



**MUSHKEGOWUK
COUNCIL** ᐃᓴᓴᓴ ᐃᓴᓴᓴᓴ

Mushkegowuk

Youth Gathering

Celebrating Life

**THE PEOPLE'S INQUIRY INTO
OUR SUICIDE PANDEMIC**

2016



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THE PEOPLE'S INQUIRY INTO OUR SUICIDE PANDEMIC

2016





1.0

INTRODUCTION

1.0

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In December of 2014, a draft report of “The People’s Inquiry into Our Suicide Pandemic” was presented to leadership during a Mushkegowuk Council of Chief’s Meeting. After much review, deliberation and recognizing the importance of the inquiry and its findings, the Chiefs directed the Commissioners to conduct a hearing specifically geared toward the youth. A youth gathering themed “Celebrating Life” took place on March 28th and 29th, 2015, in the community of Moose Factory First Nation. The gathering was held at Delores D. Echum Composite School.

The assembly was deemed a success with 49 youth in attendance representing five communities.

First Nation	Number of youth participants
Moose Factory	31
Attawapiskat	5
Fort Albany	6
Kashechewan	3
Chapleau Cree	3
Missanabie Cree	1

Age Demographics

Age	Number of youth participants
12-13	23
14-17	10
18-24+	15

Delivery

The format of the youth gathering was different from previous inquiry hearings as it was developed to be considerate and mindful of how sensitive of a topic suicide is for our young people. The first of day of the gathering featured workshops with a focus on self care and traditional teachings such as women’s roles, the Medicine Wheel and kindness. During the second day of the event, the People’s Inquiry into the Suicide Pandemic Commissioners conducted group discussions with the youth. The youth were divided into two groups- Group 1: Ages 13 to 15 and Group 2: Ages 16 and older. Support workers and two commissioners were included in each group.

During the group sessions the youth were asked two (2) questions:

1. "What are some of the solutions?"
2. "What is the Good Life?"

In the group discussions, youth attendees voiced and talked about some of the issues that affect them in their communities. They included:

- Substance Abuse
- Communication
- Bullying
- Sexual Abuse
- Community Support
- Resources and Funding
- Parental Involvement at Schools
- Identity and Language Cultural Based Programs
- History of Our People



2.0

RECOMMENDATIONS & POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

2.0

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS & POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The below recommendations came from the group discussions with the youth.

1. SUBSTANCE & DRUG ABUSE:

Youth want to have healthy communities.

- Youth want information on how to handle peer pressure and to learn tools and tactics on how to say “No”.
- They want to be guided on how to choose friends that don’t drink or do drugs.
- Youth are seeking education about health and the effects of substance and drug abuse.
- Drinking in the home was identified as an issue that needs to be addressed.
- In the communities, the youth witness unusual behaviors as a result of substance abuse. The youth are exposed to unpredictable behavior and unclear communication.
- Youth don’t understand addictions, repercussions, and the damaging effects on the body and mind. We need to speak out more about the drugs in our communities, with a focus on prescription drug abuse.
- Education is needed in the communities along with awareness campaigns and regular discussion.

2. COMMUNICATION:

Listen to us. Break the cycle of youth who are seen and not heard.

- Youth have indicated that communication with parents must be open and honest.
- A recommendation was brought forward for all communities to have workshops on communications skills and to strengthen the relationships within their families and communities.
- The youth also spoke about slangs and terms that are commonly used within their age group.

3. BULLYING:

There is a lot of bullying in the world of Social Media: Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram and Twitter.

- In some cases, online bullying has caused youth to experience low self-esteem and even cause self-harm. There is anti-bullying awareness in most communities, but there is definitely a need to bring more attention to the issue.
- It has been recommended to host several community workshops on bullying. The youth want to have more discussion focused on bullying in the schools and create an anti-bullying poster campaign about the subject.
- It has been identified that more effective consequences for bullying need to be implemented.

2.0

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS & POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

4. SEXUAL ABUSE:

- It was identified that there is a need to break down the barriers in regards to discussion about sexual abuse.
- Youth require age appropriate information and need to be confident that adults support them.
- We all must be open to talk about sexual abuse and encourage others to use their voice. Clear communication is an effective tool toward prevention.

5. COMMUNITY:

Youth want to be a part of their community.

