ABORIGINAL PEOPLES FAMILY ACCORD

INTERIOR REGION

FIVE COMMUNITY TABLE FORUMS:

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Summer, 2007

Contents

Executive Summary:

This comparative reviews five Community Table Forum reports that compiled information gathered from a series of zone forums, held throughout the Interior Region during the winter and spring of 2007. These forums involved nearly 300 participants, with a broad cross section of representation; including 33 Aboriginal communities, ten Métis regional offices, four delegated agencies, eight Friendship Centres, four Tribal Councils, and over 20 other Aboriginal urban agencies and organization. This cross section includes many youth and elders, leaders, administrators, foster parents, and frontline workers in the area of children and families services.

Key overall objectives of the APFA are simple, to be inclusive, community-driven, and to utilize those individuals with the knowledge and insight of children & family programs in the planning process. These forums were held in the Cariboo-Chilcotin, Kootenay, Okanagan, Lytton-Thompson-Lillooet, and Shuswap zones. From these reports, common themes and supporting comments for these themes are compiled in a list; with each zone to formalize the comparisons.

Five common themes were found throughout the Interior Region, voiced in all five zone forums. These themes are determined based on the number of times mentioned. It is noted that many comments made included more than one common theme; for example, "We need to build a governing system that includes our cultures and traditions". The five common themes found were: 1. governance, 2. community-driven, 3. involvement of youth and Elders, 4. traditions and cultures, and 5. building capacity. All zones felt that there needed to be a similar structure for the Community Tables, therefore a similar template for the Community Table was recommended across the Region. Any differences found with the template generally pertained to geographies, differing supports and community demographics, and unique cultures and traditions.

Overall, the recommendations are quite clear: Communities want a community-driven, cultural, bottom-up decision-making process that is not merely an advisory system. There must be a communication strategy, formation of youth and Elders groups, and capacity building done to achieve the recommendations, keeping in mind that they all must work in relation to each other in order to be affective. APFA's next steps include creating a framework of how a continuum of capacity building will evolve from the establishment of Community Tables.

Introduction:

BACKGROUND

In June 2002, the Provincial government opened the door to allow limited Aboriginal representation of proposed 'blended authorities', which would be responsible for reshaping family services across the province. However, more than 200 Aboriginal delegates and leaders from across BC supported a resolution drafted by the Interior Region's Aboriginal participants to make the regionalization of family services an Aboriginal-driven process. This became known as the Tsawwassen Accord.

The APFA planning committee, later known as the Board of Directors (BOD), evolved into a 9-3-3 model with seats for the nine Tribal Councils, three for the Métis Nation, and three for Aboriginal people residing in urban areas. The Interior is the only Region in BC to have a Political Committee, which includes seats for nine Tribal Councils, one Métis Nation seat, and one urban seat. The Political Committee provides leadership support to the APFA[1].

The BOD and Political Committee have always stressed Aboriginal community engagement. Following the first round of this engagement in 2003/04, the BOD ratified the APFA Service Plan in October 2005, which outlines how communities would like to 'do things differently' in terms of family services. In 2006, the APFA BOD hired five Community Table Coordinators, through a community-driven hiring process, to form five Community Tables across the Interior Region. These Tables are one mechanism to help strengthen the Aboriginal 'voice' for this planning process.

In the spring of 2007, these Community Table Coordinators with direction from the Community Linkage Manager, APFA senior staff, and communities held five community table forums throughout the Interior Region, to look at how to build the tables, and receive an overview of needs within the region. These forums were held in the five zones; Cariboo-Chilcotin (January, 2007), Kootenay (April, 2007), Okanagan (April, 2007), Lytton-Lillooet-Merritt (April/May, 2007), and Shuswap (May, 2007). The formation of these Community Tables was a result of a continuing voice coming from community participation while building APFA's Conceptual Model[2].

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[1] APFA Service Plan, October 2004, p 3-6
[2] APFA Conceptual Model, July 2005, p. 12

OBJECTIVES

Key overall objectives of the APFA are simple and reflected in the John Paul Story- a fictional child created to provide an example of how a child and family could be properly supported. This is to be inclusive, community-driven, and to utilize those individuals with the knowledge and insight of children & family programs in the planning process[3]. These five strategically-placed forums are one way to try to achieve these objectives. It is easy to build a committee, however; much more planning and on the ground work need to be accomplished to actually create planning tables that are as inclusive as possible, yet are unique to Aboriginal cultures and traditions. This is much more complex and a lot more time was needed to affectively recognize the core objectives, as this is part of a larger capacity-building initiative needed for the long-term.

The APFA looked at what the Aboriginal people in the Interior Region envisioned a bottom-up approach to a Community Table to look like; in order to do this a consensus-style forum was structured to ensure that it was truly the community's model. As well, there was ample opportunity to hear individual communities, Métis Nation, urban organizations, and individual grass-root peoples' concerns and issues with the children and family programs currently offered.

Specific to the objectives of this comparison, the APFA wants to compile the overall subjects that all five zones feel are relevant to their Tables and their planning process. In other words, we are looking for common themes recognized throughout the region; by compiling comments, suggestions, and quotes from those 300 representatives that are of a similar nature and placing them into particular categories. As well, this comparison will look at issues unique in nature to zones, and hope to determine the reason(s) why there are differences between the zones. In the end, the APFA strives to achieve **'One Voice'** throughout the Region that comprises of over 45,000 Aboriginal People, including on-reserve, Urban, and Métis Nation's and individuals across a largely diversified land base[4].

