



NIFCS ALL Nations Leadership Gathering

Action Planning and Participant Evaluation Summary

Hosted by NIFCS, in partnership with Gitga'at and
Kitsumkalum Nations

INTRODUCTION

On May 26th, on the beautiful territory of Kitsumkalum Nation, nearly 50 representatives from the Haisla and Tsimshian Nations Leadership, NIFCS and MCFD Leadership came together to share, collaborate and strategize around a shared vision of **Healthy Children and Families** with the following ambitious objectives:

- Consult and collaborate with Indigenous Child Welfare subject matter experts.
- Create a shared vision of the future of child welfare at its best through a community based prevention model.
- Develop shared solutions to the root challenges, utilizing existing strengths and culturally relevant/safe practices.
- Identify opportunities for collaboration across communities and in partnership with NIFCS.
- Develop a community specific service strategy & resiliency building action plans.
- Celebrate the expansion of NIFCS to deliver child welfare services into the communities.

The design of the day consisted of a blend of traditional activities, a former youth in care panel, along with leadership and keynote speaker contributions and group break out/ action planning sessions.

This included a special guest keynote speaker Mr. Terry L. Cross, an international Indigenous child welfare subject matter expert and founder of the National Indian Child Welfare Association (bio below):

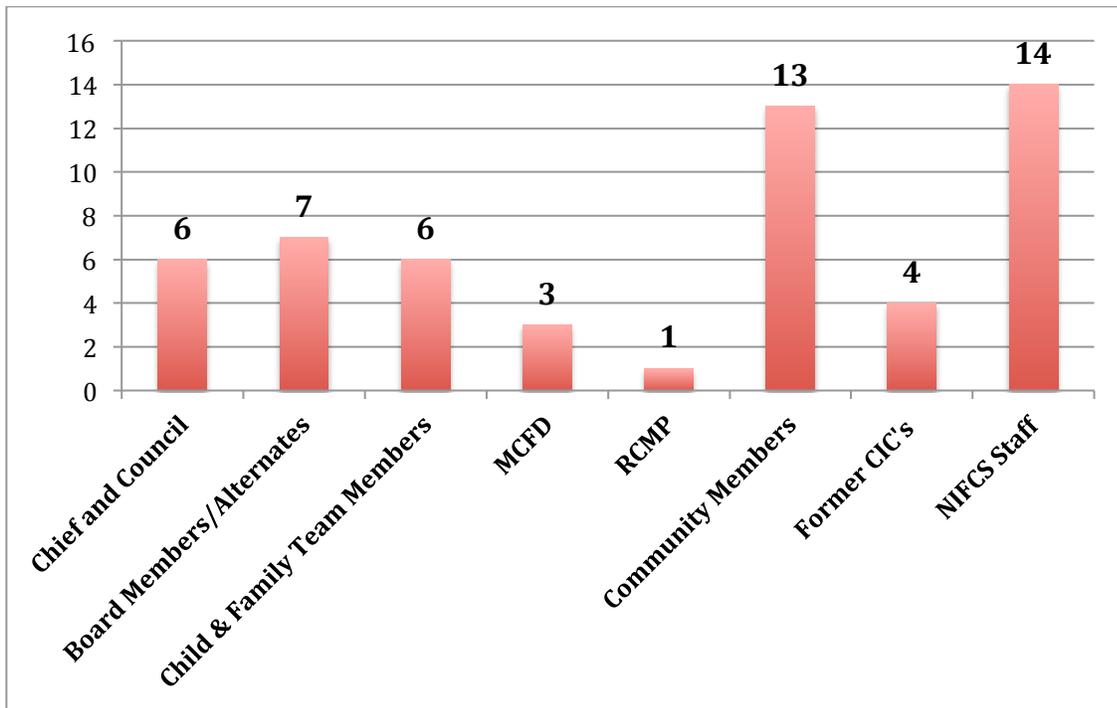
Terry (*Ha-ne-ga-noh*), an enrolled member of the Seneca Nation, received his master's degree in social work from Portland State University in Portland, Oregon. He is the founding executive director of NICWA, now serving as senior advisor. He is the author of *Positive Indian Parenting* and co-authored *Towards a Culturally Competent System of Care*, published by Georgetown University. He has 40 years of experience in child welfare, including 10 years direct practice

The purpose of this report is two fold:

