Final report of a collaborative research project between The Ministry of Children and Families (MCFD) and the University of Victoria
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Overall Results
The evaluation of ‘the village’ workshop, determined that staff who participated increased their understanding of the impact of residential school, colonialism and ongoing intergenerational trauma experienced by some Aboriginal people and communities in Canada. Participants’ experience of the workshop was overwhelmingly positive and they described their learning as being both cognitive and emotional. Most participants describe that this deeply emotional workshop has had a positive impact both personally and professionally in the way they engage with Aboriginal People.

The Research Methodology
This evaluation was done in two distinct parts, with data from both parts informing this report and our findings:

Part A
Analyzing the feedback based on the surveys given at the conclusion of each workshop from the years 2013-2017. A total of 49 workshops were conducted across BC, and 24 stratified sample surveys were chosen, for the qualitative and quantitative data analysis. In all 568 participants responses were analyzed.

Part B
A web based survey was sent out across all Service Delivery Areas (SDA) within MCFD, looking for past participants of the Workshop to respond. In all 130 people responded to the survey. The results of this survey were qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed.

Analysis: Our analysis followed the continuum of cultural learning pictured in figure 1, as we looked for evidence of learning within each of the four quadrants. Each quadrant of the circle represents a different aspect of learning towards creating cultural safety and correlates to a different area of inquiry for this evaluation. This model was an adaptation of the model used by MCFD and shared with the researchers by the research sponsor Wedlidi Speck.
Findings

Cultural Awareness:

Within this quadrant we were looking for evidence that staff built upon a foundation of respectful communication and understanding of the differences between oneself and people from other backgrounds, especially differences in attitudes and values. In this first quadrant we asked, if participants had liked the workshop and whether they had learned from the information gained.

From the surveys it was clearly evident that participants reported increased learning and awareness about the historical events and felt that this would increase their respect of Aboriginal culture and values in the workplace. It was also evident that participants increased their knowledge and understanding of residential schools and the impact of colonialism. Some of the results of the post Workshop survey can be seen below.

Overwhelmingly participants felt that the course objectives were met and that the workshop was relevant to their work. (Figure 2)

Similarly positive, the feedback received on the facilitation was that, 85% felt that the facilitator was excellent and the overall experience was also excellent. It was clear that most participants felt, that this workshop provided a great learning environment (Figure 3). A small percentage of the participants (less than 5 percent) felt there was a need to create more safety (emotional) in the workshop, with some of these attendees feeling victimized and manipulated by the workshop. A few participants felt that inclusion of the prayer and the discussion of the creator had no place in government sponsored trainings.

The most common negative feedback received was that participants did not appreciate being mandated to attend this workshop, and felt that attendance should be voluntary. A few people felt that the compulsory nature of attendance actually lessened the impact of the course for those who wanted to be there, as those who were mandated “were just going through the motions”.

Participants also commented that the workshop, “provided a much more thorough understanding of the circumstances, not only historically but of how to engage and create change.” and that “I want to continue to hold space in a
Evaluation of the workshop “Building Bridges through Understanding the Village”©

culturally respectful, compassionate and loving way for my aboriginal client”. While another stated that “The exercise of creating and living in the village was an amazing way to gain understanding!”, and one participant wrote “I will be able to implement what I have learned at my job starting tomorrow”.

Cultural Sensitivity
Our evaluation in this quadrant looked to understand the emotional impact of the workshop; did this learning opportunity create a felt sense of Aboriginal people and communities experience of colonialism and in particular residential schools? Was empathy increased? Here again we see overwhelming results of the success of this workshop.

| 80% stated that the workshop created deep and emotional insight. |
| 91% increased understanding of the negative impact of colonialism and the trauma and loss experienced intergenerationally. |
| 75% created a cognitive and emotional understanding of traditional First Nations Values. |
| 82% respondents can comprehend the challenges faced by Indigenous people as a result of colonization and residential school. |

Participants in the workshop describe their experience, retrospectively as followed:

“I had a visceral experience in a safe and supported way”

“This workshop enhanced my understanding in a more embodied and experiential way.

“I came here connected to my head & leave here connected to my heart.

“created a sense of support for creating decolonizing practice”

Interestingly there are no discernible differences between the responses of those who took this course one month ago or more than three years ago. The emotional impact of the workshop has not diminished over time.

Cultural Agility

In this quadrant we were looking for what impact this workshop has had in a practical sense. Cultural agility is seen as the tool kit needed to enact one’s cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity. As such we were looking for evidence of how this workshop has impacted participants in their personal and professional lives. Were they doing things differently that they correlated to their learning from this workshop? In this area we see some very promising results.

Participants described having a new understanding of the Aboriginal Clients “I now understand why my clients are so angry, I get it!” or “I am much more of an advocate in my personal life as well for Indigenous people. I feel the need to educate others about what I learned.” Participants described a new way of engaging, “I have changed the way in which I talk to my staff and other staff in the SDA about engaging Aboriginal clients and communities”

Although not statistically significant there were a number of people who described great difficulty in continuing in their positions given what they had learned from this workshop.

68% - Workshop enhanced work with Indigenous clients
71% - Now attempt to understand from their Indigenous clients perspective
61% - Describe having greater confidence in discussing Indigenous issues at work
55% - Workshop increased confidence in creating supportive relationships in a positive way
61% - Staff now report having increased understanding of systemic bias in the workplace
44% have participated in conversations with their team about their learning in this workshop
learned. They felt very conflicted by the system they worked for and were desperate to find additional skills and knowledge on how to proceed in a more culturally agile way. The greatest feedback was that people wanted to know how to incorporate this learning into practice. They wanted more specific tools to enact their cultural agility. Interestingly, again, the data did not show any discernible difference in the learning in this quadrant across all position types or across the SDA’s. The desire to learn more and to translate their learning into practical strategies was by far the most common comment made by past participants. The data also demonstrated that there is a missed opportunity to deepen the learning by having teams engage in further discussion on practical applications after completion of the course.

Cultural Safety

One of the tenets of Cultural safety is the power shift in terms of who gets to determine what is culturally safe, shifting from the service provider to the service recipient. As such since it was beyond the scope of this evaluation to solicit feedback from service recipients, our evaluation asked past participants of the workshop what they needed to continue their journey along the continuum towards cultural safety. In regards to moving forward along the continuum participants were clear that they were looking for more. They were looking for practical strategies to take what they had learned and translate this into practice. Overwhelmingly participants were asking for more, and specifically they were asking for:

- Teaching circles to learn local protocols, knowledge and history. (85%)
- More access to Elders and to Cultural Supervision. (77%)
- Follow up education- Understanding what reconciliation can look like, practical skills to achieve this. (72%)
- More opportunities to form relationships with Bands and Indigenous communities.
- Education on the present day manifestation of intergenerational trauma and practical strategies to help (trauma informed approaches).
- Participants were almost unanimously asking for direction, skills and mentorship on how to “develop practical skill”, “how to work through the mistrust” and “how to create a safe environment for their aboriginal clients”.

Evaluation Recommendations

- More personal stories and elder participation in the workshop.
- Create more space for discussion on practical skills and restorative practice within the workshop.
- Some pre course reading material regarding colonization and residential schools.
- Follow-up workshop to incorporate the learning into practical strategies, aimed at creating improved cultural agility. (Possibly 3 months post workshop)
- Incorporating concepts of Reconciliation and what this could be, what is possible?

Final Comments

As this evaluation does not include a pre-workshop survey we are unable to comment on the impact of the workshop in moving people along the learning continuum towards cultural safety. We are able to state that this workshop has a significant impact on learning about Cultural Awareness and Cultural Sensitivity for a large percentage of participants. We can also say that the workshop does provide learning to improve the cultural agility of some participants. The evaluation also demonstrates that MCFD staff are hungry for more. They want and understand that they will need more guidance and training if they are to develop the skills needed to become culturally agile workers, and our evaluation demonstrates that this is what MCFD workers are asking for.