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[3] APFA Service plan, October 2004, p. 8

[4] As cited by BC Stats, July 2007, http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen01/abor/HA1.pdf

Evaluations

Cariboo-Chilcotin

During the planning phase for this forum, a planning committee was struck by communities, agencies, urban, and Métis Nation members to prepare. At the time, there were questions pertaining to funding amounts from Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) and its' respective programs. Since this was a community-based approach to developing the forum and its' agenda, this zone included MCFD in the agenda.

This forum was three days and included one day of information from APFA, MCFD, and two-days of breakout sessions intended to be community-driven; offering an opportunity to gain input into planning and programs in the MCFD programs. There were six breakout groups with one facilitator hosting each: 1. Children at Risk, 2. Child and Youth Mental Health, 3. Early Childhood Development, 4. Family Group Conferencing, 5. Youth at Risk/Youth Justice, and 6. Supported Child Development. With over 80 delegates representing 12 First Nation communities, three Tribal Councils, two Métis Nation offices, two delegated agencies, two friendship centres, and other Aboriginal organizations such as the Cariboo Chilcotin Child and Family Services Society (Longname), this forum format was unique in that it addressed the three objectives of APFA; inclusive, community-driven, and utilizing those individuals with the knowledge and insight of children & family programs.

There were many common themes throughout all six breakout groups. There is a need for mobile centres that deliver all programs offered. This was mentioned in all age groups, leading listeners to recognize that the geographical locations of many of the communities is a key factor to service delivery. Continually throughout all comments, "integrating culture and training" was integral to success of any area. For example, in many comments pertaining to education and training: "…be sure to fund cultural training and support" was heard.

Looking at specific flip-chart notes transcribed in the Cariboo-Chilcotin Forum report, particular comments were repeated in all breakout groups, regardless of the focus; some of these comments were found in different words, but with the same meaning. For example: 'Integrate culture into planning' from the ECD group, 'incorporate customs and traditions' from the ASCD group, and

'traditional practices a must' from the kinship care; all objectively imply to incorporate local culture and traditions into current and future programs[5].

Throughout the forum nine common themes were found over a period of two days. Below is list of these nine themes, with some comments written word-for-word supporting the common themes:

1. Culture, traditions, and customs
   - Integrate culture into planning (3 times)
   - Incorporate customs and traditions (2 times)
   - Access to traditional cultural activities
2. Community-driven process
   - Community ownership (3 times)
   - Community driven process (4 times)
   - Community involvement/referrals from community… (8 times)
3. Governance system
   - We need our own aboriginal guidelines and policies…
   - Terms of reference needed for **Tables (many comments explaining specifics) (Cariboo-Chilcotin Zone Forum report, 2007, p.27)**
   - Planning process needs transparency
4. Involvement of youth and Elders
   - Youth involvement (6 times)
   - Talking to Elders (4 times)
   - Need elder involvement (5 times)
5. Build capacity in community/education and training
   - Training and education (5 times)
   - Mentoring from within own community (job shadowing)
   - Training within communities for community members
6. One stop shop
   - Need a one stop facility run by our own…
   - Ability to cross refer to other (programs)
   - One stop shop (4 times)
7. Mobile
   - Bring to community (mobile)- educate and train community (5 times)
   - Lack of services to rural and isolated areas (3 times)
   - **One stop shop plan offered (Cariboo-Chilcotin Zone Forum report, 2007, p.23-24)**

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[5] Cariboo-Chilcotin Zone Forum report, 2007, p. 7-12

8. Adequate funding/ resources
   - No money (4 times)
   - Transportation funding (3 times)
   - More resources (3 times)
9. Prevention
   - Prevention-informal circles in community…
   - lack of youth activities
   - No youth gathering places…

These nine themes were common in ALL breakout groups, and supported by many comments from the participants. There were numerous other comments worth mentioning, as these were brought up many times during the breakout sessions. "There is a need to research what is out there, why reinvent the wheel". "We need to change the language to be more proactive and less medical (stigma) "We need internal and external communication (communities, programs, funding, MCFD)". "There is a need to work together". "There is a fear of MCFD".

Perhaps the one example of an inclusive, 'one voice' outcome of this forum was the participants views surrounding the Community Table. There was a true consensus with all that stated unequivocally that there should be one manageable Table that rotated it's meetings within communities, as well as 'benches' (for lack of a better name) located throughout the zone. These benches would offer opportunity for community members, workers, youth and Elders opportunity for meaningful input into the planning process where the ability to travel was an issue.

Kootenay

This zone has distinct geographical and political distinctions between what is known as East and West Kootenay, as the east has a tribal council and reserve lands, yet the west does not. Although no planning committee was struck, individuals from the zone helped the Community Table Coordinator determine where and when this forum would be held. There was no inclusion of MCFD, with the two-day forum held April 10-11, 2007. Day one focused on updates from the APFA, and fielding many questions from the 40 participants. This is a unique zone, with no First Nation communities in the West Kootenay and no

Friendship Centre, creating a unique atmosphere that has some barriers to getting together and speaking with one voice[6].

