

Community Conversations

Social Policy Framework – June 28 2012



Quotes from the Conversation

The rose that you are looking for is right here. That is where the Spirit is. We're all in this together and we have to work together for a better tomorrow.

There is hope for our future generation. Elders teach us honor and respect and learning how to do these things are so important.

Loss of identity is a big issue. Where I came from, all this was wiped out by the church. There is still fear of speaking how we feel.

True history of Canada will shape relationships to go forward – but MUST allow time for reflection and creation of spec to contribute the voices of all – answers are in all of us.

We talk about the "sorrow" systems, the deficits of Aboriginal people but there is so much success, commitment and achievement – can't continue to segregate ourselves; define ourselves by the "sorrow" – we are so much more.

We need to recognize that as we hear these stories of history, they will be emotional. We need not fear that emotion, or allow it to shut us down, rather we need to acknowledge it and be comfortable with it and know it is part of the process.

A Space for Change...

A conversation providing input in Alberta's social policy framework was held at Lister Hall on the University Campus on June 28th. Over 70 participants engaged in a conversation about the future direction of social policy in Alberta.

The event opened the night before with a Pipe Ceremony led by Elder George Bretton from Treaty 6. This traditional ceremony provided teachings and wisdom and set a positive focus for the important conversation to occur the next day.

Participants emphasized that the language used in the document will help people see themselves as part of the process and the solution to addressing social issues throughout the province.

What we heard..

In general, the conversation focused on ways to restore health and dignity among Aboriginal people living in Alberta.

The following four over-arching themes emerged from a review of the comments.

1. Building **awareness through education** is an essential component to understanding the history of Aboriginal people in Canada, the history and impact of colonialism, the importance of Aboriginal culture, traditions and language and the deconstruct the myths many people believe regarding Aboriginal people.



The diverse perspectives, views, opinions, experiences, and stories brought richness and depth to the conversations. The comments will help guide decisions about programs and supports that help individuals and families participate more fully in our communities, economy and cultural life.

One sentence from Elder Eva Cardinal illuminates the profound impact of colonization, and captured the essence of why it is important to gather together, to listen, to learn from and to understand one another.

"The past is always with me."

2. **Relationships** are essential to share common values and achieve a clear understanding on differing world views.
3. A focus on **strong governance structures** that emphasized full participation of Aboriginal people, a space where all voices could be heard, opportunities for empowerment were nurtured and where an appropriate balance was struck between economic and social policy.
4. **Improving services and outcomes** by listening to the experiences and hopes of young people, and working together to support and nurture a sense of belonging to their past, their Elders, traditions, ceremonies, language and communities.



For more information on this and other Community Conversations, please email the Aboriginal Engagement and Strategy Division at:
HS.CommunityConversations@gov.ab.ca

Survey Results – What You Told Us

At the end of both the morning and afternoon sessions, participants completed an evaluation of the event. The responses from 44 participants are summarized here.

Ninety eight percent of the participants who completed the survey felt that:

- The environment in which the conversation took place was respectful;
- I was given the opportunity to voice my opinion;
- I felt my input was valued; and
- The conversation was meaningful .

In addition to multiple choice questions, we asked -

“Was there anything in today’s session that made you think or feel differently about something?” Some of the comments are:

- We are kindred spirits. Our positive energy is needed to make the change.
- Hopeful. All people are listening to one another.
- More prevention initiatives have to be developed and implemented in our community.
- Many things – focus on the family, measuring outcomes, the idea that the treaties belong to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.
- Enhanced opportunity and willingness to engage in a difficult conversation.
- A compassionate spirit is needed by all people of Alberta.

We appreciate all the information shared by participants through the conversation and the surveys. This data helps us plan future conversations and provides valuable input into the many things that will be done to improve outcomes for Aboriginal children, youth families and communities.

About the Social Policy Framework

Social policy is about how we meet human needs: housing, employment, safety and child care, for example. Social policy is expressed in how society cares for its members and how individuals, communities and government come together to address social challenges.

Information from this conversation, and hundreds more like it that are taking place throughout the province, will be put together to create a living document that provides broad, overall direction for social policy in Alberta. It will guide collective efforts to meet the growing and diverse needs of Albertans – both for government and community partners.

A successful framework will provide tools to make decisions around dynamic social challenges, such as childcare, housing, and employment. It will enable a common foundation to evaluate, measure, and report progress in achieving the desired outcomes for families, and communities. The framework will be part of the ongoing dialogue between individuals, agencies, community organizations and the non-profit sector to ensure that Albertans who need help have access to it.

For more information on the Social Policy Framework, please visit <http://socialpolicy.alberta.ca>

