

Report: Chisasibi Roundtable on Healing & Wellness

March 27 – 30, 2012

Introduction

The Chisasibi Roundtable on Healing and Wellness is the fourth community consultation activity cosponsored by the Miyupimaatisiun Committee. It was a follow-up of the February 2012 roundtable. Specifically it aimed to identify community recommendations for the development of the Chisasibi Miyupimaatisiun Committee Strategic Plan for 2012-2013. It included a one-day planning session for the community members.

The Participants

Participants were healers who have already worked in the community and are familiar with its members and their needs. They were: Wendy Hill, Harry Snowboy, Juliana Matoush Snowboy, Jules Tapas, and Kane Ferris. Also participated: Roger Orr, NAADAP councillor from Nemaska and elder Cecil Nepoose from Alberta. Larry House, CHR chaired the meeting. Janet Napash, Karen Napash and Mike Wong acted as coordinators and logistical support. Janet Napash is charged with the translation of the audio recordings of the meeting to be incorporated to future reports and identify community recommendations and needs.

Overall organization

The Roundtable was held over the course of three (3) days at the Youth Center. The format was somewhat different than the previous community consultations in order to respond to the community desire of having a balanced program, including specific cultural activities. Thus, the roundtable reserved the mornings and early afternoons to participant presentations and community discussions. The evenings were reserved for cultural activities such as a community feast, sweat lodge ceremonies and dances. Community feast, honoring of elder Robbie Matthew, the memorial rounddance and the sundance preparations have been postponed and are planned to be held at a later date.

Discussion themes

While the first Roundtable (February 2012) focused on specific aspects of Eeyou healing and how it can address root causes of health and social challenges in the community, the present roundtable discussed concrete steps that the community can take for the implementation of Eeyou healing services in the

community. In addition, it was perhaps the physical space where the roundtable was held that inspired a discussion on the experience and wellbeing of Chisasibi youth.

Youth and wellbeing

Despite the fact that the youth are often seen as a struggling generation in terms of psychosocial stress, their personal stories and viewpoints are rarely heard or sought. The participants agreed that specific deliberative spaces in which the youth can feel comfortable to share their experiences and debate relevant approaches to their wellbeing should be created. This need is especially important since a majority of youth are reluctant to appeal to existing health and social services thus they often feel marginalized and misunderstood.

The intergenerational transfer of trauma has had a significant impact on the mental and emotional wellbeing of the younger generation. Because they often feel overwhelmed by personal experiences and do not have appropriate channels to share these, the youth often carry heavy emotional burdens that are expressed through anger and self-infliction of pain (substance abuse, violence, and suicidal tendencies). Moreover, these challenges are compounded by the tendency from the part of community members to label the youth as an at risk population further marginalizing them. In many instances the solutions put forward, especially institutionalization (whether in correctional or mental institutions), exacerbates the youth's psychosocial difficulties. Personal testimonies by various participants underlined the need for access to culturally relevant programs and services. In many cases a return to the bush in the company of competent elders and healers have had very positive results and helped individuals understand their state of mind and how to overcome negative tendencies. In addition, positive role models and community resource people are indispensable to accompany youth in their journey towards wellbeing.

Finally, some presenters expressed concern over the way in which the youth are being currently treated in the community. There seems to be a certain resistance from the part of community members in accepting the input of the youth in matters of community decision-making. For example, despite the fact that the youth are encouraged to seek postsecondary education, once they return to the community they have significant difficulties in finding employment in their chosen fields and face barriers to reintegration in the community governance. This apparent perceived threat from the part of the community sends the wrong message to the youth and can have negative impacts on their future development. Being open to discuss their issues and wanting to participate in the community decision making should be encouraged and support should be made available to facilitate youth participation in any areas they deem important.