Altogether, there were 40 participants, with two Aboriginal communities represented, two Aboriginal organizations, two Métis Nation offices, and the rest were urban Aboriginal community members located throughout the West Kootenay. From the start, it was recognized that there were some people committed to attend from the East Kootenay, however; a land slide closed the only access prior to the forum.

At the Cariboo-Chilcotin zone forum concerns were expressed about the need for more time to discuss each question in detail. Accordingly, the APFA made changes in the forum's format: we limited the number of questions, and asked the three most common ones: 1. How can this zone build a Community Table with a common vision to be inclusive of all Aboriginal communities. 2. How will Community Tables network and collaborate in the region and within this zone? 3. What are the 'Next Steps' of the table, where do we go from here?

In all, there appears to be seven common themes found from the participant's comments within this zone. These themes and supporting quotes are listed:

1. The need for an effective Governance system
    - Need governance- how it will function
    - Governance must come first and built
    - Keep East and West separate, But then BRING THEM TOGETHER. Can have two tables (E & W) and then bring together throughout year.
2. Need to incorporate Culture and traditions
    - Culture must be combined with governance
    - All Aboriginals in zone bring culture to the Table and be inclusive
    - Must educate each other of our cultures and find 'shared values'…
3. Build Capacity in communities
    - We need to start with team building at the Table to work together
    - Capacity must be shared with the Table, to help everyone increase…capacity
    - Why reinvent the wheel…look at what's out there
4. Involve youth and Elders in planning

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[6] Kootenay Zone Forum Report, 2007, p.4

- Build on what exists: e.g. Structure within Métis Nation for involving youth
- Contact Elders, continued teaching…
- Youth involvement, give them a voice

5. Community Driven Process
   - TOR must reflect two way communication between communities and Table
   - Need order (principles) built by the Table for 'ownership'
   - Go to the community and ask what they want

6. Mobile Table and programs
   - Take turns hosting meetings
   - Offer chance for each community to host.
   - Mobile Table with a schedule.

7. communication both internal to the zone and externally
   - must have communication between the communities and the Table
   - Need non-violent communication skills
   - Communication, and consistently

These seven themes are common throughout all the breakout group discussions. Two more themes worth noting in this zone are "one-stop shop" and "support to overcome barriers between East and West Kootenay to work together". As well, there was consensus in following a similar structure with the Tables and utilizing the same system as the Cariboo-Chilcotin zone; of course making it fit the unique geographic situation of the Kootenay zone.

Okanagan

With all seven Okanagan bands and Tribal Council, three Friendship Centres, two Métis Nation offices an Aboriginal health centre and school, as well as many Aboriginal organizations throughout the zone including youth and Elders, this was an 'inclusive' forum with over 60 participants in total over the two-day event[7]. With such a busy area of the Kelowna/Westbank location, travel was somewhat of an issue, with many comments to host future events on the north side of the 'bridge', as traffic is difficult. This is a fair geographical comment and similar comments were expressed at each zone forum, with each having their unique barriers.

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[7] Okanagan Zone Forum Report, 2007, p.2

Following suit with the previous forums was the 'why reinvent the wheel' perspective. With that, this zone expressed that the planning around the rotating Community Table and 'bench' system would also work in this zone. In all, there were five common themes found in the Okanagan zone, reflected in all the breakout groups, and reiterated by the participants. These are as follows:

1. Governance
   - Terms of Reference and criteria need to be developed (5 times)
   - What is the mandate of the Table? Accountability…?
   - Develop protocol and guidelines
2. Involve youth and Elders
   - "The core to our communities is the children and families" (Leader)
   - Ensure every community has on Elder and youth to represent or someone who can represent them at the table
   - Have a youth and Elder council to give advice…
3. Community Driven Process
   - What input will the Table have?
   - "Community discussions is an important process" (Leader)
   - Go to all communities, phone calls, face to face…
4. Education and training – build capacity
   - Have a yearly plan in place for training, determine needs and implement
   - "Keep in mind capacity-building: 'We're only as strong as our weakest link' " (Leader)
   - Have training for Elders and youth to include them in work
5. Traditions and Cultures
   - Have cultural practice included, for example the four seasons
   - Cultural sensitivity training for non-native workers, foster parents..

It is noted that with this zone, there was a clear 'straight to the point' directive from the participants: to use a similar Table template to maintain continuality, but build it locally to meet the Okanagan's unique culture. They took the template from the other zones regarding the Table and bench system, and planned specifically on how it would work for them. Worth mentioning is the underlying theme, not verbalized but shown through action, the need to communicate and a process wanted in how to communicate effectively.

Lytton-Lillooet-Merritt

There were over 60 participants from 10 Aboriginal communities, two Tribal Councils, two Métis Nation offices, two delegated agencies, one Aboriginal college/university and many frontline workers, Elders and some youth[8]. This forum was similar to the Okanagan and Cariboo-Chilcotin Zone forums in meeting objectives of APFA; it was inclusive, community-driven, and utilized those individuals with the knowledge and insight of children & family programs in the planning process.

