

**PROVINCIAL FORUM ON ABORIGINAL
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
APRIL 21 – 22, 2006
SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS**

PRESENTED TO: Regional Aboriginal Authorities

PREPARED BY: Four Directions Management Services Ltd.
Dan George, President

May 15, 2006

“If we prevent, then we do not have to protect.”

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I) INTRODUCTION	2
II) CONTEXT.....	2
III) MEETING FORMAT	3
A) WORDS FROM OUR LEADERS.....	3
B) THE REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE.....	4
C) “BREAKOUT SESSION” INFORMATION	5
IV) RECOMMENDATIONS	12
A) COMMUNICATIONS.....	13
B) FUNDING.....	13
C) PRACTICES	14
D) PARTNERSHIPS/STRATEGIC ALLIANCES.....	14
E) EVALUATIONS	15
V) CONCLUSION.....	15

Appendices

Appendix A – Regional Presentations

- North Region
- Vancouver Island Region
- Vancouver Coastal Region
- Interior Region
- Fraser Region

Appendix B – Meeting Attendees

“If we prevent, then we do not have to protect.”

I) INTRODUCTION

On April 21 – 22, 2006, the Regional Aboriginal Authorities gathered in Richmond, BC to reflect on our collective work and to achieve the following purposes:

- 1) To reaffirm the Tsawwassen Accord, the directions contained therein, and reignite the unity that characterized the Accord.
- 2) To learn from one another's perspectives from the Regions sharing Best Practices and Challenges, and;
- 3) To update meeting delegates on the process of Regionalization.

Through this dialogue it was envisaged by meeting conveners that a number of outcomes would be achieved including,

- Consensus regarding future directions and the steps we need to take to get there,
- Clearer understanding on how we should communicate with one another,
- Measures identified regarding how we can support one another, Region to Region, and;
- An understanding of how we can support Provincial Aboriginal Leadership and ideas generated on how they may be able to assist the Regional Aboriginal Authorities.

II) CONTEXT

When the opportunity arose for Aboriginal communities and families to assume authority from the Provincial Government over the services provided to Aboriginal children and families, it was hoped, by both Aboriginal people and Provincial Government officials that the process of Regionalization would be further along than it currently is. This resulting time lag has resulted in frustration, fatigue, and cynicism on behalf of participants, particularly Aboriginal participants.

As a means of providing direction and context the gathering started with a number of key messages, most notably:

- We are involved in a new process, in many ways we are in uncharted territory,
- To be effective, meeting attendees need to be proactive and positive with their comments ensuring problems identified also have a solution offered,
- The spirit and intent of the Tsawwassen Accord must be reaffirmed with a collective understanding that "Together We Are Stronger",
- Many areas of Regionalization need attending to particularly joint multi-year work planning and the process of legislation development,

- We are here to listen and learn from experiences of people working in the field; we are seeking ways and means to improve the process,
- The most critical problem that needs addressing is that of honest, open, and timely communication between Aboriginal Authorities and the Ministry of Children and Family Development and improved communication amongst the Regional Aboriginal Authorities themselves, and
- The need for us to accept our reliance upon one another and the resulting need for us to work in a more collaborative, collegial, and coherent manner.

III) MEETING FORMAT

Consideration was given by the meeting conveners to ensure the proper issues were discussed with the appropriate people in the room. For ease of reference, this report will summarize a number of the presentations that were made, our experience in the Legislation Working Group, and the information gathered in the Breakout Sessions.

A) Words From Our Leaders

Over the course of time leadership tools haven't changed significantly, but the focus of their use has. In today's environment the leader has a new set of responsibilities. The leader, at every level in the system, must strive to implement four (4) basic principles:

- 1) Transfer ownership for work to those who execute the work.
- 2) Create the environment for ownership where each person wants to be responsible for his/her own performance.
- 3) Coach the development of individual capability and competence.
- 4) Learn faster.

Given the importance of children and family issues Aboriginal people, leaders from the major political Aboriginal organizations in the Province were in attendance.

- Shawn Atleo, Vice-Chief BC Region, Assembly of First Nations
- Bruce Dumont, President, Métis Nation of British Columbia
- Lillian George, President, United Native Nations
- Chief Robert Shintah, Union of BC Indian Chiefs
- Grand Chief Edward John, First Nations Summit

A common thread woven throughout all of the words of Aboriginal Leadership was the notion of unity. Summarized, they offered the following words:

"How can we move forward if we can't find a way to come together?"

