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**SKOOKUM
LAB**

Community Engagement Findings Executive Summary

October 2018 – March 2019

An Initiative of the Surrey Urban Indigenous Leadership Committee

SKOOKUM LAB

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Executive Summary

Phase one of the Skookum Lab involved community animators facilitating dialogue and culture-based activities to learn about the root causes of and priorities for addressing Indigenous child poverty in Surrey. The Skookum Lab community animators conducted 11 Star Blanket Exercises, three focus groups, and 6 key informant interviews with community members. Participants included youth, Elders, service providers and community leaders among others. The main focus of the engagement sessions was to learn what would make Surrey a great place to raise Indigenous children. All lines of evidence are synthesized where possible and the key themes that emerged are presented below.

The systemic context of poverty for Indigenous children and families in Surrey

Many factors contribute to maintaining Indigenous child poverty included a challenging home life; a lack of Indigenous-specific resources; a lack of connection to community and culture; a lack of support for basic needs such as housing, health and transportation; as well as stigma, racism, and a lack of understanding of the impacts of colonization. Key informants also noted that having children taken into government care causes significant emotional impacts for children and families; children in care also present challenges for families around housing subsidies, child tax credits, and provision of food services. Insufficient income assistance was also a factor that maintains child poverty, as well as limitations in mainstream services and a lack of sense of community.

Additional factors that contribute to maintaining poverty include at a very basic level, families not having basic needs such as housing, health services, and food supports. Participants also discussed a lack of affordable housing, barriers around accessing transportation and the consequential isolation. Issues around stigma and racism was also a prominent factor related to poverty, noting both interpersonal, institutional and structural racism as problematic.

In terms of disrupting poverty in Surrey, participants noted the need to increase awareness of Canada's history with Indigenous peoples, and creating a sense of community through youth connections with Elders, culture and stories.

Overarching themes to make Surrey the best place to raise Indigenous children

Culture: The most frequent mentioned theme centred on Indigenous culture. Participants suggested that more cultural activities (i.e. pow wows, drum nights) would be beneficial, and suggested increasing traditional language use. In order to do this, participants discussed the importance of ceremony and involving families and communities in ceremony. Participants also noted that it was important to create a sense of belonging where people can connect and feel proud of who they are. Participants also indicated that children need access to land and nature.

Education: The next most frequent mentioned theme was around education. Participants suggested that the education system incorporate more Indigenous knowledge into curriculum, while recreation included sub-themes related to increasing accessibility to sports and arts. Participants also suggested having Indigenous elementary and high schools in Surrey, and more after school programming that is culturally responsive. Other suggestions included increasing land-based education, culture camps, and the presence of Elders within the schools.

Recreation: Participants discussed the need to support both organized and drop-in sports for youth, and the need to create safe spaces for youth to participate in sports and games. Participants discussed the

need for free recreation passes and events for all ages. Participants also suggested art and dance programs be created.

Health and wellness: The theme of health and wellness encompassed increasing access and support to improve the holistic health of Surrey's Indigenous population including mental, emotional, physical and spiritual health. The physical space theme identified the need for an adequate gathering space for Indigenous people in Surrey, as well as community interest in Indigenizing public spaces. Participants also discussed enhancing maternal and infant health programming, as well as substance use programming, in particular for youth. As part of health and wellness for families, participants suggested more supports for families when they are facing child apprehension issues, such as wraparound Indigenous models of supports.

Space and place: Participants called for more cultural gathering places, and places that are permanent, centrally located and immersed in culture and teachings. Participants noted the need for these spaces to be inclusive of all people, all ages, and two-spirit and LGBTQ2S+ youth. Furthermore, they called for more community gardens and green spaces, and spaces that are safe. As part of the need for space, participants also noted that there is a need for more affordable housing, and a need to expand FRAFCA to other parts of Surrey.

Service: The theme related to services identified the need to increase a broad range of services related to reducing poverty including housing, nutrition, transportation, childcare and employment. Participants also identified the need for improved child welfare services such as support for children aging out of care and the need to keep families together.

Advocacy, knowledge and awareness: Participants primarily identified the need for increased awareness about the impacts of colonization and intergenerational trauma. To increase knowledge, participants suggested having more resource and knowledge centres, and including trauma-informed practices in school. Participants noted that the Skookum Lab was able to engage with many stakeholders and had opportunities to advocate for change, and also listen to community and what they are saying about their needs.

Leadership and governance: Participants reported that there is a need for increased visibility of Indigenous people in leadership and decision-making positions. Furthermore, it was suggested that politicians make efforts to come to Indigenous communities to listen to the needs, and also increasing opportunities to see what is happening in politics by televising more events.