There were six common themes reflected throughout the two-day forum held April 30-May 1, 2007. As with the prior zone forums, Lytton-Lillooet-Merritt zone felt that the rotating Community Table and bench system would work for them and showed unity across the region. Notably, this zone was very clear in stating that they did not like the name 'bench' and that it needed to be more traditional and less mainstream. The six common themes are listed below:

1. Capacity-building and training
   - Life skills training/traditional teachings
   - Knowledge must get to members to ensure they know and understand, not solely leadership
   - Community education and awareness with community members and service providers is needed
2. Governance system
   - Need the roles defined of the various committees, board, and Tables
   - Each representative must have an equal amount of decision-making power, not be tokenized
   - Role definition: What is the difference between the Table and the BOD? Need to have clear direction.
3. Culture and traditions
   - Host a Potlatch (gathering with food and gifts)- use traditional system to identify needs of grassroots communities; possibly incorporate into benches
   - How do we combine old with the new… i.e. traditional child care practices vs. modern…
   - Incorporate traditional with mainstream ways of communicating
4. Community driven process
   - Up to communities to process and determine

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[8] Nicola-Thompson-Lillooet Zone Forum Report, 2007, p. 2-3

- Table structure: Need community input to define needs, goals, objectives
- Based on local representation

5. Build Capacity in communities
   - Knowledge must get to members to ensure they know and understand
   - Need training and capacity building so that grandma's, mom's and other community members can participate
   - Community education and awareness with community members and service providers is needed

6. Youth and Elder involvement
   - Bring kids with the parents to all events
   - Support sporting events (traditional and contemporary) for youth
   - Include Elders and youth at the Table.

This zone was very strong in recognizing the wording within the forum and with the MCFD programs. This is reflected in their request to change the term 'bench'. There was a real push to use more cultural names, as well as less 'medical' terms.

Shuswap

With some political tension in this zone, and a lot of respect within people found in all Aboriginal communities, the turnout initially appeared low; with 17 participants. However, these represented four First Nation communities, the Métis Nation, the only Friendship Centre in the Zone, the White Buffalo agency, and four Elders. "I see 15 people at this forum, yet the last time there was only five…that is progress" (Elder)[9]. This zone has a tribal council choosing not to participate for political reasons, yet the Elders were very supportive of the APFA, and overall there was a broad combination of representation from the zone.

There were five common themes, continually reflected by the participants of the Shuswap zone. Since this was a smaller group, there was only one breakout group, which built their own guiding principles to ensure everyone had an equal, respectful and honest voice (Shuswap Zone Forum report, May 2007, p.15). These five common themes are as follows:

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[9] Shuswap Zone Forum, 2007, p. 5

1. Community Driven Process
   - Must be at a community level
   - If we limit ourselves to frontline workers/agencies, we miss the experience of community members
   - Will get people to meet. We want to meet, **we know the answers**
2. Communication
   - Key- communication. Sending information to band offices is not working…
   - With the political stuff going on in Shuswap country, we need to have communication
   - Communication-write/distribute to everyone you know
3. Governance
   - Need politics to stay on the back burner
   - Need a process to accommodate that process. Maybe this group should develop a 'working group' not a Table, to realize the true representation at the Table
   - They should come appointed by bands/agencies etc. They are the ones who should sit at the Table
4. Involve youth and Elders
   - Community members could be Elders, youth etc. to represent the group
   - The youth could have parents with them
   - Meet with Zone at Elders tables in order that it is inclusive; their Elders have links already historically made with the rest of the Region
5. Build Capacity in Communities
   - Participate in training with APFA providers
   - Bring in knowledge from leadership that have had best practices
   - Have a community champion, someone from this Table to go out and spread the word

Using a consensus-based approach, the participants determined not to form the Community Table right away, instead to form a Planning Table until such a time that there was a more inclusive group. It was also noted that the lack of communication was big, and more information was needed by Elders and other participants regarding the political situation in this Zone pertaining to Shuswap Nation Tribal Council.

Comparisons

Throughout the region, the five forums were guided by a community-driven approach; the breakout group discussions went at the participant's pace and were never steered toward any comment the APFA hoped to achieve. As well, the forums were an inclusive model for the Community Tables, with participants actively participating, even building their own principles on how they would ensure an inclusive forum and Community Table structure.

