



SUMMARY OF THE CYFN CULTURALLY RELEVANT HOLISTIC HEALTH PLANNING CONFERENCE December 1-3, 2009

BACKGROUND

December 1 to 3, 2009, the Health and Social department of CYFN sponsored a *Culturally Relevant Holistic Health Planning Conference*. The purpose of the conference was to discuss a community driven Holistic Health and Social Planning approach. The idea for the conference arose from discussions with the Health and Social Commission. Information collected during the Community Health Scan in all 14 Yukon First Nations (YFN) communities also indicated a need to explore holistic community health planning. The conference brought together representatives of different YFN departments to share how their respective departments contribute to the health and wellbeing of the community. The conference asked how can Yukon First Nations traditional practices be further incorporated into community health and social plans, and draw upon the strengths of the communities. The Conference combined a rich program of cultural activities, stimulating keynote speakers and small and large group learning activities. Below is a summary of the facilitators documents and quotes from conference participants.

"It is their spirit that I connect with. You can talk about all the planning in the world. If you don't put that spiritual in with cultural and traditional it is going to get lost. I have really felt compelled to say this to you while we're here for three days; let's make sure we have that in the planning" –

Conference participant

WORKSHOP “PRODUCTS”

Two models emerged out of the Community Holistic Health Planning Conference through the contributions of the guest speakers and the conference participants.

1. An indigenous planning model

Randall Tetlichy presented a way of understanding holistic health planning that stresses the importance of involving the whole community in a process that has the following elements.

<i>Seeing together:</i>	Creating a common vision of wellbeing and prosperity
<i>Talking together:</i>	Analyzing community challenges and resources
<i>Listening together:</i>	Making a safe space for everyone’s voice to be heard
<i>Thinking together:</i>	Identifying new pathways into the future and making plans for the journey
<i>With a humble heart:</i>	Putting aside our own egos, personal agendas and any feelings of superiority
<i>Braiding it all together:</i>	Moving forward in unity with the understanding that all things are interconnected

“I was so amazed. In one family we [had] a good hunter and a good cook and a person who could knit and a person who could weave. It was just so amazing the talent and the gifts that we had within just our community.” Conference participant

“TAKE AWAY” LESSONS FROM THE COMMUNITY HOLISTIC HEALTH PLANNING CONFERENCE

Workshop participants were clear that certain elements are essential for successful holistic health planning. These are summarized below.

1. A health department alone cannot bring health to a community, although it has a very important role. Many different community programs and agencies need to collaborate to create a balanced community.
2. Healing and development comes from within. Every individual, family and community has to participate actively in his or her own development.

3. Energy for healing and development processes comes from connection to spirit. There are many spiritual paths, and they all need to be honored and given a place in the circle.
4. A plan by itself is not enough to create sustainable change. Once a plan has been developed, the task of aligning the community's existing program plans with the new comprehensive plan has to be done.
5. It is important to be as inclusive as you can to start. The circle just needs to stay open, so that others can join in as they are attracted to the vision and the positive changes that are taking place.
6. Doing things in a new way—a way that will produce different results than those that current plans and activities are producing—will require learning.

"If you are going to be a role model to our people then you're going to have to be sober. It was so empowering. We were kind of walking in the middle. We felt way up here because we walked out on the limb. These people are really going to give it to us. A big majority of our First Nation, especially in our health and social, are sober. Like someone said earlier, you have to walk your talk. They see it." – Conference participant

THE ROLE OF AN INTERMEDIARY ORGANIZATION

The literature on organizational development and community building has clearly shown that collaboratives/communities of practice do not begin or sustain themselves without facilitative leadership. One of the primary functions of intermediaries can be to help create the space for collaboratives to evolve and to facilitate learning processes that are tailor-made to the development needs of their members over the long term.

"The only difference with the western world, [is that for] mental help you go to a mental place. Justice you go to court. The native way is holistic. That is the difference. That is why we have a hard time surviving. People say go here, go here, go here. In your work you have to put things together. You have to put that traditional knowledge and western knowledge. Make it work." – Conference participant

Overall the participants felt the program was useful and overdue.

"I think everyone has a voice and needs to be heard." – Conference participant