

Advancing Reconciliation in Port Alberni



TSESHAHT
FIRST NATION



hupačasath
First Nation



March 27, 2018
Community Forum
Summary

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COMMUNITY FORUM GRAPHIC RECORDING

"TOGETHER WE ARE SO MUCH MORE THAN WE ARE SEPARATELY"



ADVANCING RECONCILIATION IN PORT ALBERNI • MARCH 27, 2018



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ADVANCING RECONCILIATION IN PORT ALBERNI

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To further Reconciliation efforts and foster cross-cultural awareness in Port Alberni, the Reconciliation Committee, a partnership between the Hupacasath First Nation, Tseshaht First Nation, and the City of Port Alberni, hosted a Community Forum on March 27th, 2018, at the Best Western Plus Barclay Hotel. The event welcomed approximately 112 residents, local First Nations and elected officials from around the Alberni Valley.

The evening began with opening remarks from Reconciliation Committee Co-Chairs, Cynthia Dick, Chief Councillor for the Tseshaht First Nation and Sharie Minions, Councillor for the City of Port Alberni. Representatives from the two First Nations then welcomed guests and spoke of the need for an inclusive and welcoming community for all. Opening remarks concluded with two keynote speakers, Scott Fraser, MLA for the Mid-Island Pacific Rim, and Sarah Thomas, from the office of Gord Johns, MP for Courtenay-Alberni, addressing the room and emphasizing the critical role Reconciliation will play in Port Alberni's growth and development.

Attendees were then invited to participate in a World Café which involved ten facilitated table discussions, each with a different question regarding Reconciliation. People had the opportunity to rotate through six of the ten table topics with 15 minutes allotted for each discussion. Note-takers were stationed at each table to capture the conversations.

If participants were not comfortable speaking in a group setting they could submit their feedback through an anonymous feedback form or post their thoughts to discussions walls placed around the room. The discussion wall topics corresponded with the facilitated table topics.

The Community Forum concluded at 9 p.m. with closing remarks from the Committee Co-Chairs.

The following information is a summary of the feedback/input received at the March 27th Community Forum. Included in the document are the ten table topics, key themes that emerged from the discussions and a resource list.

QUESTION 1

WHAT DOES RECONCILIATION MEAN TO YOU?

KEY THEMES EMERGING FROM DISCUSSION AND FEEDBACK

Reconcile through Developing Relationships

- Internal First Nation community relations
- First Nations community to First Nations community relations
- First Nations communities to Port Alberni (municipal and public)

Reconcile through Healing

- Moving forward on positive awareness
- Living in harmony with each other

Reconcile through Leadership

- First Nations to have a public voice and presence

Reconcile through Public Education

- Curriculums for youth
- Story-telling for all ages
- First Nations information (history, culture)
- Through learning First Nations cultures and traditions

Reconcile through Time

- Reconciliation is an ever-living thing – it is not an end result, it is an action.

Recurring themes focused on sharing information, understanding and developing relationships on all levels from family to community to government. First Nations story-telling is a common mechanism for understanding and education. Communication and the means to achieve that are important; however, it was noted that forums are not part of First Nations' culture. Healing is integral to Reconciliation, including healing anger and restoring economic stability. There was recognition that Reconciliation meant different things to different people, but shared the objective of achieving harmony. Education, truth and a public presence of First Nations people, traditions and culture were seen to be methods of achieving Reconciliation. Several specific suggestions included a "Sorry Day", a harvest round table and inclusion of First Nations on City Council.

QUESTION 2

WHAT CAN THE COMMUNITY DO TO ADVANCE RECONCILIATION IN PORT ALBERNI?

KEY THEMES EMERGING FROM DISCUSSION AND FEEDBACK

Cityscapes

- Create a city that is not separated
- Include First Nations' art and symbolism; include translation of street names
- Disband set borders
- Locate memorials in more prominent areas
- Redesign the City flag
- Decorate the main city routes with First Nations' artwork
- Use more symbolism that recognizes First nations and non-First Nations cultures

Communication

- Positive reports in the media highlighting Reconciliation efforts
- Use Facebook
- Provide avenues for discussion
- Include everyone's views, not just political leaders
- Keep everyone informed about related meetings
- Create advertisements together (First Nations and the City)
- Revive the traditional First Nations' language(s)

Education by First Nations for First Nations and Port Alberni

- Keeping and sharing traditions and culture
- Saving and learning First Nations' traditional languages
- Provide training to avoid racism

