

Women's Spring Symposium

Building Leadership and Community

Sunday, April 7, 2013

FINAL REPORT

EVENT SUMMARY:

On Sunday, April 7th, 2013, over 325 women from various community and cultural backgrounds gathered at the Westin Edmonton Hotel for a full day of learning, sharing and networking. The day opened with a colourful grand entry ceremony led by the Yellow Ribbon Aboriginal Dancers, Mayor Mandel, Linda Cochrane and guest speakers and organizers involved in the day. Troupe leader Rocky Morin shared a powerful tribute to women and introduced Elder Eva Bereti who blessed the gathering with an opening prayer. Mayor Mandel and Linda Cochrane brought greetings from the City of Edmonton and conveyed the importance of bringing women together to discuss issues of importance to them in order to build a strong vision for Edmonton's future. Meheret Worku and Kate Gunn emceed the event. Following lunch, Constable Mona Gill delivered an inspiring keynote speech about her incredible journey to free herself from a life of domestic abuse to fulfill her dream of becoming a police officer.

A series of break-out sessions and focused conversations were scheduled throughout the day and included a range of topics including leadership, motivation, strategies for entrepreneurial success, community engagement, the power of storytelling, women in politics, women's advisory entity, and Cree rites of passage and indigenous leadership. In addition, 30 exhibitors participated in the Inspiring Futures Marketplace that provided participants with an opportunity to learn about services and resources available to them within the community. Speaker biographies as well as a detailed summary of each session topic can be found in the Symposium program.

Women who attended considered the Spring Symposium as a valuable opportunity to build connections, learn, share information and to network and many expressed they wanted to see this effort continued in a similar format in the future.

Four key objectives guided the planning and delivery of the Women's Symposium – Building Leadership and Community. These were to:

1. Engage a diverse audience of women to continue the conversation of building leadership and community;
2. Facilitate networking and learning opportunities for women;

3. Explore possibilities for mentorship programs to empower women to take on leadership roles in social, economic, and political sectors of civic life;
4. Receive input from women regarding the proposed structure for a Women's Advisory Committee.

The Way We Live – Edmonton's People Plan

The Women's Symposium demonstrates ways in which the Community Services department is following The Way We Live Edmonton's People Plan.

EDMONTON IS A VIBRANT, CONNECTED, ENGAGED AND WELCOMING COMMUNITY

- The City of Edmonton provides opportunities in neighbourhood, community and public spaces to connect people and build vibrant communities
- The City of Edmonton connects individuals, families, groups, cultures and communities to the services they need to thrive and realize their potential
- Provides opportunities for new residents to connect and feel welcome and be engaged in their new city.
- Provides and promotes innovative methods to reduce barriers to participation and engage citizens in local government.

Women's Advisory Entity - Focus Group Discussion:

Two focus group conversations took place over the course of the day and over 50 women participated. Facilitators provided participants with an overview of three possible models to consider for advancing the work of the Women's Advisory entity. These are outlined in Appendix A. The following questions guided the conversation.

1. Which model would they recommend administration support & why?

Women were asked to consider their response based on the following questions:

- When you think of a Women's Council ... who do you see as members of the Council?
- What kind of role should a Women's Council play in the community?
- What do you see as the purpose of a Women's Council? What kind of work do you see the committee involved with on an annual basis?
- How would you engage or recruit for membership?

2. Is there an additional model that should be recommended?

3. Would they be interested in sitting on a steering committee that would move this initiative forward?

Summary of Feedback:

Based on the discussion and responses received, women prefer an entity that:

- is diverse and inclusive in representation
- will focus on City policy, advocacy and projects,
- is independent for the purposes of decision making yet supported by the City of Edmonton – both with funding and staff resources
- has a clear nomination process with defined criteria
- has a structure to where issues can be brought forward and considered for action

The model most supported by the women who attended the Focus Group session is the **Council Advisory Committee**. This model was generally viewed as being the best jumping off point and one that would provide the necessary administrative support needed to become established. Women viewed the Advisory Committee as having permanence within the City of Edmonton structure which would offer a municipal profile to engage with all other levels of government. Women viewed the Advisory Committee as an umbrella organization representative of the many diverse needs in the community.