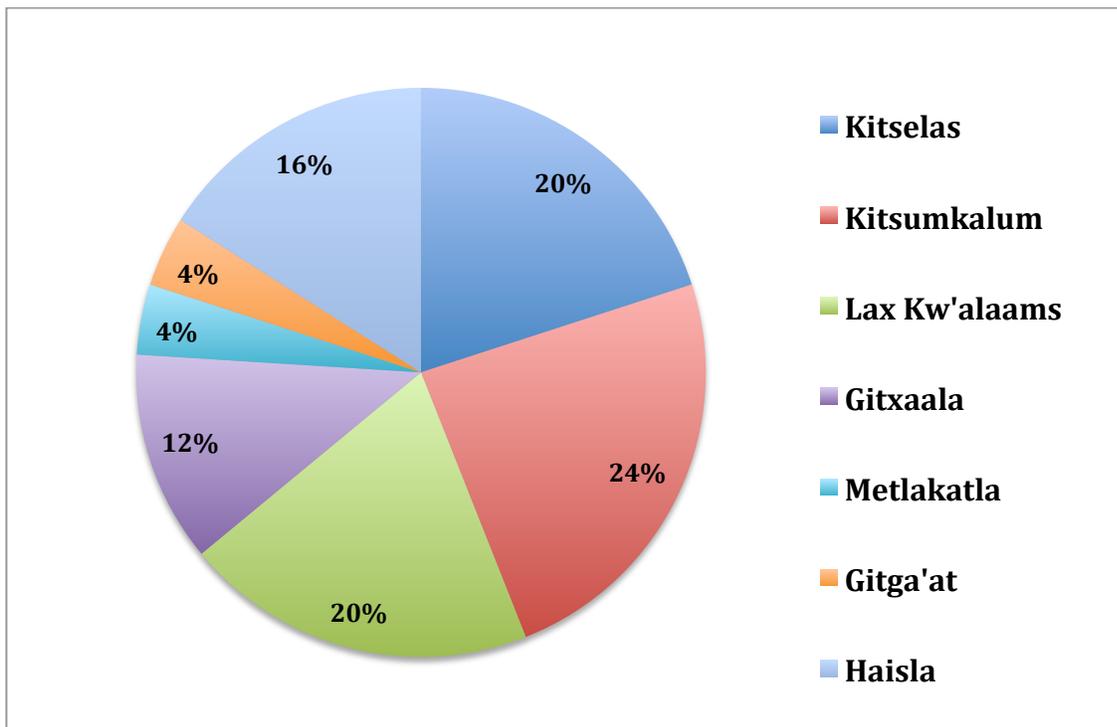
- Summarize and share the key themes and actions identified through the Leadership Gathering break out sessions and participant evaluation; and
- Offer recommendations on the next steps to ensure that the valuable wisdom is shared and identified actions achieve the intended impact and results.

A PICTURE OF ATTENDANCE

By Role



By Community



BREAK OUT GROUP SUMMARY

The break out/action planning session engaged three large groups to partake in three key activities that fostered group sharing, brainstorming, problem solving and action planning as summarized below:

1) COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION

Participants were asked to identify ways to improve communication and collaboration.

The following key themes emerged:

FUNCTION	IN WHAT WAYS CAN WE IMPROVE?
<p>COLLABORATION</p> <p>Is defined as “the act of working together to produce or create something”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing gaps • Lateral kindness • Be open minded • Include more voices at the table (a cross section of community and variety of people) • Contribute your voice • Develop action plan (with a timeline) • Follow through with plan • Child Welfare Committee-already in place before Social Workers get involved • Constructive criticism • Break down “silo’s” • Family group conference from the beginning • Regular meetings- cycle of seasons • Email list to collaborate and bounce ideas off one another • Committed to see job through • Do away with apathy <p>FOLLOW ACTION PLAN TO THE END TO AVOID “CON-BLAB-BORATION”!</p>
<p>COMMUNICATION</p> <p>How can we ensure that our communication is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliable • Honest • Timely • Interactive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively listen and support • Be inclusive • Be respectful • Nurturing tone and words • Be transparent (showing vulnerability) • Clarify assumptions and biases • Be truthful • Base information on facts • Set priorities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiate between ideas and action • Keep on track • Deal with conflict • Debate the issues, not the person “Hard on the issue, not the person” • Be flexible • Create an information system • Utilize technology • Incorporate traditional/family/cultural values • Spread awareness of training available • Be consistent
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2) ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

Participants were invited to name “one obstacle” that was holding them back from achieving greater success towards the vision of healthy children and families.