"We need to leave here with a sense of where we are going."

"We need to blend everything together so we are united."

“Your direction is my direction.”

“When we get confused, always revert back to the child.”

“The time is now; we need to end the suffering of our children and families.”

“The future isn’t ahead of us, the future is coming behind us.”

“The Government needs to know that we can take care of our children.”

“We are all leaders in this room.”

*“We are living in a history of denial of who we are as a people, our place on our lands,
and our responsibility to care for and protect our children.”*

Leslie du Toit, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Children and Family Development was also in attendance for the full two (2) day forum learning from the experience to date of Aboriginal people in the Regionalization process and sharing her insights on how things may be improved. Ms. du Toit’s comments spoke to the need for Ministry of Children and Family Development and the Aboriginal community to pay respectful attention to our past and learn from it. If “we” are to be successful, the Ministry of Children and Family Development must no longer have the authority and right to care for Aboriginal children – this must rest with Aboriginal people. It was acknowledged that there will be a new system, a new Ministry in place, yet this will take time.

“We must move as quickly as possible, while still being thoughtful.”

B) The Regional Perspective

Each of the five (5) Regional Aboriginal Authorities had an opportunity to share their strengths, experience, and hope regarding the provision of services to Aboriginal children and families. Copies of the Regional presentations are included in Appendix A. Throughout the Regional presentations, a number of themes/messages emerged:

- Community engagement is critical to our success and attention must be paid to how we communicate with one another and those we serve,
- To be successful, we need to remain children and family focused,
- Our work is challenged by a large workload coupled with limited human, monetary, and capital resources,
- Throughout the Province, we are at different stages in the development of systems, processes, programs, and policies,
- The building of capacity remains an on-going, pressing issue,

- Strategic linkages are being developed within the community, operationally, and with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal political bodies,
- There exist unique organizational approaches and structures from Region to Region. At different levels, Regions are organized based upon geography, Nationhood, and gender. Elder involvement was a constant,
- The Regions, while dealing with similar issues, are very different geographically with a diversity of population, and,
- The work that is being done by the Regions is long-term in nature with an emphasis on Conceptual Planning and Service Planning.

C) “Breakout Session” Information

To gather information for future planning purposes, five (5) breakouts were held addressing three (3) broad goal areas. To facilitate the discussion a number of questions were used as prompts. For ease of reference, the report author has clustered the feedback of meeting attendees into themes.

GOAL: ALL ABORIGINAL VOICES ARE SUPPORTING THE REGIONALIZATION PROCESS; INFORMED BY THE NEEDS OF ABORIGINAL CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

KEY QUESTIONS:

1) What are the opportunities for us to work together on behalf of children and families?

a. Identification and Resolution of Political Issues

- Address political issues as they arise.
- Unity will allow us to remain strong.
- Delegated agency issues must be addressed.
- Identify alternatives to delegated agencies.
- Need a service plan to ensure all children are cared for in a meaningful way.
- Need to avoid simply having a “brown ministry”.
- Government to government relationship is needed.
- Regionalization is not ideal for all groups.

b. Development of a Common/Shared Vision

- Maintain our vision as a group rather than following the Ministry or government.

- Regionalization is the Ministry's way of fixing what is broken within itself; we need to look at what is broken in our own communities.
- Need for an overarching vision that everyone can agree on.

c. Capacity Building

- Costs of providing services in remote areas must be considered and addressed.
- Need opportunity to highlight our challenges and find our own solutions with the proper resources to find those solutions.
- Partnership with universities for training to address capacity building issues.

d. Improving Communication

- Everyone work as a team to improve communication.
- More resources needed for adequate community consultation.
- Relationships among Aboriginal stakeholders.
- Contact the Chiefs and the communities regarding these processes.

2) What are some of the strengths/assets we possess?

a. Common Goals/Purpose

- Despite disagreement with the process, it has allowed us to gather together and work towards a common goal.
- Given us a process to work Nation to Nation on child focused issues.
- The five regional planning committees have recognized the need to work together in Aboriginal communities to ensure all people are included so no one falls through the cracks.

b. Culture and Spirituality

- We are capable of dealing with issues on a Nation to Nation basis by cultural protocol.

c. Leadership

- We have a strong Leadership Council.
- Our planning committees will know to serve the people who need the help to avoid them falling through the cracks.

d. Becoming Proactive

- Set high goals for ourselves. We are capable of making progress with culturally focused programs and systems.