Finally, the star blanket exercise identified a number of overarching values including unity, family, respect and empathy that are important for guiding and grounding this work.

Conclusion

Themes that emerged consistently include the need to support and increase connection to culture and community; the need to increase access to low-barrier, trauma-informed services that address the root causes of child poverty; the need to continue to increase awareness about the impacts of colonization including residential schools and intergenerational trauma; the need to increase support for families before their children end up in care; and the need to increase the representation and visibility of Indigenous people in leadership and decision-making positions.

Findings from the Star Blanket exercise, Key Informant interviews and Focus Groups

This section includes a brief summary about how the data was collected, then a section that provides insights into the systemic context of poverty for Indigenous children and families in Surrey. This section then includes an overview of the 9 overarching themes that emerged across all of the data collection / lines of evidence.

About the data collection

As part of the Star Blanket Exercise, participants were asked “What would make Surrey a great place to raise Indigenous children?” They provided a great number of diverse ideas and suggestions, which are summarized into nine tables representing overarching themes. Full list-style tables of the themes are included in the Appendix A.

Interviews were conducted with 5 key informants, representing Indigenous organizations (e.g., the Métis Association of BC, Fraser Valley Aboriginal Child and Family Services), schools, and government (e.g., Fraser Health, Ministry of Children and Family Development). Their work contributes to the wellness of Indigenous children in Surrey in a number of ways, including through building cultural connections, delivering health and family support services, and partnering with other Indigenous organizations. Their perspectives and recommendations are summarized below and for additional tables (containing the same data), please see Appendix B.

Focus groups were held with individuals from Surrey Schools, Xyolhemeylh Child and Family Services, and Métis Child and Family Services. Sharing from the lens of service providers that contribute to the wellness of Indigenous children in Surrey, their perspectives and recommendations are summarized below and for additional tables (containing the same data), please see Appendix C.

Note that all of the presentation of findings below are denoted with the group where the data was collected, and that common themes across the groups are synthesized where possible (if the findings just note *participant* and not focus group or key informant, this represents Star Blanket participants). The first section speaks to the systemic context of poverty in Surrey, followed by overarching themes that emerged across all of the lines of evidence.

The Systemic Context of Poverty for Indigenous children and Families in Surrey

How Indigenous children experience poverty and other structural challenges in Surrey

Drawing on personal and professional experience, key informants described some of the challenges that Indigenous families may experience within their homes and families. They noted that parents may have limited supports, both in terms of social and monetary support, which can be a challenge in terms of child care and parenting skills ($n = 3$). Struggles with addiction were also discussed and it was noted that this can lead to government removal of children ($n = 3$). They also described poor housing conditions and homelessness as pertinent challenges for Indigenous families in Surrey ($n = 2$).

Having children taken into government care not causes significant emotional impacts for children and families, but, as key informants described, the apprehension of Indigenous children also contributes to family poverty. Key informants noted that having children in care challenges housing subsidies, child tax credits, the provision of food services, and other financial supports ($n = 3$). This shift can lead to precarious housing situations, which further challenges parents' abilities to be reunified with their children. Additionally, one key informant noted that the Ministry's requirements for returning children to their families are often unclear. Key informants also described issues with a lack of Indigenous foster homes and Indigenous staff working for Circle 5 in Surrey, as well as culturally inappropriate risk assessment tools, which may miscalculate risk for Indigenous children.

Many focus participants spoke about the overrepresentation of Indigenous youth in government care through the child welfare system. These participants often spoke about the impacts of being in care ($n = 7$), including intergenerational cycles with the child welfare system. They also spoke specifically about aging out of care, as participants noted that youth in care are at risk of homelessness, being on social assistance, and being incarcerated. They also spoke about intergenerational cycles of involvement with the child welfare system.

Participants noted that income assistance is insufficient for families who have had their children removed from their care, which creates difficulties in working to get children back in their family homes ($n = 6$). Participants cited poverty as a leading cause for the removal of Indigenous children from their homes ($n = 2$), and noted that there is also a lack of funding for prevention to help children remain with their families ($n = 2$). Other participants noted that support for families that are reunited with their children falling a removal are not adequately supported by the Ministry ($n = 2$).

Key informants noted that the limitations of mainstream services, including shelters, and the lack of Indigenous organizations that are tasked with serving large populations may contribute to family poverty ($n = 4$).

Key informants noted that Indigenous people may face significant challenges in finding a sense of community and connecting with culture while living in Surrey ($n = 2$). Another noted that there are limited places to gather.

