

# City of Regina – Roundtable Conversation Summary

May 8 - 9, 2013

Critical to the formation of the Cultural Plan and Cultural Heritage Management Strategy is input from the indigenous and Metis people of this country. Over a two-day period in May, five roundtable conversations were held with First Nations, Metis and Inuit elders, artists, knowledge keepers, language instructors, cultural managers and other community leaders.

The information from those conversations have shaped the very structure of the Cultural Plan and provided the hopeful forward path for future, ongoing engagement around the City's role in meeting the cultural aspirations of our indigenous and Metis communities.

A summary of the conversations follows, organized into the following categories;

- General points
- Diversity, Multiculturalism, Racism and Immigrants
- Accommodating and enabling
- Regulations and Bylaws
- Education
- Youth
- Documentation and Commemoration
- Indicators of success in 10 years time

## **General Points**

- The relationship between the City and the First Nations, Metis and Inuit community should be a partnership, based on trust and respect.
- There is a need to celebrate and promote Regina's First Nations, Metis and Inuit cultural heritage.
- First Nations, Metis and Inuit world-view is holistic – based on the foundation that everything is interconnected and interrelated. As such, it is important to know that the topics and issues discussed during the First Nations, Metis and Inuit Engagement Session are all interconnected.

## **Diversity, Multiculturalism, Racism and Immigrants**

- Whereas others have brought their cultures to Canada, the First Nations, Metis and Inuit people have lost theirs and are strangers in their own lands.
- There is an opportunity to bring people together through the cultural heritage of Regina.
- Regina is becoming a diverse city with many traditions and as such, there is a need to build relationships with all of the people representing the different traditions. There is a need to build acceptance (and not just tolerance) of others in the community.

- The diversity of First Nations, Metis and Inuit cultures and languages need to be showcased. The different linguistic groups and resulting identities need to be acknowledged and promoted.
- Instead of using the terms First Nations, Metis and Inuit, First Nation or Métis, perhaps people can be identified based on their own terminology – Dene, Cree, Anishnabek, etc.
- There needs to be more interaction of First Nations, Metis and Inuit people with others in the community.
- There should be a forum for all people to get together and talk.
- First Nations, Metis and Inuit people need to interact with each other to not only enjoy each other's company, but to recreate the life they used to have.
- Ceremonies are important towards building understanding of First Nations, Metis and Inuit people and their culture.
- Racism is experienced by First Nations, Metis and Inuit people on a daily basis and such, racial divisions should not be ignored and need to be dealt with.
- However, the newcomers can be allies of First Nations, Metis and Inuit people through education. It is may be easier to change the minds of new immigrants whereas long-term residents may be more resistant to changing their mind-set.

### **Accommodating and enabling**

- Regina is perhaps one of the only cities in Canada to not have a central gathering place for First Nations, Metis and Inuit people. A place where First Nations, Metis and Inuit people can gather for ceremonies, to use for practical events such as funerals, and have on-going cultural programs is necessary.
- Funding for First Nations, Metis and Inuit cultural groups and events should not be considered at the same level as other cultural groups. There is a greater need for First Nations, Metis and Inuit cultural events/programs because they are on the verge of extinction. It is increasingly important to support First Nations, Metis and Inuit cultural preservation right here because members from other ethnic/cultural groups have the advantage of being able to visit their countries of origin to reconnect and immerse themselves with their cultures.
- The City can support the people/organizations that are producing and addressing First Nations, Metis and Inuit culture now and providing a contemporary First Nations, Metis and Inuit perspective.
- The City can sponsor programs that promote First Nations, Metis and Inuit culture, e.g., classes on how to make Powwow outfits, beading, etc.
- Many urban First Nations, Metis and Inuit people wish to visit the reserves on Treaty Day but the lack of transportation is an issue. The City may be able to help with logistical issues such as this one.
- First Nations, Metis and Inuit people need to be given opportunities and be put in positions of power to tell their stories. Decision makers should be representative of the community.
- More opportunities should be created for people to get together through informal gatherings, coffee-house conversation, etc.

- Fully funded facilities are needed to maintain First Nations, Metis and Inuit culture and identity. The lack of facilities/opportunities for First Nations, Metis and Inuit people is reflected in the poverty faced by many.
- There is a need to identify and dedicate a significant interpretive site for First Nations, Metis and Inuit-specific gatherings (incorporating a Wanuskewin-type model) situated near the traditional gathering spot near Sherwood Forest.

### **Regulations and Bylaws**

- Fire by-laws are an issue as it prevents the lighting of fires for ceremonies. Sweat lodges have also been affected by fire regulations.
- Smudging is also not possible in enclosed spaces. The City should develop guidelines to overcome these issues. Solutions may include installation of extra ventilations in buildings/rooms designated for smudging as well as setting up special smudging stations.
- Many First Nations, Metis and Inuit events and ceremonies require facilities to be open late, sometimes twenty-four hours. Such facilities are currently not available.
- Curfews imposed by noise by-laws prevent important cultural activities such as the Round Dance from taking place.
- The City and their policy-makers should ask and listen to First Nations, Metis and Inuit people.

