

Social Policy Forum Open Space Proceedings

February 18-19, 2016
Victoria BC



THE FEDERATION
of COMMUNITY SOCIAL SERVICES of BC

Introduction

This document is the proceedings from the first day of an Open Space Social Policy Forum sponsored by The Federation of Community Social Services of BC. The forum was called to look at the implications raised by *Paige's Story* and to invite people from agencies and government to discuss how to begin to address these problems differently.

This document is a collection of raw reports that were completed by each Open Space session. These reports document highlights of conversations and in some cases document detailed points raised in discussions.

To learn more about each conversation, contact the conveners, most of who furnished email addresses.

The set of discussion summaries are preceded by a poem written by one of the participants, Meredith Graham, who captured words and images from the day and shared them in our closing circle. We begin with the poem...

What song have you sung?

Meredith Graham

It begins when it begins.

What is it that the people in this room sing? What good can today bring?

I am where I need to be; embroiled in the mystery.

Are you running out of, or away from, fear? Away from where we were towards our space and time here. With praise, gratitude, and power in this hour.

Can we recognize our privilege in walking alongside one another?

Perhaps we need to slow down, show up, shift sideways to invite others – everyone – in. Be in circle without running in circles.

The community to raise its own. Being led. Being shown how what has been reaped has been sown. Home. Grown.

Time.

Time.

Time.

For a new crop; for us to rise to the top and build one another up by building together. We are the anchor and the tether.

Caution: we are in prevention construction.

Be right back: we are currently deconstructing and busy rebuilding. Bridges, roads, pathways that won't fall down.

Tasked with asking hard questions.

How do we sit at the same table and break the same bread? Or take away the table and gather around in a round space, instead? With gratitude and with grace. How do we get to that place?

And if young people are our future why are they not presently present? How can we make room for them to represent?

Individual communities and nations within a global community and a national, or worldwide, nation.

We are the people inside all of it. We are, after all, people too.

And, like two ships in the night or two sides acting in fear, how can we support each other and our allies to appear? How do we make barriers disappear?

How can we dance? Together?

You are part of my relations. Regardless of the delegation.

How can we stand on our land and care for our children? All our children. All my children.

While working within a system that is rusty. Made by, respectfully, some old white dudes. We must remember we are the oil. We are the earth. We are the soil.

What is in a name?

A social worker can be a social worker; measuring signs of safety and resiliency with persistent consistency.

Stop the force-fitting. It doesn't seem to work and leads to people quitting.

We exist in an interesting dichotomy of fear and believing we know what's best.

Perhaps that perception, that notion, and that potion we drink need to be put to rest. It doesn't work. We've failed the test.

We need to infuse and influence our policy with arts and culture. A communicative means to healing.

To not just talk.

To, in fact, stop talking.

United and included in one room. As conveyors of hope, innovation, and declarations of motivation for a better walking space of our human race. We are all one people.

To be challenged is to move forward. Look behind because it is valuable to read the signs and recognize where we no longer want to go.

Partners in creation.

In elevation.

In aging our children into community.

Former foster kid. I'm lost and I feel loss. Where are my gains and celebrations?

How come my train isn't at the station?

People tell me I am going places. I see no vehicle. Planes, trains, and automobiles.

All the options somewhere in existence and yet I have no ability to access available mobility.

Perhaps I can sit and stay. Until I am ready to move on – not move away.

How can we formalize a plan and formally recognize our forever kids?

We're not extending the age but we're extending the love. Removing barriers, stipulations, and regulations through legislation.

We have a duty to provide opportunities through expansion and substantiation.

The government is my parent. They must, too, be my guardian.

It's not about the title of Ward of the State. It's about being cared for while Being in Care. And not letting me go. Because I still need to grow.

We know the story. We've lived the worry. Somehow we get the blame and we don't get the glory.

How do we incite a riot? (Just kidding, Bev, I didn't say that...)

Who are you? What are your values and what is your value?

Our young people are our leaders. Dance with us. Let us lead.

I have listened and I have learned from my brothers and my sisters.

My heart is both heavy and light as my ears were lent in your direction. Connection.

Our journey.

My hands, open in gratitude multiple times over, for your spirit, openness, personality, and attitude. Am I soft and old or loving and bold?

Your authentic selves. Our authentic collective.

The lens of hopeful potential with and without credentials.

Essential to move together, feeling our feet, flat on the ground, listening to the earth and our hearts swell. May it, may you, be well.

We are on the same page. Rallying as allies together for all our Paige's. What is our collective, partnered, powerful story?

Silence.

What song have we song?

This is your wisdom. These are your truths.

Go forward knowing it is never done.

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Risk and imagination in our services

Convener:

Rebecca Ataya

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Summary of discussions

This conversation wove itself in a whole bunch of directions...cats, trampolines and criminal record checks all had their moment. But we were left wondering if it would be better for care if rather than doing things quietly that are good for our clients but deemed risky whether we expose ourselves to more risk and are actually missing an opportunity to advance practice.

We talked about what it would be like to convene a practice conversation once a year and look for opportunities to help direct and shift practice and policy with the funding ministries. We wondered about taking a more proactive role as a group in doing this.

How do we get human beings to value difference, as just difference?

Convener:

Kathy Powelson

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Summary of discussions

- Are there really incompatible differences? What are ways we can reconcile these differences, in order to enable us to work together on a common goal?
- It is okay to have the differences if you have a degree of trusts and respect for one another. So the question can be how do we build that trust and respect so the differences are less of a contentious issue?
- How do we get others to respect and trust us?
- Have to be willing to take a risk. Part of being a leader is facilitating that to happen.
- How do we create an optimal environment? The real challenge is often ourselves. I have to first acknowledge that I am having trouble with this difference. Engage the populations we are working to serve. Get their perspectives/experience. Will help us remember who and what we are working towards and for.
- Find an agreement in an outcome, and then start talking about how we can make that happen.
- Speak the unspoken at the beginning
- Start with focusing on what you do agree with
- Acknowledge the differences at the beginning and confirm that these differences are okay
- Can we “teach” a group how to “regulate” our reactions?