There were certain themes that can be compared across the region, based on the number of times each topic was mentioned in the breakout groups held during the Forums. Overall, there were five themes referred to in all breakout groups within all five regions. As well, there were many topics talked about in at least 75% of the breakout groups and/or forums worth mentioning.
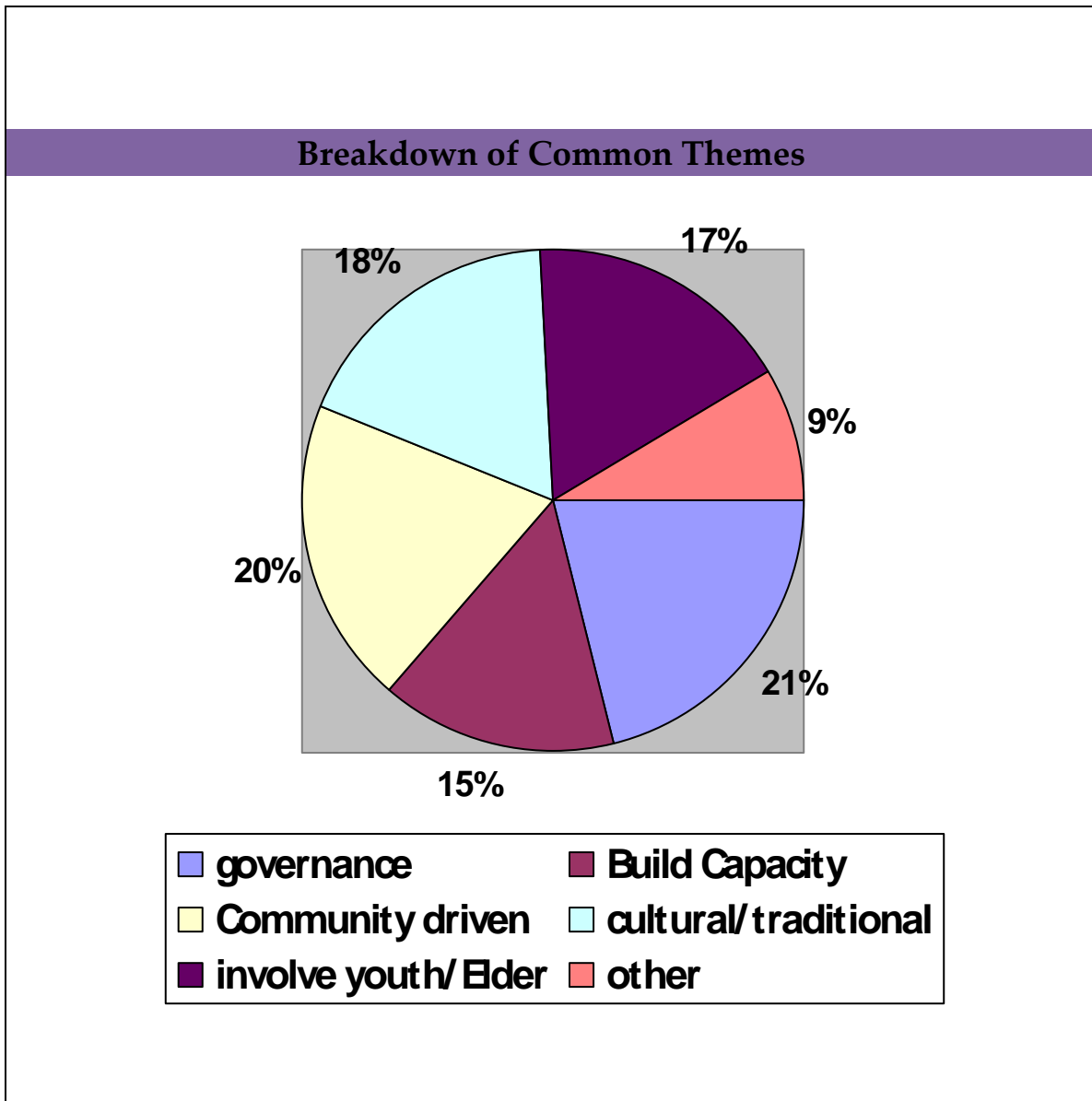
Looking at these five themes, the APFA has broken down the number of times there were comments relating to the five topics or common themes. It is recognized that there are overlaps of these common themes, and that one comment can reflect more than one common theme. For example, "The community must include traditions and cultures when building Terms of Reference for the Table". In this example, the statement would be included under Governance, Traditions and Cultures, and Community Driven Process; when evaluating the common themes[10].

 Diagram 1 on the following page shows the breakdown of these common themes, noting that the other topics worth mentioning are grouped under 'others' (See Zone Forum Reports for actual).

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[10] Note these overlaps based on APFA interpretation and determined with objective approach

Diagram 1: Regional Common Themes

Breakdown of Common Themes

17%

18%

9%

20%

21%

15%

- governance
- Build Capacity
- Community driven
- cultural/traditional
- involve youth/Elder
- other

Another comparison across the Region is in relation to the format of the Community Tables. Although there were variations in logistics pertaining to each zone, all five Regions felt that a similar structure should be adopted in each zone, envisioned since the first forum held in the Cariboo-Chilcotin zone. This structure includes a rotating main Community Table, with sub-tables or 'benches' located strategically throughout the zones. This would create an inclusive model by giving ample opportunity to participate; including key community, youth, Elders, and frontline workers unable to travel to the Community Table[11]

Following is a diagram showing the results of a Cariboo-Chilcotin Community Table meeting that was adopted in principle by all five zones. All zone forums reflected a generalized similar structure to this diagram; all mentioning particular components specific to individual unique zone factors, such as geographies, populations, and cultures.