The following key themes emerged:

Obstacle	Solution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poverty - Learned behavior - Borders, politics, policies - Forever running after the money and programs doesn’t work - Untreated trauma - No connection - Disconnected with technology - Reactive society - Lateral violence - Con-blab-oration - Fear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encouraging independent thinking (decolonizing) - Bring back culture, love and family - Awareness and understanding - Buy in from the community - Education - Working with others - Consistency - Being comfortable to bring forward new ideas - Come from an approach of love and caring - Opportunities to grow - Engage people - Set priorities - Develop a plan - Implement the plan - Let everyone know what the plan is - Community owned strategies and solutions

3) GOALS & ACTION PLANNING

Within this activity, the groups were invited to name ONE GOAL and then list key steps and activities associated with this goal. The results are listed below:

GOAL/FOCUS	KEY STEPS/ACTIVITIES
Keeping Our Children in Our Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety plans for high risk families • Fighting for our children
Bring our Children Back Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fighting for our children in care • Finding Caregivers • Family meetings • Community involvement • Engage families • Group home • Cultural identity
Treat the Untreated Trauma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge the trauma • Bring people together in a circle • Provide a safe environment • Open to help
Discuss the Hard Topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show love, compassion and empathy • Actively listen • Respect • Give options • Create safe space to talk through process • Non judgemental
Change the Age Out Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change terminology to transition to independence • Teach basic life skills • Peer mentoring system with previous in care adult •
Create More Opportunities to Collaborate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring people together more often • Consult and communicate more frequently • Utilize technology where possible to share information • Create a listing of resources, stakeholders and committees across communities

GOAL/FOCUS	KEY STEPS/ACTIVITIES
Remove the Boundaries of On & Off Reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach planning and service intervention without placing barriers or working around “on and off” reserve
Hear the Voices of Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize a youth gathering/conference • Strike up a youth council
Improve on Prevention Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health services • Parenting skills-mentoring/family support • Basic life skills support-parenting, laundry, driver’s license, dentist etc. • Girls groups • Homework clubs • Counselor on hand to offer support
Institute Child and Family Teams (Child Welfare Committees)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve teachers, Doctors, families, Grandmas • Offer training • Inform child and family of their rights • Advocate for the families

THREE OVERARCHING THEMES

FOLLOW THROUGH

Regardless of the goal and key actions, each group emphasized the IMPORTANCE to FOLLOW THROUGH on the ACTIONS identified. Keeping the momentum going is MOST CRITICAL.

OWNERSHIP

The second overarching theme is the need to take ownership over the current situation, whatever the challenges might be and create community owned solutions.

NEW PATTERNS

Throughout the discussions and action plans, there is an energy and passion to break free from colonial structures and processes and explore new and renewed strategies and solutions to move forward with. Best summed up in one of the statements documented from a group: “The thing that BROKE us, cannot HEAL us.”

PARTICIPANT EVALUATION: SUMMARY OF RATINGS, THEMES AND COMMENTS

Following the Leadership Gathering, an evaluation was sent out for all participants to complete to share their impressions of the experience and learning effectiveness from the gathering as well as identify next steps. The results follow.

OVERALL IMPESSION/RATING

Overall impression, other than 1 respondent, all respondents rated the experience as: “Fully met my expectations” or “Exceeded my expectations.”

All aspects of the program were rated 4 and above on a 5 point scale with the highest rated aspects being the “Former Youth In Care Panel” at 4.88 and the “Cultural Elements” at 4.65. “

Q. “WHAT DID YOU MOST VALUE?”

- Hearing from the youth (multiple respondents).
- The gathering of all people involved in Child welfare, and sharing, brainstorming and shared resolutions.
- Guest speaker Terry Cross (multiple respondents).
- Spiritual blanket wrap around the youths.
- The encouragement from the speakers to do child welfare the way First Nations want to do it. The agency could take a lesson from this and not worry about what the province says but put forward what the nations want.
- The opportunity to learn what are the concerns and what has been working.
- Collaborating with individuals and groups, sharing ideals and progress.
- Working in small group to take action at the community level.
- The little children opening up the day touched my heart with the singing of our language.

