



FOUR DIRECTIONS
MANAGEMENT SERVICES LTD.

Akisqnuq First Nation Community Dialogue

SUMMARY REPORT

June 2014

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Introduction

The citizens of Akisqnuq First Nation (AFN) came together on June 4 & 5, 2014 to discuss their roles and responsibilities and how the community may organize itself for greater success.

The sessions focused on the following anticipated outcomes:

- **Clarify** roles and responsibilities of the many “moving parts” of the AFN including Chief, Council, staff and members.
- **Create** the conditions for our community meetings to be positive and productive.
- **Engage** in value-added, solution-oriented dialogue that will chart our critical path forward.

This is a summary report of the proceedings that will serve both as a record of the events, as well as a central document around which the community can utilize to move forward with confidence and focus.

Systems Thinking

Participants were asked to consider multiple perspectives and viewpoints during the session through contemplating a systems thinking approach. Systems thinking is the belief that a department, an organization, a community, is more than the sum of its parts; that it is an integrated system that cannot be divided into independent parts.

Systems thinking is important to effective leadership and management because it indicates that a piecemeal, problem-patching approach won't fix the system or make it work better. When one element is changed, the effect on all elements must be examined and evaluated.

The following diagram was used to focus meeting participants on the different levels of the “AFN system” for two primary reasons:

1. To clarify the different moving parts of the system and clarify the role and responsibility of each part; and,
2. To demonstrate that within a healthy system there exists high role clarification with an overarching understanding that there is high interdependence within the system. In short, if one part of your organizational and community system is unhealthy it fouls other parts of the system.

For greater clarity the elements of the 'system' depicted in the diagram are:

Our Teachings

Foundational to our work are the teachings that have been passed to us by our Grandmothers and Grandfathers. This includes our ways of 'knowing, seeing, being and doing'. While many of our organizations are now multicultural, we see the world and our work through multiple lenses, the foremost being through the lens of Indigenous people.



The View from the Mountaintops

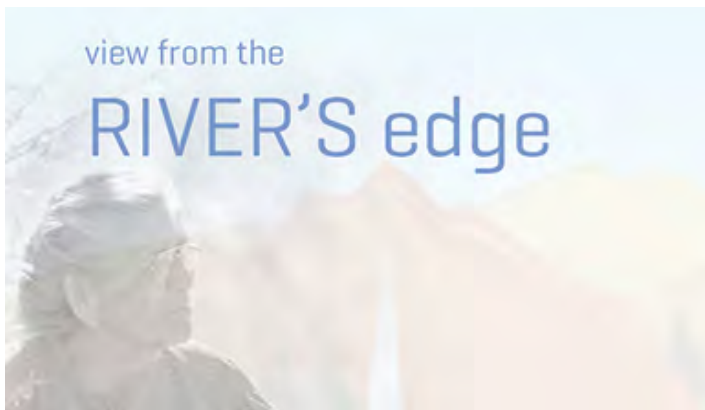
This level of the system is occupied by leadership (Chief & Council) and denotes that leadership is entrusted with "making space" for their citizens to be successful.





The View from the Treetops

This level of the system is occupied by Senior Management and suggests that the role of senior staff is charged with the task of “defining the space” created by leadership.



The View from the River's Edge

This is arguably the most important part of the system(s) in which we operate. Front-line workers and citizens occupy this level of the system. The ultimate goal of those at the Mountaintops, Treetops and River's Edge is “getting results’ that proactively address the needs and aspirations of those you are formed to serve.

Our Desired End State: All Is Well

At the commencement of the community dialogue session meeting participants engaged in a modified version of scenario planning. In this case two potential scenarios were introduced as stories about the future - one being “Dark Clouds” and the other, “All Is Well.” The intent of the two scenarios was to brainstorm likely future outcomes based on what we know about the present and what we know about how the world works. Every weather forecast, for example, presents a scenario for the future, based on what meteorologists know about the current weather and what they know about how weather patterns develop.

When participants were asked, “When you look five years into the future and there exists “**Dark Clouds**” hanging over our children, families and community, what is occurring in terms of our relationships and outcomes?” they responded with the following comments:

- There is a lack of communication.
- Violence is present.
- There is an increase in the use of alcohol and drugs.



