



NORTHERN BC TOUCHSTONES OF HOPE

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Quesnel Touchstones

By Dianna Mould

The Quesnel Touchstones was held May 17-18, 2011 at the College of New Caledonia and co-hosted by the North Cariboo Aboriginal Family Program Society [NCAFPS] and the Ministry of Children and Family Development [MCFD]. The Aboriginal communities that are in partnership with NCAFPS are Nazko First Nations, Lhtako Dene First Nations, Lhoosk'uz First Nations and Alexandria First Nations. Each community had representation of Elders, frontline workers and community members, also in attendance were many Quesnel community partners including Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Friendship Center, Child Development Centre and others.

The agenda for the event was created by Lorene Pulles, NCAFPS Executive Director. A representative from Lhtako First Nation, Terry Boucher, spoke on Self Determination and Geneva Irwin, an Elder from Lhoosk'uz Dene First Nation, spoke on Culture and Language. The small group sessions focused on the PATH and the dreams . The five small group facilitators were Brenda Lewis, Dianna Mould, Cheri Maisonneuve, Marlaena Mann and Sheryl Elgie.

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Website Updates

The northern BC Touchstones of Hope website has been updated! We have re-faced the look of the site to reflect the Touchstones of Hope reconciliation movement but to remain unique to the northern BC Touchstones initiative.

Learn more at www.northernbctouchstones.ca.

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The other keynote speakers were Lorene Pulles and Audrey Lundquist who spoke on Non Discrimination and Brenda Lewis did the talk on Structural Interventions.

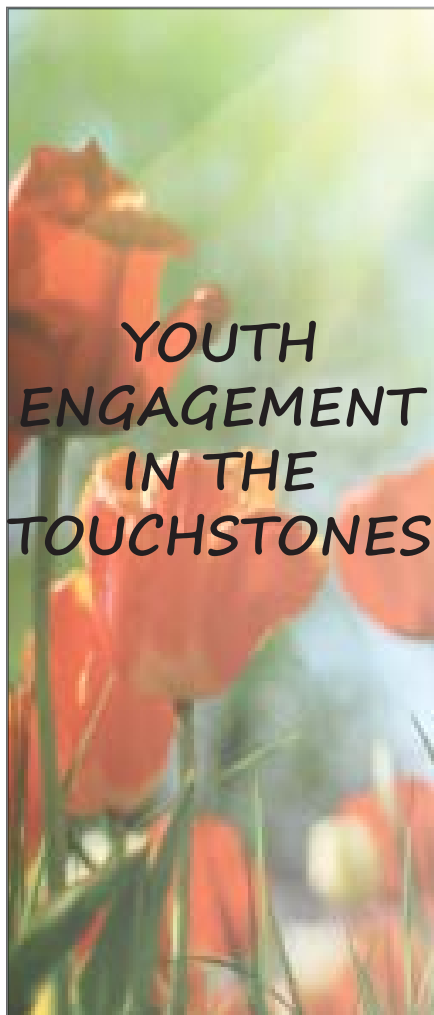
There were 54 evaluations handed in, most were very positive with recommendations for further follow-up, and for people to remain committed to the Touchstones process. Many people were happy with the amount of people in attendance and encouraged more gatherings like Touchstones to bring people together.



FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Dr. Michael Saini from the University of Toronto has been collaborating with the northern BC Touchstones team since 2009. He created a research methodology template using Participatory Action Research (PAR) which engages communities in being researchers. In July of 2010, Dr. Saini and the Touchstones team revisited participants from three community

sessions in order to explain the research findings. Throughout the summer, Dr. Saini will be working on the data analysis from the community sessions so that it can be given back to communities and used for future research. In addition, the Touchstones team will be looking into a process which engages all of those involved in the five community sessions in an evaluation measuring short and long term outcomes for children, families and agencies.



This past winter and spring, the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society collaborated with the Regional Aboriginal Youth Engagement Coordinator at the Ministry of Children and Family Development in Kamloops. The initiative involved the Voices of Experience [VOE] panel composed of approximately 10-15 youth who have been or who are currently in child welfare care. The first session occurred in February of 2011 at the Quaaout Lodge outside of Kamloops. The youth learned about the Touchstones and created their own dream for the VOE panel using the PATH. In April 2011, the panel and their mentors reassembled at the Quaaout Lodge for a Touchstones train the trainer session. The group explored the Touchstones of Hope through the example of the Caring Society's 7 Ways to Make a Difference. The youth also learned more about the history of Aboriginal peoples, residential schools, child welfare and reconciliation through the stories of Elders and mentors at the session. On the last day, there were small group presentations in order to practice presentation skills. In June, eight members of the VOE panel assisted in facilitating small group discussion at the Touchstones regional session in Kamloops [more about the session on page 4]. Thank you to all of the amazing youth and their mentors who participated in our Touchstones training!

