Indigenous Funders Dialogue
Summary Report

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RECIPROCAL
CONSULTING

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1.0 Background

The Indigenous Funders Dialogue initiative offers a learning opportunity to support broader awareness and action around how typical granting processes may be transformed to more meaningfully engage and address the needs of Indigenous organizations and communities. The initiative involves coordinating and hosting a multi-phased dialogue with a targeted group of supportive funders.

The purpose of the initiative:

⇒ To share perspectives from Indigenous communities and programs about barriers to the funding process
⇒ To identify a range of strategies to strengthen the inclusivity of funding processes and decision-making
⇒ To discuss solutions which would support meaningful engagement from communities most in need of funding support

The initiative emerged after the BCCDC Population and Public Health (PPH) team received feedback on their granting process from a grantee internal to the BCCDC, Chee Mamuk, and their project partner, PHSA Indigenous Youth Wellness. PPH staff, along with these partners, brought this feedback forward to other regional and provincial funders who were interested in learning more about how to improve the accessibility of their grants to Indigenous communities. Reciprocal Consulting was engaged to facilitate and document the initiative, and smaller gatherings and discussions were conducted through fall of 2019 to scope the initiative as well as uphold and frame identified challenges and assets.

Day of Dialogue

On March 9, 2020, a day-long dialogue was convened to invite a broader audience into the conversation. Select funders were invited to send 1-2 representatives to the facilitated dialogue.

The purpose for day of dialogue:

- To help guide funders to opportunities for change in their particular organizational context
- A meeting of hearts to galvanize a groundswell of people who can affect change
- To spend time sharing truth, to learn and pivot to where change can occur (for redress and reconciliation), and to walk out with hope

2.0 Recommendations

This section includes a summary of the key recommendations and next steps that emerged from the Indigenous Funder Dialogue initiative.

Thematic areas for funding shifts and transformation

1. **Support Meaningful Engagement**
   ⇒ Longer timelines and support for community-informed project planning and relationship building recognized as critical infrastructure for community grants
   ⇒ Attention to power dynamics and inequities, beginning with use of language in announcements, webpages, applications, and guides
   ⇒ Funders creating culture and space to reflect on privilege and sit in discomfort
   ⇒ Have difficult conversations and acknowledge mistakes
   ⇒ Build relationships with reciprocity and respect on both sides

2. **Shift the Funding Process**
   ⇒ Longer funding terms
   ⇒ More core funding
   ⇒ Focus on program process rather than requiring outcomes/indicators/activities before community has been meaningfully engaged
   ⇒ Offer options other than formal report for evaluation (i.e., filmed interviews)
   ⇒ Provide support for sustainability planning, project promotion, and other capacity building

3. **Support Navigation of Services and Requirements**
   ⇒ Having examples throughout application
   ⇒ Help be a translator between bureaucratic code and common language
   ⇒ Offer training, capacity building, and mentoring
   ⇒ Fill in forms with grantees, through conversation on purpose and intentions
   ⇒ Clearly articulate funding criteria (i.e., what activities/resources can and cannot be funded)

4. **Support Non-Western Knowledge Systems**
   ⇒ Acknowledge and make space for forms of evidence/expertise that reflect Indigenous ways of knowing (i.e., oral storytelling)
   ⇒ Consider different worldviews; find a shared worldview
   ⇒ Bi-cultural knowledge transfer
   ⇒ Two-way accountability
   ⇒ Allow for exploratory, open-ended processes, qualitative outcomes and alternate knowledge systems

5. **Increase Indigenous Participation and Foci**
    ⇒ Increase Indigenous representation on staff teams
    ⇒ Ensure cultural safety on team and within organization in order to retain and support Indigenous staff
    ⇒ Recruit Indigenous adjudicators for grant selection
    ⇒ Ensure that a significant amount of resources are dedicated specifically to Indigenous communities or service providers, and pair this with training for adjudication boards on equity practices
    ⇒ Seek Indigenous consultation on granting process
    ⇒ Include TRC/UNDRIP/MMIWG recommendations in funding priorities

6. **Create a Funder Community of Practice**
    ⇒ Share efforts to improve processes, and rationale for operating differently
    ⇒ Keep everyone accountable
    ⇒ Consider joining Circle on Philanthropy, signing declaration of action
    ⇒ Share funding application – see where there might be eligibility elsewhere

Next steps:

- ➲ Share back draft report with themes and recommendations
- ➲ Reconvene group at a future date
- ➲ Sub-group to reconnect on specific barriers (procurement process)
- ➲ Share participant contact list to stay in touch

3.0 Methods

This section describes the approach and scope of the work, as well as the data collection processes and analysis methods.

