

Becoming Allies: Enhancing Cultural Understanding Between Indigenous and Newcomer Youth

Oliver Kamau

Pathways to Prosperity Conference

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Creating Hope Society of Alberta



Traditional Land Acknowledgement: Treaty 6

I acknowledge that we are located on Treaty 6 territory, a traditional meeting place for diverse Indigenous peoples including the Nehiyaw (Cree), Blackfoot, Métis, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Dene, Ojibway/ Sauteaux/Anishinaabe, Inuit, and many others whose histories, languages, and cultures continue to influence our vibrant community.



Context

- **An initiative between Creating Hope Society (CHS) and Edmonton Immigrant Services Association(EISA).**
- **The goal was to promote and increase intercultural understanding between Indigenous and Newcomer youth.**
- **40 Indigenous and newcomer youth from two junior high schools were engaged over a period of 9 months.**
- **Implemented between June 2018-March 2019.**
- **Resource tool - [Journey to Becoming an Ally: A Toolkit for Indigenous and Newcomer Youth.](#)**



- **A not-for-profit, charitable organization, incorporated in 1976, to assist new immigrants, refugees and first-generation Canadians with their settlement, adaptation and integration.**
- **Delivers numerous programs such as Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS), Library Settlement Services, Language Bank, Supporting Newcomer Integration, New Neighbours and ESL to name a few.**
- **Project's role: Fiscal agent responsible for identifying Indigenous partners and liaising with Edmonton School districts to identify interested schools in the project.**
- **Staff from Settlement Workers in School program were involved in securing meeting venues, planning and delivering program activities in the respective schools.**



Creating Hope Society of Alberta

- **Creating Hope Society is a non-profit society established to recognize that the sixties and seventies child welfare scoop of Aboriginal children is a continuation of the Residential Schools era.**
- **CHS believes that it is time to halt the cycle of Aboriginal children being separated from their families and communities.**
- **Key programs offered by CHS include Aboriginal Mothers, Aboriginal Fathers, Youth Mentorship, Youth, Elder, Parent Cultural program and Peer to Peer Support group.**
- **CHS's role in the project included providing facilitators.**

Meeting of Two Cultures

- **The initiative involved Westlawn & H.E. Beriault Junior Highs in Edmonton, Alberta.**
- **Prior to this project, each of the two schools had either an active Indigenous or a Newcomer youth program.**
- **Due to the collaboration between EISA and CHS, each school was able to accommodate the two programs.**
- **The programs were delivered separately each week, but participants met on bi-monthly basis to learn about each other's cultures.**

Project Activities & Learnings

- **Introduction to Sharing or Learning Circles.**
- **Indigenous Peoples History, Culture and Teachings.**
- **Debunking Myths around Indigenous and Newcomer Communities.**
- **Modified Blanket Exercise.**
- **The Role of Reconciliation in Healing Society.**
- **Project Resource: Journey of Becoming an Ally.**



Youth: Learnings from the Sharing/Learning Circles



The sharing circle is used to create a respectful & inclusive space for all.

Used as a method of initiating conversational sharing in groups.

Smudging was also introduced into the Learning Circle.

Facilitators from CHS explained the cultural significance of smudging to Indigenous communities.

The act of smudging practice was entirely voluntary.

The Key Teachings & Traditional Treaties of Indigenous Peoples of Canada



The youth learned about: The three broad groups of Indigenous Peoples namely: First Nations, Inuit and Metis Peoples.

The seven key teachings namely: Truth, Courage, Humility, Love, Respect, Honesty and Wisdom.

The numbered Treaties with Edmonton located in Treaty 6 Territory.

Debunking Myths Around Indigenous & Newcomer Communities

This activity sought to debunk and provide accurate information and context about the experiences, culture and values of the two communities.

During this activity, Indigenous and Newcomer youth shared how their communities get stereotyped.

They identified incidences of bullying, harassment and even violence and related them with stereotypical attitudes and behavior.

Modified Blanket Exercise

The blanket exercise was held at Westlawn Junior High School and was led by an Elder, Amber Dion.

A great participatory tool for teaching the history, colonization and displacement of the Indigenous Peoples to non-Indigenous peoples.

Afterwards, both groups compared similar injustices experienced by their communities such as colonialism, displacement and bullying.



The Role of Reconciliation in Healing Society

To understand the significance of Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), youth were introduced to basic concepts.

Examples included: *Truth* (which had been taught earlier as one of the six key teaching of Indigenous Peoples), *Reconciliation*, *Residential Schools*, and *Allies*.

Youth from both groups watched a video from Reconciliation Canada as an introduction to the concept.

The video discussion afterwards helped the youth explore the importance of truth-telling in dealing with painful experiences.

Youth Resource: Becoming an Ally

JOURNEY TO BECOMING AN ALLY:

A Toolkit for Indigenous and
Newcomer Youth

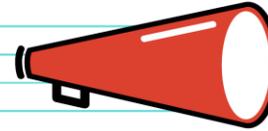


Creating Hope Society of Alberta



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

WE WOULD LIKE TO
GIVE A SHOUT OUT
TO THE WESTLAWN
JR HIGH STUDENTS
WHO WERE
INVOLVED IN
ADVISING THIS
TOOLKIT



**THANK YOU TO
THE STAFF AT
EISA AND CHS
FOR THEIR
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THIS PROJECT**

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Conclusion

This project was a success as it was grounded from a place of intentional practice.

Indigenous facilitators from Creating Hope Society created a valuable learning experience for all youth who were involved.

Bringing the two groups together was also a constructive way to begin having an open intercultural dialogue.

Post-pandemic, we intend to continue with the youth dialogues.



