

# INDIGENOUS APPROACHES: GROUNDING OUR DIRECTIONS

Harrison Hot Springs October 18-21 2010



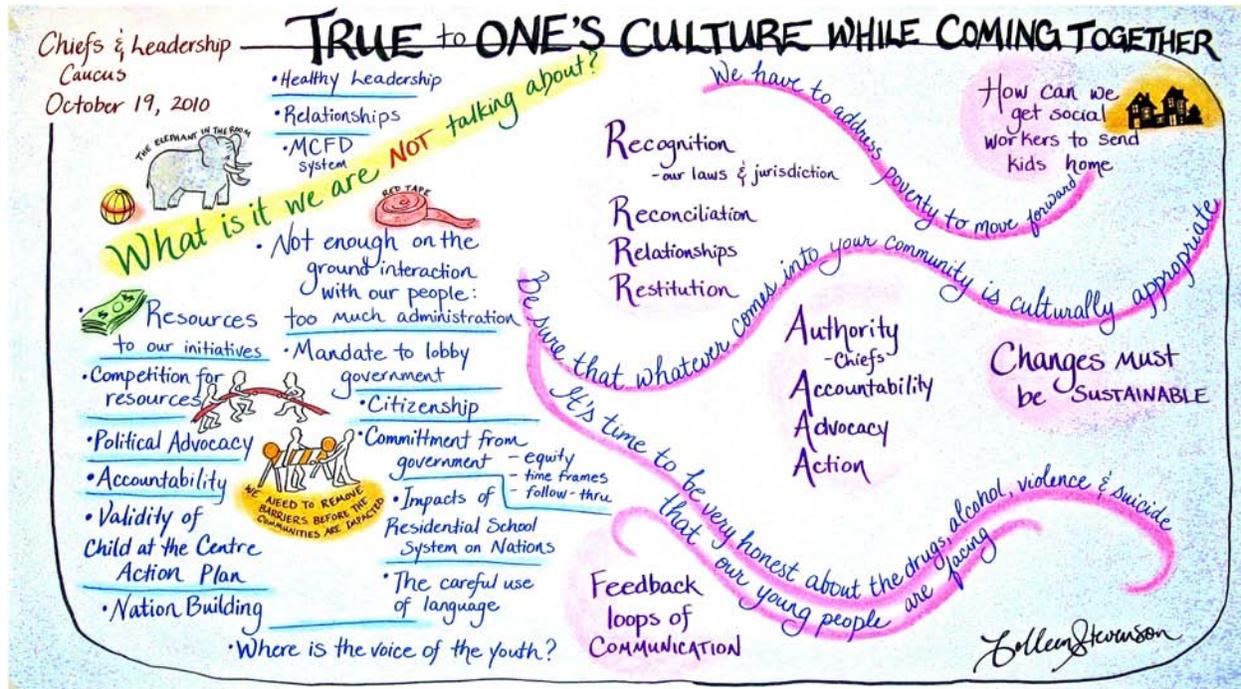
From the remote north western area of the Stikine territory to traditional Coast Salish territories of Southern Vancouver Island, Indigenous communities are developing their own culturally-based child and family services systems. This work, referred to as “Indigenous Approaches” is grounded in the acknowledgement that Indigenous communities hold an inherent jurisdiction to care for and protect their children and families within the context of their traditional laws and customs - and it is their communities who now need to lead the design and delivery of services to their children and families.

Indigenous communities throughout the province who are working on Indigenous Approaches gathered together for a four day event to share the work they are doing in their respective communities. Hosted by the Chehalis First Nation with logistics support provided by the South Island Wellness Society, *Indigenous Approaches: Grounding Our Directions* was held at Harrison Hot Springs from October 18-21st.



There are currently 16 Indigenous Approaches underway in B.C. representing more than 100 First Nations, Métis and Aboriginal organizations.

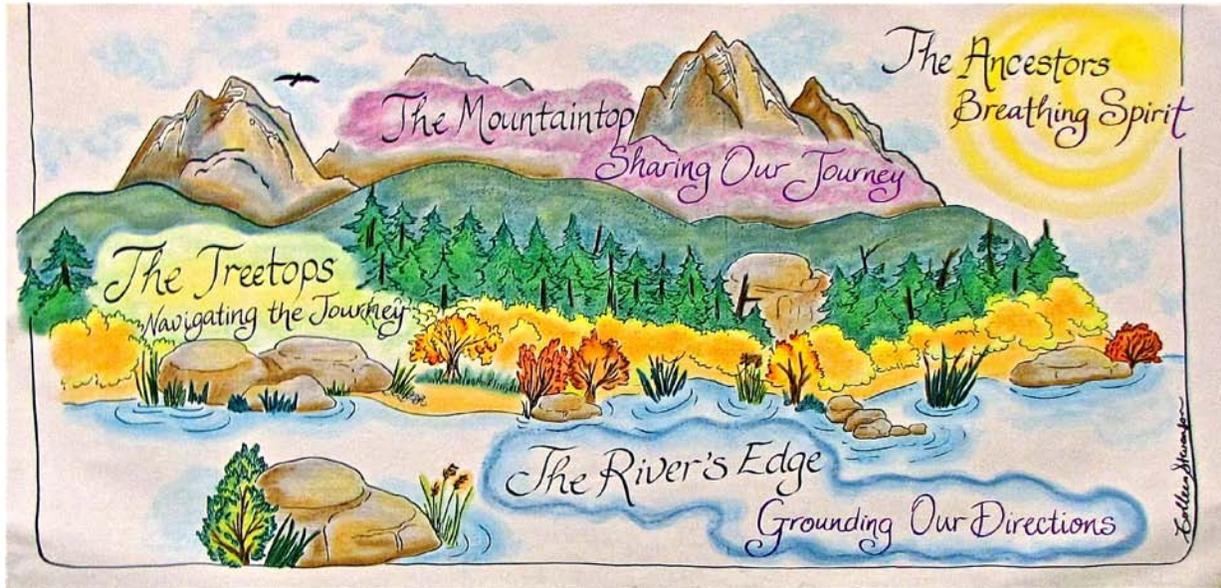
The event provided an opportunity for Indigenous leadership to share their visions, goals and experiences in the work of designing their own approaches for the care and protection of their children and families.