Events and Directives

- Hold more public events, e.g., Blanket Exercise
- City and First Nations jointly host events for the whole community
- Make recognition days and statues meaningful (e.g. Aboriginal Day)

Storytelling

- Use in education, healing and communications
- Use to get to truth
- Respect and listen to Elders

Healing

- Acknowledging history
- Circle or gather together
- Remember and maintain traditions and culture
- Share protocols

Leadership

- Decision making on focus and goals
- First Nations representation at the tables
- Elders' guidance
- Identify a "voice" for the people

Education in the City will take many forms and should include First Nations culture and objectives; however, First Nations are ultimately responsible for keeping their traditional ways. A division between Reserve(s) and the City is perceived and a goal would be to dissolve the boundaries. Healing needs to occur through understanding and communication. There is much support for more public forums and workshops where there is opportunity for learning, sharing food, collaboration and discussion. Media is seen as a support for positive communications about efforts to reconcile.

"Revive our History, culture, language. We are losing our way of life."

QUESTION 3

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION CALLS TO ACTION AND DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, AND HOW COULD WE BETTER EDUCATE PEOPLE ON THESE TWO DOCUMENTS?

KEY THEMES EMERGING FROM DISCUSSION AND FEEDBACK

Not many people have in-depth knowledge about Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) Calls to Action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)

- Suggestions to simplify the documents and to focus on a few actions at a time

City Council Action

- Related annual goals

Economic Prosperity

- Shared prosperity: there needs to be drastic changes

Federal and Provincial Governments

- In Germany it is not the Jewish people's responsibility to teach about the Holocaust, it is Germany's place to learn about it
- Two legal systems

First Nations/Community Action

- Share experiences, host information events on the TRC and UNDRIP
- Organizations could adopt the TRC's 94 Calls to Action and help revitalize eroding First Nations culture
- Community definition of Reconciliation coupled with local priorities and actions

Healing Opportunities

- The TRC is looking at ways to heal the generations
- Support for intergenerational healing

Public Education

- Broader perspectives; new curricula
- Elders are going into the public schools to share their culture

While there is general support for the intent of the TRC Calls to Action and UNDRIP, it is perceived there is not much applied in the community and it would be beneficial to make them more user friendly with visuals, graphics, etc. There is a need for community organizations to address the TRC's 94 Calls to Action and to incorporate them into strategic action plans. Public education and information sharing is vital, and there are roles for the federal, provincial and local governments to play to help end racism and support the healing process.

"The two documents need to be presented at various levels to students in schools from elementary through senior secondary, thoroughly discussed in an open and also specific way with both First Nations and settler presenters, then have many community forums for everyone."

QUESTION 4

WHAT DOES PORT ALBERNI LOOK LIKE AS A MORE RECONCILED COMMUNITY?

KEY THEMES EMERGING FROM DISCUSSION AND FEEDBACK

Building Relationships

- A topic resonating with participants
- Community participation in branding

Cityscape

- Street naming is a teaching opportunity

Communications

- Advertising strategies
- Discuss racism in schools

Directives

- Adoption of a definition for Reconciliation
- Status quo has got to go
- Activities, social, recreational, educational open to all citizens
- Meeting places

Economy

- Employ First Nations people
- Address poverty for on-reserve and urban First Nations

Education

- Education brings history to light and thus supports healing

Healing Strategies

- Acknowledge history
- Reduce verbal negativity
- Build understanding
- Heal within First Nations communities

Inclusion

- Make Port Alberni home
- Inclusive – one that no longer accepts racism as the norm but speaks out against it any chance that it gets – leading the way for others to follow

Leadership

- Governments to be accountable and keep their word
- First Nations to have a place at the table

Process

- Know together that we can do better, know each other and know your neighbour
- The future of Port Alberni is in the youth. We need to protect them, take care of them and nurture them.
- March 27, 2017 was the Walk for Reconciliation; March 27, 2018 was Talk for Reconciliation; what will March 27, 2019 bring?

Port Alberni will look like home when it is a more reconciled community:

*“Home is a place where you can go and be comfortable. It is comfortable right where you are and where you can be you without any preconceived scripts or notions. We go home to make connections and to feel comfortable. Everything is one and we are all one people and one family. Let’s make Port Alberni home.” -
Roman Frank*

Racism and healing are issues for First Nations and non-First Nations peoples and education and access to education are fundamental to addressing these issues notwithstanding perceived poverty and lack of respect. All levels of government can play important roles in relationship and trust building.