The option of establishing a Not for Profit organization was also discussed at length, but was not as favoured by those in attendance. While it was recognized that a Not for Profit model could provide more autonomy and flexibility, participants expressed concern that this option could place them in direct competition with local area Not for Profits, particularly for resources in an already declining funding environment. Women also shared they did not consider this option as necessarily the best place to begin considering group readiness and resources required. Participants also shared they envision the Advisory Committee evolving over time and possibly transitioning to a Not for Profit organization at some point in the future.

A complete listing of the feedback gathered can be found in Appendix B attached.

Symposium Key Learnings:

- b) Let's move forward with the creation of a Women's Advisory Committee!
- c) An annual or semi annual Women's Symposium is useful outreach to gather input, ideas, learn, share, and to celebrate. Strong support to see this continued in the future.
- d) Continue to engage more young people in this dialogue/work.
- e) Administrative support both in funding and staff resources are valued in moving the process forward and for coordination of the Women's Symposium.

- f) Grand Entry and recognition of Treaty 6 Territory was respectful of Aboriginal people and very much appreciated.
- g) Cross cultural teachings is beneficial learning for everyone.
- h) The quality and range of topics shared at this Symposium appealed to a broad audience of women and diversity was viewed as well represented in the panel topics presented.
- i) Many women shared they felt inspired and empowered through their attendance and participation in the day. Many reported a renewed sense of self confidence and motivation.
- j) Availability of internet access is a requirement at events such as this.
- k) Many interesting session topics to choose from - perhaps consider a two day format and offering duplicate presentations times.
- l) Many new friends and connections were made. Please consider holding a friendship dance as a way to close the day.

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS:

1. Develop Terms of Reference/Bylaw.
 Timeline: August – December, 2013
 How: Series of facilitated discussions with steering committee group supported by administration.
 - a) Bring together a Community based steering group to begin developing the mandate and responsibilities for the Women’s Advisory Committee. Several women who attended the Focus Group volunteered to support this work.
 - b) Create an internal project team to support the Community Steering group in the development of the Terms of Reference/Bylaw. This team would be comprised of representation from the City Clerks Office, Law, Mayor’s Office, Community Strategies, Communities of Interest, Aboriginal and Multicultural Relations.
2. Host a Community Forum to review the draft Terms of Reference and Bylaw.
 Timeline: November - December, 2013
3. Prepare final draft of the Terms of Reference and Bylaw in preparation for presentation and approval at Community Services Committee and Council.
 Timeline: December 31, 2013
4. Recruitment process begins January – March, 2014.

APPENDIX A:

Women’s Advisory Entity for consideration:

Purpose: Creating of some type of entity that can sustain the momentum from the yearly gathering (s) to ensure that leaders and the community stay informed of current issues/trends & create the necessary networks to advance initiatives & ideas.

Outcomes:

- Provides Edmonton with an opportunity to raise the profile of issues of concern to women into the discourse of contemporary Canadian culture.
- Provides the opportunity for women to gather and dialogue with Governmental and other institutional leaders on an ongoing basis.
- Hosting an event which gathers a broad cross-section of women in Edmonton where discussions and learning sessions around trends and concerns pertinent in the community will occur.

Type / Model	Description	Analysis / Implications
Council appointed Advisory Board	The formation of a general assembly with an elected executive committee (Similar to Edmonton Youth Council) to advance resolutions and initiatives identified each year. Entity is formed through a by-law	-Administration would provide supports to the executive committee and general assembly - Process of membership selection is regulated, and has strong community voice. Administration provides stability and continuity to the entity, and there are already well established procedures in place that can be followed. Appointments are facilitated through an established process in the City Clerk’s Office. -Entity is limited in its advocacy ability and scope of influence external to the City Administration and City Council.
Administrative Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next Gen 	A group of citizens and city staff that work together to forward a <i>Terms Of Reference</i> that is approved by City Manager / Council.	- Sustainability created through ongoing technical staff support and City of Edmonton administrative structures. - Navigating intractable perspectives of community versus bureaucracy.
Not for Profit Organization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional societies act organization, membership based 	A specific organization formed to serve and address a specific purpose/mandate.	- Capacity to maintain administrative structures often tax the organizations volunteers. - Community ownership is created, however process is time consuming and exposes group to various intractable community dynamics. - Ability to access other sources of revenue that City of Edmonton cannot. -Time and resource intensive to develop, as it requires very committed and passionate founders. -Can be challenging without the assistance of administrative infrastructures to advance the development of the organization