“ I appreciated the circle of greeting all the people present that day. Made it personal and real rather than the usual "business-like" introduction. I also greatly appreciated Dan George's skill in being the emcee. The flexibility of change to the agenda was super. When things happen the way they are brought to the surface, like the circle of greeting, it makes it heartfelt, which is what this is really all about.”

Q. "WHAT WOULD HAVE MADE THE DAY EVEN BETTER?"

- More time, add another day (several respondents).
- Maybe it would have been awesome to see who was who and where they work by breaking up the groups by community.
- Notifying the community before hand....

Q. “PLEASE RANK ORDER- TOP 3 PRIORITIES”

(Based on a list of 10 from the LG break out session)

1. Develop safe home/plan in order to keep children in the community.
2. Develop and deliver a basic life skills course for children/youth in care.
3. Enhance mental health and parenting skills as prevention services.

Q. “PLEASE SHARE ANY OTHER IDEAS OR PRIORITY ACTIONS THAT YOU WALKED AWAY WITH.”

- Working in a First Nations non-profit society, who services off reserve individuals and families, is to incorporate a Youth in Care focus in our programming and program planning. We would like to partner with other agencies to help make this happen for our Youth.
- Creating Aboriginal policies and approaches for service delivery. We are running with policy practice that has a proven track record of not meeting the needs of Aboriginal families and children.
- Involved and healthy community is vital while raising a child.
- Have local meetings and planning in each community. Our needs will be different.
- Don't be scared of ministry care about the communities more if they want a different model, help them create one instead of using everything that ministry tells you to.
- More action needs to be taken by our First Nations communities in taking responsibility for our children, wherever they may be living.
- Children to be centre of all programs and for the funding to run programs efficiently and provided adequately.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS OR COMMENTS

- Thank you very much for creating this platform for us to come together. It is such an important matter that affects all of us. I really enjoyed the gathering of minds and hearts on this issue. I felt very uplifted and hopeful.
- Overall wonderful day. I was touched by the stories of the youth.
- Amazing experience thanks for the invite!
- I thoroughly enjoyed my day. We would like to plan a very similar event in our community. Thank you for the invite.
- NIFCS staff and Board of Directors should be commended on a job well done.
- The clan system is a way of seeing and learning (Who am I)

“ The feedback from the stakeholders was valuable to see and hear that things are changing in comparison to children of the residential school system and the 60's scoop. Our people will have the resources to ensure this never happens again.

and being seen (you are part of). How to support the accepting, supporting and integrating children in care (CIC) and out of care (prevention) back into their families, clans and communities. Because the communities NIFCS serves are matrilineal, how we do support CIC who are register with the band under their patrilineal lineage but their mother is non-aboriginal? What is the role of the Father's family, clan and community? Is the CIC custom adopted into a clan or are they left as a Butterfly? The disconnection for families to their clan and community can be generational. When a CIC is introduced back the reception under the surface is not always welcoming. Sometimes the child is paying for the disconnection or actions of their parents, grandparents and great grandparents etc.

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations take into consideration the role and responsibility that each participant, organization and nation plays in sharing the knowledge and taking action from the Leadership Gathering. The intent is to continue to move forward with **ONE HEART, ONE MIND, with the children and youth at the center.**

1. Each participant to review this report and identify/refresh specific goals that he/she may follow through with to contribute to the forward movement of the ideas and actions identified.
2. Each participant to share with colleagues and community members the experience of the Leadership Gathering and engage in conversations around the priority areas.
3. Utilize the report as an input into nation and organizational planning- to ensure that there is the alignment and momentum required to achieve forward movement and traction on the areas identified.
4. Continue the conversations across and within nations and service providers.
5. Create an email distribution group (perhaps even a blog or Facebook group) for Leadership Gathering members to continue to share and collaborate openly using technology, given the geographic barriers.
6. For NIFCS to reach out to engage with the nations and community service providers around the areas where they will take the lead in planning such as:
 - Discuss the goals/key activities during collaboration opportunities across nations to develop priorities and nation specific solutions
 - Organize a Northwest Youth Conference/Gathering
 - Co-developing the Child and Family Teams/Child Welfare Committees across communities
 - Deliver Trauma Informed Practice Workshop(s)
 - Organize a Northwest Youth Council
 - Continue to develop the prevention services across nations and through the Family Support Worker program
7. Reconvene on an annual basis to check in on progress on the priority areas, continue to learn as a leadership community and refresh action plan to continue to evolve and develop capacity.