QUESTION 5

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE THE CITY OF PORT ALBERNI, TSESHAHT FIRST NATION AND HUPACASATH FIRST NATION DO TO FURTHER RECONCILIATION IN PORT ALBERNI?

KEY THEMES EMERGING FROM DISCUSSION AND FEEDBACK

Promote First Nations Arts and Culture

- Prominent public displays
- City flag, street signs
- Access to language
- Recognition of First Nations history

Engagement of Children and Youth

Economic Partnerships

- Develop shared activities

Education and understanding

- First Nations history information sessions and curricula
- Encourage learning and use of local First Nations languages
- Share cultures to break generational behaviours

Inclusivity

- Community events that encompass the whole region
- Community decision-making (e.g. change school name)

Promote, Support and Participate in Healing Processes

- Continued outreach
- Opportunities to speak the truth

Leadership

- Teams to promote community events
- Representation at tables
- Share ideas

Integral to Reconciliation is understanding and the foundation of understanding is education.

“What are the names Tseshaht, Hupacasath, Port Alberni derived from? What do they mean?”

Participants recommended that there be more forums, workshops, and informational signage, and the sharing of cultures at social events and activities. They looked for more representation at City tables and had high expectations of leadership to share ideas and knowledge while supporting community events. Healing should occur in families and communities first before moving to the region. An objective of inclusivity was to:

“Live together, work together and respect each other. Show results of working together.”

QUESTION 6

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE RECONCILIATION COMMITTEE AND ITS WORKS, AND DO YOU HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR THE COMMITTEE GOING FORWARD?

KEY THEMES EMERGING FROM DISCUSSION AND FEEDBACK

Advertise to the Whole Community

- Communication plan to include reports, activities, events, processes, results
- Have a presence at public events
- Public signage to include First Nations pronunciation and correct spelling

Children would benefit from the same type of forum

Committee Directives

- Expand the committee to include City workers, police, etc.
- Make resolutions regarding Reconciliation actions
- Appoint a First Nations liaison/relations manager
- Host events at First Nations gathering places, e.g. halls

Education

- Opportunities and venues for storytelling; training for teachers
- Committee member participation in First Nations training (e.g. Blanket Ceremony)
- Committee member role to educate

Healing

- More forums would promote healing
- Breathing life into health objectives, support First Nations' initiatives
- Challenge "white privilege"

Leadership

- Create a path to respectful relationships through bureaucracies and systems

Building Relationships

- Create opportunities to share experiences, culture, food, respect
- Support language learning

Stories

- Share protocols around storytelling

The Reconciliation Committee was recognized for organizing a wonderful event and there were many who recommended more public forums with a greater representation of all communities and similar events for children. The Committee was seen to be supportive of Reconciliation and the directives pointed to further involvement in community activities and being a watchdog of sorts for First Nations signage and protocols. Education to get to better understanding is paramount and teachers asked for guidance from the Committee in this regard.

- *“... educators need support and facts to educate. We need more understanding, open communication, so we do not feel shame in not knowing, or asking silly questions.”*

QUESTION 7

WHAT ARE SOME RECONCILIATION SUCCESS STORIES YOU'VE HEARD?

KEY THEMES EMERGING FROM DISCUSSION AND FEEDBACK

Children and Youth Teaching Adults

- Language learners and entertainers contribute to Reconciliation

Communication and sharing experiences bridge divides

- CBC Radio First Nations programming

Community Embracing non-First Nations and two-spirited people

Integration of First Nation languages in the school system

Leadership examples of sitting together with common interests

Specific Events

- The Sechelt (shíshálh) Experience
- Port Alberni Reconciliation March
- Port Alberni Reconciliation activities including this Forum
- Regional District Board
- Treaty
- Court Cases (Federal Court)
- Tseshah
- Hawiith Council
- Barclay Sound Working Group
- Provincial government
- Friendship Centre/Meetings & Workshops
- Quuquutsa Language Society
- Musqueam with UBC

Success was seen as improvements for new generations. First Nations children are learning their languages and informing adults who did not have those opportunities in their schooling.

"She [my non-First Nations granddaughter] was exposed to First Nations food, dance, drumming. Any time you see someone doing that at 13, it will move the process."

"Collaboration with the school district. Teacher, linguist, Elder."