It was also an opportunity to share best practices and approaches that may be beneficial in advancing the vision of each Nation. A representative from each of the Indigenous Approaches presented on the work they are doing in their communities, followed by the opportunity to learn and engage in discussion among the various groups.



The event was grounded in and guided by the traditional practices and cultural values of the Chehalis First Nation.



Those in attendance were welcomed by Chief Willie Charlie from the Chehalis First Nation and Chief Bruce Underwood from the Paquichin First Nation, who is also chair of the South Island Wellness Society. Chief Willie Charlie spoke of how customary laws and cultural practices for the care and protection of Chehalis children are rooted in and expressed through the stories and connection of the Chehalis people to their traditional territory upon which the gathering was held. Attendees were also provided with a tour of the facilities and culturally-based programs of the Chehalis First Nation, along with a feast and cultural evening at the Charlie Longhouse.

“I am very proud of the Sts’ ailes Snowoyelh team’s role at the *Indigenous Approaches: Grounding Our Directions Gathering* that took place on our traditional territory of Harrison Hot Springs,” said Chief Willie Charlie. “Sts’ ailes Snowoyelh played a valuable role as a successful ‘framework’ program for Indigenous approaches to child and family services and this was reflective throughout the gathering. Central to all Sts’ ailes services is the practice of our culture and spirituality, which is kept strong for our children and families to celebrate their identity. We continue to build a strong nation.”

As well, National Chief Shawn Atleo attended to show his support and appreciation for the Ministry of Children and Family Development and the Nations in the collective work of supporting Indigenous communities to care for their children and families within the context of their traditional laws and child rearing and protection customs.

During the opening session, the Honourable Mary Polak, Minister of Children and Family Development, reaffirmed government’s commitment to Aboriginal jurisdiction, “If we truly want to ensure a better future and better outcomes for Aboriginal children and youth, we must

allow Indigenous communities to develop their own approaches so a full array of services can be delivered in a culturally appropriate manner, with government supporting the process.”



Left to right: Chief Bev Sellars (Soda Creek Band), Amy Sandy (Stsmémelt Project), Chief Terry Porter (Bonaparte Band), National Chief Shawn Atleo, Deputy Minister Lesley du Toit, Lynn Kenoras (Stsmémelt Project), Jody Beckett (Stsmémelt Project), Doreen Johnson (Stsmémelt Project Coordinator)

Deputy Minister Lesley du Toit acknowledged that it is Indigenous communities who must determine what is in the best interests of their children and families and that the ministry's focus is to find ways and means of supporting Indigenous communities to realize their vision. The deputy minister also opened the door to possible legislation, if needed to support the approaches Indigenous communities identify to best serve their children and families.

This event affirmed that going forward both the Ministry of Children and Family Development and Indigenous communities will continue to work together to ensure that services are based upon the unique culture and traditional laws of the many diverse nations in B.C. Each Nation or group of nations will lead this important work, with support from the ministry.

*Indigenous Approaches: Grounding Our Directions* ended with a wrap up session and discussions around how we can support each other and continue to move this work forward. A follow up evaluation and report is currently underway to determine next steps regarding this innovative and culturally-based work.

October 21, 2010

# Putting Our Work on the Ground

**Traditional Law into Policy**  
\* Keeping the children of the families



**Self-Sufficiency**  
\* Access & control of Resources  
\* Infrastructure  
\* Education  
\* Training  
\* Strength-based focus on "each child & adult"  
\* Creating our own schools



No one gets left behind  
- Chief Andy Thomas  
- Scuncheon



**Cultural Services to families**  
\* off Reserve  
\* Claiming an adoptive family

**Youth Conference**  
in the works!

MCFD incorporating **DIVERSITY** into policies

Ellen Stronach

**Pilot Projects to remove barriers**  
\* Chief & Council increase federal points  
\* First Nations leading priority  
\* Integrating Services framework & priority  
\* Think-Tank of organizations  
\* Both of his divergences

**Restorative Justice**

\* Regionalize and branch into neighboring bands  
\* Address the deep-seated issues

**How should MCFD act & interact**  
\* Increased dialogue  
\* Addressing inequities  
\* Mapping out Services  
\* Recognition of other Service providers



**Shared Learning**  
\* Contact list of projects  
\* Getting the "right" story

**Inclusive Legislation**  
\* Clarification  
\* Deeper understanding

**Jordan's Principle**

**Keeping the Deputy & the work going**  
\* Reconciliation at Summit & chiefs' meetings