

# **Becoming Allies: Enhancing Cultural Understanding Between Indigenous and Newcomer Youth**

**Oliver Kamau**  
**Pathways to Prosperity Conference**  
**November 8-10, 2021**



**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/ Saulteaux/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

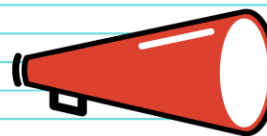


Creating Hope Society of Alberta



## 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  
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Patrimoine  
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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.**