Approach

The development of the initiative was grounded in the relationships that PPH developed with Chee Mamuk and PHSA, and was anchored in the themes raised in the initial feedback PPH received.

PPH summarized the feedback from Chee Mamuk and PHSA as follows:

1. Account for the time it takes to support **meaningful engagement** and community informed project planning
2. Relieve pressure related to **application and reporting processes** as much as possible. Include tangible supports for sustainability planning, promotion, and completing application forms.
3. Provide **navigation services** to relevant resources and info
4. Allow for exploratory open-ended processes, qualitative outcomes and **alternative knowledge Systems**
5. Include **Indigenous partners** within funding decision making. Clearly articulate Indigenous communities as a priority population and TRC/UNDRIP recommendations in funding priorities.
6. Clearly **articulate funding criteria** (what activities/resources can be funded or not)

Starting with these main points of feedback, Reciprocal Consulting took extensive meeting notes and other documentation to conduct a thematic analysis to collect and synthesize challenges and opportunities that were raised through the initiative. The resultant themes with associated issues, assets, and promising practices can be found in Section 4.

Scope of Dialogue

The agenda for the full day of dialogue was developed out of the conversations and expertise of staff working with and for Indigenous communities. Creating space for welcome and introductions – getting to know each other as humans – as well as truth telling, galvanizing action, and building hope were identified as important aspects of the day. There was also understanding that the conversation should not be too constrained or prescriptive, and therefore the agenda provided guidance as a draft framework. The scope of the agenda aligned with the purposes of the initiative and offered significant contribution to the thematic feedback (see Section 4).

Agenda for March 9th Dialogue

1. Welcome and Opening
2. Defining the issues and our assets:
   - Review purposes of the day and what brought us here
3. Sharing lessons and emerging practices:
   - What have you learned through your experiences?
   - What has worked well that can be shared or built on?
   - Listen for themes and emergent next steps through dialogue
4. Next Steps: Building action plans from themes

4.0 Thematic Analysis of Issues, Assets and Promising Practices

This section presents the challenges and opportunities raised over the course of the initiative.

Challenges and Issues

The following presents the challenges and issues raised related to meaningful engagement, funding processes, and worldviews embedded within granting opportunities.

Meaningful Engagement

Timing:
⇒ There is a need to account for and adjust the time and timelines it takes to support meaningful engagement and community-informed project planning.
⇒ A lack of time to complete applications was noted as a challenge, as there is limited time to determine who shows up and how to show up in the work. Shorter timelines were noted as being at an advantage for organizations with resources to react more quickly, with top-down directives.
⇒ Granting timelines to complete the work were also identified as challenging. For instance, a three-year cycle for funding programs was cited as being too short, given the time it takes to plan, leaving only two years to complete the work. This limited time also fails programs in building in sustainable practices.
⇒ The timing does not allow enough time or space to identify healing as part of the journey

Relationships:
⇒ Discussions in the funders dialogue identified challenges regarding the extent of relationships in the funding process.

⇒ With changes in bureaucratic processes, there is the risk of interfering with relationships with communities. Changes in staff, funding processes can undermine trust and buy-in, and ultimately relationships with communities. Sentiments of being 'Tired of disappointing people" emerged in the funding dialogue.

⇒ Funding processes were described as "Transactional relationships."

⇒ Having no people within organizations to create change, as well as a lack of representation of Indigenous people in positions of power and a lack of safety in power structures were also noted as challenges.

Indigenous participation in Funding Processes:

⇒ Frequently, there is emotional labour of relationships held largely by Indigenous people and reconciliation is often on Indigenous people alone; Indigenous people cannot be called on to teach and do all the work alone.