APPENDIX B:

Proposed Roles /Mandate of Council Committee

- Advocacy – Council Committee
 - Need to be able to make decisions and bring to council
 - Voice to make changes and bring ideas/issues forward
 - Emphasis on power and performance
- The council should bring forward diverse voices of woman
 - Less advice being asked for from City, more voice and opinion
 - Coming from the women who are not heard
 - Women’s council should be one bringing issues forward
- Role & Mandate of Council:
 - Women in governance
 - Public service
 - Evidence based – proper needs assessment – what is actually happening
- Be mindful of what true needs are
- Meet on a regular basis – based on projects
- Combination – bylaw for permanence but more of it’s own identity – access to city documents
- Should be like a government within a government
- City provides support – Council provides strategic direction
- Would like to see women celebrated based on achievements, not just resolve issues or reaction to things done
- Raise profile of issue and positive achievements of women
- If WC is competitive within it will undo itself – need to realize opportunity we have to create an effective group
- Would be nice to see part of city identity be celebrating families/women
- Have an advocacy role for all women
- Like idea support from city but still independent
 - Be bottom up not top down
 - Not elite women
 - Council not directing agenda
 - Agenda set by the group
 - Grass roots – from the bottom of the pyramid
 - Not influenced by funding
 - Ensure right women are recruited
 - Come from positions of support
- Voice to create change
- Education on women’s issues
- Document process on forming council
 - Video and other means
 - Messaging -> driven by the committee
- Raise awareness of issues

- Tackling policies - not operational level
- Making change making a difference – as soon as possible
- Recommending directions
- Very strategic
- Recommending to other levels of government – bigger than the City of Edmonton
- Suggestions to other levels of government
- Share reports
- Women in Trades, Health, Poverty
- Sooner than later – before the next election
- Prefer council appointed advisory board
- Connected directly to council
- Don't want to compete with other NFP
- Stronger if there is an umbrella group'
- Not duplication
- Direct link with council
- Meetings – daytime and evening times; Meetings recorded and information shared
- Policy and project based
- Have standing committees that are project based
- Identify outcomes and successes
- Celebrate and learn from other communities successes
 - Learn from them
 - Two way successes
- Look at structures that make sense to each community ie: wheel, tee pee
- Needs to reflect diversity of community
- Level of commitment needs to be ensured
- Continue to welcome new people
- Need a way to communicate and info share
 - For now web page
 - Considering Facebook
- Send out rough notes of ideas shared

Resources Required

- Concern – continued funding to sustain
- Should always have CoE staff assigned – connection between two entities
- Work done by admin with direction from women's council – no more research.
- We need funding, staff support
- Ties all ends and gets things done
- We need somebody to be able to have the resources [city staff] to work with community to facilitate a process

Discussion on Models

- With #1 (Council Appointed Advisory Group)– would be concerned with amount of flexibility with structure
- Combination of 1 & 2 – bring in experts from the city to share information

- Could lose – successes within community if we don't do NFP route
- Creating a NFP group could take away resources from other groups
- WC should not take away from other groups – should only be providing leadership not doing services – share information, provide advice, not duplicating what exists; not taking away funding
- Need to have ability to bring forward women's issues without feeling dismissed Could we look at a task force
- Vision to eventually be a non profit – morph from council to admin committee
- When are we going to get to the work-stage. Who is going to make the decision on what this looks like?
- An example:
 - Peace River, AB Non profits came together for a process "new model"
 - Other options out there
- Do we have the capacity to move things forward as an NFP?
- Best to find the best platform means to get things started
- Choose a path that is most directly connected with Council
- Commitment to gather and work on this
- Be respectful and mindful for all participants
- Create a space to empower people
- Do we have capacity to move things forward
- Find the best means of a platform to get things started to build collective impact model
- Make sure there is a diverse representative from community
- It is beyond key community leaders
- Training for future leaders
- Grounded in common vision and mandate
- Collaborative
- Build sense of community
- NYC commission – review model
- Research important to be shared
- Don't reinvent wheel
- Prefer an Administrative committee
- Depends on support for initiative (There is political will and possible staff resources)
- Want something in place by the fall before City Council election
- Need a report by September and supported by current council
- Want it ingrained into system in advance
- Is this entity looking at City Policy with a gender lens?
- Feel strongly this entity looks at City Policy with gender lens to influence quality of life for Edmontonians
- If attached to Council – what is the level of decision making?
- Would like to be independent and make decisions to bring forward to council
- A NFP to work in congruence with other groups to influence Council
- Beyond a talk shop – be truly a voice
- Women having a stronger voice
- Like it being integrated into City Council
- Needs to have staying power
- Integrated into policy
- Danger having one organization being responsible