There is great pride of youth who lead social and political functions with First Nations song and dance. Examples of partnerships such as the Barclay Sound Working Group focused together on mutual environmental concerns were seen as successful Reconciliation processes, as was the inclusion of First Nations people on the Regional Board.

"Key decision makers sitting together."

The City of Port Alberni has been successful in supporting events and activities around the Reconciliation March. Friendship Centers provide workshops and meeting places for First Nations and non-First Nations peoples. Guidance from Elders is respected and respect is felt through forums that bring people from all walks of life together.

QUESTION 8

“WHAT DOES RECONCILIATION LOOK LIKE IN THE URBAN FIRST NATIONS POPULATION?”

KEY THEMES EMERGING FROM DISCUSSION AND FEEDBACK

Urban First Nations require avenues of support to maintain their First Nations culture.

There is Nation-to-Nation bias, there is gender bias, there is non-First Nation to First Nation bias.

Urban First Nations do not get the same economic benefits; bureaucracies have divided families.

First Nations communities and families have responsibilities for First Nations living in urban environments.

There are opportunities to partner and build a bridge for prosperity.

Urban-living First Nations live away from ‘home’.

Affordable housing is an issue for all First Nations peoples.

*“Many of us ended up in Port Alberni, after residential school,
Port Alberni is where you ended up - no home to go to.”*

The Forum examined ways in which First Nations living in urban centers could be supported noting that the Port Alberni Friendship Center was a point of contact for many. Poverty and below average living conditions are perceived to be prevalent and people are not always at ease leaving the City and going home. There are a number of biases that need to be addressed and healed and the City of Port Alberni does not have as many resources as larger urban centres. The lack of affordable, safe housing is prevalent both on and off reserve and often urban-living First Nations are the hidden population.

“We need to stop exports.”

QUESTION 9

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE POSITIVE THINGS HAPPENING IN OUR COMMUNITY?

KEY THEMES EMERGING FROM DISCUSSION AND FEEDBACK

The Nuu-chah-nulth culture is being woven respectfully into the community through education and recognition.

There is a societal shift to be more accepting.

There is positive communication happening (without lies).

Industry is developing and there is more business for the community.

People are proud of Port Alberni again.

Change is happening: the Reconciliation Forum is a good start, leadership is taking it on.

There is acknowledgement of the pain of the ancestors and the opportunity to heal.

Young women are taking on leadership roles successfully.

We can see the preservation of language; the First Nations identity is being protected.

First Nations youth take part in events without boundaries, gates, fences or colour barriers.

Progress is being made in relationship building, beginning with the young.

Language preservation is important and key to Reconciliation efforts. Seeing culture respected and taught in the schools is reassuring and there is a general feeling of First Nations moving into the community. Organizations are hiring First Nations people and there are better community connections. In a large respect the Reconciliation Forum has contributed to better relations.

“People who went to residential schools are now leaders and CAN talk/discuss without hatred.”

QUESTION 10

WHO NEEDS TO BE PART OF THE RECONCILIATION DISCUSSIONS?

KEY THEMES EMERGING FROM DISCUSSION AND FEEDBACK

Art and culture have an integral part in Reconciliation discussions.

- There was a question of how to incorporate all First Nations histories

First Nations Health Authority

- Has an existing approach to undertaking Reconciliation

Community members, family members, organizations and cultural groups.

- Churches, Lions, Kinsmen, MCFC, Friendship Center, etc.

Teachers and Teacher Trainers

- To affect change include Children and Youth

Healers, Residential School Survivors and Urban-living First Nations

Leadership

- Create opportunities for Reconciliation, communication, community building
- Elders and Chiefs
- People already well acquainted in social and political circles

“Everyone,” was the most popular response to the question. Cultural traditions such as sharing food, prayer and having Elders present are important facets to gatherings and understanding. Children are carrying forward Reconciliation to future generations and should be included.

“Feed into the minds and spirits of children”

Barriers to communication are falling as respect grows with more opportunities to gather together and learn from one another. Community groups, governments, First Nations, non-First Nations residents working together for generations to come will result in reconciliation.

RESOURCE LIST

City of Port Alberni Reconciliation Committee
www.portalberni.ca/reconciliation-committee

Hupačasath First Nation
www.hupacasath.ca/

Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council
www.nuuchahnulth.org/

Port Alberni Friendship Centre
www.pafriendshipcenter.com

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (Calls to Action)
[www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls to Action English2.pdf](http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf)

Tseshaht First Nation
www.tseshaht.com/

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf
