



Elders and MCFD Collaborative Meetings Summary

Background

Sasamans Society hosted two meetings for the purpose of collaboration between our communities' Elders and MCFD staff in Port Hardy and Campbell River. The first meeting was funded by the provincial office under the permanency fund and the second was funded by Campbell River/Port Hardy regional office. There were 18 Elders invited, 9 from the North and 9 from the South. However all seats were not filled at either meeting due to invited participants having other commitments.

March 21/22 Meeting

During the first collaborative meeting, which took place in Campbell River, the Elders shared their experience, wisdom and recommendations for strengthening and supporting MCFD in improving Aboriginal service delivery.

They brainstormed on what cultural safety means to them and how to ensure it will be practiced. The process was inspiring to see how they view safety in self, the home and the community as the foundation for cultural safety.

They spent time discussing what name they could call their committee as they were looking for traditional names that reflected the work of the committee. A decision was deferred to the next meeting. It was determined that there will be two committees: one in Port Hardy and one in Campbell River.

Terms of reference were drafted by the Executive Director following this meeting based on information received from the Elders regarding roles and responsibilities for the committee and its members. The purpose of the Elders Committee is: to provide leadership and support the Ministry in improving Aboriginal Services for our people on the north island.

May 22/23 Meeting

The purpose of the second meeting was to discuss the formation of a committee for the North and South Island and refining the roles and responsibilities. In addition, the Elder's identified what they will need in order to fulfill their roles. Both groups requested workshops regarding:

health and wellness, public speaking, conflict resolution, addressing residential school issues, enhancing communication skills and relationship building (with MCFD). It was suggested that there be community meetings (lunch) for reciprocal information sharing.

Strategic planning for the committees will take place when the Elders are ready and the completion of the TOR re: guiding principles and criteria for membership.

The participants were energized by a presentation of the “Granny’s Group” from the Lax Kw’laams Band, Port Simpson. This group has been in existence for eight years and is only beginning to do what our Elders are embarking upon. This information provided the Elders with the reality of how long it can take to formalize their committee and begin work with the Ministry.

A future objective will be to develop a third Elders committee based in Courtenay/Comox.

The Elders also wanted to know what MCFD’s wish list was in order to work with them. MCFD staff members identified the following:

- 1. Organize Elders to help us – how can we bring our kids home to their communities**
 - Use the wisdom that Elders have
 - Need to feel safe in this Committee – who do we include – how do we move forward

- 2. To Create Cultural Safety**
 - What are things that MCFD can do this fiscal year to create a welcoming office?
 - Have a manual explaining what MCFD does and how things are done, i.e. legislation that outlines MCFD work
 - Support the creation of more aboriginal foster homes (an aboriginal foster home should be considered first for an aboriginal child, but there needs to be one available).
 - Preplanning – if a family is struggling we can make a plan ahead of time – work with the family – bring in MCFD to help – hold an FCPC
 - Make sure people are aware of support programs. Elders can help with this
 - Social Worker (SW) to connect with Bands and work together and with family to keep children at home
 - Connect kids to community – not just immediate family. (Elders can help with this)

- 3. Education**
 - Ministry – prepare orientation for Elders
 - Hold a ‘Fair’ to showcase what people (SWs) do
 - Encourage or kids to be SWs