- Youth are seeking community programming that is specifically designed for their age demographic. When the support is available, youth believe that they will have more of a sense of belonging in the community.
- The youth feel excluded from community decisions. They would like to be included in decisions that affect the population and the future of the communities.
- Youth are requesting more family oriented activities that will encourage supportive family members.

6. RESOURCES AND FUNDING:

Youth would like to see more promotion of services.

- Youth are unaware of support workers in their community and are also unaware of resources that are available. They don't know who works within certain organizations and where to go for help.

7. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AT SCHOOLS

- Youth want more parental involvement at their schools.
- Youth voiced that the overall attitude of students and their success is greatly affected by their home environment. Emotions evoked at home tend to follow youth to school.

8. IDENTITY AND LANGUAGE:

There is a loss of language and disconnection from identity in the communities.

- In some communities, there is a lack of communication between Elders and youth, which prevents Elders from passing down knowledge to the younger generation.
- Youth want more traditional language courses and learning opportunities. Many youth cannot speak or understand their traditional language.

9. CULTURAL BASED PROGRAMS:

There should be more land-based activities that will encourage healing.

- Land based training will instill a sense of hope and will reconnect youth to life. Being out on the land brings about a sense of calm and will help youth heal and move forward.
- Schools should have land-based programs that are worth a credit.
- The youth want Elders to be involved with culturally based programming to pass on their knowledge and wisdom through activities such as hunting and fishing.

10. HISTORY OF OUR PEOPLE:

Youth want to learn the history of their people in the Mushkegowuk region.

- Youth would like to know more details specifically in regards to the historic trauma of our people and the Indian Residential Schools.
- We need to share the historical journey of the Aboriginal people so there is an understanding of the state of our people today. This will create awareness and is a part of the healing process.





3.0

CLOSING REMARKS

3.0

3.0 CLOSING REMARKS

We, the Commissioners would like to acknowledge the youth who attended and participated in the workshops during this two day gathering. Their participation was integral to the inquiry and demonstrated that youth want to have the good life.

We would also like to acknowledge the hard work of the Mushkegowuk Health Wellness Coordinator in making the youth gathering a success. Thank you to the communities and the leadership in the Mushkegowuk region for their support.

Kinananaskomitinaw
Coordinator and the Commissioners
The People's Inquiry Into Our Suicide Pandemic

“
Working
together,
we can
succeed
for their
future
”



4.0

COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

4.1 Lead Commissioner: Mike Metatawabin

Regional Youth Conference Report

This event was held on the weekend of March 28th and 29th 2015, in Moose Factory, Ontario. The regional youth conference was a continuation of the work done with the visits to the Mushkegowuk communities in the winter of 2014 in which hearings were held on the issue of suicide. The visits to the communities did not garner the desired outcome of having more youth contribute to the commission hearings. The Chiefs felt the need to have more youth involved and therefore gave direction to go back to the communities to engage youth between the ages of 12 to 16.

The following is a summary of comments provided to the Commissioners who held hearings for the youth ages 12 to 16. The older youth were divided up to participate separately and the Commissioners were divided up as well to cover all the group sessions.

On the first day, the conference covered client safety, ground rules, and a review of the commission hearings that were held with the communities.

From this preliminary discussion on the first day, the youth made it clear that there was no support for them in the community. There are no specific examples that can help shed more light on this comment.

On the second day, the 12 to 16 year old age group sat down with Commissioner Kataquapit and myself. The session was facilitated by two members of the community. It was decided that the facilitation would help draw out the feedback from the young group. There were two other adults who were there to provide support to the team and to the youth.

Bullying was considered to be the number one cause that impacted confidence within the youth. These next points are comments provided by the youth on this topic:

- Talk to someone.
- Make awareness.
- More talk in school.
- Create posters about bullying.
- Stop making jokes about friends.
- Don't be a bystander when it comes to someone being bullied.
- Rumors and gossip need to be addressed and stopped.
- There needs to be effective consequences for the bully.
- Awareness to family about gossip and about being nosey.
- Need to educate families about respect.

The drinking in the homes also needs to be addressed. The youth are exposed to adults talking openly about people and getting mad. Substance abuse is also another factor that exposes youth to witnessing unusual behaviors. The youth recommended that education is required about drug abuse.

The youth also spoke about slangs and terms that are commonly used within their age group which are suggestive leading them to think it is okay. One example they provided is YOLO - you only live once.