- Can we act as remodels by working with someone we have differences with?
- Learn how to represent our thinking in a calm and deliberate manner?
- Pay attention to how things are set up to have the discussions. Difference meeting styles/structures etc., allow for varying levels of discourse and dialogue...where people can feel safe to disagree and engage in a conversation about that.
- Pay attention to how our systems and structures are set up to resolve conflict.
- Pay attention to process, and to invite the “other”.
- Remove the judgement around other and categories and recognize the value of these systems.

How do we use what we know about our communities to help others who don't have that same level of information to care and engage?

Convenor:

Rebecca Lang

Summary of discussions:

- More care in people in our communities/province who maybe just don't understand the same things we see as community social services and this feels like untapped champions.
- How do we change care?
- How do we utilize information that maintains privacy and doesn't exploit stories?
- Report from VF around misconceptions around foster care.
- What do we need to say? share? Are we going about this the wrong way?
- Caring people who don't think about this stuff? i.e. family who is looking for childcare, now seeing the lack of services. Providing insight like cost of care, regulations, pay of providers.
- Shift people's perspective? Is this even a valid use of our energy?
- Went to unicef gathering to discuss why Canada ranked so low in child welfare/ issues - built resources such as documentary, youth booth to talk to parliament. Possibility to bring expertise together: graphic designer, documentarian, tech people.
- Form your group and then interview people in different industries and bring lessons back to room.
- Conference - half social service sector/half business - learn from one another, listen
- Competition and Collaboration - one thing that happened in sector, more with less, has created competition rather than collaboration. So how do we come together more collaboratively to give message of community rather than organization. And more collaborative with other sectors. Not just partner for money.
- How do engage community in conversation, especially youth aging out of care. There is something everyone in community can do to support. Something people can grab onto.

- Do we need to worry about those who don't care? Or focus on those who do care. Or once there is awareness, people tend to care. Relate issues to own personal experience or their children, immediate empathy.
- Public Opinion research, huge jump in people who felt there should be support for youth who age out up to 25. Media, tragic stories, ongoing coverage. Shifting province and lower mainland. Understand how hard it is for young adults. Affordability. Don't really know why, but combination.
- Does the average person in community care about kids in care or are they so focused on their own kids?
- Distinctive difference of feelings around kids in care vs. aging out of care. Still stigma of kids in care, but with aging out, empathy shifts.
- Article around people's need. i.e child who gets sick by no fault of anyone (children's hospital). But hard when they see "other" such as parent's whose children go into care or addiction. Because don't want to look at the possibility of happening to self/family.
- People are more engaged when seeing someone who is not in sector speaking up, like sports star/celebrity.
- Think beyond own circumstances, but community's circumstances.
- Once: Health, welfare and education - 3 pillars, but now don't talk about welfare. Political talk about economy. Consumerism drives us. Community being how close to shopping. Need a shift in ideology.
- Pope Francis - revolution
- What if we are successful in people caring, but stay in own life. Not sure have caring to give to someone/thing else.
- What is it going to cost me to care? What shift do I need to make?
- Spend 2 hours at mall or 30 minutes and 90 minutes engaged in community. How you live your life. Investment of time, just as much an issue as money.
- Even if it is inviting a kid in care for dinner to your family. But barriers in place such as crim check to be engaged. Would average person even know what is involved in being involved.
- Look at natural environment, have a perception of we live here and will continue to live here and care about "this place" rather than individual houses just flipping house. Loss of relational connections.
- Child aging out needs connections that stay over time.
- Occupy movement, interesting around without megaphone, repeating of question so everyone can hear. Thought around what I say. Ripple.
- You can get people to care, but caring doesn't mean money or understanding or knowledge of then, what do you do???
- Invested in topic, but then what? Write cheque, talk to a politician. Want to do something but don't know what to do. We understand feeling of not knowing.
- Personal responsibility of not knowing. Relationships with those who did. Sharing knowledge. Passing on of issues. Ripple effect. Potential.
- Linking of skills to context.
- Transition. Mentored. Example of young men, mentored by older men to hunt (traditionally). Apprenticeship programs, more than just the work. Relationships. More mentorship. Caring. Taking time to mentor younger generation. Even if not official, more common and intentional in everyday life. Maybe happens more for women?

- Conversations in the workplace, to guide and mentor even if not activist. Finding moments to teach.
- How much is this about grass roots transformation vs. top down dissemination. One or the other? Both? Think both, room for both. Two can go together and don't have to be at odds with one another. Personal becoming political. Percolate up. Frustration not seeing it percolate up. Hit ceiling all the time
- One reason sector has problem getting funding, the government doesn't see the possibility for real change. Don't believe they see the worth because don't believe. Fund short term need.
- Public Policy Institute, looking at election. "stop playing in the same sandboxes". Don't just appeal to supporters. Social services need to invite those who aren't necessarily friendly to sector, but the big sector players. Show how economy improves when people are out of poverty.
- Justice policies for children. Be strategic in who you are talking to. Campaigns to engage broader and hit least caring. Don't need them to care, but see how it helps them economically or politically.
- Not just care. Different levels of care/involvement.
- Amnesty did a campaign where they asked current donors/supporters to take 10 postcards and give them to 10 people in their circle. Not asking for money, just letting them know you are involved and maybe go to website. Relationship piece, easy.
- Need a song/anthem.
- Unions/revolutions have songs.
- Techniques to convince people. Save money, safety, engage people with what they care about not start with the issue that is a hard topic. What's in it for them.
- 700 a year age out. Not as simple as extending foster care. Extending support. Other places have done it. Can learn. Cost to other sectors, such as health or justice. Save money.
- Sad that it takes something really big to shift, like kids aging out dying. But shifts immediacy, but not really long term. Often no connecting of issues.
- Talk of child poverty as if they are on their own, not linking single mothers or domestic violence. Needs to move beyond, see the bigger context.
- Budget, good to add new social workers, but is it addressing why kids come into care in the first place?
- Feeds into black hole. Gave more money but problem still there. How do we paint bigger picture without sounding self-interested? Solve immediate, relieve some pressure, but doesn't change problem.
- What is the disconnect? i.e. hiring more cops doesn't reduce crime, unless money also put into crime prevention.
- How much influence do I have with peers? But may have influence with younger generation. Invest in younger generation for long term change. Maybe they are part of solution. Occupy. See in freshness of federal government. Maybe that is part of solution, engaging those just coming into scene.
- It might be the 20 year old who sees the 19 year old age out, who can relate and care.
- Work in gangs, look to leaders to get message out, but meant meeting them halfway.