Diagram 2: Regional Community Table Structure

Example of Community Table Structure

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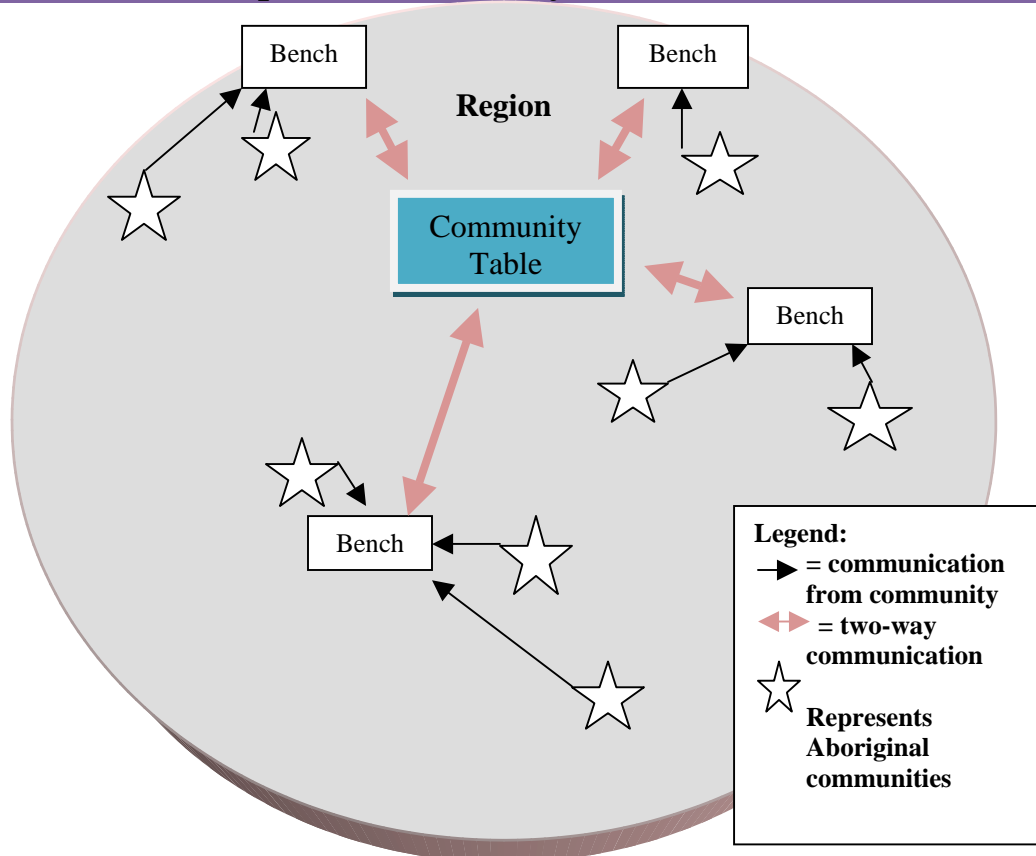
[11] Cariboo-Chilcotin Community Table minutes, March 16, 2007

Results

Common Themes

Although there appears to be five common themes throughout the Region: Governance, Community-driven, Involvement of youth and Elders, Traditions and cultures, and Building capacity; there are overlaps of these five themes, and other themes not common with all five zones. In other words a statement or comment by a participant may refer to more than one theme, depending on the comment. For example, 'community-driven process' also overlaps with 'communication' in some comments, yet 'communication' is not a common theme throughout all five zones- it is recognized in many of the zones, in relation to ensuring that this is in fact community-driven.

As well, the five common themes all interface with each other. Many comments throughout the Region mentioned that there needs to be a governance structure built. However, most also stated that this structure needs to be built by the communities, and needs to integrate Aboriginal cultures and traditions in order for governance to be effective.   Surprising was the common response from community participants with the community-driven process; they were noticeably shocked when asked their opinion, "I am glad to be asked what I have to offer, and I am glad to share it" (Shuswap Zone Forum, 2007, p. 5).

Common throughout the Region is the concept of the Community Table; a process that began with an idea from the APFA for a different approach to working with communities from the bottom-up. Clearly, these are not believed to be advisory-merely recommending to another group- but a working table with a clear accountable structure that is built by each zone and/or community(s). All believe that a clear 'one voice' across the Region can be built by not 'reinventing the wheel' and using similar templates; whether designing the Table structure, Terms of Reference, or guiding principles- showing recognition that clear accountability is necessary.

After working with various communities, the reason for the commonalities across the Region appears to relate to two factors. The first relates to many comments found in all the forum reports; there is a lack of trust and belief that these are 'their Tables'. The term 'consultation' tends to create mistrust and

generally speaking, if it is not built by the communities in a fashion that relates to them, then it merely becomes 'consultation'.

This flows into the second factor- the need to integrate the traditions and cultures into the Community Table and its' structure. Although government has made big steps in becoming 'Aboriginally sensitive', it lacks the community-driven process that truly integrates unique cultural and traditional themes that promotes 'ownership' over the process.

This perhaps explains why *Diagram 1* reflects a relatively even percentage in breakdown between the common themes. It appears that balance comes when more voices are utilized in the planning process. Further, consensus then becomes accepting a 'happy medium', yet knowing that individual input is recognized and valued by others in the planning process- creating a belief in the planning process

In the end, it is truly 'common themes', as there is a distinct trend amongst the topics of working with each other; actually needing each theme to make the other more affective, acceptable, and workable. This then actually becomes only one common theme, with five areas necessary to make it an effective community-driven planning process.

Differences

Many differences across the five zones pertained to relationship building. One zone began at the beginning, which included actual training in building the relations; while another zone moved right into a working Community Table with a consensus model that was quite inclusive from the beginning. As well, there were the other zones that varied between these two approaches. This stems from the differing supports and community structure of each zone.