Specific recommendations:

- Devise specific methods to reach out to the youth (facebook, websites, focused workshops)
- Create safe community spaces in which the youth can discuss their specific challenges and find solutions
- Target younger generations in the schools through focused curriculum in areas such as spirituality and Cree history

- Strengthen intergenerational bonds with elders in the community
- Diversify and make available on-the-land programs for youth

Nishiiyuu Miyupimaatsiun Strategic Plan

The primary goal of implementing Eeyou healing is to make available alternative service provision that although may not be relevant to all community members, it **does** respond to the needs of a certain section of the Chisasibi population that has already participated and taken advantage of Eeyou healing services. It was underlined that the perspective should not be presented as an 'either/or' issue but simply as diversifying health and social services in order to respond to as many needs as possible. For example, individuals that have not benefited from typical clinical interventions (i.e. psychological counseling) may benefit from more culturally appropriate methods such as on the land programs, Eeyou counselling services, participation in cultural ceremonies, and feasting. The long-term goal, whether using clinical approaches or Eeyou healing, is to help individuals achieve balance in their life irrespective of the method they choose. Thus, the community was invited to prioritize the types of events and structured interventions to be included in the 2012-2013 Nishiiyuu Miyupimaatsiun Strategic Plan.

The community discussion identified three major aspects for implementing Eeyou healing: broad community activities focused on awareness, inter-agency coordination, and organizational strategies.

Community wide awareness activities

- Create awareness to general public about the different methods of healing
 - Focused workshops
 - Hold ceremonies, sweat lodges during these events
 - Focus on historical root causes and contemporary initiatives
 - Prevention programs
 - Suicide prevention
 - Family case conferencing with a cultural prospect
 - Mini conference on Residential school survivors
 - Land based therapies
 - Acknowledge other methods and other teachings/ healing centers
- Clear communication of Nishiiyuu Miyupimaatsiun goals and vision
- Prioritize youth participation

Inter-agency coordination

- Facilitate communication between various community institutions
- Focus on the role of school and curriculum to increase youth participation
- Network activities with the school – invite school representatives
- Secure participation in community consultation from entities and delegates on behalf of other community organizations.
- Changing the attitudes with the organizational leaders
- Cultural protocols need to be at the forefront when engaging the services of a traditional healer

Organizational strategies

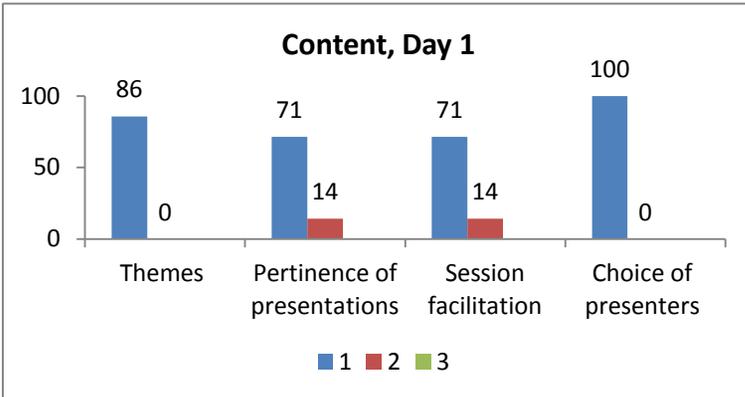
- Establish communication strategy
 - Pamphlets/newsletter
 - Broadcast workshops & presentations on TV
 - Create radio programs focused on Eeyou healing & history
 - Website to keep community members informed by accessing documentation and activity schedules
 - Timely and focused advertising
- Establish ongoing and permanent intervention program
- Produce statistical reporting of Eeyou healing interventions and activities
- Finalize ethics guideline and Strategic Plan
- Align vision and goals with those of the community
- Secure funding
 - More structured approach to accessible and secure funding – possibility of developing a more streamlined funding process that reduces bureaucratic barriers (eg. Establish a better funding agreement between the CHB/Band/ Miyupimaatisiun Committee)
 - Secure long-term funding – reduce project by project process and aim for yearly funding to be managed by the Miyupimaatisiun Committee
 - Clarify healers' remuneration and facilitate their access to funding
 - Implement other funding activities such as fundraisers and harmonization with other funding sources besides the Community Initiatives Program