- When Fed meets, often who isn't in the room is the youth/young adult/frontline staff.
- Put out information that could be shared not just with Directors but also staff, on policies related to election (not to influence vote) but to show how they can translate their experience to have voice in political community. Informed in practice and see how they fit in larger system.
- All staff professional day, give information on taxes/voting, don't see how it relates to them?
- Engagement pieces are exciting and frontline staff are often the most innovative. Often don't have time to step back and reflect. Bringing people who do work together.
- Need youth to be part of the conversation. Get a different point of conversation.
- Good to get them engaged, even if negatively. Care enough to be angry, is good.
- What strategy has been successful in past? i.e. smoking cessation. Not one message or strategy, but it worked. What can we learn from that? Shifted consciousness.
- Changing messaging from what we do to who we are? What do we do to help kids aging out? to - What do we care about? BC cares about kids. Expand to all kids. Values, identity.
- If we can get ahead, predict problem so we can have the solution when time is right. If not listening right now, spend energy getting ready for when the door does open a crack.
- Summary: Complex work, this isn't one strategy. Depending on what we are trying to achieve. Whether that is using revolutionary tactics, or being ambassadors who spread the message, or engaging other people who are not "in our sandbox". Look beyond our borders. Need to reframe for people to listen.
- Image - octopus with megaphones - different messages, song.

Overcoming Skepticism

Convenor:

Paul Sheaves

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Summary of discussions

Convenor: "those that forget the past are doomed to repeat it."

1990's – Judge Gove and Matthew Vaudreal

2015 – Paige

- Both about failure to attend to client
- Lost the ability to do 'one more thing'

So, what next? How to make a more complete solution?

- Being willing to say 'no' and allowing consequences to flow to government – hard to do when youth at risk

- Looking into the hardship and telling the stories to public to influence government – keeping the movement in the spotlight
- Support each other
- To be determined....?

To engage the public/community in the 'movement' to influence government., and be involved in community-based initiatives, to support youth and vulnerable individuals

Convenor:

Shane Picken
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Summary of discussions:

The example of how the public perceptions has changed over the last 3 years from 40% to 70% now believing that youth in care need support and services to transition to adulthood and independence (beyond age 19)

The drivers were increased awareness of the needs of these youth the connection to their own experience of the struggles all youth face today in this transition.

'People' in the community want to help and need support to see how to need to help.

We need to make the issues real to them and connect them to their own experience

- Touch their heart
- Convene conversations/initiatives at the community level to learn and get involved – broad invitation to public, media, business leaders, youth, families, vulnerable people
- Ask vulnerable youth/individuals how they would like to be helped?
- By adults in community, services govt
- Host and support those opportunities for youth to get involved in our community and for community people to get involved in helping youth (in ways they want to help)
- Build the 'positive narrative' e.g. "vulnerable youth are kids, they can be helped" – everyone can contribute to solutions – 'services at work' – it takes a village to raise a child' etc
- Engage own friends (personal and in community) to build the movement
- Target the silent majority – don't waste time haters/nay-sayers.

Moving from Crisis to Prevention Services

Facilitator:

James Challman

- Can we apply business models of “research and development” to the social policy questions would we find that “promising practices” net new community wellness and preventative practices? We are ruled by risk management too often.
- Evidence-based, research-based programs often do not allow for innovation
- Combination of innovation and best practices knowledge.
- Health (example given) has spent a fair bit of their focus on wellness knowing that the health-care spending is not sustainable
- Examples to draw on for use in the social services sector
- Look at tracking the spending on wellness/prevention to prove that investing in it is a way of creating healthier communities.
- No public education on the social service sector (unlike the education that does go on in other sectors like Health).
- Fraser Institute- type rating system for the social service sector around “healthy communities”.
- Need to get away from individualization to “we are all in this together”
- We are victims of our own messaging because we work with images/stories of people in crisis to tell our story
- Crisis and prevention are not either/or. There will always be unexpected events.
- How do we find ways to do preventative work, celebrate it and not move into crisis AND still be able to show good practices and the ramifications?
- Courage to work on convictions is needed – not flavour of the day. Leadership is a necessary component.
- How do we get a social service agenda like a wellness plan onto government’s agenda?
- Sustainability plans (example in New Brunswick) are needed
- How do we switch the practice from reacting to crisis?
- Gov’t perspective: choice between helping people in immediate crisis versus assisting someone down the road by providing prevention
- Assets based approach to problems to be considered
- Why are we short-sighted? We could have predicted that if the resources are taken away, a few years later we would have a crisis. Tools and research are there but we are not using them as we could.
- How do we get to the place where we don’t have to choose; we do more with more.
- It would be nice to get to a place where we don’t have to choose.
- Why do we not have more resources that can be accessed without the referral/assessment/case management process that is such a requirement.
- Sometimes we don’t know if a set of clients would have needed crisis services later on because we didn’t collect data from prevention services.
- Contracts are focused too specifically on people, services, etc.
- We focus on the sub-groups and keeping them from getting worse while we should be looking at a focus on keeping a community healthy.

- Sometimes it might be about “risking” more. We have become quite risk adverse and provide this with services in mind.
- Need a revolutionary leader.
- We need to focus on “wellness” because it is so much more engaging. Community wellness (check out resources related to this concept through Positive Behavioural Supports.)
-
- People at the bottom of the triangle need less services than those at the top; majority of people in a community will be at the lower part of the triangle
-
- People in our communities are really diverse; why do we say for those people that a support doesn’t work for that they need a special accommodation? We assume that the standards we have right now are the right way?
- Switching language from social services needs to “community wellness”; we can make a movement out of this
- Throne speech was one of crisis: six points at the end were “we will be there” statements; the only statement that resonated with social services issues was one of being there in crisis.
- Move from the “independent spirit” we have absorbed to the “take care of each other” mentality
- WE do know the whole story and how it works.