- We are extinct as a unique people.
- Poverty is commonplace.
- There is a lack of culture & historical background.
- Our children are being taken out of their homes.
- High levels of despair, there is no hope.
- We have an increase in suicides.
- There are no jobs for the people.
- Our citizens are moving away from the home territory.
- We have poor leadership.

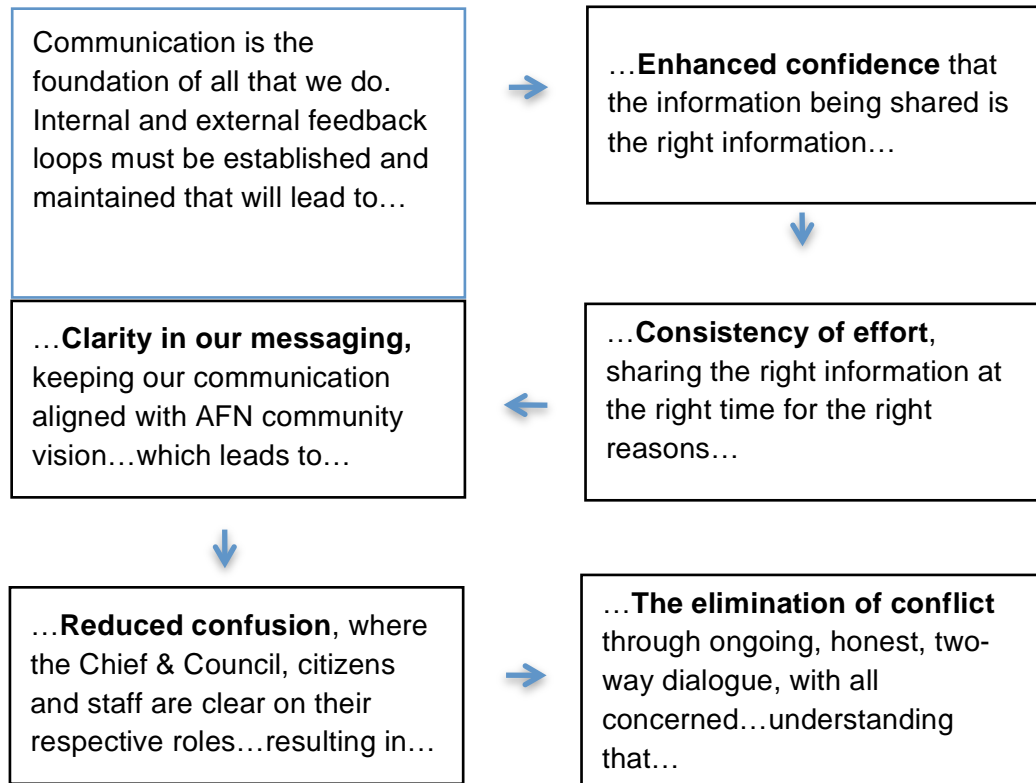
When participants were then asked, “When you look five years into the future and **“All is Well”** with our children, families and community, what has changed for the better in terms of our relationships and outcomes?” they responded with the following comments:

- We are happy, shiny people!
- We have people owning their own homes, and taking pride in ownership.
- People are looking after the land.
- Traditional values returning, sense of community strong.
- Own crews are building our own homes.
- We are learning our language.
- We have social services in place.
- We are self-reliant and self-sufficient.
- The band office is not the biggest employer of our people; we are prospering in many fields.
- Educational attainment is high with our youth.
- Our youth are engaged and attending meetings.
- Everyone knows one another inter-generationally.
- We are compassionate, encouraging, and helpful.
- There is no discrimination and no lateral violence.
- A strong sense of community returns; many gatherings are being held.
- We have many partnerships with others who share our vision.

The purpose of beginning the sessions with a future look towards the AFN’s desired end state was to tell a story that matters; that leads to better decisions. In practice, scenario planning begins by identifying the focal issue or decision. The point of the short exercise was to agree on the ideal future, five years hence, and to use this positive vision (All is Well) to motivate and direct the work of the organization and community.