Evaluation Report

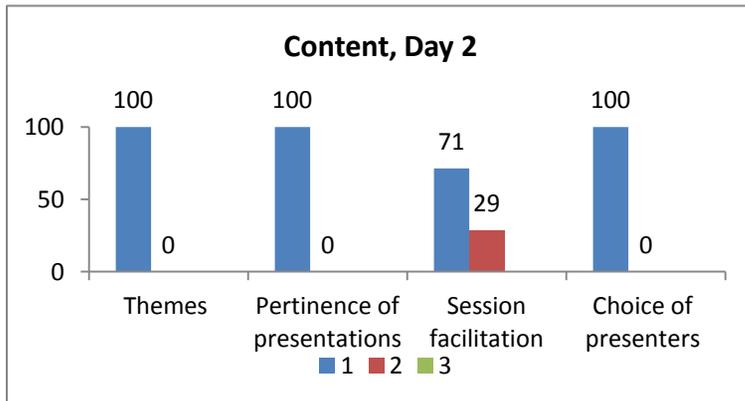
All values are expressed as percentage of total survey respondents for each day of consultation.

On average there were 8 respondents per day.

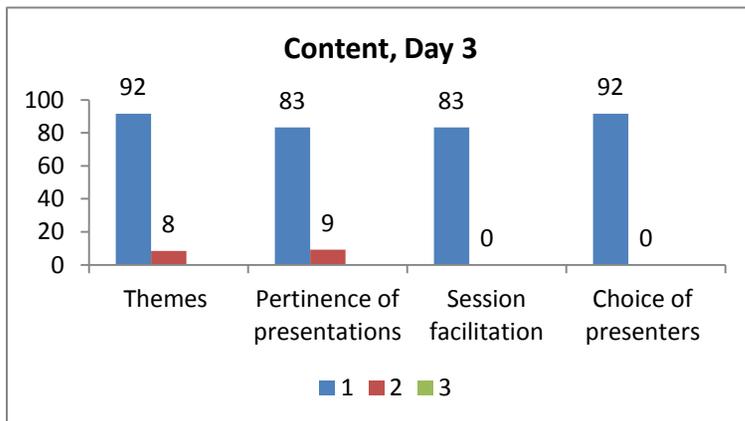
Comments



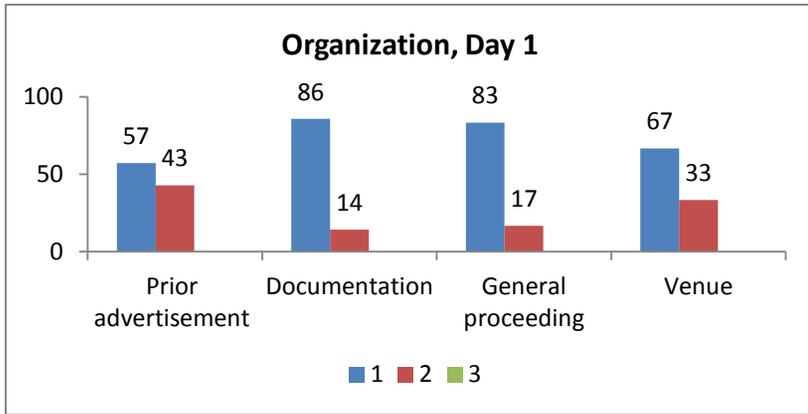
- Roger Orr's presentation was very good. It teaches you not to be afraid to open up our hearts to talk about what is bothering us in our lives; that we will have peace, love, happiness in our lives
- Awesome + heartfelt stories of childhood, pain and overcoming these reaching un understanding of people
- A facilitator that knows youth issues on hand (suicide bullying, etc.)