One key informant noted that in urban settings, inherent land-based rights of Indigenous peoples get lost. Another noted that a lack of disaggregated data specific to First Nations, Inuit and Métis people, as well as a lack of adherence to the principles of Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession, may contribute to systemic challenges around poverty. Lastly, one person was concerned about exposure to drugs and poverty.

Factors that contribute to maintaining poverty for Indigenous children

At a very basic level, families require basic needs, which key informants described as being unmet. Supports are needed to ensure that families have access to affordable and available housing ($n = 4$), including social housing and other rental options; health services ($n = 4$), such as having mental health supports, access to a family doctor, and specialists to serve children with developmental challenges. Parents also require work at a living wage ($n = 3$), access to affordable childcare ($n = 3$), transportation ($n = 1$), food supports ($n = 1$), and support for single parents ($n = 1$).

Barriers to accessing services and supports were often discussed by focus group participants. The most common barriers discussed included paper work ($n = 4$), where forms may require higher literacy levels to complete and families with lower education levels may require help in filling them out. They also noted that accessing services online or over the phone can be a barrier for some people ($n = 3$), particularly for those that do not have access to phones or computers, or may have trauma caused by the system they are trying to access. Similarly, one person noted that family services can have intake processes that are triggering for some families ($n = 1$). Others spoke about barriers specific to mental health and addictions services, noting long wait times or “clean time” to access addictions services ($n = 2$) and a general lack of mental health services ($n = 2$). Lastly, one person cited a lack of culturally relevant services and another noted that programs are often too short and when extensions are possible, there can be a lag time which is difficult when trying to build trust with a client.

Many participants spoke about a lack of affordable housing in Surrey ($n = 8$). Particular concerns around housing included discrimination from landlords for tenants who are on social assistance, safety and hygiene issues in single room occupancy hotels, and “reno-victions” from rental properties. Housing was also described as a particular challenge for families that are dealing with child apprehensions, who may have limited funding to help with housing.

Transportation was also commonly discussed by focus group participants as a barrier for families to access services (e.g., food banks), schools, and employment in Surrey ($n = 6$). One person noted that some organizations may provide transportation, but clients may feel ashamed to accept rides. Focus group participants spoke about several impacts of colonialism, including a loss of culture, traditional parenting, and communities ($n = 5$). In this way, they spoke about families being more isolated with less support and grandparents taking on different roles by working later in life and caring for grandchildren. Some people also spoke about Indigenous people not knowing their own history ($n = 2$). Participants also spoke specifically about the impacts of residential schools ($n = 1$), internalized racism ($n = 1$), and the process of getting status ($n = 1$).

Issues around stigma and racism included both inter-personal and institutional forms. Focus group participants spoke about harmful portrayals of Indigenous people in the media ($n = 3$), where negative stories may instill a sense of shame for Indigenous youth who see them and positive stories are framed as “the first ever Indigenous person” to do something. Indigenous people also have to face negative attitudes among service providers and staff that they interact with ($n = 2$), as well as stigma in accessing services like the food bank ($n = 1$). There were also noted issues around stereotyping and racism in the education system ($n = 2$), where Indigenous students are often labelled with negative stereotypes. Similarly, participants noted that service providers may hold bias, lack cultural competency, and misunderstand trauma for Indigenous clients ($n = 2$).

Key informants noted that Indigenous families may face racism at both interpersonal and institutional levels. This can include systemic racism within healthcare and school systems ($n = 2$), culturally unsafe workers and community members who interact with Indigenous people without appropriate knowledge and training ($n = 2$), and structural barriers to accessing aid (e.g., food banks that require identification; $n = 1$).

The intergenerational impacts of colonization were also described. This included challenges to Indigenous identity, belonging, and community, which key informants noted has been hard to rebuild in urban spaces like Surrey. Additionally, Indigenous families may have had adverse childhood experiences and do not know how to ask for help ($n = 1$). One person spoke about divisive approaches utilized by

some organizations and events that systematically leave out Inuit and Métis peoples.

Finally, Several participants noted that the services in Surrey are generally concentrated in one area. This may present barriers to families if they are exposed to triggering environments or people that they may be trying to avoid. These participants noted that it is also recognize the need to have services that meet people where they are at.

There is a noted lack of community spaces to go to in Surrey, as one participant noted that the friendship centre is not open in the evenings. One participant spoke about unsafe situations relating to poverty, including being exposed to predators and having to share living accommodations with unsafe people. Another person noted that accessing services in government spaces is hard because the spaces themselves can be triggering environments.