4.0

4.0 COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

One of the questions that was asked of the youth was about good life, and what it meant to them. These are the following examples they provided:

- Eat healthy.
- Exercise.
- Don't do drugs.
- Stay fit, be active, and get into athletics.
- Eat properly.
- Be yourself and respect yourself.
- Compliment each other- "good job".

The youth also suggested a video be produced about living a good life. They want the video to promote positive attitudes and lifestyles.

Being attentive to peers was another recommendation. Being aware and noticing friends. Helping others who don't seem to have friends.

On the topic of suicide, they recommended the following.

- Listen.
- Ask why.
- Tell an adult about it.
- Don't keep secrets.
- Don't do it for attention.
- Don't encourage anyone to kill themselves.

Cyber bullying was another identified issue. The youth recommended that a support group be established for cyber and physical bullying.

The issue of parenting was also brought up. There are too many unhealthy actions of parents when it comes to saying things online and not being able to say anything in person.

The youth recommended more programs be implemented for after school hours. The teachers also need to be aware and be more proactive.

The youth would also like to see summer camps where they can learn life skills.

In closing and as a recommendation - I, as a commissioner who participated in all of the hearings, would like to provide the following observation:

If and when we have future events that are crucially important and sensitive, we need people who know how and when to listen as opposed to taking up all of the talking time; and we need to respect everyone who makes the effort to speak and avoid cutting them off.

One example of this is when the youth were being engaged to provide their thoughts and opinions. Unbeknown to the facilitators who met with the youth ages 12 to 16, one young girl walked out in frustration. She had had her hand up repeatedly but was continuously being overlooked. In anger, she left the room visibly upset. Her mom followed her knowing full well what was happening with her daughter. The mom told me that her daughter walked out because her child knew that nobody was listening. In previous gatherings or events, this girl was always overlooked.

4.2 Health & Social Commissioner: Dorinda Vincent

Introduction

On March 28, 2015, the second day of the conference, the focus group sessions were conducted at the Delores D. Echum Composite School classrooms. Each commissioner was assigned to specific age groups to listen and record the recommendations from the youth. In this session Jackie Fletcher, Nellie Trapper and I, were delegated to facilitate the older youth from ages 16 and up. In the sessions there were a number of support workers who also participated in the session as well.

Format:

The group sat in a circle as the Commissioners explained the purpose of the People's Inquiry. Rules and safety measures were implemented and the support workers were acknowledged. The theme of 'Celebrate Life' was discussed and the concepts of enhancing life were shared with the group. The session began with an icebreaker "telephone", which provided an illustration of the importance of communication.

The Elder Commissioner asked the group 'what are some of the solutions?' The following were the responses from the youth:

1. Self-reliance: We are strong; we shouldn't have to depend on the government body so we can do it on our own. Coming together and standing up for ourselves.
2. Substance Abuse: We need to eliminate this in our communities.
3. Working together instead of working against each other.
4. Learning to communicate: This is a big issue in our communities. It is important so that we can work together.

The next question 'What is good life?' was asked. The following were the responses:

1. To be happy.
2. We need to have goals in life.
3. Being with family that supports me and I support them.
4. Family oriented activities.

The discussion of social media took place. Conversation focused on the negative effects of Facebook and how disruptive it has become, by distracting people from having meals together, talking to each other, or just doing regular every day things. Social media has an impact on youth. The following were the responses to this:

1. It is easier on Facebook to say mean things; it's so negative and I see it all the time. But people choose to be a part of it by commenting; it's our way of communicating.
2. There is a lot of bullying on social media - Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter.
3. There is a lot of drama especially if you are from a small community.
4. You can see others commenting through your friend list and contacts. There is a big trickle effect with drama. Then it is shared on other peoples' walls and status updates.
5. People can be anonymous online.
6. It's sad because you can cause someone to cut or hurt themselves. You are alone, looking at this monitor with all this hate in your face. It's not good.

4.0

4.0 COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

4.2 Health & Social Commissioner: Dorinda Vincent

7. I had a young girl in my home; she was a cutter. I caught her doing it and had to stay with her all the time. I've never seen suicide as a way, but this young girl did. An assessment was done and the school encouraged her to participate. Those appointments are hard and can cause severe damage.

This writer discussed the powerful tool of communication. However, how you respond and conduct yourself on Facebook, etc. is your strongest weapon. Social media represents your character. You can be positive on Facebook, and be a role model for others, which will remove negativity and break the cycle of lateral violence. Young people can be represented in a good way that expresses that they are strong in mind and in their heart. It is understandable that the internet is a very big part of a young person's life, however it is how you represent that will show others the good life.