The Importance of Effective Communication

Extensive discussion was held concerning the importance of communication to the shared work of the AFN. It was shared that oftentimes our community challenges stem from misinformation that leads to misunderstanding, which, in turn, leads to conflict. The dialogue held unpacked the following concepts.



The essence of effective communications is ensuring that we are clear and consistent in our messaging, doing what we say and saying what we do.

Role Clarification

The AFN accomplishes its mission with and through the energies of many contributors. To ensure that the experiences of each person are as positive and productive as possible as they work together, it is important that everyone be clear about one another's roles and responsibilities.

The Chief & Council (the Council) has ultimate governance authority over the organization and community. In simple terms, this means the Council has fiduciary responsibility and responsibility for the trust that is understood to exist between the mission of the AFN and the Akisqnuq citizens and external stakeholders the AFN serves.

Members

- The authority to elect leaders and offer them advice
- The expectation to get informed and be kept informed
- The authority to conduct business in assemblies
- The ability to hold leaders accountable and, in turn, be kept accountable by leaders
- Responsible for attending meetings, on time
- Responsible for treating leadership, staff and each other with dignity and respect
- Electing leadership that possesses the necessary tools, experience and values

Band Staff

- The mandate of the Band Staff is to manage the day-to-day operations of the organization and ensure that operations are consistent with the policies developed by the Chief & Council
- Provide information and trends to inform Council decision making
- Provide reports and data
- Provide information, make recommendations and implement procedures
- Provide trend information, analysis and recommendations on programs, policies and performance

Chief & Council

- Articulates and communicates the vision of the organization and community
- Focuses on strategic planning and direction
- Focuses on the whole organization, rather than on issues of interest to individuals
- Is a political body, with Council members working together as a whole
- Speaks with one voice
- Directs the organization's work by approving policy and monitoring its impact
- Is responsible for its own management through self-governance
- Hires, supervises, and releases only one employee: the Band Administrator
- Avoids making management and operational decisions



The Challenge of Limiting Beliefs

At the sessions much dialogue centered on sorting out what we believed to be true and what is actually true. We often leave our lives chained to stories that we made up to make sense of things that we don't understand that occurred in our childhoods. These stories often then take on the form of *limiting beliefs*.

Limiting beliefs are those beliefs that we hold that constrain us in some way and can negatively impact our lives and change our reality to the worse. Because of the dangers of limiting beliefs and because of the bad impact they have you must be aware of their creation process so that you can do your best to avoid them and stop them from invading your belief system.

Common limiting beliefs include:

I do/don't

We may define ourselves by what we do or do not do. I may say '*I am a traditional person*', which means I do not do utilize the conveniences of modern society and should not even think about it, and consequently fail to benefit from the gifts available in both the traditional and contemporary worlds. Another common limiting belief is around how we judge ourselves. We think '*I don't deserve...*' and so do not expect or seek things.

I can't

We often have limited self-images of what we can and cannot do. If I think '*I cannot speak our language*' then I will never try or not go to language lessons to improve my ability. This is the crux of many '*I can't*' statements: we believe our abilities are fixed and that we cannot learn.

I must/mustn't

We are bound by values, norms, laws and other rules that constrain what we must and must not do. However, not all of these are mandatory and some are distinctly limiting. If I think '*I must clean the house every day*' then this robs me of time that may be spent in something more productive, such as spending time with family and friends or getting out on the land practicing traditional activities.

I am/am not

As we think '*I am*' we also think '*I am not*' or '*I cannot*'. For example we may think '*I am an artist*' and so conclude that we can never be any good at mathematics, or must not soil our hands with manual work. '*I am*' thinking assumes we cannot change. Whether I think '*I am intelligent*' or '*I am not intelligent*', either belief may stop a person from seeking to learn. '*I am*' also leads to generalization, for example where '*I am stupid*' means '*all of me is all of stupid and all of stupid is all of me*'. A better framing is to connect the verb to the individual act, such as '*That was a stupid thing to do*'. When coupled with values we get beliefs about whether a person is right or wrong, good or bad.

