care. Strong Start is not a solution to the child care crisis in our region. It services stay-at-home parents/caregivers only. The needs are much higher for full time, culturally enriched, quality child care in greater Victoria. Strong start is parent participation program, it doesn't help working families. There is nothing about them that is Aboriginal yet they used the HELP EDI results to target populations who have higher need and higher Aboriginal populations for the initial program start-ups in Victoria. Even though they've put the first round of Strong Starts in communities where highest populations of Aboriginal children, statistics are showing that Aboriginal people aren't participating in them. Our people are still afraid of the school system due to residential school experiences. I recently heard a comment made at a community meeting about how the Strong Starts were re-traumatization for this person who had been to residential schools and when she heard that they were thinking of expanding them to younger years of 3 and 4 year olds, she said, 'oh no, they're coming for our children again, they want them even earlier!'. Why shouldn't we be able to keep our children in the loving embrace of our own people, at least until they are five years old? I don't want to have to send my children off to the mainstream world at the age of one or even three or four, it's bad enough at age five. This is my dream for my children, to remain in the loving embrace of our people until they have to enter the school system at age five, that's soon enough.

- More consistent funding because who wants to come to program if you don't know whether it will be there in a year
- We need to honor where everybody comes from and their strengths in unity
- The education system needs to understand that not everyone learns in the same way
- Universities need to have cultural awareness classes
- The most important part of the child is their family
- They need to incorporate the Aboriginal ways of learning and not just the Western way of learning where we need to go outside to the land and bring the classroom outside
- To hire people that are qualified and resourceful.

Hire people with the desire to save our language and culture.

To come up with a common goal or several goals for our children. To pool money and resources together and come up with tangible results that will carry forward throughout the child's life time.

- To ensure that what has been learned to date will continue and not end when the money does.
- To provide short, medium and long term plans. Keep it a living document and find out what is successful and what isn't.
- To hire people with bonus incentives for providing successful programs to the community.
- I'm not sure how to answer that question. I think to build on existing strengths would be to promote cultural opportunities as much as possible so that new community members are aware of what's available to them
- Highlight those strengths. Put some resources into showing the mainstream community all the good things that are happening in our communities. Put on a conference to showcase all the positive programs and services and things our children and families and service providers are doing and invite the mainstream to it so it shifts world views of aboriginal culture so it is seen as positive rather than negative.
- Support the services that are already working
- Build a mentoring program by those who have been in service for so many years to students coming out of school (universities), there could be a stronger facilitated model to learn from those who have been in the industry for years, especially around cultural protocol
- Language and culture skills need to be transferred rather quickly to children to maximize their interest before entering the school system (e.g. found a language tape and now practicing it with my niece)
- Find any resources available to keep language alive because knowledge is quickly disappearing with the deaths of our elders
- We need to believe in our families letting them know that they have so much good to give. Highlight the positive things they are doing. We need to go back to the traditional way of being a community that supports each other and look for the strengths in the community. We need to put more support into keeping families together rather than just taking away their children. We need to put supports into their homes to keep them together.
- In our case, we have a lot of communities who are doing great things for space for children and families to connect with their Aboriginal heritage as Métis families. We need to support them and build on their capacities. The communities who are doing it well know how to do all the accessing of resources, but where there are gaps we need funding to help that community get empowered and put infrastructure in place. Community gatherings that are child friendly. We need to strengthen our human resources capacity and infrastructure. We are developing great resources, but don't always have the dollars to get them out to communities to use them properly.
- We need an FTE and merks to help get resources out to community, this would also need a travel budget. We need someone to help us implement at community level. We need capacity dollars to create a resource kit that is culturally relevant and be able to share it with our 36 communities and 5 Metis children and family service providers. 3-5 year mulit year

funding would allow us to do an appropriate needs assessment and develop programming that is appropriate and truly meet the needs of our children and families. More opportunities for information sharing with other organizations who are doing work similar to ours.