Sharing the story of our communities

Convenor

Rebecca Ataya

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Summary of discussions:

We talked about the intention of our sharing and how this guides how we share. Do we want people to understand something they didn't understand before?

Do we want them to care? To act? To vote? To be united in a cause? We talked about the tools we may need - songs and stories? And we wondered about how to engage younger workers and citizens in these issues?

The stars are aligning

Convenor

Lori Dennis – lori.dennis@options.bc.ca

Summary of discussions:

A conversation about the ongoing disconnect between on the ground and policy makers

We want a conversation; all levels of government

Government non-profit initiative

- Bring sector leaders together including government
- Policy, contracts, operations, procurement
- LMP grants - \$5million
- Then the economic downturn appeared that govt. lost its steam (2008 – 2010)
- Best of intentions on all parties
- There's a paper on this from 2014? – on innovative sustainability

New initiative: sustainability round table

- Complex
- Flatline budget
- How do we work collaboratively
- Some legacy pieces have been done
- Union, govt, NPO's
- Spirit of collaboration

The stars are aligning for a more collective movement: BC election year

Bring together BC NPO's collective in partnership with govt.

- There are specialized projects where this happens i.e Violina Free BC
- NPO's need to engage govt @relationship level
- NPO's bring 'added value' to the conversation ie community based service
- Cross-sector secondment?
- Economy of scalee
- We must keep specialized voices heard
- Keep voices loud

Actions

1. May 12 Conference

Prov. Associations gather for one association – who are those associations

Third Voice with an interim Board of Directors to engage with Government for our own agenda

2. Develop personal relationships with government officials – elected; civil servants

Keep them informed
Read the ministers mandate letters

3. Fed hosts a network of like minded individuals/org – online, accessible, phone calls – then feed outcomes to ‘Third Voice’

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- How do we get others to respect and trust us?
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- Pay attention to how our systems and structures are set up to resolve conflict.
- Pay attention to process, and to invite the “other”.
- Remove the judgement around other and categories and recognize the value of these systems.

Food Security

Convenor

Andrea Mears
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Summary of discussions:

- Need to coordinate food initiatives
- People going to school, looking for a job, overcoming addictions need food.
- Food and shelter are things everyone needs
- If looking at the needs of people we're serving- people need food
- Federation should develop a position paper on food and the importance of feeding people and meeting their needs.
- There are concrete solution and things we can try that will improve the lives of people we serve
- There is a lack of funding for food –our funders need to recognize the importance of food
- There are some innovative things being done and it should be done across the sector

How to reduce placement movement of children in biological, kinship and foster homes

Convenor:

Dan Malone
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Summary of discussions:

Idea's/Nuggets

- Intensive and broad and unique support to caregivers
- 'placement' is just a place – the planning and caring is ongoing
- Relationship, re-unification or some piece of both - what is in the child's best interest?
- *Team decisions – MCFD, family, children, community members, other professionals* (important)
- Principle of integrated care management to be re-visited
- Families, children and youth need to have space to talk and be heard
- Need to value healthy people, healthy communities
- Really pause and listen
- 'Mattering'
- Don't lost sight of impact we have on every individual
- Can we make space for the really huge topics 'I'm terrified of this youth I'm living with' 'I'm gutted that I had to apprehend children'
- Can we challenge apathy and indifference?
- Should we be advocates for more preventative work and more community support e.g. 'it takes a village to raise a child'
- Child's best interest in number 1 – they are the most vulnerable

How to do more with less; possibilities and challenges

Convenor:

Sylvia Ceacero
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Summary of discussions:

Key take away:

- Review of programs and services to streamline and make "tough" choices
- Volunteers are a great source of doing "more for less" if recognition and appreciation
- Students are another great source of doing more with less
- Secondment between government and NFP practitioners two- way street.

How do we shift the conversation from "doing more with less" to "doing more with more" ?

Convenor:

Michel Pouliot
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Most of us have seen budgets stay static with cost increasing and demand increasing. We have seen public opinion value the economic argument over the "People Values" or civil responsibility. We need to fight the perspective that social services are not efficient and sometimes wasteful (reinforced by the Portland hotel society)

We (the sector) aren't really partners with government we provide a service government pays for. There is a fair price for that and we as partner agencies need to stand united and say NO. We aren't going to continue to do more with less and we aren't willing to silently let you compromise the value of the services British Columbian need. We can allow procurement process to drive wages and or service down

Perception of the public is that community social services agencies are volunteer based charitable organization and therefore should just be happy with what they get. We need to shift that public perception. We need a public relations campaign that Start with identifying the value our sector has and bring to focus the reality that we are part of what a civil society is.

Potential partners: BCGEU, CUPE. AMSSA, ASPECT, Board Voice

Ontario has a campaign promoting the value of social services.

More to a 6 hour work week

Where and How do we make space for arts in healing and government

Convenor

Meredith Graham
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Summary of discussions:

We discussed where arts and healing are used in government and noticed that it encourages and supports empower and voice. All this come from creativity and in order to do new things, we need to work with creativty,

- Communication tools for folks with disabilities+ FOR ALL PEOPLE healing around trauma
- Art removes the divide of communication
- Illusive nature of art to just be and have and SHARED
- Ancestral connection, human belonging, history and knowing where you have come from and what guides you
- Artists are our Allies and often want to contribute and give back
- Left brain vs right brain planning
- Invest vs appreciate art
- Do new things in order to do new thing you need to create
- CREATION
- Discernment and knowledge
- Someone needs to be brave enough to bring it forward in our everyday practice
- Bridging and being the steward into our places of employment, a practice to expose and engage and connect with others
- Empowering –it brings people together and allows room for conversation and connection
- Specific organizations created to incorporate art

Keeping youth safe that won't stay at home or in a placement and are high risk vulnerable, unemployed, unable to attend school, couch surfing or living on the streets

Convener:

Hilary

Summary of discussions:

- Supports provided earlier in life – trauma informed, strengths based
- Supports catered to each youths ability
- Peer groups/ mentors to help connect/support other youth (that have experienced the same issues)
- Need continuum of services
- Flexible services/supports

- Low barriers! Groups with minimum expectations/low barriers to provide a place to eat (pizza's), have a nap, or just be safe; after trust/respect is built, try and increase expectations, opportunities for youth
- Attachment and connection for youth extremely important
- Intergenerational trauma is a fact
- We need to change the lens from punitive to needing supports and providing them
- We expect too much from youth – dealing with trauma-affected brain, even with a 'normal' brain too young for these life choices
- Need more involvement from communities – community raises a child
- Need flexibility of service contracts and consolidated budget

How do we ensure diversity and inclusion in the sector? How do we create space or get out of the way?