- The one zone that began right from relationship training has no First Nation community, friendship centre, and few Aboriginal organizations within a great distance of the area. As well, any relations that have begun are still new and in the 'storming' phase of development. On the other hand, the zone capable of moving to a working Community Table has a multitude of supports, and relations have been built within the Aboriginal communities; including the fact that all three relevant Tribal Councils are located within blocks of each other, and two delegated agencies that focus

on specific Nations are nearly side by side. This helped that zone to actually form a planning committee for the Community Table even prior to APFA employees being hired in that zone.

- Another key difference looked at the structure of the Community Table. Although participants felt that *Diagram 2* above was a fair template, they also felt that their own unique spin on the template was necessary. A simple example and rationale lies in the number of 'benches' each zone felt necessary. Some looked at three benches, while others never felt a bench was important in the beginning. The reason for this difference is quite simple; geographic locations within each zone. One had three major towns/cities within two hours of each other, while the other had three major mountain passes within each community. Yet another zone has a number of Aboriginal communities with limited access to the major town/city. Definitely, geographical situation were largely regarded as unique factors.

- The structure of the governing system is another difference noted throughout the five zones. Some were very adamant in a culturally sensitive traditional style of governing system; while other zones had the 'why reinvent the wheel?' perspective and felt a generic template would suffice; integrating their cultures and traditions into these documents later. Looking at these differences, three points stand out. First, one zone doesn't have an Aboriginal meeting place; no band office, friendship centre, or cultural centre. On the other hand, the other zone has a structured Elders group, has two Aboriginal languages integrated into the school district, and has places to gather; both on the land, and in an office. Third lies in one zone that has structured bylaws, taxation agreements with government, and many businesses and Aboriginal development corporations.

- An interesting difference lies in the demographics of the Regions Aboriginal cultures and traditions. As *Diagram 1* show, there was overwhelming support for the integration of cultures and traditions. However, there are also differences in what this would look like. The Interior Region comprises of seven distinct language groups still spoken by those indigenous to the region. As well there are a number of other Aboriginal language groups that have relocated from various locations worldwide. For this reason, there were clear differences that stemmed

from language, demographics (i.e. population statistics, geography, local resource base).

Challenges

- The size of the Interior Region as well as the widely spread out populous of Aboriginal People became a significant challenge in maintaining a transparent and open process. The question often was left whether the APFA was reaching the community-based people in the region.

- Many Aboriginal people 'wear many hats' and attended meeting at the capacity of a social worker, or working for an organization. This left the question of whether comments were that of the community-based people or on behalf of an individual organisation. Definitely, to ensure an inclusive process, more travel to the communities must be done, in conjunction with the Community Table process. This becomes a challenge, with only a few employees to cover over 60 First Nation communities, a multitude of urban centers and hundreds of Aboriginal organisations, Métis Nations, and urban organisations. The travel costs alone become very high; as well trying to ensure that this is inclusive further burdens the economic aspect of the Community Tables.

- Another challenge lies in the political aspect of the region. All Aboriginal communities have a desire to be their own government, without interference. Combine individual Nation actions in attaining this with differing understanding of what regionalization and an Aboriginal authority means, makes it understandable that not all Nations have the same understanding as to the benefits of working together. As well, with MCFD continuing with other messages that are similar in nature such as 'transformation', it further clouds the communication and understanding of the process. It is understandable that government wishes the process built by Aboriginals, yet it becomes a challenge when the process that was built from the 'one voice' Tsawwassen accord has no verbal or written support stating that the process currently being structured by the majority is supported by MCFD. Further, there is no clear definition of what governance is; whether from the province, or combined Aboriginal communities, Métis nations, organisations, or the community-based people.

- This leads to jurisdictional questions from the leaders of the respective communities and community-based people that have participated. APFA has continually maintained that we are here for the children to provide a better plan to take care of them in the future. Yet, respectfully the question of jurisdiction comes from those leaders, as that has been their struggles with government. In the end, it becomes a challenge of the community table and APFA, as it interferes with the planning process because it tends to interfere with the planning process even though APFA does not look at jurisdiction- only the future of Aboriginal children.

- Communication! The challenge is for the APFA to improve communications and monitor the strategic plan relevant to continuing to improve our communications. With remoteness factors, many communities do not have the technical capacity to help with certain types of communication such as what many take for granted- like email and internet access. With many key community members traveling, even telephone communication becomes a challenge. As well, there is always changeover at all levels that further inhibit the lines of communication that are intended to help get information to the community-based people.

Recommendations

The zones spoke quite clearly; community-driven, cultural, bottom-up planning process that is not merely an advisory system: there are expectations of a true planning Table that has the ability to make recommendations to APFA Board of Directors in a system that ensures that so long as it is an inclusive process, the recommendations are recognized and adopted. Terms of reference need to be done by each respective Community Table, utilizing a standard format while individualizing based on local cultures, traditions, geographies, and other unique factors arising from each zone. This will ensure that the Tables meet the criteria required for a true inclusive, community-driven, process.

Adequate community engagement must be recognized and funded at all levels – including capacity building- on an ongoing basis. This is necessary to ensure that we are maintaining a community-driven approach; and increasing our relationship with communities and Aboriginal services providers. Trust must be

built and maintained, and this can only be achieved with adequate community engagement support; including technical and financial.