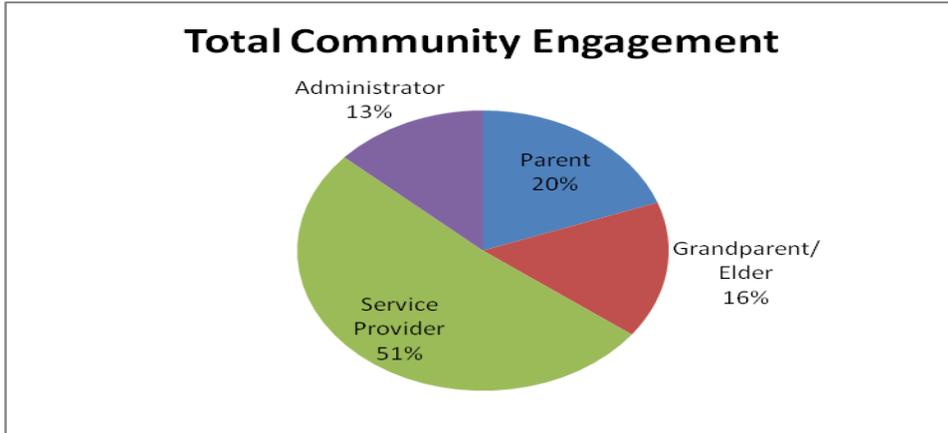
- One question is how does the conversation continue? It is great the province is doing this, but what about after?
- I think there is a definite place for Elders in the Schools. Not only in the capacity of storyteller but also to deal with disruptions with the students. When we had this at Haa huu payuk, problems with the students were then dealt with immediately and gently. Also the students were looked after. Because of our legacy some of our families have problems they are dealing with. Some children came to school tired because there had been a “party” in their house the night before. Some came in dirty clothes because their parents did not have a washer and dryer and so could not do laundry often. Some students did not have a lunch because there was no money at home. Some students came soaking wet on rainy days because they did not have umbrellas or boots or good winter jackets. The school addressed this problem by having a washer and dryer for wet clothes, they also had some spare clothes children could borrow while their clothes were being looked after. They had a folding cot for the children who needed to sleep. And they provided cereal and toast for breakfast and soup and buns for lunch for the students without food. This was the work of the two Elders who were employed there as cultural workers. Although the school provided the washer and dryer the two Elders cooked the soup themselves from groceries they had at home. They recognized that these students had to have their basic needs met before they could do their school work. There was no stigma attached to accessing these programs and no teasing was allowed against these students. In fact, many of the students with lunches hid their lunches or gave them away so they could access the soup and sandwich of the day. In a non-native school, there would be all kinds of rules, regulations, and policies, put in the way of something like this. Our people recognize that to have children learning they have to be fed and comfortable. Their input was recognized by the board and the problem was addressed in a traditional way, by doing something about the problem not just the fallout from the problem. And the children were not made to feel there was something wrong with them. Bullying is still a big problem. And it will continue to be as long as Principals and teachers continue to say things like, “I have never seen that happen” or “Surely he would have told someone if he was being bullied. He never said anything so this did not happen.” For our children to function well they need to feel safe. And again Education is key when we are talking about the people working with our children. There is a program called naanaaneqsuu haahuupa that is being offered by a young man in our community. This program teaches people about our history by putting them in our place for an afternoon. Programs like this need to be not only offered but be mandatory for a Professional Development Day. And yes, I realize not everyone will be open but those who are open will be able to have a positive influence on our children.

## **DESIRED SERVICES**

- Buddy care system for kids
- Counselling/support/preventive & awareness RE: sexuality
- Grandparents support group
- Aboriginal daycare's available
- Speech & language development
- Sign language classes
- Nutritional program (vitamins)
- Cooking classes
- Bully prevention
- Clothing & Toy Family Swap
- Nutrition
- Accessible medicines
- Full coverage of medical, dental, health, vision care, & hearing
- Budgeting programs: Learn what is a living wage? How much does it cost to live? Learn about finances and budgeting
- Workshops for families: Time management, drugs & alcohol, prevention information baking and preserving workshops
- Provide life & living skills programs
- More youth drop in to prevent use of D&A

## Total # of Participants in Community Engagements: 216

- # Completed with Parents: 42
- # Completed with Grandparents/Elders: 34
- # Completed with Service Providers: 111
- # Completed with Administrators: 2