Factors that contribute to the disruption of poverty for Indigenous children

Key informants spoke about the importance of increasing awareness of Canada's history with Indigenous peoples ($n = 3$), advocating for policy change with a trauma-informed approach ($n = 2$), incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing into the education system ($n = 2$), and increasing leadership with social justice values ($n = 1$).

Key informants noted the importance of creating a sense of community through youth connecting with Elders, culture, and stories, and having a safe space ($n = 3$). They also spoke about culturally-specific supports, such as Aboriginal support workers ($n = 2$), and opportunities for participating in land-based Indigenous programs ($n = 1$).

The notion of using a strengths-based approach involved acknowledging the strengths and wisdom of Indigenous communities. Key informants spoke about Indigenous leaders coming together in Surrey ($n = 2$), highlight community strengths and programs that are working well ($n = 1$), and empowering people with lived experience to share their voices ($n = 1$). One informant also spoke about how the graduation rate is improving, as an example of community success.

Key informants provided examples of services that require increased funding. This included youth programming offered through schools (e.g., social development, Strong Start), social housing, emergency grant funds through the friendship centre, bus passes, and food vouchers. One person talked generally about the importance of services that are offered to support people.

Overarching Theme 1: Culture

Participants provided many suggestions surrounding cultural activities and events. They noted the importance of offering different cultural events, activities, and programs overall, which could be tailored to help children and youth learn about their culture ($n = 14$). Detailed suggestions included:

- Arts-based workshops and programs including cedar basketry, beading, carving, and teachings from local artists and Elders ($n = 9$);
- Offering 'Powwow Nights' and opportunities for children to dance ($n = 7$);
- Drumming nights and drum making ($n = 5$);

- Workshops to make regalia (e.g., ribbon skirts; $n = 5$);
- Storytelling circles for children ($n = 4$);

Other suggestions included offering West Coast Nights with drumming and dancing ($n = 1$), opportunities to learn Indigenous songs and their translations ($n = 1$) and holding youth craft fairs ($n = 1$).

Many suggestions were rooted in the importance of offering cultural teachings and ceremony. Overall, participants spoke about the importance of traditional teachings, involving Elders in sharing the 'old ways,' and bring people together to share teachings ($n = 13$). They also spoke about the importance of ceremony and involving whole families and communities in ceremony. Specifically, participants called for more sweat lodges, including youth-friendly sweat ceremonies ($n = 7$). They also noted the importance of Coming of Age and Rites of Passage Ceremonies ($n = 5$). Some participants indicated the importance of sharing the teachings from specific nations ($n = 4$), such as Medicine Wheel teachings, the Seven Sacred Teachings, and Pow Wow teachings. Other ideas included traditional medicine teachings ($n = 3$), as well as teachings around food and harvesting ($n = 2$).

Participants noted the value of creating a place of belonging where people can connect and feel proud of who they are and where they come from ($n = 5$) and feel safe to express and understand their identities ($n = 2$). They spoke generally about including more culture and more community ($n = 2$), as well as the importance of offering cultural programming in general to help children to understand and take pride in their roots and heritage ($n = 2$). They also spoke about outcomes, in the sense that cultural pride can lead to hope and strong identity ($n = 3$), culture is life, culture saves lives ($n = 4$).

Suggestions around Indigenous languages, included creating more programs and for First Nations languages ($n = 10$) and other opportunities for First Nations language revitalization ($n = 4$), as well as creating a space to build language skills.

Participants indicated that children need access to land and nature ($n = 2$), and connections to community, land, and people ($n = 1$). Participants also spoke about the right for displaced indigenous youth to visit or return to their home territories ($n = 2$). They also spoke generally about being true to the land and honouring mother earth ($n = 2$). Specially, one person suggested canoeing as a land-based activity.

This theme included suggestions for healing and fostering spirituality. To accomplish this, participants noted the importance of offering healing circles ($n = 3$), maintaining self-care through spirituality ($n = 2$), and fostering an ongoing basis for spiritual re-connection ($n = 1$).

The importance of culture, traditions and healing was often discussed by focus group participants. This included access to cultural resources and opportunities ($n = 2$), Indigenous health care and healing ($n = 2$), Elders working with youth to reconnect with culture, and Indigenous programming in schools ($n = 1$). One person also spoke about the importance of Indigenous presence in Surrey, where language, and architecture are all reflective of Indigenous worldviews.