Recommendations

1. A young person stated that we can learn a lot from social media. Certain aspects of social media can be beneficial to our communities if used in a positive manner. For example, there are fruit markets in Fort Albany and that is shared on Facebook to promote it. The internet can be used in regards to promotion and to communicate and share information. A member from Chapeau discussed how they share community events using social media.
2. A Missanabie Cree First Nation member would like to see more promotion of services. She is unaware of workers in her home community, resources, or where to go.
3. Youth Representatives should be identified in each community - a male and female to share information with leadership.
4. More programs for youth and programs geared for the older youth ages 16 and up. Right to Play and Nishnawbe Aski Nation have good programs for the younger demographic but the older youth need guidance too. We can be role models for them as well.
5. In the Northern communities, there needs to be more programming specifically geared toward the youth.
6. Parents need to have more involvement in youth programming. It is challenging to effectively run a program without parent involvement and interest. Parents send their kids to programs, but don't volunteer to help manage them. I run a lot of hands on programs, and it is hard to do a good job with 12-15 kids who show up and limited staff to coordinate.
7. Listen to us. Break the cycle of youth who are seen and not heard. Elders need to sit down and listen to us instead of lecturing us. They need to get more involved too.
8. Youth need to start to be a part of the solution so when we get older, we can make better for the younger ones.
9. Listen to the youth. We need more workshops like this where we can come together and learn. I know a lot of kids who don't want to come here. Maybe go door to door, ask them what they see. There is a lot we know and should not know in our communities.
10. More positive out there instead of being negative. It's hard when someone doesn't listen to us, yet they sit there and nod.

11. The age gap can be a problem for programs; Older kids need to be role models, and should lead by example. They can teach us things that our parents can't.
12. Youth don't talk, they are closed off. We need to reach out to them in each community. There should be a counsellor on call and available 24/7. There should be more land-based activities in healing.
13. There are a lot of guidelines in programs; we need to be more independent. We can be self-reliant in our programming. They talk about family based programs but as a youth member we would like programs of our own. However, that doesn't mean we don't want help.
14. We will always have an element of dysfunction but we can keep going. We will get better within time if we keep going. We need community involvement from the youth.
15. Parents need to be more involved at school. Youth tend to bring issues from home to school, resulting in negative and disconnected attitudes. It's hard to make change when parents are not there. We don't see parents getting involved in school or extra curricular activities such as hockey practice. I see more elementary kids at programs than the older youth. In our community, space and ice time isn't an issue, but there is not enough equipment. A lot of our families are on Ontario Works and there is a lack of knowledge sharing and information being passed on from our elders.
16. Substance and prescription drug abuse is a major issue. No one tells us, they only judge and condemn one another. We don't understand addictions, how it affects the body and mind. I know it's a sickness but the gossip is bad. The worker does all he can but has to work in small steps. We need to speak out more about the drugs in our communities.
17. There is loss of language, which creates barriers in how we communicate with one another. Not all of us understand or speak Cree or English. There is a struggle with computers and technology that also impacts several people. Addiction is the hardest thing. It's hard to get people engaged and out to meetings. We can spend money on equipment like TV's and radio to promote events. Getting people involved is the biggest issue. How can we expect people to be engaged when they are on drugs all of the time? The youth can be the change; they can get away from it. We need to educate them more on what you take into your body and the harmful effects.
18. Bring the barriers of sexual abuse down, talk about it. Be open about it and encourage others to use their voice. Use Facebook to share knowledge and community events. There are sweat lodge ceremonies in the community - advertise it. Talk about love, tell your parents you love them. Let's deal with the lateral violence- it starts with us. We need to go back to our roots and learn about our history as people or we won't go anywhere in the future. Need to go back so we can move forward.
19. Don't be scared, it's good to learn about our journey. When I became aware of the past, it gave me hope. The cycle will always continue but it is better than it was 20 years ago. Back then there was a generation of sexual abuse, and then it stopped when one man said something. Other generations are affected but we need talk openly about it. Make your voice heard. People tell me, you have no voice, you are too young. But I have a voice. Just smudge and pray. Don't be silent anymore. I will use the analogy of a fart. It's like a loud fart and it stinks when you have a silent fart. You can smell it. That's what I mean, (laughter) We don't need to follow policy all the time, it is not our way. I see kids on snowshoes, it made me proud. I don't follow policy, sometimes I take kids to spring camp on my own expense to save them. If we want to save our community, we need follow the laws of our

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4.0 COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

4.2 Health & Social Commissioner: Dorinda Vincent

ancestors. The land-based training gives kids hope and reconnects them to life. We need to shine a light on our communities; We need to fight for our youth, we need to be their voice on stronger issues. The Elders want to push out the drug dealers, and all of us need to stand up and say 'enough'. We need to push them out and not be silent anymore.