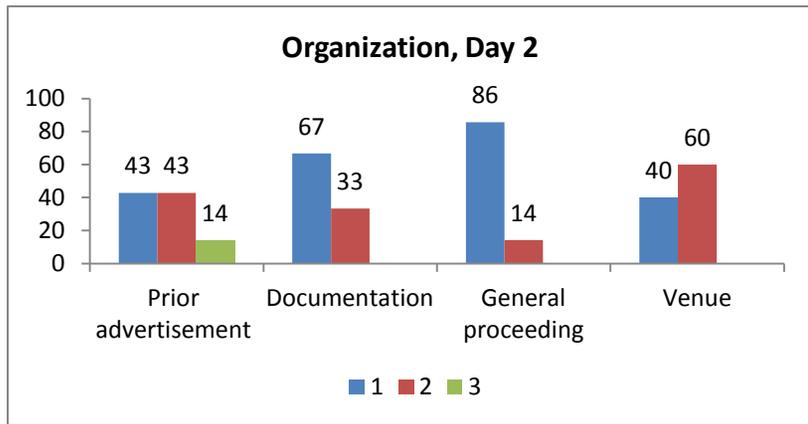
- Do an one hour video for school assembly and cable channel that features two or more healers talking about different topics: their childhoods, ceremonies, climate change, etc.
- All presenters had really good ideas



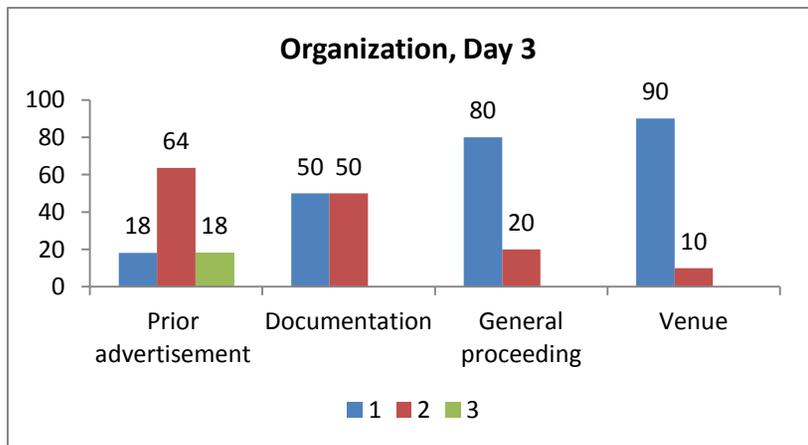
- Good teachings shared



- Need more input to boards and employees to attend



- Good job with your organization



- Show one hour video a week before the next community workshop featuring presenters telling a bit about themselves (10-15 min each). May have to collect video content with video conference
- Only thing is advertising needs to be out there prior to the conference
- As it is a growing organization publishing is a good procedure to follow as to make it better for communication

Overall comments:

- Why are people bothering the name traditional healing, that's the way our people were, even white people they have their bible for healing
- Lateral oppression, compassionate communication
- Have more presenters; **more local elders** to share in the workshop; have a youth who "is not afraid to share" to tell us the reality of living on the rez – positive + negative aspects – help improve the lives or understand the struggle of youth today
- How to make youth feel welcome and a part of how important they are to our community in these kinds of events
- **Other ceremonies to be shown:** workshop on medicines + ceremonies by a respected elder (that knows). It was all good, people need to ask more questions & be encourage to attend/participate
- The activities need to **be planned way ahead of time and keep the dates as scheduled**. Overall very awesome.
- More advertising prior to meeting & conferences
- More activities during the evening
- Find out prior to holding the vent that no other events are being held – everyone is at the other event (Inuit gathering) – even during Ped days or other community breaks
- **Need more promotion one month advance at least**
- Awesome team
- To have seminars, roundtables or workshops **in the afternoon**; **advertise in advance** through media, posters, emails
- Survey the community at the seminar to have documentation
- Need **more elders** to sit in also the youth or a **representative from each department at the CHB**. Include the community members from each entity
- More **youth participation** & involvement, **school teachers & staff** to be more involved because they are teaching our children. Have social workers participate.
- Lets insure that these events keep happening on **a regular basis**. The community needs to have their voice heard – what they need
- Also powerpoint needed to have something to look at. Need also prior advertisement

100% of survey respondents recommend similar activities to be held in the future