Convener

Michelle Fortin
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Summary of discussions

- Does the Federation have a connection to AMSSA or an intentional plan to provide outreach to the immigrant serving organizations
- Tracking the birth nations of staff as a reflection of diversity in an organization.
- It takes a lot of time to shift the ways that we embrace diversity.
- More questions: short term contracts can get in the way of hiring diverse folks that need some training to achieve results.
- Is there a way to work more effectively with high schools and universities to engage diverse young people earlier?
- Is there a concept that runs between equity and equality?
- Do we have to be everything to everyone? Probably not as it relates to services and yes as it relates to hiring and engaging youth/community advisory boards
- What would it look like to be more inviting at the Federation? – it's very white, very professional and very articulate – which means very intimidating
- Federation limitations include the financial cost of meetings on top of the membership fee.
- How do employers create an inclusive organization that has accommodation for folks with disabilities
- Have you reviewed your forms and the language within them to reflect
- Commitment to accommodate taking more space than what's easier
- Hiring for values – things you can not teach
- People want to see themselves reflected in agencies – Aboriginal Elder quote
- We struggle with good hires that reflect gender balance and cultural diversity that are best for the client
- What are the limiting beliefs that get in the way of hiring for diversity?
- Using opportunities for privilege to be a tool and not a weapon with diverse peer groups

Finding Confidence for Malaiga Movement

Convenor

Mark Gifford
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Summary of discussions:

We discussed some of the barriers to participating in a movement including time, feeling buried in the work, not feeling like a legitimate voice for children and families. Some enablers include consistent convening and relationship building. We need to find ways to give multiple entry points and ways to engage. We need to ask people what the gift is that they would like to give, and create a forum or venue to make this offer.

‘Movements are like growing up. They take time, money and relationships.’

How do we engage a new Generation of CYCs in Professionalization and “conversations or movement”

Convenor:

Janet & Jessica CYCABC
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Summary of Discussions:

- How do we engage community beyond our circle, a younger generation? See Earlier Discussion from session A.
- How do we encourage a newer generation in becoming involved in the larger conversation?
- People in our field want to make a difference. They can get lost in the day to day work/client and have a hard time lifting their head up to look at other things going on around them? How can we make them see the bigger picture?
- We are met with “It’s not part of my job”, “I don’t get paid for that”, Resources are limited due to time/ cost of living needing to work, not able/willing to volunteer to get involved in movements/initiatives that aren’t directly related to employment.
- I don’t get time off to attend – educating the agencies, imploring that they support front-line staff to get involved. Some offer time off/pay for professional development.
- Professional Development leads to improved retention of staff
- Professional Development provides networking opportunities, opportunities to collaborate in discussion
- We have to engage the passion in their work and in their community. We have friends and allies that we need to up the Narrative about what we do. Gov’t wont fix it unless ‘the people’ tell them to.
- Child and Youth Care Association brings connection to a group/a part of something – Developing a community and support group.

- Historical CYCABC – Personal and Professional development, relationships brought out the passion, Lifetime Working relationships – Look around the room.
- Encouragement from the Agencies to get staff involved, mentorship of an older generation to younger generation.
- Getting public involved to help influence the government.
- A sign of the times – “do more with less”, outcomes/outputs, use every hour in direct service – we lose sight of the bigger picture in that culture
- Training opportunities – Collaborative Opportunities between agencies.
- Identity as a CYC – diverse population doing CYC work, don’t necessarily identify and then the work they do is belittled, It is a profession and important.
- SW identity – very different Qualification/Mandate
- Child and Youth Care Practice – Professional Identity, We do great work.
- Finding a champion in organizations to get involved in bigger picture - Frontline staff driving it.
- Share information with all levels/students – IE: News Clippings from the Federation.
- Or directly sending newlinks to frontline staff.
- Social Media – Twitter, Facebook, within organizations – Between organizations – easy way to disseminate information to a large audience. IE: Stephanie Cadeaux tweets.
- Having Associations/Federations etc. share published information with the community, ie: Federation put out some pamphlet with information for the Election. ToolKit of information.
- Informing staff and public of Knowing what rights are with government ie: requests to meet with MP MLA etc, they must honour requests.
- Social Networking in agencies and Community: Tea time at Richmond Family Services or Talk-a-latte with CYCABC
- Protégé – mass exodus (mentorship and succession planning)
- Frontline level – Agency – Government involvement
- Teaching youth/client focused practice

Non-traditional partnerships for social service organizations.

Convenor

Doug Tenant
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Summary of discussions:

- Who is in the room. Who needs to be in the room? - Boards of Trade; Chambers of Commerce; Union Groups
- Align with social justice mission
- Program partnerships – mental health CDC
- Business partnerships – BC Hydro, banks (funding)
- Program partnerships are easier to do because of alignment
- Smaller areas lacking big business partnerships – who should these groups be partners with?

- Do we need to have boards that create partnerships
- Instead of donations > partnership (for example Starbucks)
- Academic partnerships > practicum students
- Vancouver Foundation fund VIU to do youth/mental health research
- Ideal partnership: “Cooks Down Under”
- Aboriginal Friendship has something like this
- Personal relationships with the big players (especially when contentious projects being done (Site C))
- Change the conversations – “what can we do to you?”
- “C3” – working with social enterprises
 - For example a butcher (organization put together grants for butcher but butcher was not a good businessman)
- C3s are not easy to understand
- The future may be in using our tax status (charity) to work with social enterprises
- Sometimes it is just timing
- Tapping into powerful community leaders who can help in a non-financial manner
- Legacy giving
- We need to brand or market ourselves better
- Property – housing
 - For example – purchase house
 - Support vulnerable people in house
 - Pay off mortgage
 - Leverage property for more land
- Boards could coach other boards on side issues
- Partners with schools
- Stefan > made a partnership with lawyers and judges – for divorces > mediation
- (Need to share this with others)

How do we create a rites of passage framework for the child welfare system?