⇒ Further, Indigenous partners are not included within funding decision-making as the peer review process has no Indigenous adjudicators for grant selection

Funding Processes

Focus of applications:

⇒ Several challenges were noted regarding the scope and focus of granting applications.

⇒ It was shared that applications are not always relevant to those doing the work as applications can often be focused on assumptions of problems in the community versus realities of communities' needs. Often the problem is defined at the outset and based on funders' assumptions and assumes outsiders bring the expertise.

⇒ Proposal questions are often premised on the applicant knowing what is in best interest of community, rather than drawing on wisdom and knowledge that the community possesses.

⇒ Additionally, there are challenges related to focusing on the micro-level versus macro-level, such that funding is often project-based, not systems-based.

⇒ Furthermore, funding applications frequently focus on outcomes, and fail to consider the process taken to achieve outcomes.

Worldview embedded in the funding process:

⇒ Challenges related to funding processes operating in a colonial system were identified, such that the worldview taken throughout the funding process puts pressure on funders to stay at an arms-length to be "impartial." Further, there exists "silo's" and "hives" where not all players are always aware of actions from the department level.

Navigation services and support:

$\Rightarrow$ Accessibility around funding requirements was identified as a challenge from the applicant perspective. For instance, rural and remote communities often do not have resources for the excessive requirements for grants over a certain funding amount.

$\Rightarrow$ Challenges of navigating through application and reporting process were also identified, as well as finding relevant resources and information.

Demand:

$\Rightarrow$ From a funders perspective, the number of applications received also presents a challenge because it results in being overloaded with funding proposals and having to decline some proposals.

Accountability and sustainability:

$\Rightarrow$ Accountability was also noted as a challenge, as there are significant pressures related to not only the application, but also the reporting processes for those doing work on the ground in communities. It prompts the questions of "Who are we accountable to?" "What do we report on?" and "How do we report (written)?" There are the requirements to collect so much data, yet much of that data is unused.

$\Rightarrow$ Challenges related to ethics and sustainability were also noted as program continuity can often be compromised due to fluctuating and unstainable funding, often leading to high staff turnover rates in communities.

$\Rightarrow$ Addressing long standing and ongoing systemic inequities was a challenge when funding decisions attempt to allocate funds equally between Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups. Grants which prioritize Indigenous communities and training on equity practices is critical in order to ensure that decision makers appreciate the impact of systemic inequities, and avoid the perspective that Indigenous applicants are being given an unfair advantage in the process.

Privileging of Western Knowledge Systems

Epistemic supremacy

$\Rightarrow$ Challenges of valuing quantitative methods for Indigenous communities over qualitative methods; quantitative methods are not always compatible with communities who are more aligned with circular, qualitative approaches.

$\Rightarrow$ Perfectionism, and putting power into the value of the written word (characteristics of white supremacy culture) also present challenges, as it diminishes oral methods of sharing and knowing.

Power and privilege

$\Rightarrow$ The majority of funding applications are created in a way in which the power is held by funder, not community. For instance, with funding applications and reporting, the ease of the process is

geared towards the funder, not the community and consequently, this can result in fear of failure if funding or implementation goes sideways.

⇒ Funders need to unpack white privilege organizationally and unpack dehumanizing archetypes held

Assets and Promising Practices

The following presents the promising practices or assets that have been identified for funders to more meaningfully engage and address the needs of Indigenous organizations and communities. Assets and promising practices provide a starting point for funder organizations to consider opportunities and calls for incremental, systemic and/or transformational changes that have emerged through the dialogue.