20. Those that live in Thunder Bay and the northern students have no programs. We go to school but that's it. There is nothing from 3pm to 9pm, so we don't do much. We need to create more programs and role model for one another. That will help the younger generation.
21. Role models will help break the cycle, I did it. I used to be so angry all of the time; I didn't want to talk to anyone. I have never hugged anyone, and in my 20s I did. Someone hugged me. And now I hug my mom. The wellness team helps a lot; it's a team that includes youth and elders programs. We are told to get educated, to go and just do it. Learn from the mainstream society. After you are done, then you come back and share with us.
22. Being out on the land helped me. I don't go to school, and had problems at home. But then they started land-based activities and you can get a credit in school. You go on a raft in the summer, take a journal and talk to the Elders. We all live on this raft that we build together. We go hunting and fishing too. You go for two weeks and travel along the river. More communities should do things like that. Not all kids play sports and prefer to go out on the land. Now I don't mind school.
23. More input is needed from the youth, talk to us about change. We should be included and we can talk to those in charge. You need our input to help organize programs.
24. Youth need to be heard. Our Elders don't teach us; we need more culturally-based programs.
25. We need to start finding money for these programs, There is a cost. We can't do things without it. There has to be a way, especially when there is money left over, redirect it. There should be a position where this could happen in all communities.

Conclusion

The dialogue in the circle was a balance of both negative and positive input, with every problem, a solution was suggested. It is evident that there is a feeling of despair in the Northern communities and there is a major lack of trust with workers and change.

Social media is a powerful force for youth and can impact their lives in a negative manner, however there were solutions shared in the sessions to combat issues such as cyber bullying.

It is evident that there needs to be more age appropriate programs for our older youth that will enhance their life skills; they want to help our younger youth but are unaware of how to do this. Strength based approaches will assist and empower the older youth.

We need to share the historical journey of the Aboriginal people so there is an

understanding of the state of the Aboriginal people of today. It will connect the youth and elders and create awareness of the stages of pre-contact, contact, post contact and the future of our people. It is part of the healing journey.

Overall it was a good session and there was a request for this type of conference on an annual basis that would focus on various themes. In essence, it will benefit the youth, strengthen the community and promote healthier relationships.

Respectfully submitted,
Dorinda Vincent
Health & Social Commissioner



4.0

4.0 COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

4.3 Youth Commissioner: Helen Joan Kataquapit

March 28,2015 10am

Women's Teachings Workshop:

The participants were seated in a circle. The facilitators spoke about their experiences in their own lives, their parents, the people and their teachers who taught them about life, teachings, culture and traditional ways of life. There was a discussion and questions about the teachings, traditions, and culture. There were also some issues raised regarding the residential school syndrome and how it impacts us today. More stories and experiences were shared. There should be more Elders and other speakers involved in the schools to talk about the teachings about our traditions and culture. There should be more workshops to teach parenting skills to the young parents.

March 28, 2015 12:00pm

Emotions/Feelings Workshop:

I found this workshop to be a really effective way to reach the youth. Even though some young people were shy and didn't say much, they all learned something about themselves and other people. I can imagine the youth being shy. Sometimes even the adults have a difficult time opening up or talking about their feelings in an honest way. More workshops and sessions should be held within the communities for the children and youth.

Sunday, March 29,2015

Commissioners Mike Metatawabin & Helen Joan Kataquapit

Facilitators Brittany & Deva with the support of Theresa Sutherland- Traditional Healing & Wellness Program & Laurie Mack

- 12 to 15 years youth
- 9 females (youth) and one male youth who participated in the circle
- Session started off with an ice-breaker

Session topic: Suicide

- Required everyone's participation to do this exercise.
- Used a stone or crystal, sometimes we used a feather and went around the circle.
- Grabbed a rock to speak.
- Talked about suicide today and how it is a very touchy subject to discuss.
- Breathing helps, makes us less nervous.
- Learning to breathe helps. Close eyes and breathe deep into the nose and breathe out. Letting it out.
- When someone is tense, tightens up the muscles.