Overarching Theme 2: Education

Recommendations related to educational curricula most commonly included incorporating spiritual teachings, language, culture, history, and healing in schools to shift curricula to fit the needs of First Nations children and youth ($n = 10$). One participant noted the importance of educating all students in the school district and their parents on Indigenous issues. Another noted the importance of including Indigenous culture in curricula from Kindergarten through Grade 12. Others suggested offering elective classes focused on Indigenous studies, offering more Indigenous arts in schools, and teaching communication skills.

Participants also provided ideas around Indigenous schools. This included having an Indigenous elementary school and high school in Surrey ($n = 9$), with Indigenous staff and Indigenous building names. Other recommendations included more Aboriginal Head Start programs, Indigenous alternative schools, Indigenous private schools, and fully Indigenous child care (for all ages, focused on culture and language).

Several people provided suggestions for after school programming. Most commonly, this included creating Indigenous after school programs or clubs that are culturally responsive ($n = 8$). Others noted that after school programming should provide opportunities for children to connect with Elders. One person noted the need for after school care for children older than five years old, and another person noted a need for summer programs.

Ideas also centered on the need for increasing opportunities for children and youth to have land-based education. Several participants noted the need for camping programs for Indigenous youth, including permanent camps ($n = 4$). Others cited specific examples of camps for Indigenous youth which could be implemented in Surrey: the Rediscovery Program ($n = 2$) and the Seven Sacred Teachings Lodge ($n = 2$). Other suggestions included having guided nature walks for identifying and foraging local plants, implementing outdoor schools, and building an Indigenous land-based learning centre. Participants called for increased academic support and tutoring ($n = 4$), mentorship programs ($n = 2$), and peer-to-peer mentorship. One person asked for a place where children can get support for social skills.

The presence of Elders within schools was a common theme that participants raised. This included having Elders available to mentor youth in all schools ($n = 4$), having Elders available in each school district to share teachings ($n = 2$), and welcoming Elders into school systems. Participants indicated a need for tolerant and welcoming schools where people have increased cultural awareness and celebrate Indigenous cultures. They noted that students should be able to see their identity reflected in their schools and that teachers should be culturally competent. Participants also noted the need for free educational opportunities, though no further details were provided.

Focus group participants provided suggestions for improving education included creating Indigenous schools ($n = 1$), having an Indigenous board in the school system to advocate on behalf of Aboriginal families and students and to mitigate racism in schools ($n = 1$), and outdoor school models ($n = 1$).

Overarching Theme 3: Recreation

Participants spoke generally about the importance of supporting both organized and drop-in sports for youth ($n = 8$), as well as the need for funding to cover sports registration and equipment costs ($n = 6$). Participants also noted the need for creating safe spaces for youth to participate in sports and games ($n = 5$), including a fitness facility and skateboard park. Some people named specific sports that should be offered for Indigenous children and youth, including traditional games ($n = 2$), hockey ($n = 2$), self-defence ($n = 2$), basketball ($n = 1$), and lacrosse ($n = 1$). Lastly, two people indicated that Surrey should create basketball teams for the All Native Basketball Tournament.

Participants spoke about the need for recreational programs for children and youth ($n = 4$), as well as activities that are inclusive of families ($n = 2$). Specific ideas included offering free recreation passes to youth ($n = 4$), boys and girls clubs ($n = 2$), family and community dances ($n = 1$), and free concerts for youth ($n = 1$). Participants also noted that events should include scheduled playtime for children, and that there could also be playgroups for older youth. People also spoke about the need for safe spaces for youth to 'hang out' ($n = 3$). One person also recommended that Surrey open youth drop-in centres, which would offer culture and arts-based activities after regular business hours (i.e., 10pm – 2am). Participants often spoke about access to arts, as well as the overall need for more visibility of Indigenous peoples through arts (i.e., Indigenized spaces). Recommendations included:

- The need for art in general ($n = 4$) as well as programs ($n = 3$) and places for arts and crafts ($n = 3$). They also spoke about the need for increased access to Indigenous arts ($n = 2$).
- Opportunities for dance ($n = 4$), including spaces and groups
- More music programs, including or free subsidized music lessons ($n = 4$)

Participants provided suggestions for a variety of youth programs, resources, and activities specific for youth. Specific suggestions included youth leadership opportunities, programs to help youth learn to be 'warriors,' programs for the empowerment of youth voice, and outreach for youth reduce isolation.