Meaningful engagement

⇒ Engage in Trust-based philanthropy

⇒ Establish longer windows of time from call-for-proposal to deadline

⇒ Include questions in the proposal to ask what processes or mechanisms were used for community engagement on identifying the problem or opportunity to be addressed

⇒ Commit to long-term change to improve access to funding

⇒ Enter into relationships with reciprocity and respect on both sides

⇒ Funders' starting own learning journey about reconciliation and colonial history

⇒ Shift to a culture where there is a willingness to reflect and sit in discomfort, and acknowledge and learn from mistakes

⇒ Include time and resources to collaborate and build meaningful relationships = critical infrastructure needs

⇒ Be aware of power inequities and power dynamics, address white privilege and operate from an equity lens

⇒ Create space for difficult conversations

⇒ Become members of the Circle on Philanthropy, and sign declaration of action

⇒ Create a feedback loop for grantees to have ongoing communication channels on granting processes and their experience

⇒ Start relationships by meeting in person

⇒ Sustainability and ethics of project funding when need is demonstrated

⇒ Meaningful engage Indigenous reviewers and Indigenous adjudicators, Indigenous consultation on the process, and Indigenous staff to assist in the process

⇒ Include TRC and UNDRIP recommendations in funding priorities

⇒ Include Indigenous representation on staff teams, and ensure cultural safety on the team to retain Indigenous staff once they are hired

⇒ Focus on areas to over-resource.

Shifting Funding Processes

⟹ Include tangible supports for sustainability planning, project promotion, and completing application forms

⟹ Challenge deadlines and requirements from community-based perspectives and establish longer funding terms

⟹ Focus on processes, and not requiring outcomes-driven reporting

⟹ Provide more core funding

⟹ Do not pre-determine outcomes or dictate activities in funding call-for-proposals without community input

⟹ Remove financial review criteria for some applicants

⟹ Establish mechanisms for funders to support filling out application through in-person information-sharing conversations on the purpose and intentions of the call for proposals

⟹ Offer filmed interviews or other options in place of evaluation reports

⟹ Frame funding as partnership agreement rather than grant

Navigation of Services and Supports

⟹ Include examples throughout the application

⟹ Have referenced supporting documents included, linked, or embedded in the call for proposals

⟹ Build community capacity through the funding process

⟹ Clearly articulate funding criteria (what activities/resources can be funded)

⟹ Offer training, capacity building, mentoring

⟹ Offer opportunities to complete forms together, for grants and reporting

⟹ Have support to translate between bureaucratic code and common language

Addressing the Privileging of Western Knowledge Systems

⟹ Allow for exploratory, open-ended processes, qualitative outcomes and alternate knowledge systems

⟹ Acknowledge and make space for other forms of evidence and expertise, such as oral storytelling, that reflect Indigenous way of knowing and being

⟹ Find a shared worldview and engage in bi-cultural knowledge transfer

⟹ Establish two-way accountability

⟹ Offer different templates and ways to report

5.0 Brief Summary of Dialogue Discussion

Participants:

Name	Role	Location
Claire Sauvage Mar	Grant Administrator	BC Healthy Communities (BCHC)
Jessica Chenery	Team Lead, Chee Mamuk Program	BCCDC - Chee Mamuk
Harlan Pruden	Educator, Chee Mamuk	BCCDC - Chee Mamuk
Lauren Allan	Ops Coordinator, Clinical Prevention Services	BCCDC - Clinical Prevention
Charito Gailling (note-taker)	Project Manager, Healthy Built Environments	BCCDC - Population & Public Health
Lanny Libby	Planning Analyst, Grants, Equity, Research and Data Team, Social Policy and Projects Division	City of Vancouver
Eric Kowalski	Social Planner, Social Planning and Policy	City of Vancouver
Melinda Markey	Secretariat Director	Community Action Initiatives (CAI)
Mira Farrage	Grants and Community Funding Manager	Community Action Initiatives (CAI)
Gabi Emery	Leader, Indigenous Health	PHSA Indigenous Health
Kim van der Woerd (facilitator)	Principal, Reciprocal Consulting	Reciprocal Consulting
Lauren McGuire-Wood	Community Grants Coordinator	VCH Community Investments

1. **Welcome and opening**

   - Round of introductions around the question "what gives you hope?".
   - Lots of appreciation expressed by those in the room for the opportunity to convene in dialogue to lean into this issue and the difficult conversations it will take.
   - Many emotions coming up from anger/impatience to hope and appreciation for the opportunity to work with like-minded allies and move towards resilient policies.

2. **Defining the issues and our assets**

   - Need to name the issue in order to address it. Harlan spoke to the four Indigenous archetypes[1] recognized by dominant systems and the inequities it creates. Need to create spaces where people can show up with all of their strengths and human characteristics.

