

VICTORIA URBAN RECONCILIATION DIALOGUE

Hosted through the Victoria Native Friendship Centre, TheDialogue@VNFC.ca

SUMMARY REPORT

Advisory Panel Gathering
November 26, 2018

Full Report available at www.TheDialogueVictoria.ca



Indigenous Services
Canada

Services aux
Autochtones Canada

Background

In March 2018, urban Indigenous community agencies, community members including an Elder and an artist, and representatives from the federal, provincial and some local municipal governments gathered at the Victoria Native Friendship Centre in response to the shared desire to begin an Urban Reconciliation Dialogue. From this gathering a Steering Committee was formed to advance the conversation and enable ongoing dialogue within the community. The named the initiative

Through monthly meetings, the Steering Committee developed a strategy to begin the daunting task of engaging with the 383,000 citizens of Victoria. On November 26, 2019, an Advisory Panel Gathering was hosted to widen the conversation and bring a more comprehensive range of voices into the dialogue.

The Advisory Panel was selected by the Steering Committee, with the understanding that it is not a finite group of people but an evolving set of voices. Ninety invitations went out and 40 people participated in the Gathering.

This report reflects that Gathering.

Themes of the Gathering

Reconciliation is a broad and complex notion that can mean different things to different people at different times. For this reason, the Advisory Panel included a diverse group of community representatives who together examined the meaning and impact of reconciliation for the Victoria area. The day was a powerful opportunity for participants to connect with each other, build new relationships and share their own unique stories and perspectives in relation to reconciliation.

Through three facilitated sessions, participants explored several key themes.

Relationship Building: Reconciliation is, at its core, about building mutually respectful relationships and being genuinely accountable in those relationships.



Curated Resources: A database of “reconciliation resources” should be assembled and actively maintained. This database could include learning materials on:

- the concept of reconciliation
- the history of the local territory and of colonization in Canada
- a list of Indigenous individuals or agencies able to engage with and offer programming around reconciliation
- a cultural safety toolkit created by Indigenous community with information on how non-Indigenous individuals or agencies can engage with Indigenous communities in a good way

Creating Safety for Diverse Voices: Simply inviting diverse voices to the table isn’t enough. We need to actively make the conversations safe for different people with varying experiences and personal backgrounds in order to make those invitations meaningful. Additionally, it is important to examine why some voices are at the table and others are not and determine ways to make spaces safer and more welcoming for those who aren’t yet at the table.

Opportunities to Gather and Connect: Opportunities need to be created for gatherings about reconciliation. Through these gatherings, participants can build connections across a wide range of organizations and broaden the network of allies committed to taking on strong commitments to reconciliation.

Questioning Norms and Re-Imagining Mainstream Systems: Reconciliation isn’t about throwing more resources or projects at a problem while fundamentally maintaining business as usual. Meaningful steps towards reconciliation necessitates a deeper reflection into systems and systems changes, allowing for the evolution of new norms.

Uplifting and Centering Indigenous Voices: We need to make sure that Indigenous voices are at the table and that Indigenous people are given the opportunity to lead conversations and be heard and learned from. To do this, we need to equip Indigenous people with the skills needed to speak their truth and guide this work.

Next Steps

The Victoria Urban Reconciliation Dialogue Advisory Panel Gathering was a powerful and impactful day for everyone involved. By bringing together such a wide range of community members new relationships were built, existing relationships were strengthened, and tangible actions were identified that have the potential to support meaningful strides towards reconciliation in the Victoria area.

In closing circle, the resounding sentiments expressed included: a sense of gratitude for the opportunity to gather and build relationships; a sense of courage, invigoration and inspiration; and a sense of momentum, readiness and commitment to carrying this work forward.