- Teen parent and single father programs.

e. Increased Capacity

- Master tuition agreements are a strength and an asset that demonstrates our capacity.
- Integrated management plans bringing programs together at the community level.
- Multi-year funding agreements, continuation of programs and services, and long-term staff.

3) What are some of the linkages that we should be pursuing?

a. Nation to Nation

- Need to link healing for parents and link to other Nations as there are other issues such as drugs and alcohol, poverty, etc.
- Link up with other communities who have valuable programs.

b. Government to Government

- Need to have the federal government involved. How is it that they have offloaded their fiduciary responsibilities?
- Need to be aware of other processes that will impact our communities e.g. health blueprints.

c. Agency to Agency or Group to Group

- There are already existing capacities in communities that need to be acknowledged, supported and funded to continue the work they do or possibly start work (e.g. youth councils should be involved from the communities as the youth are also our leaders in training and we need to ensure there is opportunity for them to get the experience in the community and these processes)

d. Family to Family

- Link healthy families with those who are not healthy.

e. Person to Person

- Need to link people of all ages who have healed themselves.

GOAL: DEVELOPMENT OF LEGISLATION THAT REFLECTS ABORIGINAL REALITY AND IS FROM A COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

KEY QUESTIONS:

1) What tools do we need to inform the legislative process?

a. Accountability

- Money must get to the child and family directly as it tends to get filtered through government and administration rather than where it is actually needed.
- Always ask the question, “Are we serving and benefiting the community people?”
- Equality of funding for on and off reserve foster parents.
- Funding is currently based on how people identify themselves and many people are lost and excluded. There is a strong need to be more inclusive.

b. Awareness and Recognition of Aboriginal Rights and Title

- Need recognition of Aboriginal rights and title in the legislative process.
- We can not and will not be treated like everyone else, we have special rights.

c. Community Consultation

- Need more community consultation in the legislation process (e.g. luncheons without government as our communities still do not trust government especially on issues regarding the Ministry of Children and Families).
- Need more information on legislation if we are to provide input and need more of our community to approve such a process.

d. Creation of Aboriginal Based Legislation

- Child welfare is not an industry; it is a backwards approach, it should be more values or indigenous philosophies based.
- Emphasis on cultural values in the legislation with holistic values.
- Utilize the Memorandum of Understanding as a tool as we have more power in our unity than we really realize to make the government listen
- AOPSI model should be re-examined
- Legislation causes us to forget our way of life and the legislation must reflect Section 35; we should be using legislation as a tool to our advantage.
- Examine the Maori experience.

e. Capacity Development

- If the child stays with a relative adequate funding and support is absolutely necessary.
- Inadequate funding for delegated agencies.
- Asset mapping should be done to build capacity and support.
- Economic development.

f. Our Leadership

- Leadership should put a moratorium on the funding cuts to protect children's status.
- Many people depend on the non-political organizations that are not included in the Leadership Council.
- Our political leaders need to be on the Legislation Working Group.
- Work with leadership more and ensure that they are getting the support they need on an administrative basis to keep up with these sort of issues as the New Relationship carries much responsibility and it would be nice to ensure that they are able to keep up with the bureaucracy as Aboriginal organizations are typically under-resourced.
- Increased communications structure within the Leadership Council as they are carrying a heavy responsibility and we need to ensure that they are maintaining the strong community communication with the grass roots people who are affected.

2) Who are stakeholders and how do we engage them?

a. Political and Service Delivery Entities

- Signatories to the Tsawwassen Accord (e.g. Métis, First Nations Summit, Union of BC Indian Chiefs, Urban Aboriginal groups such as United Native Nations, BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, Delegated Agencies, Service Providers, Daycares, schools, etc.)

b. Individuals

- We need to look at the human element not the organizations or groups (e.g. Métis, Aboriginal, status, non-status, etc.)
- Our stakeholders are our children and elders.

c. Engagement

- We need to build trust particularly among delegated agencies.
- Start at the community level not from the government.
- Develop protocol agreements between all stakeholders.
- Need a website to gather and disseminate information.