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[1] Archetypes include: (1) Stupid / dumb, (2) Angry and dismissed, ruled by emotions, (3) Passive supporters, (4) Active supporters

- Can organize around love or hate. It's much easier to organize around hate, to galvanize a movement based on reaction to an urgent and clear injustice and through blame. Is much harder and takes much more time to organize around love but this is the sustaining change.
- Value of recognizing and supporting role of bi-cultural allies who can move between Indigenous "code" and more Western or bureaucratic "codes" to translate meanings and intentions to common language.
- Chee Mamuk told the story of applying for a PPH grant, which is an internal BCCDC program, and having to jump through many hoops and have many meetings with partner organization to figure out how to fit the cumbersome application form to their needs. Harlan went through 6 barriers/ recommendations that were shared with PPH, in the effort not to cloak their response and to give honest feedback, in order to improve the granting process to be more inclusive to Indigenous communities.
- Funders feel pressure to stay arms-length from grant recipients in order to remain fair and impartial, but this sets up a barrier to relationship building and info sharing between funders and grant recipients as partners.
- Question around targeting funding to special populations (i.e., Indigenous communities, vs. broadly inclusive granting processes)
- Participant talked about VCH pilot project with Central Coast to offer additional funding application supports for Indigenous communities. Meetings communities in person and helping filling out grant application on their behalf after an info-sharing conversation about their purpose and intentions. Reporting is a big challenge so partnering with Richmond Youth Media Lab to film community interviews after project completes to replace an evaluation report.
- Participant talked about capacity building phase in CAI grant applications. Intentions have been to be inclusive but there are challenges with balancing Ministry priorities with community needs and ability to fund the cost of collaboration and relationship building.
- Participant talked about challenges with offering Indigenous granting stream last year, received way more applications than they could fund which created problem for prioritizing and selecting successful applicants.
- Participant talked about challenges with PHSA Indigenous Grants which are not being offered this year due to fiscal restraints, and creative ways the team are able to continue offering support (community partnership agreements)
- Participants would find it helpful to have opportunity to convene with other funders to share the small and larger things we are doing to improve our processes, and show rationale for doing things differently
- Suggestion to create an on-going community of practice to continue this conversation and support each other's efforts to improve practice ("speak in a collective voice") and keep ourselves accountable
  - Perhaps sign on to Circle of Philanthropy commitment as a community of practice?
  - Could share funding applications between us, i.e. if one organization cannot offer funds could pass the application to another organization who may

- o   Vantage Point has a "Capacity Investors" group that offers learning presentations for funders
- Participant's team struggles with protocols for providing grants over $100K. Must go through full procurement process through BC Bid which is extensive, cumbersome, and does not reach the communities that would benefit the most from these grants. Has found that if no applications are received, another option is available which involves a simpler two-page application form. Interested in addressing this systems gap.

3. **Sharing lessons and emerging practices**

Resources shared:
A.   [Decolonizing Wealth](#) book
B.   [Deconstructing White Privilege](#), Robin Diangelo
C.   [Me and White Supremacy](#) workbook.
D.   Non-profit AF, "[The problem with relationships](#)"

- Unpacking white privilege organizationally. How does white privilege show up organizationally?
- Ensure Indigenous people are equitably represented in staff teams (Eric referenced 30% as minimal goal). Need to also ensure cultural safety so that Indigenous people will be retained once they are hired.
  - o   Good policy is to always give Indigenous applicant an interview, and even if they are not hired to give them thoughtful and constructive feedback on their strengths
  - o   HR may short list on your behalf and exclude applicants that you would like to interview. Request that HR forward the full list of applicants instead of short-listing on your behalf.
- Participant talked about feedback loop process she is creating, so that grantees are always connected and have on-going communication channel about the granting process and their experiences.
- Need to re-think the cost of collaboration and building relationships, as "critical infrastructure needs."
- Initial convening should be in-person in order to establish the relationship, "look in each other's eyes," and then future communication could be electronic.
- Creating culture that its ok to make mistakes as long as you learn from them