### **Education**

- There is a need to explain the current context of First Nations, Metis and Inuit people and why things are the way they are to the community at large.
- There are information kits available in schools. However, many non-First Nations, Metis and Inuit teachers do not feel comfortable using them.
- The lack of literacy in First Nations, Metis and Inuit languages is a challenge that needs to be addressed. In Regina, schools teach Cree but there is often a shortage of teachers. More classes and teachers are needed.
- First Nations, Metis and Inuit youth often do not know their own history and lack knowledge about their First Nations, Metis and Inuit roots. More programs that promote First Nations, Metis and Inuit culture, which will engage the youth and prevent involvement in negative activities, are needed.
- There is a huge need to educate the public about First Nations, Metis and Inuit people. If the general population was taught about First Nations, Metis and Inuit heritage, then First Nations, Metis and Inuit people may have to face less racism and have an easier time finding employment.
- It is often difficult to explain the impact of treaties on First Nations, Metis and Inuit people to non-First Nations, Metis and Inuit people. Also, cultural awareness programs often lead to more hostility from the non-First Nations, Metis and Inuit people.
- Sessions where Elders are able to teach about First Nations, Metis and Inuit cultures (e.g., storytelling) to both First Nations, Metis and Inuit and non-First Nations, Metis and Inuit people of Regina is a good idea.

- It is recommended that First Nations, Metis and Inuit cultural camps are organized to introduce children from all backgrounds to First Nations, Metis and Inuit sports, games, food, etc.

### **First Nations, Metis and Inuit Youth**

- It is important for the Elders to pass on the teachings to the youth. Examples include how to dance, respect for Elders, way of life, etc.
- Not knowing ones identity often leads First Nations, Metis and Inuit youth to seek out gangs and get involved in negative behavior and crime.
- The gang environment in the North-Central community needs to be addressed. It is not the kind of culture wanted by First Nations, Metis and Inuit people for their youth. The challenges facing First Nations, Metis and Inuit youth link directly to the challenges of First Nations, Metis and Inuit education (C.2.5). Having opportunities for parents, children and youth to participate in language preservation programs, and more programs that promote First Nations, Metis and Inuit culture (in culturally-appropriate settings) will go a long way toward engaging First Nations, Metis and Inuit youth in positive ways and increasing their cultural awareness and self-worth.
- By increasing First Nations, Metis and Inuit cultural awareness, it is possible that the problem of drugs and gangs will be addressed, as the youth will have an alternative positive outlet to turn to.

### **Documentation and Commemoration of First Nations, Metis and Inuit Cultures**

- The story of First Nations, Metis and Inuit people needs to be told accurately. Often, the First Nation and Métis interpretation of events is different than that of the general public. Interpretive plaques/displays should be reviewed by First Nations, Metis and Inuit people to ensure accuracy.
- Louis Riel:
  - The Highway between Regina and Saskatoon is called the “Riel Trail” but there is no real signage.
  - Riel’s life should be celebrated.
  - The location where Riel was tried and hanged should be treated as a heritage site in Regina. Located, on the grounds of the R.C.M.P., access to this important heritage site is restricted except for certain occasions.
- The Residential school cemetery needs to be researched properly and protected. There should be a sign/monument to show where it was located.
- There is a lack of knowledge about archaeological sites in Regina. There is an opportunity to involve First Nations, Metis and Inuit people in researching and documenting these sites. The First Nations, Metis and Inuit community should be consulted on how they should be involved.
- There could be interpretive trails along Wascana Lake.
- Pre-contact First Nations, Metis and Inuit archaeological sites should be interpreted.
- The story of train crossing in Regina should be commemorated.
- There was a possible buffalo jump near Dojak Centre which should be researched.

- There are many variations of what Oskana, the root word for Wascana, means and this should be subject to further research and documentation.
- The First Nations, Metis and Inuit community encourages recording of oral history and this could be a project undertaken by the Museums in Regina.
- The City's park spaces can be used to tell the story of First Nations, Metis and Inuit people by incorporating and documenting the value, custom and importance of traditional native plants.
- Signage in First Nations, Metis and Inuit languages could help increase First Nations, Metis and Inuit people's visibility in the City.
- Give streets/places First Nations, Metis and Inuit names. Cree should be given prominence on any First Nations, Metis and Inuit signage since it is the language spoken by the original historic inhabitants of Regina.
- There is an opportunity to showcase First Nations, Metis and Inuit culture at the City's Airport, which is often the first impression of the City. Previous exhibition of contemporary First Nations, Metis and Inuit art at the airport was well received but has not been repeated.
- If the City already had a Cultural Plan, then the mural painted by Bob Boyer, a contemporary First Nations, Metis and Inuit artist, may have been protected from demolition. Future destruction of First Nations, Metis and Inuit art should be prevented. C.2.8 Economic Opportunities for the City
- There is opportunity for the City to be involved and to promote the upcoming North American Indigenous Games in 2014.
- There is an opportunity for the City and the First Nations, Metis and Inuit people to form partnership and promote the First Nations University of Canada's Powwow. The City of Albuquerque is famous for its annual Powwow, which attracts people from all over North America. This is an economic incentive for the City to get involved and increase tourism.

### **Indicators of Success in 10 years**

- If there is greater participation in politics and employment by First Nations, Metis and Inuit people.
- If there is an increase in youth's self-identification based on ancestral heritage.
- The provision of space for cultural activities.
- The City has an on-going dialogue with the First Nations, Metis and Inuit community.
- Less gang activity.
- More engagement with cultural heritage by First Nations, Metis and Inuit youth.
- The City has to more than just plan and needs to set one, five and 10 year plans with milestones.