Convenor

Bernadette Spence VACFSS
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- Imagine asking a youth who has aged out of care “tell me about your experience of growing up in six foster homes with twenty-four guardianship social workers?”
- Nurturing competencies for each child within a developmental life cycle is the responsibility of the parent. When the parent is denied the right to provide this or is not supported to do so, the responsibility for raising children becomes the responsibility of the village. In this scenario the village is MCFD. Is it possible to approximate the role of the village and the value it places on children within a system and a service organization? What are the barriers that prevent us from approximating the role of the village.

- Nurturing competencies in children and youth necessitates that we recognize developmental readiness. For children and youth in care the path is challenged by many changes, disruptions, uncertainty and often trauma.
- In gathering to discuss this topic, our small group recognizes and honor Paige's life story and her bond with her mother. Currently the system is not designed to support children and their parents within the context of risk and harm reduction. Even when the intervention is creating more risk from the practice of separating youth from their parents who live in circumstances of risk. We must challenge the system to develop practice that works in the margins outside the service framework. We must learn how to engage youth in the margins to guide them into the circle where there is more safety. This is the challenge for us today.
- We can learn a lot from a village by the way they celebrate the birth of a child and the way in which they respond and organize themselves in the death of a child. It is important to recognize the profound urge in all of us to be connected to our history, to our kinship system, to our biological family and to develop a system that is closely aligned with the mediating and protective process of the village.
- We require a service system align itself with village values and processes that are congruent to the hearts and commitment of the social workers who work with the most complex challenges faced by family systems and communities.

How do we create a mechanism for youth voice to be collected and heard and connected through the political system?

- Our mechanisms are not youth friendly (our meetings etc). If we want youth voice we have to relook at the mechanisms we use. Ask a specific questions, have a specific purpose.
- Hard to have ongoing engagement because youth may not want to be involved in one thing over the long term given their other priorities. It can be very power for youth to be involved in all aspects of the work, however.
- Ask young people what their expectations/hopes are for their experience.
- When asking for youth consultations, it is important that we create spaces that are supportive of the young people and give them the information and supports required so they can fully participate and engage.
- Take youth where they are at, and build upon their strengths – Positive Youth Development
- Example: Seattle: Advocacy Day at State Legislative . Youth serving non-profits create agendas for the day, young people are supported to present on the issues (Can we do something similar?)
- Identify a MLA to champion it.
- FBCYINCN working on Youth Speak with McCreary. – How can we get elected officials excited about this? Also how do get the information collected gets out to community and the government's response was to this. Utilize community sector partners, professional associations, business community and the media. Create a social media campaign around findings.

What are considerations and different ways to support children and families who receive support/supervised access?

Convenor

Vicki Kipps
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Summary of discussions:

We need a consistent policy framework that clearly identifies the focus on/of family reunification that is family focus rather than simply what is best for the child. Look historically at the needs of the family rather than simply the child.

At the time a family is referred: conversation and clarity must take place to ensure all parties understand the intent, obligations, limitations including privacy and information sharing.

It must be recognized that from a judicial perspective, the supervised access worker's perspective/opinion is incredibly important. It has/should have even more weight than the social worker because of the social worker's limited access. The number one criticism from judges is the lack of time available for families referred to access. Number two criticism is the unnatural environment of the visits. We need to hold ICM to engage all team members in support of the family including foster and/or care placements.

Consider ways to share the responsibility of risk so that it all doesn't reside with MCFD (i.e. contracts with families, delegated responsibility for agency staff). It's important to move from an actuarial perspective (that counts mistakes and holds them against you; "since it happened once it will happen again") as this limits creativity and growth.

Considerations to the families/youth who attend the visits that can be anxious, tiring, etc. Recognize that there is a performance element to their visits with their children. It is critical for social workers and support staff to bring perspective of hope and prevention and be inclusive of family members involved particularly siblings. It is important to find innovative ways for families to engage – often inclusive of siblings.

How do we live into reconciliation fully and in our daily practice

Convenor

Jennifer Charlesworth
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Summary of discussions:

- Lessons learned from the reconciliation practices can infuse and expand
- Online PHSA
- Kathi's workshop – gaining an understanding
- Taking personal responsibility to be more curious; ask questions; look at our personal biases; challenge assumptions
- Reaching beyond our typical community to have the different conversations
- Considering the CLB@ aboriginal adults that moved out of institutions into community that been cut-off the indigenous communities
- As advocates we have had to take a strong stance and have had to be fierce which scares people
- Specific to the country/community reconciliation is in the minds of people
- Important to know about our own culture (whatever it might be) in order to have empathy with what it would be like to not have connection to culture
- Spectrum from cultural awareness, understanding to agility
- 'Systemic action; professional indifference'
- Lack of attention to the finer details e.g. don't return a phone call and that might trigger a series of events with very big outcomes
- It's a human thing, it's not just about an organizational role
- We don't think enough ourselves about the importance of our own work
- Before TRC there was the sheer weight of holding space for the history; post TRC the space is everywhere and we can have the conversations
- Look at how our policies reinforce racism
- Part of change has to be at a practical level
- Collaborations e.g. PLEA, Stolo
- Explicit connections with aboriginal leadership. MOV with BC friendship. Moving beyond the pomp and ceremony digging in.
- Carve out opportunities @ every Fed meeting
- Reconciliation is bi-directional
- Need to be having conversations to connect
- Tie into people's self interest – what's in it for them to be encouraged in reconciliation
- What education are we doing with our children
- 'We don't know what to do but we need to co-host conversations. ACTION: We are going to co-host conversations in agencies, aboriginal and non-aboriginal
- Overcoming our history of boundaries and separation – self and others; changing the narrative from separation to connection
- What do we do to have an embodied experience of reconciliation?
- Recognise how we make the connections:
- 'Where is my role to collaborate and build relationships'
- Now that you know, what are you going to do about it?