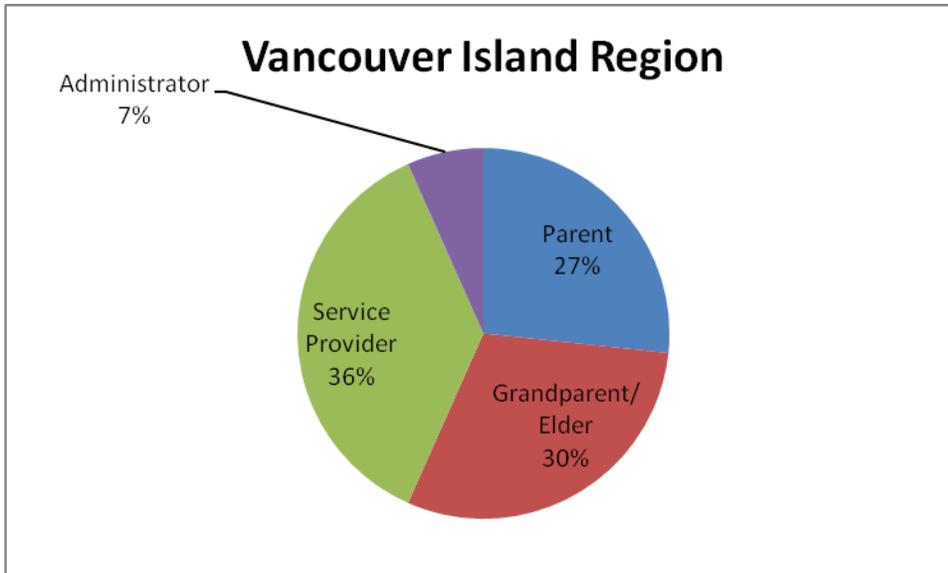


## Vancouver Island Region

November 12<sup>th</sup> Host: Laichwhiltach Family Life Society: Campbell River

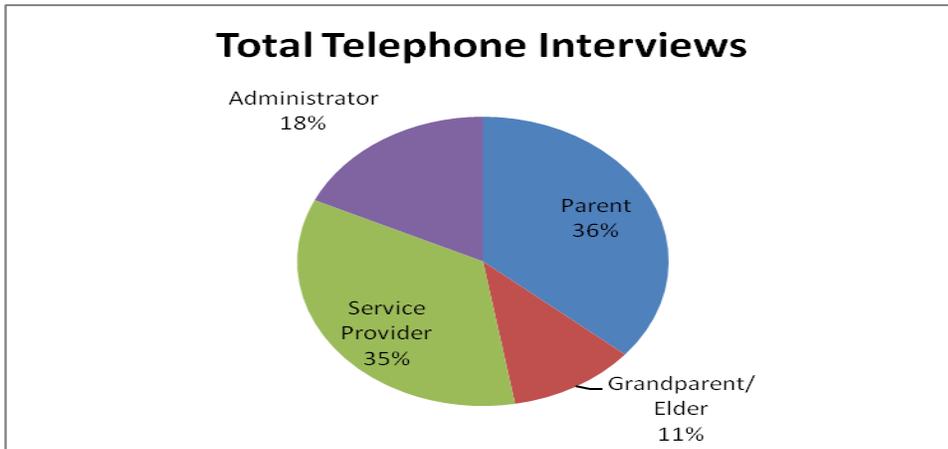
November 14<sup>th</sup> Host: Hiiye' yu Lelum Society: Duncan

**Total # of participants: 30**



## Total # of Telephone Interviews completed: 72

- # Completed with Parents: 26
- # Completed with Grandparents/Elders: 8
- # Completed with Service Providers: 25
- # Completed with Administrators: 13



## Vancouver Island Region

- Total # of participants: 16
- Parent: 7
- Grandparent/Elder: 1
- Service Provider: 7
- Administrator: 1

*\*Six individuals identified as Parent and Administrator, by their request, they have been calculated as parent. One identified as Elder and Service provider and requested to be calculated as an Elder.*