Overarching Theme 4: Health and wellness

Participants noted the need for counselling supports that are long-term, free, and culturally responsive ($n = 10$). Counselling and trauma support should be available to youth and families, with attention to suicidality, depression, anxiety, and addiction. Counselling should also be available to parents that are involved with the child welfare system. One person spoke about the need for traditional healing and counselling to be offered through Indigenous organizations. Additional suggestions for mental health supports included suicide awareness programs, youth outreach workers, and mental health call centres. Suggestions for supporting overall health and wellness included creating Indigenous healing and wellness centres and programs ($n = 4$) and an Indigenous health clinic in Surrey ($n = 2$), as well as increasing overall access to safe health care ($n = 2$) and funding for health care ($n = 2$). Public health advocacy events were also suggested in order to raise health awareness and knowledge ($n = 2$). Others spoke about the importance of access to healers and medicine people in the community ($n = 1$)

Participants spoke about ways to improve maternal and infant health, including midwifery, postpartum support, physiotherapy for infants, and access to pediatricians.

Some participants provided specific recommendations for substance use supports. This primarily included treatment and recovery programs specific for youth.

Participants noted the need for free dental care and increased dental care education in communities and schools.

Most of the priorities that key informants raised related to ensuring that families have their basic needs met. This included housing ($n = 4$), transportation ($n = 2$), employment ($n = 2$), and nutrition ($n = 1$). Key informants also called for culturally responsive programming and supports for young parents, families, and youth. Specific ideas included opportunities to learn on the land, support networks for young parents, and a young mothers circle.

Key informants suggested supports for children and youth included early childhood development, life skills programming for youth, and lowering the number of Indigenous children in government care. Other program recommendations included increasing the number of lower-barrier programs available and increasing access to recreation activities.

Focus group participants provided a number of recommendations for services and supports that are needed to support Indigenous people in Surrey. This included the need for treatment centres ($n = 3$), including those with harm reduction models; life skills programming for youth ($n = 2$); education and employment programs for parents ($n = 2$); and support for First Nations families to apply for status ($n = 1$). Participants also spoke more generally about the need for culturally safe services for the Indigenous community ($n = 2$) and for holistic services that use a strengths-based approach ($n = 3$). Additional service needs included more low-income assistance ($n = 1$) and free counselling ($n = 1$). Lastly, participants noted the importance of face-to-face service delivery ($n = 1$) and a need for service location across different neighbourhoods in Surrey ($n = 1$).

There was a widely expressed need for more supports for families that are involved with the Ministry for Children and Family Development, who may be facing child apprehension. First, focus group participants noted that children should be able to stay in their homes and communities where possible (e.g., when attending treatment, $n = 4$). They also noted a need for increased funding to support prevention through programming for children and families within a wraparound Indigenous model ($n = 2$). One person also suggested creating an Indigenous learning series for non-Indigenous foster siblings and caregivers, which could help them become more aware of Indigenous cultures. Lastly, one person noted a need for more after care for families that are reunited after Ministry intervention.

Overarching Theme 5: Space and place

Participants called for more cultural gathering spaces ($n = 14$), and asked that these spaces be permanent, centrally-located, and immersed in culture and teachings. They also asked for inclusive, Indigenous gathering spaces ($n = 8$), which would be available to host Indigenous events, resources, and services. Specifically, participants noted a need for more friendship centres throughout neighbourhoods in Surrey ($n = 4$), and they also spoke about opportunities to utilize and extend FRAFCA ($n = 5$). Two participants asked for collective cultural spaces specific to Métis people and culture. Additionally, people called for inclusive spaces for two-spirit people and resource centres for LGBTQ2S+ youth ($n = 3$).

Most commonly, participants noted the need for Surrey to have places for Elders ($n = 8$); this included a centre or hub for Elders to visit and share culture with children and youth. People also spoke about the importance of spending time with Elders in general ($n = 6$), with specific suggestions around 'community time' bringing Elders and babies together, allowing youth to spend time with Elders throughout the year, and 'Elder advice clubs.' Lastly, one person noted the need for Elder Support Services to ensure that Elders have people to talk to for support.

Participants asked for community gardens ($n = 8$), as well as more green spaces and parks in the community ($n = 3$).

In addition to speaking to the need for safe spaces in a general sense ($n = 6$), they noted that children and youth need places where they are allowed to go when they are unsafe ($n = 2$). Other suggestions included safe meeting spaces and spaces for Elders and community members.

Participants spoke to a need for Surrey to be a strong, connected and safe community.

Many key informants spoke about a need for Indigenous gathering places in Surrey in order to create a stronger sense of community ($n = 5$), as well as the importance of safe and healthy communities ($n = 1$). Key informants spoke generally about the need to increase services, as well as providing specific suggestions. These suggestions arts-based education, child care, and life skills programming.