Others are/will

Just as we have limiting beliefs about ourselves, we also have beliefs about other people, which can limit us in many ways. If we think others are more capable and superior then we will not challenge them. If we see them as selfish, we may not ask them to help us. We often guess what others are thinking based on our '*theory of mind*' and beliefs about them (legacy of assumptions). These guesses are often wrong. Hence we may believe

they do not like us when they actually have no particular opinion or even think we are rather nice. From our guesses at their thoughts we then deduce their likely actions, which can of course be completely wrong. Faced with this evidence, it is surprising how many will still hold to the original beliefs.

How the world works

Beyond the limiting beliefs above there can be all kinds of belief about '*how the world works*', from laws of nature to the property of materials. This can lead to anything from the beliefs that all dogs will bite to the idea that all resource development on our territories is bad.

Why do we limit our beliefs?

Experience

A key way by which we form our beliefs is through our direct experiences. We act, something happens and we draw conclusions. Often such beliefs are helpful, but they can also be very limiting. Particularly when we are young and have few experiences we may form false and limiting conclusions. Nature builds us this way to keep us out of harm's way. We learn and build beliefs faster from harmful experiences. Sticking my finger on a hot stove hurts a lot so we believe all stoves are dangerous and never touch a stove again. If punching another child results in a sound beating we may henceforth believe ourselves weak.

Education

When forming our perceptions of the world, we cannot depend on experiences for everything. We read and listen to parents, knowledge keepers and teachers about how the world works and how to behave in it. But our teachers are not always that well informed. We also learn from what family and friends tell us and are '*infected*' by their beliefs, which may be very limiting. Education is a double-edged sword as it tells you what is right and wrong, good and bad. It helps you survive and grow, but just because you were told something, you may never try things and so miss pleasant and useful experiences and knowledge.

Faulty logic

In decisions, we make '*return on investment*' estimations and easily conclude that the investment of time, effort and money is insufficient, and that there is a low chance of success and high chance of failure. The return may even be negative as we are harmed in some way. People make many decision errors, for example based on poor estimation of probabilities. We take a little data and generalize it to everything. We go on hunches that are based more on subconscious hopes and fears than on reality. The word '*because*' can be surprisingly hazardous. When we use it, it seems like we are using good reason, but this may not be so. We like to understand cause-and-effect and often do not challenge reasoning that uses the mechanisms of rational argument.

Excuse

One reason we use faulty logic and form limiting beliefs is to excuse ourselves from what we perceive to be our failures. When we do something and it does not work, we often explain away our failure by forming and using beliefs that justify our actions and leave us blameless. But in doing so, we do not learn and may increasingly paint ourselves into a corner, limiting what we will think and do in the future.



Fear

Limiting beliefs are often fear-driven. Locking the belief in place is the fear that, if we go against the beliefs, deep needs will be harmed. There is often a strong social component to our decisions and the thought of criticism, ridicule or rejection by others is enough to powerfully inhibit us. We also fear that we may be harmed in some way by others, and so avoid them or seek to appease them.

If you want to rid get of limiting beliefs then you must not listen to most people, understand that the opinion of large groups is usually wrong and never make any conclusions about yourself or anything else before acquiring the missing facts.

To overcome limiting beliefs and to create a safe and respectful environment for community meetings a number of community meeting values were suggested that are contained in Appendix 1.

Toward Better Meetings

Attendance at community meetings is important so that we can learn from, and share with, one another as Akisqnuq citizens strive to improve the health and well-being of the community and its people. Sadly, far too often community meetings are not positive. This results in people choosing not to attend and those that do attend leave meetings feeling anxious, disrespected and under-valued. To ensure that Akisqnuq citizens achieve the success that they deserve meetings must be structured in a way that makes sense to the community and leads the citizenry towards healthy outcomes. It is clear that the community is the experts; that the community has the answers to the challenges you face.

On the evening of June 5 participants were split into two groups and asked a number of questions. Their responses are included below.