- Support Advisory Committee model – the shorter the distance from council the better
- NFP's already have a lot on their plates

Recruitment/Structure

- NFP's and women who feel they don't have a voice should be on the council
- WC should represent all groups of women
- Use nomination process and elections
- Make sure there is turn over of representatives from the community
- WC should give voice to all women; don't know how to ensure that there is no competition between members and parties involved
- Prefer Youth Council to Advisory Board for Services with People with Disabilities recruitment method – NFP would appoint rep to GA
- Should reach out as far as possible – metro channel 10, buses, free paper
- WC will need to learn from other groups ie: person on council should be connected to others to share information
- Membership should be as widely diverse as possible
- Acknowledge the Aboriginal community
- Council could create sub committee of other interested volunteers
- Should have representatives with knowledge of different communities – ie: United Way
- Women's Council would determine voices missing and seek them out to engage
- Question – how do you give strength to communities that haven't typically had that voice
- WC would decide if committees are needed ___ an issue and when to start committees (standing issues/committees at the beginning)
- Application process with criteria
- Information is accessible to all
- Leaders informed and share info back to community
- Different languages
- Code of ethics
- Reflect cities values and ideas
- Public education role for this committee
- Promote council and women's issues
- Council – 2 – 3 members at large from the public
- City council to share info to their wards
 - Active involvement and promotion
- Bylaws, money, number of members, selection, all is important
- Could also focus on celebration of women/girls on large scale (eg. September 1 Daughter's Day)
- Strong aboriginal/multicultural representation and others
- Need more voices
- Some people aren't Canadian Citizens, some are refugees
 - Actually includes residents of Edmonton
- We need to look at grassroots – start there and figure out what to do next
- Strong, diverse, representative [leadership], advocate, autonomy
- Aboriginal, immigrant, seniors, youth, professional organizations, labour groups, health care, mental health, abilities, rural, government politics, academics, stay at home, small business, corporate

- Advocating process important
- Reach out to silent leaders
- Possible nomination process with defined criteria
- Inclusive recruitment process
- Candidates well connected and represent broader community
- NFP groups well represented on advisory committee
- Diversity important
- NFP in competition for funding
- Do we need to create a “venue” -> we are ready to put “pent to paper”
- Trust the process – “build it and they will come”
- Information and how do we get it out to the community ie: LRT Committee
How do we get this out?
- How do we make it inviting/comfortable/safe to have process for all voices from the community
- Structure important
- Action plans implemented by working committee with support from staff
- Ensure issues are being addressed i.e.: women’s shelters, abuse
Call for entry/recruitment process
Rotating chair
Dare to do something in and different way
- Let it evolve as it goes along
- No one group has total say
- Gender champions – embedded ambassadors within the system
- Taken up equally by men and women throughout agencies and cross corporations
- Gender lens – with all policies
- Women’s Committee that will enhance or work with staff
- Gay/Lesbian lens needs to also be considered
- Diverse representation

Membership

- Diversity is reflected defined by Age, Ethnicity and Experience
- Mixed model – have representations from agencies and industries, corporate academic
- Need people with authority as well as stay at home moms and disabilities
There for the broader goal not personal agenda
- need background check and references
- Interview process
- Needs to be transparent and documented
- FCSS model of consultation and to be considered
- Some groups are very large
- Representation difficult
- Need to honor diversity
- Representatives from NGO’s in the community
- Need previous community experience
- Look for passion and commitment to broader community, goals
- Need to identify issues/needs before thinking of representatives
- Diversity in ages needed

- Need previous community experience
- Look for passion and commitment to broader community, goals

Q – Are committee members volunteers?

A – Yes – supported by staff

- Nomination process a bit more systematic; Ask person first if they want to be nominated
- Several names suggested to be part of the steering committee to move initiative forward