Focus group participants spoke about the importance of offering accessible, culturally safe, and affordable housing ($n = 7$). This included changing housing law/regulation to encourage the construction of more social housing so that whenever new houses are built, social housing must be built as well. Participants also spoke about a need to have a safer environment within Surrey ($n = 5$), with safe and sacred spaces for Indigenous people to gather that are open 24 hours a day. They also spoke about expanding FRAFCA to other parts of Surrey so that all Indigenous peoples can access a culturally safe space and services ($n = 1$). Another person suggested that Surrey have an Elders lodge that allows for youth to drop in.

Focus group participants spoke about providing affordable transportation for children and families, as well as creating a volunteer transportation program for Indigenous children to attend after school programming.

Overarching Theme 6: Service

Participants most frequently indicated a need for safe and affordable housing ($n = 24$), with specific suggestions around housing specific for young people, Elders, and the homeless population. Some participants also noted a need for more Indigenous housing co-ops, like Kekinow ($n = 3$). One person also noted a need for housing to have holistic services available to support the wellness of residents. Participants also spoke to a need for more safe houses for children and youth ($n = 5$), as well as transition homes ($n = 1$). They noted that safe houses for youth should be culturally responsive and that there should be visible signage for these houses.

Some people also spoke about a need for sustainable food resources and food sovereignty initiatives ($n = 5$), such as sustainable agricultural practices and Indigenous food farms. Similarly, traditional food practices were a common theme ($n = 4$). This included teaching about hunting, harvesting, cooking, and

preserving traditional foods. Finally, one person suggested hosting community dinners. Suggestions related to food security and cooking skills included the need for more food banks ($n = 4$), including Indigenous-run food banks. They also noted a need for a variety of cooking classes ($n = 4$), including youth-focused programs that teach everything from shopping to meal preparation. Others indicated that there should be more free, hot lunch programs in schools ($n = 2$), and other initiatives to ensure that “no child goes hungry.” One person also noted a need for services to be available without referral. Most commonly, participants indicated that more programs and services are needed for Indigenous youth who are aging out of government care ($n = 9$), with a specific focus on housing. Housing was also noted as a need for aunts, uncles, and grandparents who adopt family members ($n = 2$). Participants noted the need for improved foster care ($n = 1$) and more Indigenous foster homes ($n = 1$). One person specifically suggested that Surrey create a village for each child and family, indicating that entire families could be taken into foster care and mentored by another family. Others spoke about funding supportive programs and housing to families stay together ($n = 4$) and creating more services for family finding and reunification ($n = 2$). More generally, one person said that more services need to be available to support families without requiring Ministry involvement, and another noted a need to start a new system to help assisting families as “MCFD is not working.”

In terms of services needed to support families, participants provided a variety of recommendations. Suggestions for parenting and relationships programs ($n = 8$) included programs to support mothers, resources for single fathers, teen parenting classes, healthy relationships workshops, and child behaviour support groups. Child care was also a common theme ($n = 5$) as participants indicated a need for Indigenous-run day cares with cultural teachings for children, and affordable and appropriate childcare more generally. Additional recommendations included culturally responsive in-home supports and gender-inclusive parenting and family resources.

Participants spoke generally about the need for more employment opportunities ($n = 4$), vocational training and skills development programs ($n = 4$), and employment readiness and life skills courses ($n = 2$). Suggestions also included career planning ($n = 1$) and wage programs ($n = 1$) for Indigenous youth, business development programs for parents ($n = 1$), navigation tools for finding training and employment ($n = 1$), and overall public awareness for employment opportunities ($n = 1$). Other recommendations included employment programs specific to Métis youth ($n = 1$), teaching life skills starting in elementary and high schools, and allowing people on social assistance to work full time without decreasing their assistance.

Participants spoke goals with respect to ending violence and crime. This included a need to decrease gang violence ($n = 4$) and offer more programs for youth to access help when exiting gang involvement ($n = 2$). Other goals included ending rape ($n = 1$), preventing gun violence ($n = 1$), ending crime ($n = 1$), and raising more awareness about Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls ($n = 1$). Increased supports were also called for to support Indigenous offenders ($n = 1$), including restorative justice ($n = 1$). Additionally, one person asked for more supports to decrease stigma and end persecution against sex workers. Lastly, one participant spoke about a need for the Surrey Police to be more respectful.

Service needs were highlighted to support people who are living in poverty. In addition to the overlap with the themes on Housing and Food Security (summarized above), participants also called for guaranteed minimum income and increased rates for social assistance ($n = 4$), clothing drives and donations ($n = 2$), community outreach ($n = 1$), and increased awareness of child poverty ($n = 1$).