1. What is **CURRENTLY WORKING** at our meetings?
 - Meal provided; prayer; agenda; consistency; non-member taking minutes; ground rules.
 - Regular schedule; lots of discussion; more people attending; nobody falls asleep; leadership is present; no fisticuffs; good minutes; more feelings of safety; agenda items protocol; minutes have evolved.
4. What do we **NEED TO IMPROVE** to ensure our meetings are more productive?
 - Part of community and meeting (communication); commitment and follow through; respect for each other; respect people and time; stay on topic; involvement; stay focused and finish discussion; comprehension and communication; leave room to discuss agenda additions; more youth involvement.
 - Speak louder; stand up; FB regularity; agenda needs to be improved; Focus on ideas and concepts (solution-based discussion) rather than negative (issues and concerns); nanny group; overview of what is going on; videoconferencing or something to engage of-reserve members; timekeeper; parking lot for issues outside of scope of agenda.
3. What **BEHAVIORAL NORMS** should we agree to?
 - Guidelines first, set at beginning of meeting; respect for speaker; strong chairperson that is respected.

- Safety first; not holding grudges; let it go; question ideas not people; respect for others; stay on topic.
4. What **OTHER ADVICE** would you offer to ensure we are moving forward confidently and respectfully?
- Share freely; let it go; be gentle.
 - Acknowledgement of speaker; minutes of meetings sent to citizens; raise hands for turn to speak; positive acknowledgement at beginning of meeting.

Effective Community Meetings

When citizens come together ways and means must be sought to ensure that the time spent together is healthy and productive. This does not mean that there won't be disagreements. In fact, healthy debate is important to find the right path forward. Problems arise though when meetings are allowed to become a forum for negativity and finger pointing. In such instances participants become distracted from the realization that the citizens all need one another if your children are to be raised and nurtured in a manner that allows for them to become *happy, shiny people*.

With the above in mind, the advantages and disadvantages of community meetings must be carefully considered.

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Provides an opportunity for people of diverse backgrounds to share ideas and experiences,	Requires good leadership and advance organization. Can degenerate into a political "free-for-all."
Can provide a quick, intensive picture of community concerns,	Opinions obtained are limited to those who attend - all viewpoints may not be heard. Probably discourages participation by those who see themselves as less powerful in the community.
Can effectively involve citizens in planning, publicizing, moderating, evaluating, etc.	Poor advance planning and advertising may result in limited participation.
Gives community issues broad visibility	If not well-facilitated, only the vocal minorities will be heard.
Akisqnuk citizens feel as though they have been heard.	A large turnout may prevent everyone from speaking and may limit time allowed for each speaker.
Generally inexpensive	May generate more questions than answers.
Useful to identify problems, assess needs, or to suggest questions requiring further study.	May raise citizen's expectations and frustrations if objectives are unclear, or if expectations are not met.
Design is flexible - a variety of techniques can be incorporated,	The meeting setting may restrict information people will reveal.

Round Table Closing Comments

At the conclusion of the second evening session a closing round table was asked for. Following are the comments that were shared:

- We need more community gatherings with less bickering where we join together.

- I heard a lot of good ideas that now requires follow through.
- Excited for the opportunity for growth.
- Glad we were able to come together to share our ideas, to make something better. Together we can make the change we want to see.
- The work ahead is a continuous struggle. We need to work together and support one another.
- I had a lot of fun, listening to ideas, adding my voice. The sessions were very beneficial.
- I enjoyed the last couple of days, I feel hopeful for my grandchildren. Hopefully change will come. We must show one another that we care. We need to be in the solution, not the problem. We should consider a games night.
- It would be nice to have my fellow youth at the meeting.
- It was fun.
- Thanks to everyone for the input. We have proven that “we are not broken.” We all shared and made one another feel safe.
- This is huge for our community. We have seen people, who do not regularly attend, come to meetings. I learned a lot from everyone’s perspectives. Gaining a sense of community that I lost as a kid. The real work begins now.
- I enjoyed the last two days, the info shared, the input from everybody. We have been missing the fact that we need rules and roles to play to progress our community. We need to look at things from different perspectives.
- We need to follow through. I am glad to see new faces; sad that there weren’t more here.
- What am “I” going to do? What am “I” going to change?
- What I learned will probably hit me in the next six weeks. The changes that we put on paper we are responsible for. Let’s use all we have to our advantage.
- We must stay on the rabbit trail; avoid pitfalls. We can do this. Remember, we are all family.
- We made a lot of progress over the past 2 days. It is up to us to do the next step. We need to implement changes tomorrow. My personal motto is “Make time to be an Indian.”
- I believe that we now know that we have responsibilities and duties to one another, to help each other out. Let’s walk that way. Step up!