The youth participated with setting up the ground rules.

Mike talked about The People's Inquiry, providing background information and how the entire project got started. He mentioned that the Chiefs requested more youth input to complete the report.

There were 16 root causes that were identified from the People's Inquiries. We picked a few to talk about.

- Identity and culture: Traditional activities/pow wows.
- Unresolved grief: Loss in life and we don't deal with it in a positive way. Reflect on health.
- Size of person? (Young people are conscious of how they look).
- Parenting skills: Children taken away/not able to parent as a result of residential schools. Do kids go to foster homes? Depends on family or other.
- Bullying- most common. Possible solution:
Talk to someone or a counsellor. More awareness is required as bullying is not really talked about in schools (make posters for awareness). Create serious consequences that will be more effective for the bullies, and choose not to gossip.
- Substance abuse: Peer pressure - not giving into peers, choosing and learning how to say "NO". Choosing friends that will not drink or do drugs, educating people about health and the effects. "You only live once" - not all agree to that.
- How can we live a good life? Awareness in the community through creative methods and campaigns like poster contests, cupcake writing "no smoking" or other.

What is a good life?

Mike: Being healthy - minopimatisiwin, hunting.

Brittany: Good life prevents suicide.

Deva: Being healthy, good education, being drug free, exercise, fitness, active, eating healthy foods, being yourself, loving yourself, taking care of yourself and family, and a good job.

What kind of safety for a good life? Safe transportation.

What does it mean to you? Being happy, thankful, saying "NO" to drugs, and living.

How can you be part of the solution?

Video, slide shows. A play about a good life.

School to make a play for their classes, make a community newspaper, make up quotes, make others feel good, lift each other up and complement each other every day. Invite your friends out if they keep to themselves, recognize the ones who don't have any friends, notice the ones who have a hard time, friends need space too, give them space.

Brittany: If someone tells you they want to commit suicide, tell an adult and report it. What can you do? Watch a movie regarding bullying. Call police and share with the community.

Deva: Solutions - Social media (Sites)

Brittany: Types of sites - getting in with bullying. Support groups for bullying, schools should make videos, community channels to post it, make commercials.

Deva: Share how to be good friends,

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4.0 COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

4.3 Youth Commissioner: Helen Joan Kataquapit

unhealthy actions to good actions, compare healthy actions. If something's bad online, never say it in person, teaching young people if they have nothing nice to say don't say it.

How can you be part of the solution?

How can you help us?

Don't say something bad and be aware of what you say to each other be conscious.

Brittany: People are actually telling people to kill themselves.

Solutions? Show proof to police - online/ internet comments.

Deva: Be part of the solution.

Mike: Fossil - simple of how old it is. There are teachings around it. Give thanks every morning or when you're alone by the trees. Be grateful for life and family. Help others. More after school programs. Teachers need to act. If you tell them, they will say they will do it; but they don't. Action is required.

Some of the youth talked about peer pressure and wanting to fit in with their friends. They also talked about the solutions and how they can help at school and home. The discussion led to the internet and how some web sites and people tell the youth to commit suicide. The youth discussed ways to help and support each other. They also talked about education and ways to promote more awareness through making videos, slide shows, radio talk shows, and newspapers etc. There should be more awareness on bullying

especially during school hours. The young people should be encouraged and supported to tell their parents or other people when they see other youth being bullied. They also talked about crafts and other ways to get the youth involved in activities. More awareness and prevention programs should be available for the young people. There should be more motivational speakers, Elders, workers and helpers to talk about healthy lifestyles, in schools. There is also a taboo about talking about suicide and people don't want to talk about it. I heard an Elder once say that there are ways to talk about suicide.

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4.0 COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

4.4 Elder Commissioner: Jackie Fletcher

Youth Gathering-Celebrating Life

March 28/29, 2015

Attached is my report on the two workshops that I did. My overall comments of the Youth Gathering is that this needs to happen at least two to three times a year. We need to make youth a priority. There's always funding available for other programs but no one designates a person to write proposals specifically for youth. This is where we should be investing our funding and efforts, as they are our next leaders.