Our Dreams Matter Too: First Nations students ask the United Nations to investigate inequitable education on reserves

First Nations students are tired of waiting for Canada to ensure culturally based equity in education. Today, they join with non-Aboriginal students to launch a report called “Our Dreams Matter Too” at Pierre Elliott Trudeau School in Gatineau, Quebec. The report asks the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child to study the inequities in First Nations elementary and secondary education.

The report was inspired by First Nations youth education activist Shannen Koostachin, founder of the Shannen’s Dream campaign for safe and comfy schools and equitable education, and convened by a group of students from Attawapiskat First Nation and Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation called the “Dream Team.” The report, supported by the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada and the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, includes letters from First Nations students across Canada on how the under-funding of schools and education on reserve impacts them and their futures. Many of the letters echo this statement by Chelsea Edwards, youth spokesperson

for the Shannen’s Dream campaign, “Just like Rosa Parks as she started the civil rights movement, we have been sitting at the back of the school bus our entire lives. It was Shannen who rose and walked to the front of the bus, with the company of many children. The back was not a place where we wanted to be, where NO ONE should be.”

Cindy Blackstock, Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society says “This is the third anniversary of Prime Minister Harper’s apology for residential schools and yet First Nations education and child welfare continue to be dramatically under-funded. Many First Nations have no schools or have schools in deplorable condition. The Auditor General has repeatedly called for equity in education and child welfare but Canada’s response is piecemeal and inadequate.” Dream Team members say this to the United Nations: “As children and youth, we continue to write letters to the Government but nothing changes. The discrimination and denial of our rights continues. We need your help. Please read our letters. Please come to see us!”

For more information see shannensdream.ca or contact: Cindy Blackstock, Executive Director, First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada (613) 230- 5885 or cblackst@fncaringsociety.com.



Students gather at Pierre Elliott Trudeau school in Gatineau, QC on June 9, 2011.

Touchstones Regional Session

The Touchstones of Hope movement has spread to the interior of British Columbia and June 14-15, 2011 marked the start of a reconciliation journey for communities in the interior. Leaders from the communities, First Nations child and family service agencies and the Ministry of Children and Family Development [MCFD] attended a regional session in Kamloops. The regional session was intended to introduce or provide additional knowledge of the Touchstones of

Hope guiding principles so that leaders could decide whether or not the Touchstones would be a good fit for their communities. During these two days, leaders had the opportunity to engage in a reconciliation process – truth telling, acknowledging, restoring and relating - and they openly discussed the situation of child welfare and created their visions for their children, youth and families. Speakers included Elders, individuals involved in the Stsmémelt Project,

community members, staff from MCFD, and others who have been engaged in the northern BC Touchstones and the Touchstones. In addition, there were videos on reconciliation and the Touchstones featuring Cindy Blackstock from the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada (see below).

A special note of thanks to everyone who made the Interior Touchstones Regional Session a success!

New Resource

Aboriginal Philanthropy in Canada: A Foundation for Understanding

This new document was put together by a circle of philanthropists and foundations interested in partnering with Aboriginal Peoples. For communities who have developed their Touchstones plans, this group may be useful to collaborate with.

<http://www.cfc-fcc.ca/documents/AboriginalPhilanthropyInCanada.pdf>

YouTube Videos

The Caring Society has created a series of reconciliation videos with filmmakers Andree Cazabon and Jith Paul. We invite you to learn more about reconciliation in child welfare by watching and sharing the videos with others:

- Why Reconciliation is needed in Child Welfare?
- Designing Child Welfare from the Ground Up: Introduction to the Touchstones of Hope Movement
- 7 Free Ways You Can Make a Difference
- Children and Youth Helping Aboriginal Families

Find fncaringsociety on YouTube for these, as well as other videos!

See www.fncaringsociety.com for additional Touchstones resources.

7 Ways to Make a Difference

Be a Witness

To the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal case and help 160,000 First Nations children get culturally based and equitable child welfare services.

Sign Jordan's Principle

Put an end to government red tape depriving First Nations children of government services available to all others.

Support Shannen's Dream

Support Shannen's Dream for safe and comfy schools and equitable education for First Nations children.

Sign the Touchstones of Hope

Principles to guide services to Aboriginal children.

Engage Young People

Learn how to respectfully engage young people in your movement or organization.

Many Hands One Dream

Principles to improve health care for Aboriginal children.

www.fncaringsociety.com



Wednesday, June 1st, 2011 marked the one year anniversary of the tragic death of youth leader Shannen Koostachin. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the Koostachin family and Attawapiskat First Nation.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION
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