- Need a communications coordinator.
- Spend time in the community and sit with people at the grassroots level at the kitchen table.
- Group conference calls.
- Gifting vs. honoraria.
- Bingo and a movie.

3) What are the opportunities inherent in the legislative process?

a. Use of Legislation as a Tool for our Communities

- Development of protocol agreements between all stakeholders.
- Development of child centered legislation.
- Legislation should not be about funding the system, it is currently set up backwards e.g. it rewards delegated agencies based on the number of children they have.

b. Ensuring Government Accountability

- Educating non-Aboriginal people on issues and rights.
- Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report has some excellent recommendations and should be followed up on.
- Need to link with the Federal Government and remind them of Section 35.
- Compare the gaps between MCFD vs. Aboriginal organizations administrative support, it is appalling and shameful.

c. Development of Culturally Relevant Legislation

- Traditional adoption.
- Ancestors and ceremonies have the answers.

d. Development and/or Strengthening of Services

- Conflict resolution, mediation, and first aid training for Aboriginal communities taking responsibility for any social services.
- In our delegated agencies we should try to only hire Aboriginal people and if we do not, we will ensure that the non-Aboriginal person mentors a young person or student at least once every year for a few months showing the commitment to community and ensuring our people are not missing out.
- Supports for invisible disabilities.

4) What are the tools strengths/assets we have?

a. Communication and Partnerships

- Information sharing in regions – making direct linkages today.

b. Culture, Spirituality, and Identity

- Language
- Teachings

c. Accumulation of Statistical Data

- Developing our own statistics to have a means to challenge the government.

d. Government Support of Aboriginal Children and Families Process

- Aboriginal people are now working for Ministry of Children and Families; five years ago this was not the case.
- The Child and Youth Office and the Deputy Minister of Aboriginal Services.

e. Aboriginal Technicians

- AFN, UBCIC, FNS have technical people.
- Joint Aboriginal Management Committee has regular meetings.

GOAL: CELEBRATE AND BUILD UPON OUR SUCCESSES SINCE THE TSAWWASSEN ACCORD WAS SIGNED

KEY QUESTION:

1) What have we achieved since Tsawwassen Accord and our formation?

a. Identification of Common Priorities and Issues

- We have achieved a process.
- Naming racism as a barrier in the child welfare system.

b. Unity

- Unity-an ability to come together to address our issues.
- Working together with our diversity for our children.
- Resolving our differences before they go to government.
- We have become more inclusive.
- Working together as a group.

c. Awareness of Our Rights

- Protecting our individual rights and taking control.
- Assuming authority.
- We are not passive anymore, we know our rights and can use their system against them and we are more aggressive to make it work for us and our children (International Rights of the Child).

d. Leadership Council

- We have a strong Leadership Council.

e. Learning from the Past

- Awareness of the history of child welfare.
- More awareness that the system does not work and needs to be fixed.
- Learning from our mistakes and aware that we will make mistakes in this process and realize that we must learn from them.

f. Incorporation of Traditional Practices

- Elders are the keepers of the children.
- Start and continue practicing spirituality keeps us strong.

g. Capacity Development

- More delegated agencies.
- Training is more Aboriginal sensitive (apprehension workers).
- Coming forward with our own solutions and plans.
- Policies and procedures are in place to become authorities.

IV) RECOMMENDATIONS

The development of recommendations from the Provincial Forum is equally as important as the Forum itself. In the best case scenario, recommendations are best developed in consultation with the proponents of the Regional Aboriginal Authorities. With this in mind, the following tentative recommendations are suggested to ascertain whether the recommendations are reasonable in light of organizational, operational, and political limitations.

A) Communications

Recommendation #1

Provide further opportunities for key stakeholders to discuss and attempt to resolve outstanding issues including the delegated agency process, funding for service development and delivery, communications amongst ourselves and with others, and regionalization. This can be accomplished through further forums, both regional and provincial and should include representation from political and non-political stakeholders as well as both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal service providers

Recommendation #2

Engage non-political service delivery agencies as active participants in the strategic planning process to ensure all stakeholders are being heard and are able to provide direction to the process. Representation should include both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal service providers.

Recommendation #3

Hire a Communications Coordinator to develop and maintain an Aboriginal Child and Families website, facilitate conference calls, and generally encourage discussion about the process. The Communications Coordinator would be accountable to the Aboriginal Authorities and to the Aboriginal community as a whole.

B) Funding

Recommendation #4

Lobby both the provincial and federal governments to supplement available funding to address two factors:

- i. The high costs of delivering services in Aboriginal communities due to the disproportionate number of Aboriginal children in care, with a focus on the high costs of delivering child welfare services to remote and special access communities.
- ii. The imbalance of administrative funding/support for Aboriginal service providers and Ministry of Children and Families programs and services.

Recommendation #5

Develop a new funding formula for child welfare agencies which:

- i. Rewards quality of service as opposed to quantity of children in care.
- ii. Reflects the diversity and size of caseloads.

- iii. Addresses the capacity development needs of the agencies.
- iv. Provides a predictable and sustainable level of funding to assist in agency strategic planning.

C) Practices

Recommendation #6

Create a Best Practices Guide for the development of child centered and culturally sensitive child welfare program with a focus on supporting the family as a unit. Content should include successful programs, cultural practices, community strategic planning, curriculum development, program evaluation, benchmarking, data collection and analysis, and available resources to develop programs.

To develop the Best Practices Guide, research and analysis of other successful Indigenous child welfare programs should be undertaken including the Maori, South Africa, United States, and Canada.

D) Partnerships/Strategic Alliances

Recommendation #8

Develop partnerships with public and private training institutes to provide training for Aboriginal child welfare workers to ensure they have the appropriate skills to effectively serve our children. The training institutes should be accredited to ensure the quality and recognition of the training offered i.e. colleges, universities.

In addition, workers must be provided with cultural knowledge to assist Aboriginal families if they require it. This can be accomplished by including Elders and spiritual leaders in the training of workers who are recognized by their communities as legitimate practitioners of cultural activities.

Training should include but not be limited to First Aid, conflict resolution, mediation, family reunification, cultural practices, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, facilitation skills, evaluation, legislation, residential school effects, traditional nutrition, budgeting, and drug and alcohol awareness.

Recommendation #9

Ensure there are properly mandated Aboriginal representatives participating in the Legislation Working Group, meaning individuals who have decision-making authority. It is necessary that there be a balance of members based on gender, Aboriginal Nationhood, political/non-political status, geography, off reserve, and on reserve.

E) Evaluations

Recommendation #10

Evaluate the delegated agency process to ensure proper supports are in place for the effective delivery of services by these agencies. Areas to be measured should include caseload sizes, family reunification statistics, family satisfaction, use of agency resources, prevention vs. protection, capacity development of the agencies and workers, partnerships, and community support.

Recommendation 11

Conduct a review of all activities undertaken on behalf of the Aboriginal Children and Families process to date to measure progress and identify strengths, weaknesses, successes, and barriers.

Activities to be reviewed should include but not be limited to:

- i. Protection issues
- ii. Prevention issues
- iii. Transfer of authority
- iv. Capacity development
- v. Financial management
- vi. Administration
- vii. Communication
- viii. Development of legislation
- ix. Partnerships and strategic alliances

V) CONCLUSION

There was a sense of “covering the same old ground” by meeting attendees therefore a strong desire was expressed to “give expression” to the words and directions of participants. Once the contents of this report and tentative recommendations are considered, the next phase of the process begins, namely the making of decisions. It is important that such decisions incorporate whatever other information is available regarding Regionalization in addition to the findings and recommendations of this paper. To guarantee success, it is critical that adequate procedures and processes be in place to ensure that appropriate follow-up actions are taken.

<p style="text-align: center;">Provincial Forum for Aboriginal Children and Families Breakout Group Summary of Themes</p>
--

GOAL: ALL ABORIGINAL VOICES ARE SUPPORTING THE REGIONALIZATION PROCESS; INFORMED BY THE NEEDS OF ABORIGINAL CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

KEY QUESTIONS:

1) What are the opportunities for us to work together on behalf of children and families?

a. Identification and Resolution of Political Issues

- Address political issues as they arise.
- Unity will allow us to remain strong.
- Delegated agency issues must be addressed.
- Identify alternatives to delegated agencies.
- Need a service plan to ensure all children are cared for in a meaningful way.
- Need to avoid simply having a “brown ministry”.
- Government to government relationship is needed.
- Regionalization is not ideal for all groups.

b. Development of a Common/Shared Vision

- Maintain our vision as a group rather than following the Ministry or government.
- Regionalization is the Ministry’s way of fixing what is broken within itself; we need to look at what is broken in our own communities.
- Need for an overarching vision that everyone can agree on.

c. Capacity Building

- Costs of providing services in remote areas must be considered and addressed.
- Need opportunity to highlight our challenges and find our own solutions with the proper resources to find those solutions.
- Partnership with universities for training to address capacity building issues.

d. Improving Communication

- Everyone work as a team to improve communication.
- More resources needed for adequate community consultation.
- Relationships among Aboriginal stakeholders.

- Contact the chiefs and the communities regarding these processes.

2) What are some of the strengths/assets we possess?

a. Common Goals/Purpose

- Despite disagreement with the process, it has allowed us to gather and work for a common goal.
- Given us a process to work Nation to Nation on child focused issues.
- The five regional planning committees have recognized the need to work together in Aboriginal communities to ensure all people are included so no one falls through the cracks.

b. Culture and Spirituality

- We are capable of dealing with issues on a Nation to Nation basis by cultural protocol.

c. Leadership

- We have a strong Leadership Council.
- Our planning committees will know to serve the people who need the help to avoid them falling through the cracks.

d. Becoming Proactive

- Set high goals for ourselves. We are capable of making programs and progress with culturally focused programs and systems.
- Teen parent and single father programs.

e. Increased Capacity

- Master tuition agreements are a strength and an asset that demonstrates our capacity.
- Integrated management plans bringing programs together at the community level.
- Multi-year funding agreements, continuation of programs and services, and long-term staff.

3) What are some of the linkages that we should be pursuing?

a. Nation to Nation

- Need to link healing for parents and link to other Nations as there are other issues such as drugs and alcohol, poverty, etc.
- Link up with other communities who have valuable programs.

b. Government to Government

- Need to have the federal government involved. How is it that they have offloaded their fiduciary responsibilities?
- Need to be aware of other processes that will impact our communities e.g. health blueprints.

c. Agency to Agency or Group to Group

- There are already existing capacities in communities that need to be acknowledged, supported and funded to continue the work they do or possibly start work (e.g. youth councils should be involved from the communities as the youth are also our leaders in training and we need to ensure there is opportunity for them to get the experience in the community and these processes)

d. Family to Family

- Link healthy families with those who are not healthy.

e. Person to Person

- Need to link people of all ages who have healed themselves.

GOAL: DEVELOPMENT OF LEGISLATION THAT REFLECTS ABORIGINAL REALITY AND IS FROM A COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

KEY QUESTIONS:

1) What tools do we need to inform the legislative process?

a. Accountability

- Money must get to the child and family directly as it tends to get filtered through government and administration rather than where it is actually needed.
- Always ask the question, “Are we serving and benefiting the community people?”

- Equality of funding for on and off reserve foster parents.
- Funding is currently based on how people identify themselves and many people are lost and excluded there is a strong need to be more inclusive.

b. Awareness and Recognition of Aboriginal Rights and Title

- Need recognition of Aboriginal rights and title in the legislative process.
- We can not and will not be treated like everyone else, we have special rights.

c. Community Consultation

- Need more community consultation in the legislation process (e.g. luncheons without government as our communities still do not trust government especially on issues regarding the Ministry of Children and Families).
- Need more information on legislation if we are to provide input and need more our community to approve such a process.

d. Creation of Aboriginal Based Legislation

- Child welfare is not an industry; it is a backwards approach, it should be more values or indigenous philosophies based.
- Emphasis on cultural values in the legislation with holistic values.
- Utilize the Memorandum of Understanding as a tool as we have more power in our unity than we really realize to make the government listen
- AOPSI model should be re-examined
- Legislation causes us to forget our way of life and the legislation must reflect Section 35; we should be using legislation as a tool to our advantage.
- Examine the Maori experience.

e. Capacity Development

- If the child stays with a relative adequate funding and support is absolutely necessary.
- Inadequate funding for delegated agencies.
- Asset mapping should be done to build capacity and support.
- Economic development.

f. Our Leadership

- Leadership should put a moratorium on the funding cuts to protect children's status.

- Many people depend on the non-political organizations that are not included in the Leadership Council.
- Our political leaders need to be on the Legislation Working Group.
- Work with leadership more and ensure that they are getting the support they need on an administrative basis to keep up with these sort of issues as the New Relationship carries much responsibility and it would be nice to ensure that they are able to keep up with the bureaucracy as Aboriginal organizations are typically under-resourced.
- Increased communications structure within the Leadership Council as they are carrying a heavy responsibility and we need to ensure that they are maintaining the strong community communication with the grass roots people who are affected.

2) Who are stakeholders and how do we engage them?

a. Political and Service Delivery Entities

- Signatories to the Tsawwassen Accord (e.g. Métis, First Nations Summit, Union of BC Indian Chiefs, Urban Aboriginal groups such as United Native Nations, BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, Delegated Agencies, Service Providers, Daycares, schools, etc.)

b. Individuals

- We need to look at the human element not the organizations or groups (e.g. Metis, Aboriginal, status, non-status, etc.)
- Our stakeholders are our children and elders.

c. Engagement

- We need to build trust particularly among delegated agencies.
- Start at the community level not from the government.
- Develop protocol agreements between all stakeholders.
- Need a website to gather and disseminate information.
- Need a communications coordinator.
- Spend time in the community and sit with people at the grassroots level at the kitchen table.
- Group conference calls.
- Gifting vs. honoraria.
- Bingo and a movie.

3) What are the opportunities inherent in the legislative process?

a. Use of Legislation as a Tool for our Communities

- Development of protocol agreements between all stakeholders.
- Development of child centered legislation.
- Legislation should not be about funding the system, it is currently set up backwards e.g. it rewards delegated agencies based on the number of children they have.

b. Ensuring Government Accountability

- Educating non-Aboriginal people on issues and rights.
- Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report has some excellent recommendations and should be followed up on.
- Need to link with the Federal Government and remind them of Section 35.
- Compare the gaps between MCFD vs. Aboriginal organizations administrative support, it is appalling and shameful.

c. Development of Culturally Relevant Legislation

- Traditional adoption.
- Ancestors and ceremonies have the answers.

d. Development and/or Strengthening of Services

- Conflict resolution, mediation, and first aid training for Aboriginal communities taking responsibility for any social services.
- In our delegated agencies we should try to only hire Aboriginal people and if we do not, we will ensure that the non-Aboriginal person mentors a young person or student at least once every year for a few months showing the commitment to community and ensuring our people are not missing out.
- Supports for invisible disabilities.

4) What are the tools strengths/assets we have?

a. Communication and Partnerships

- Information sharing in regions – making direct linkages today.

b. Culture, Spirituality, and Identity

- Language

- Teachings

c. Accumulation of Statistical Data

- Developing our own statistics to have a means to challenge the government.

d. Government Support of Aboriginal Children and Families Process

- Aboriginal people are now working for Ministry of Children and Families; five years ago this was not the case.
- The Child and Youth Office and the Deputy Minister of Aboriginal Services

e. Aboriginal Technicians

- AFN, UBCIC, FNS have technical people.
- Joint Aboriginal Management Committee has regular meetings.

GOAL: CELEBRATE AND BUILD UPON OUR SUCCESSES SINCE THE TSAWWASSEN ACCORD WAS SIGNED

KEY QUESTION:

1) What have we achieved since Tsawwassen Accord and our formation?

a. Identification of Common Priorities and Issues

- We have achieved a process.
- Naming racism as a barrier in the child welfare system.

b. Unity

- Unity-an ability to come together to address our issues.
- Working together with our diversity for our children.
- Resolving our differences before they go to government.
- We have become more inclusive.
- Working together as a group.

c. Awareness of Our Rights

- Protecting our individual rights and taking control.
- Assuming authority.
- We are not passive anymore, we know our rights and can their system against them and we are more aggressive to make it work for us and our children (International Rights of the Child).

d. Leadership Council

- We have a strong Leadership Council.

e. Learning from the Past

- Awareness of the history of child welfare.
- More awareness that the system does not work and needs to be fixed.
- Learning from our mistakes and aware that we will make mistakes in this process and realize that we must learn from them.

f. Incorporation of Traditional Practices

- Elders are the keepers of the children.
- Start and continue practicing spirituality keeps us strong.

g. Capacity Development

- More delegated agencies.
- Training is more Aboriginal sensitive (apprehension workers).
- Coming forward with our own solutions and plans.
- Policies and procedures are in place to become authorities.