I believe handing out tickets to each participant who showed up for the sessions and completed them, is a very good incentive. If it takes food and prizes to bring them out, then let's do more of that. One more stipulation we could add is that they must participate. It is too easy for them to pass on taking part, especially if they are shy. We may need to focus on "taking risks" and identify that speaking up is taking a risk and we could have workshops on this topic. One thing I mentioned in a couple of the sessions, was asking people to stop having side conversations when one person is taking a risk to speak, which is disrespectful. I notice this happens in some of the Chiefs meetings.

We could also have workshops on "respect". Another workshop could focus on is "communication". As an icebreaker at the Sunday morning circle, I wrote out a sentence and whispered it to the first person in the circle and they in turn whispered what they heard to the next person and so on. There were about 25 people in the room. This was

the sentence: "Moose Factory is a beautiful place and the people are awesome." When the last person said out loud what she heard it was "Moose Factory is a big place". This demonstrates how rumors are developed, through a lack in communication and is also a great icebreaker.

Several ideas have surfaced as a result of the youth gathering. All in all, I was very impressed that youth came, participated and enjoyed the event. One scene that sticks in my mind, was the Elder and youth making bannock dogs together at the fire. The youth member asked if she could show him how to do it, because he always wanted to know how. I think we could do a youth gathering focused on the land with hands on teachings incorporating elder teachings.

I am very proud to be part of this process and I want to thank everyone who helped. I know it takes a lot of work and there are many "behind the scenes" workers. Thanks to Warren and Nellie for bringing this together so quickly and it was good to have our team together again.

4.0

4.0 COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

4.4 Elder Commissioner: Jackie Fletcher

Workshop A:

March 28, 2015: 12:00 - 2:30 p.m

Emotions/Feelings

Youth and 2 commissioners

- Introductions - what is your name and where you come from
- I gave a brief overview of what the difference was between the two and we examined the emotion of anger
- I asked the group to define what anger looks like to them and they were very engaged, listing 10 characteristics of anger
- Next I asked, "what would you do if you saw a family member or someone else displaying these behaviours"?
 - A young participant said she would look for adult to help them
 - Call the police
 - Remove themselves from the situation.
- I then put two emotions on the board and explained that all feelings come from either FEAR or LOVE and drew a line between them
- I asked them to name a feeling and what emotion it would go under. For example, the feeling of shame, would go under Fear and the feeling of happiness would go under Love
- It was interesting to see that the longer list was under Fear
- Next I handed out a Smiley-Face Feelings Guide that depicts 70 feelings faces
- I asked them to circle all of the feelings that come under Fear
- After they were done I asked them to total up all the circled "Fear" feelings
- I put all the scores on the board (and the numbers were varied) to show them that not everyone identifies feelings the same way
- One girl identified only 3 under fear. The same girl would not provide her name and was very shy and didn't like the inter-activeness factor and would not participate
- I also encouraged them to post this guide in their rooms so that they can identify how they are feeling every day and share the guide with others
- Another point I talked about is when we lose people through death, we have a hard time sorting out what we are feeling because our feelings are all over the place
- Some youth were very shy but pushed themselves to participate - All in all I was very proud of this group because it is very hard to speak in smaller groups. In larger groups you can hide more.

Workshop B:
March 28, 2015: 2:30 - 4:00 p.m

- 12 youth and 1 First Nation adult made up the older group
- Started off with low numbers but grew to 13
- Introductions always seem to be uncomfortable for the youth but we got through it. I asked this group to identify why they were in attendance:

Many said because they were told to come, two just happened to walk by the school and came in to see what was going on, while others said they came to have fun, learn and have food and prizes

- I had a hard time hearing what some were saying because they spoke very low
- I handed out a sheet that asked them to identify three gifts and how they knew they were gifts
- The youth were eager to write and I could see that they were really thinking about what gifts they have.
- After everyone was done (15 minutes) they were all ready to hand in their papers to me and I said, “no, I don’t want the papers. What I want is each of you to read out your gifts to the group”. They all looked very stunned but slowly started to do the exercise
- I could tell they were uncomfortable talking about themselves
- Some of the examples are: pianist, helper, life saver, good friend, pet lover and team player
- This exercise took up most of the time, as everyone read through their gifts. I could see confidence building as each individual spoke

I encouraged the youth to use this technique when they are going for a job interview - to tell a story about gifts you have and why, rather than shrugging your shoulders and saying, “I don’t know”. This will help interviewers because it demonstrates confidence in knowing who you are and what you can contribute.



Mushkegowuk Youth Gathering

Celebrating Life

THE PEOPLE'S INQUIRY INTO
OUR SUICIDE PANDEMIC
2016



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