- Overcoming the fear of curiosity
- Identify the MCFD CLBC change agents
- Organizational ‘reconciliation communities’
- Where can we offer to step in
- Expressing ourselves as witnesses
- ‘go out from this conversation to next group and shape the conversation’
- What are we doing in our own org. that is causing a problem? What are we going to do about it? – create space for this

Influencing systems change for community development in the context of the early years (children 0-6 and their families)

Convener

Andrea Thompson
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Summary of discussions

Nine of us from across the province (from Burnaby through Chilliwack to Clearwater and Dawson Creek) had an engaging discussion about the state of early years services and policies in British Columbia. We unanimously agreed on the importance of investing in prevention and early intervention and expressed concerns about the disproportionate funding available for young children. We discussed the need for communities to strike a balance between tackling the issues themselves and pressuring governments to more adequately respond to the needs, so that we don't let government off the hook. Topics arising during the conversation included the lack of affordable childcare, waitlists, low wages for early childhood educators, divisive grant processes, children's attachment, poverty and other inequities, Paul Kershaw's Generation Squeeze (see the Human Early Learning Partnership for details), and the insufficient social safety net for families. It was a rich and inspiring dialogue. We brainstormed some methods for building more of a movement and holding government accountable: raising awareness about the huge economic and social return on investments in the early years, engaging media to help tell the story, using social enterprise to fund services, educating the public on the importance of focusing on the early years, advocating for universal childcare, finding champions to convey our messages, using social media as a platform, and mobilizing voters to impact public policy. Thanks to all for participating!

What needs to be in place for a social policy framework to be adopted in BC?

Convenor

Doug Hayman
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Summary of discussions:

Please write a short description of your conversation and any key insights. This will be shared in our final report.

A social policy framework is a tool to get us to our vision of a more equitable, inclusive society

It should become a lens through which all policy decisions are assessed and provide guidance to communities and agencies

The Social Policy Framework needs to be branded in such a way that people and organizations can see themselves in it

This idea eventually will require the Provincial government and Premier to champion

Our work right now is to prepare the ground in all relevant sectors which will help to persuade the government that this is a good idea.

How to support kids to age into community instead of aging out of care?

Convener:

Alison Grauer
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- Why this resonates, my team who works with youth aging out are really taking this to heart.
- Lots of media coverage.
- Who is really ready at this age?
- What else can we do? Be advocates in public? Influence policy? Who should be at the table? #1 would be youth in care.
- Public opinion is shifting. 71% agree 19 is a ridiculous cut off age.
- Even the term "aging out" is so hard. Change it to aging into community.
- What do we want for them. To be part of community, to contribute and belong.
- The term, losing something, not gaining. Daunting. Not excited. Terrified.
- Should be a time of celebration. Not anxiety about all the things you now need.
- Can't just be at a marker. It needs to be a transition, a bridge. Even if we could increase the age, that it would be a process, not hard and fast.
- We need youth to tell us truly their experience.
- Annual BBQ/Celebration of who did move on, but invite them back. And not losing entire support system.
- Natural supports. What responsibilities do we have as agencies to build these supports.
- Looking at the literal cliff is terrifying for those who are turning 19.
- How do we walk with them leading up to that marker. And ask alumni, what would be helpful?
- There are more supports, like Transition and Housing workers. But not mandated.
- Can't all of a sudden stop talking or connecting, but with new case loads it is hard to continue to support.
- How can we formalize these alumni supports?
- Forever kids.
- How do we do it well?
- Formalize support and system should recognize because clearly there is a need.
- AYA program - not currently meeting needs, so ministry is doing a review and talking to these YAs. Doesn't necessarily meet them where they are at. Trying to shift. Trying to make it 4 years instead of 2.
- If when I age out at 19, and I'm not ready for AYA and want to come back when I'm 22 and then I'm ready and attach to the program.
- Also rehabilitation programs supports, post-sec, tech programs. Lobbying funding young people to get life skills workers: employment, budgeting, housing, etc.
- Relationship piece of mentors. Looking at changing youth service delivery. Not the age changing of in-care, but what they do need is support, relationship, not the legal status. So if they have a relationship with Social Worker, the relationship doesn't end if they don't want it to.

- One of the places we still have work to do, is residential support for youth in crisis. i.e. safe houses that kicked out if using.
- Need to look at from high risk lens.
- AYA - eligibility - need to be permanent ward or YAG. School isn't absolute in new program.
- Can AYA stay with foster parent with AYA payment? If foster parent is ok.
- Through biggest hurdle in legislation, but not started yet. Building policy and regulation towards it. Hopeful news.
- 55% of former youth in care go onto welfare/IA. So if those youth aren't accessing IA, can that money of the budget be repurposed?
- 3 areas: may transition to CLBC; PWD (IA); AYA (for those who don't fit CLBC/PWD, but not ready for transition) - AYA need to be working towards something. Expanding eligibility.
- Young adults are living at home longer.
- But then also need transition for the other end of AYA. Looking at other ministries helping like Jobs or Education. As ward of state, other ministries have a role to play too. Like preferred work placements for kids in care. Need understanding across system. If MCFD is the parents, other ministries are the Aunties and Uncles and need to help too. Family.
- If your kids aren't ready to move out, why would children in care be ready. Government needs to see this about young people.
- Youth in Care Network - tax programs, cooking skills, budgeting.
- Funding has been cut, but still doing work that is needed with help of network.
- No new funding for youth in budget (prov).
- Shift to life skills groups, because there is a need.
- Youth need more services and supports. These things cost money, but the political budget decision isn't funding. Agencies are being creative to provide supports. How do we get the politicians to see this need and its impact.
- Need to advocate for budget decisions. Always the same players at the table. How do we bring people to the conversation that will have an impact? Listen to constituents.
- Mockingbird Society - WA - advocacy. Meet with young people, find out needs/wants, create advocacy plans and go to legislation to lobby for their voices. Combine personal narrative with statistics and clear goal and call to action.
- Spend a lot of time talking about problems and what we should do, but don't create a plan of action. As a collective we need to figure out our ask and present it. Not just complain.
- Gary Mason, Globe and Mail - article about budget and what missing. Put in perspective. Why didn't politicians make a different decision, because whose voice they are hearing. How do we reach those people who have the ear of government/politicians?
- NICWC National Indian Child Welfare Conference - Agency must report on outcomes or lose funding. Evidence based, research based. Where is money going? Lack system like this. Can learn from other countries what they are doing.
- Asking youth, have we prepared you well enough? Beyond basics. Have we helped impart that desire to be a citizen? Values based piece that often gets lost. Beyond practical pieces.
- If young people voted, we would have such different outcomes politically.

