



The Nelson Project
Building a Relationship - Not a Program



SUPPORTING MEN IN THE NORTH

WINTER GATHERING REPORT

DEC 13-15 2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over 3 days of discussion, workshops and activities XX participants shared their experiences, life stories, successes and failures. The atmosphere was relaxed, informal, respectful and honest.

The Experiences of Other Men's Groups

Men's Sheds, Dudes Club Society, the Arka Brotherhood and [Jackson Lake] all spoke about their different organizations as well as the lessons learnt and challenges they had faced.

The framework of themes that emerged were:

Local is best, but don't reinvent the wheel – there's help out there

Groups need to be focused on the needs of men in their community but can benefit from the lessons and support offered by others and adapt it.

Empowerment and collective leadership rather than big egos

There needs to be more than one person 'in charge' to sustain a men's group and there's no room for big egos.

Informal rather than formal, don't force it

Maintain a relaxed, informal atmosphere where men feel comfortable and good conversations will come from that.

'Leave your armour at the door'

Groups don't need a rulebook, but men need to be respectful of each other and be able to listen with an open heart and mind, without passing judgement.

What's the definition of men's health?

It's more than just medical check ups - it's also about eating, hunting, fishing or watching a movie together.

‘Health through stealth’ instead of stigma & discomfort

Men are more comfortable talking shoulder-to-shoulder, so create the right atmosphere with the right activities and deeper conversations will happen.

Awareness & funding

There’s poor awareness, provision and funding for men’s health, groups may need to lobby and find an administrative partner organization.

Funders don’t help if they are prescriptive

Some bodies are very prescriptive and inflexible with their funding, so it just won’t meet the needs of local communities.

Engaging youth

Young people are the group members of tomorrow and key to healing intergenerational trauma, but they have very different needs and views of health to older men.

You can only take other men as far as you’ve gone – & only when they’re ready

As a leader you have to acknowledge your own journey and you can only help men who have decided they’re ready to make a positive change.

Participants’ Goals for Their Groups

The participants’ goals, dreams and visions aligned well with many aspects of this framework. The individual groups had different emphasises on activities and services offered, tailored to their communities and members.

Activities & Services for Men

Activities that the groups wanted to offer – and men wanted to participate in – included a mix of traditional practices and others, like fishing, bush skills and knowledge of the land, trail riding, story telling and cooking.

Some really wanted to focus on the service element – supporting men and the wider community. Services that were felt to be useful for men included: financial / legal advice, help in maintaining a positive attitude and men's health services.

Beaten Down by Society

Another important theme that emerged was how Indigenous men felt beaten down by society and had to come together to meet their needs and support each other – help wouldn't be coming from anywhere else. That made them angry.

The Role of Women

The participants also discussed the role of women. Many held the view that women played a key role, often motivating or instigating men to join a support group. The men didn't want to necessarily exclude women but needed to find a way to have some spaces and activities that were just for men supporting other men.

Support Needed from TNP

The groups identified several areas where they would likely need support from The Nelson Project. These included help with sourcing funding, legal issues, networking, sharing contacts and sharing knowledge amongst groups.

Conclusion

There is a groundswell of Indigenous men supporting other men in their communities. They are doing this because there is a clear and widespread need and men are poorly served by other institutional services. These leaders need support to get started and gain momentum, adapting best practices from other men's groups internationally that can work for their communities.





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