Support is needed from both the leaders and the MCFD to show the necessary commitment to the process. At some point, direction must be clearly given supporting this process and committing to it verbally and financially. It will be detrimental to the process if the majority support it, yet there is no verbal and financial support from government. No one can or should expect consensus when we are talking about ensuring communication to tens of thousands of people- this is a trust issue and most will not trust until they know what the process is. If it is truly up to the Aboriginal Communities and a large majority accept this role with active support, then MCFD must accept this overwhelming support and commit to the process. In the end, consensus is the ultimate; but rarely realistic.

Communication is necessary amongst the Interior Region, both internal to the zones and external amongst the five zones, APFA, and MCFD to help promote a true 'One Voice' style of process. This will take time, commitment, and finances to ensure that this is done in an inclusive fashion, with a bottom-up approach. There needs to be a continued relationship with all, and regular meetings, updates, and communication system to ensure the process does not stagnate; this includes MCFD commitment to ensure proper APFA staff are welcomed to pertinent meetings involving any Aboriginal funding proponent. Youth and Elder groups need to be formed or utilized where similar structures are already in place. As well, this must be combined with adequate communication and be community-driven and inclusive to the Community Table.

Finally, capacity must be built in the communities, organizations, and agencies internally; as well as externally with both APFA and MCFD – communities need the external capacities built to ensure a positive and realistic transition process. This includes sharing cultures and traditions, as well as Child and Family services-this in itself becomes a challenge as there are many cultures and variations of traditions leading to building capacity in this area merely to adequately define what culture and traditional practices are! APFA and MCFD must learn from the Aboriginal people of the Interior Region. This model of training and education must be community-driven, utilizing the voices of the Communities via the Community Tables and benches strategically located throughout the Region. It will be the Tables that direct this process through an inclusive model of planning that can be utilized throughout in future years and be accepted by Aboriginal People in the Interior Region, APFA, and MCFD

Conclusion

This comparative analysis looked at an inclusive, community-driven, approach to five Zone forums throughout the Interior Region, by utilizing individuals with the knowledge and insight of children & family programs in the planning process. Through these forums the voices of individual communities, Métis Nation, urban organizations, and individual grass-root people were heard; including concerns and issues with the children and family programs currently offered. Five common themes are recognized throughout the Interior Region, echoed by many and reflected in the plenary group discussions held in the five Zone forums: Governance; Community-driven; Involvement of youth and Elders; Traditions and cultures; and Building capacity within communities. These themes work in unison; one cannot build or limit one without affecting the others.

The approach taken to analyse the voices of the communities in the Interior Region was done as an inclusive document, with the recommendations based on actual comments found both within the five zones forum reports, and based on verbal communication during the time spent with participants of the forums. APFA listened to the participants, used a transparent approach to the forums, and provided many hours of planning with community. Although objective in nature, some views are based on personal interpretation as APFA spent considerable time at the community level; hearing comments and questions first hand.

The APFA's **next steps** include developing and implementing a community-based child and family service delivery system. This requires extensive community development initiatives to ensure the communities have the capacity to deliver services in an accountable manner. APFA is committed to engaging communities in the development of community-based child and family services by creating a framework that describes how a continuum of capacity building will evolve from the establishment of Community Tables or other alternative means of Community Engagement.

The Aboriginal Peoples Family Accord wishes to thank all the participants and the communities, Métis Nation, delegated agencies, Friendship Centres, Aboriginal originations, and especially the community-based people- including our youth and Elders of the Interior Region.

Definitions

Note: Definitions are based on the general understanding compiled from participants across the Interior Region, and may differ from standard business practice. For this report, these definitions will be used.

Bottom-up approach: beginning in the communities, and utilising a consensus model to deliver one voice to the community tables, in order to create a planning process that reflects needs in relation to child and family service programs

Capacity: building a general understanding of programs and services in communities through community tables and APFA staff and administration; increasing knowledge and practice to be able to develop and implement innovative and creative child and family service programs at a community level.

Community-driven: approach actively involving communities, those using or requiring child and family service programs, youth and elders in active participation of a planning process

Consensus: is a decision-making process that fully utilizes the resources of a group. A consensus decision represents a reasonable decision that all members of the group can accept. It is not necessarily the optimal decision for each member. By combining their thoughts, people can often create a higher-quality decision than a vote decision or a decision by a single individual

Culture: Defined by individual communities, Métis Nations, groups, or individuals, and respected by APFA, and the planning process. For the sake of discussion, the following is a dictionary definition:
- **Culture**: The system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours, and artifacts that the members of society use to cope with their world and with one another, and that are transmitted from generation to generation through learning

Governance: rules and regulations involving the relationship of all participants of the planning process, including the Community Tables and sub-tables (benches); inclusive of principles and policies of the Table system, and their relationship to governance and administration of APFA

Community members (community-based): those Aboriginal people from all sections of community, urban, Métis that have an interest in the programs and services of MCFD, including users of the programs, youth and elders

Inclusive: Involving all Aboriginal communities, urban representatives, Métis Nations, Aboriginal organisations, and any other Aboriginal groups in the planning process at their determination, on a voluntary basis.

Appendices

To download copies of all five 2007 zone forum reports

Contact Allan Weselowski to be added to APFA's Community Zero Program and then

Go to:

http://www.communityzero.com/apfa_board