Next Steps

The underlying purpose of the community sessions was to promote ongoing skill development that would position Akisqnuq citizens to undertake “constructive damage to the status quo.” It was evident at the session that much of the effort of the community is working, but there is also much needing to be improved to ensure the highest quality services to Akisqnuq citizens. This requires change and people react differently to change.

Many times it is the *process* of change, not the change itself, which evokes strong emotions. When people do not know how a decision was made or who made it or who developed the plan of action, they become concerned and behave in ways that look like resistance.

Understanding that proactive, deliberate change is required, there are a number of key areas to focus your initial efforts.

1. A **review of the FDMS Summary Report** must be undertaken to ensure that the contents of the report fairly represent what was shared.
2. Attention should be paid to **reviewing the Akisqnuq Community Meeting Values Statement (Appendix 1)** and determining whether it meets with your approval. After the review the Values Statement should be given out at the commencement of every community meeting to remind meeting participants as to how they are expected to behave. It then becomes the responsibility of all citizens to ensure that it is adhered to.

Conclusion

As Akisqnuq citizens you can improve yourselves through ongoing training and coaching. Personal development is often not easy and requires personal change. If you want your community to aspire to high performance, you have to make that your goal, too. If you want to improve your effectiveness, care about the people you live and work with; and if you are willing to change much of the information covered at the planning session can act as a starting point for honest self-evaluation and growth.

There are six areas that require constant attention to accelerate positive change in people, including:

1. **Perception** – Self-reflection on your personal strengths/weaknesses and your view of the world.
2. **Plan** – Establishing a sense of direction, destination, and the goals/action steps to support it.
3. **Preparation** – Acquiring the skills and knowledge to enhance your ability to improve and adjust your approach to your career or life.
4. **Practice** – Building conviction by applying new skills and knowledge through consistent application, repetition, and review of results.
5. **Persistence** – Continuing determined efforts and establishing robust confidence in spite of fears, obstacles, and challenges embodied in change.
6. **People** – Surrounding yourself with people who are supportive to help you stay the course and provide you with insight to help ramp up results.

In sum, we are all leaders and great leaders embody two main characteristics: integrity and caring. Integrity involves living a life that is genuine and honest. It is an internal value about how to interact with the world. Caring is about treating all people with dignity.

Great leaders focus on helping other people become successful as a way to their success. We consistently hear from those at the River's Edge that they want to follow leaders who are

honest, forward-looking, inspiring and confident. By keeping the health and well-being of our children at the core of all that we do we are practicing out traditional duties and obligations we have been entrusted with by our ancestors. Our children deserve the absolute best that we can offer if they are to realize their full potential. This sentiment was a recurring theme at the sessions and must now be used to unite the citizens of Akisqnuq in a common cause. Your children are waiting.



Appendix 1: Akisqnuq Community Meeting Values Statement



Akisqnuq Community Meeting Values Statement

SAFETY FIRST

I protect the safety and well-being of myself, my fellow citizens, staff and the community as a whole.

BE THE BEST

I strive to be the best that I can be recognizing that my best effort is always good enough.

LET IT GO

I do not carry grudges as grudges poison my ability to positively contribute.

SHARE FREELY

It is my responsibility to regularly attend meetings and offer my positive thoughts and ideas.

STEP UP

I hold myself accountable and expect others to be accountable for delivering superior results.

WIN TOGETHER

I collaborate with others understanding that we are all family. I share in our successes and learnings.

RESULTS MATTER

I contribute to defining the expected result and do my part to exceed expectations.

BE GENTLE

I am respectful of other's feelings. I do not use hurtful words that serve to bring other's down and negatively affect their self-esteem.

DO IT RIGHT

I plan effectively and know when to move to action.