- We value our youth, but do we really ask them to have high hopes for themselves and connect to their community? Beyond their paid workers. Who is there forever person? How can we help them find their own instrument in their symphony of resilience?
- We don't have the luxury of not loving our children. Sometimes we devalue the impact we have. Get lost in the work. We are just one instrument in their symphony of resilience. Maybe the flute or the guitar solo, and maybe different things at different times. We need to give these pieces to our children.
- Attachment theory. But how about sometimes just "you matter to me". And you are worthy of good things simply because you exist.
- Youth Advisory Committee at VACFSS. Youth are leaders of tomorrow. Not assume kids in care can't have a good life. Need a shift in view. When you believe, the conversation becomes so much more robust. You can bring people along a lot further. Kids know when not authentic.
- We don't ask kids in care what they want to be when they grow up? Research shows that when the person who cares for them expects/believes them to do well, they do well.
- *Teach me to make a meal, yes. But love me enough to believe that I can make that meal and love me enough so I begin to believe I am worthy of this meal. (from poem Meredith wrote)
- Youth in Care voice needs to be heard to make change!
- Art can be used to make a difference. It is so primal and basic and crosses all divides. Unites all of what we have to say.
- Art is often pushed aside for our youth in care, but so important. We need to provide the opportunity. Or lessons of any kind of what they are interested in.
- We don't advertise, but we should advertise successes of Youth in Care as adults.
- Need to nurture our young adults until they are ready for education/employment. They are going to fall back, they need extra protective factors.
- Kids in care don't really know what is available for them aging out. There are resources, but they need someone who can let them know when they're ready. Even if after the age out date. Even if they do know, there are so many hoops to jump through to get the resources. Paperwork, applications, etc. If there are 2 barriers along the way, you are out of there. Need someone to help with the process. And waitlists are a couple months long, so they lose interest. Need that cheerleader in their back pocket to keep bringing them back.
- Summary: Supporting youth beyond the age out date, to age into community. Believing that they are capable to be successful in their goals and dreams and supporting them to get there through their young adult years. Having their voices heard by those who have the ear of the politicians. New changes to AYA will help this. Be instruments in their symphony of resilience.
- Image: Symphony of resilience.
- *Teach me to make a meal, yes. But love me enough to believe that I can make that meal and love me enough so I begin to believe I am worthy of this meal. (from poem Meredith wrote)
- "We are just one instrument in their symphony of resilience. Maybe the flute or the guitar solo, and maybe different things at different times. We need to give these pieces to our children."

How Long Are You/We Prepared To Tolerate Youth Homelessness?

Convener

Steve Arnett

No one in the group is prepared to tolerate Youth Homelessness becoming "Institutionalized" in our communities as the Food Bank phenomena has become over the last 25 years. We agree youth need more than to be just not homeless but have ongoing access and choice to a safe affordable home, characterized by a sense of belonging, that is non judgemental. Trust is paramount.

Housing has to be the right housing and if it has support staff they must be the right staff. Given that view there is no panacea or over generalization of ' models' per se as we need a range of options and need the funds accordingly. See this act as an investment opportunity in a generation of youth our communities cannot afford to lose. If that means higher taxes do be it. To take action Is our ethical and moral duty as adults and decision makers.

A consensus seemed to emerge that we (the community at large) must provide a sense of an extended family for these youth. We need to create a supportive village where youth can connect with community.

Furthermore we must examine and improve social systems such as foster care and the school system. Then we must act upon what we know about how the education system as it is currently structured and operates can often contribute to the initial pathway that eventually leads to a youth being homeless. Look at the precursors and potential for homelessness before it happens and address those precursors. Many youth have similar histories of dropping out of high school and lack critical life skills, no marketable employment skills, experience and/ or qualifying experience to participate in the world of work to support themselves and no one to support them with their struggles.

Who are the couch surfers, who are the homeless youth? The entire cohort includes but is not entirely dominated by only youth who have "graduated from the foster care or other residential care of the state. Many of these homeless youth have experienced poverty, abuse, addiction and mental issues but have never been part of the state child apprehension system. It needs to be transformed from child protection to child welfare where families and their children are offered/ provided with tangible, ongoing social support. Invest in the family of origin and natural family.

What Are You/We Going to Do About It?

Folks talked positively about having read and contemplated the content of the Fostering Change Report. The group thought that widely disseminating the knowledge and learnings from the Learning Community to End Homelessness (particularly the Kamloops Eva Initiative - A Way a Home Project as a method to create a general public understanding of this national crisis in Youth Homelessness.

We must identify the various elements and features of what works in such projects. The we must communicate it loudly and on a wide scope.

However the messaging and messaging process will only be effective if simplified the complex detail into a powerful communication that raised large numbers of people's consciousness and understanding in a meaningful way. One that could not be ignored or was trendy for a brief moment in time only!

Finally, youth with lived experience must be supported in a true manner versus tokenism to play lead roles as peers with helpful adults across the community spectrum to end our tolerance of what must be an intolerable situation.

In Kamloops that person was and is in the forefront of the community effort. She is a former Youth in Care who brings a wisdom, understanding and commitment to the cause that inspires meaningful action and outcome.

What are we collectively going to do now? We are going to create a local movement that addresses reflects the fact we will not tolerate Youth Homelessness becoming an entrenched feature of Canadian Society.
Sent from my iPad -