BE BOLD

I am creative and innovative, taking informed risks to move our citizens, community and Nation towards greater success.

RESPECT ALWAYS

I respect myself first so that I may demonstrate respect to others.

Appendix 2: Akisqnuk Good Health Summary

Individual How does a healthy person behave? What do they contribute?	Family When you think of a healthy family, what is going on within that household?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead by example, help, inspire • Contribute ideas and solutions • Eat healthy and exercise • Make people feel valued • Respectful • Self responsibility/responsible • Abstain i.e. drugs and alcohol/clean and sober • Open-minded • Will take action when necessary • Accountable • Positive and optimistic • Approachable • Able to listen/communicate • Active • Adaptable • Greet and acknowledge people • Spiritual • Thinks about greater good for all • Confidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good communication • Basic needs are being met • Pets are well taken care of • Love and tough love i.e. boundaries • Awareness and respect of a higher power; spirituality allows for guidance • Spend quality time together • Believe in each other • Extended family • Meals • Carries on our traditional language • Structure/foundation • United; do things together and look out for each other • Discipline • Openness to share experiences and knowledge • Respect • Encouraging and supportive • Balance within the medicine wheel • Willingness to learn
Organization How do we ensure that the office is safe and respectful place for our staff, leaders and members?	Community What needs to be done for our community to be considered health?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inviting/welcoming • No closed doors/whispers • Relaxing • Not a hovel • Strong corporate culture and embody the values • Adequately maintained • See consistency across the board • Synchronicity • Transparency • Policies in place to protect everyone • Zero tolerance – consistency • Strong leaders and staff that are supportive • Make sure everyone is greeted and acknowledged • Good communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusivity • Sense of welcoming • Healthy boundaries • Support leadership • Support each other • Gatherings and get togethers • Newsletters/regular communication • Some level of acceptable behavior across the board • Look out for each other • Celebrate • Less drug and alcohol problems



Appendix 3: Healthy Community Perspectives

Akisqnuk First Nation

From your perspective what does a healthy community look like?



YOUTH

- Everybody united & participating in activities (walks, garden)
 - Having positive role models
 - Cultural activities
 - Feeling supported/included
 - Able to contribute
 - Opportunities in communities
- | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| • Safety | • Guidance | • Respect |
| • Recognition | • Understanding | • Consistency |
| • Laughter | • Empathy | • Access to Traditional Teachings |
| • Being Heard | • Equality | • Zero Tolerance for any Violence |
| • Inclusion | • Recognition | |
| • Role Models | • Mentorship | |
| • Structure | | |



ELDER

- Community kitchen / teaching (traditional)
 - Sense that traditions are being passed down
 - Picking huckleberries
 - Feast & gatherings (naqamcu)
 - Hearing positive stories
 - Visiting
- | | | |
|------------------------|------------------|---------------|
| • Language | • Understanding | • Equality |
| • Respectful Youth | • Empathy | • Respect |
| • Communication: Open | • Zero Tolerance | • Consistency |
| • Role Models | • Mentorship | • Safety |
| • Access to Activities | | |





LEADER

- Able to make decisions and know that community is behind them
- Seeing cohesiveness (community as connected)
- Opportunity
- Using your words (opportunity)
- Role Models
- Safety
- Understanding
- Empathy
- Respect
- Guidance
- Direction
- Consistency
- Self Care
- Equality
- Inclusion
- Zero Tolerance



STAFF

- Strong Leadership
- Zero tolerance
- Security
- Fairness
- Recognition
- Good Listener
- Role Models
- Safety
- Understanding
- Empathy
- Zero Tolerance
- Equality
- Patience
- Respect
- Consistency



COMMUNITY

- Respect for one another
- Positive role models
- Self Respect
- Belonging, active
- Unity
- Give of oneself
- Mindful community
- Role Models
- Safety
- Understanding
- Empathy
- Less usage of drugs & alcohol
- Traditional ways
- Access to learning (ceremony)
- Doing smudges
- Zero Tolerance
- Equality
- Consistency
- Respect
- Inclusion
- Objectivity
- Security
- Open Mindedness