Participants indicated a need for transportation to cultural events and youth programming ($n = 3$), as well as free transit in general ($n = 2$) and transit to assist Indigenous people living in rural areas.

Overarching Theme 7: Advocacy, Knowledge and Awareness

Participants indicated a need for educating leadership, public workers, non-Indigenous supports ($n = 4$). They also noted that society needs to shift the way that First Nations people are viewed so that children can grow up with a positive outlook on life ($n = 1$). People suggested increasing awareness and outreach to educate on indigenous people's experience and culture ($n = 3$), in order to increase acceptance. One person specifically recommended providing public messaging to increase awareness (e.g., in malls, recreation centres, parks, and transit).

This theme included the need for positive Indigenous role models ($n = 5$), adult outreach to help youth in need ($n = 1$) and positive youth-adult connections more generally ($n = 1$), and motivational speakers ($n = 1$).

This included suggestions for Indigenous resource and knowledge centres ($n = 2$), Indigenous supported libraries ($n = 2$), and child-friendly Métis cultural literature ($n = 1$).

Participants spoke about the importance of Indigenous children seeing and feeling the positive impacts of reconciliation through true apologies to the trauma that Indigenous people have survived. Another participant spoke about the need for increased opportunities for non-indigenous youth and young adults to engage and connect with Indigenous members of the community.

Key informants discussed advocacy and education-related ideas, included creating advocacy bodies that can work on behalf of urban Indigenous peoples; increasing allies and building partnerships with RCMP, school districts, politicians, and health authorities; and increasing awareness of Indigenous issues within the broader community. This theme included trauma-informed school practices ($n = 2$), including alternative teaching methods and behavioural management techniques, and raising children to be advocates for a better society. Key informants noted the need to increase Indigenous representation in all professions, as well as awareness of the Indigenous community in Surrey. They also spoke about access to Indigenous foods within mainstream grocery stores. Finally, there was a noted need for awareness of inter-generational trauma and poverty.

Key informants recommended that the Skookum Lab continue to engage with multiple stakeholders. Most commonly, engagement with government was suggested ($n = 4$). This included educating and advocating for Indigenous issues to municipal and federal governments, as well as identifying "champions" within government. Listening to community was also a common suggestion ($n = 3$), as key informants noted the importance of having both Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members share their visions and perspectives to guide the work. They also noted a need to engage in facilitation, while ensuring that timelines are met ($n = 1$) and creating partnerships with school districts ($n = 1$). Additionally, some people listed various bodies that should specifically be engaged, including the City of Surrey, Fraser Health, Surrey Cares, Surrey Foundation, Surrey schools, and community members.

The theme of visibility included educating the larger community on who Indigenous peoples are, highlighting the Indigenous population and Indigenous priorities within Surrey, and supporting

Indigenous people in strengthening their identity and gaining visibility.

For the Skookum Lab to be successful, key informants also noted that it should have a clear and well-informed message. They noted that it should be clear who decisions are being made for, what the priorities of the community are, and how community can help in making decisions, recommendations, and strategic priorities.

Overarching Theme 8: Leadership and Governance

The theme around political advocacy and representation was diverse. Participants noted a need for increased Indigenous representation at multiple levels of government and “places of power” ($n = 5$) as well as general “visual representation within the city” ($n = 1$). One person also noted that non-Indigenous people should not be in positions where they are making decisions about Indigenous children. People also noted the importance of minorities having a voice ($n = 1$) and politicians coming to talk with Indigenous peoples ($n = 1$). Other suggestions included voting for a good mayor ($n = 1$), protesting ($n = 1$), and televising events so that youth can see them ($n = 1$).

A few people noted that consultation for this project should continue, and recommended going into schools and offices to get ideas ($n = 2$). One person noted a need for collaboration and information sharing between Ministries.

Focus group participants spoke about the importance Indigenous leadership ($n = 3$) at multiple levels of government. They saw Indigenous leadership as making decisions alongside politicians and having direct input into Ministry priorities and operations. Participants also spoke about a need for collaboration between government ministries ($n = 2$) and policies that prevent discrimination against Indigenous peoples ($n = 1$).

Focus group participants spoke at a high level about decolonizing Surrey at family level, schools, community, and government levels ($n = 2$) and focus on Indigenous food sovereignty ($n = 1$), as well as fostering relationships with non-Indigenous allies.

Overarching Theme 9: Overarching Values

The table below presents a summary of the overarching values that were identified by the Star Blanket participants. The most frequent mentioned value noted was *love* which meant kindness, caring and loving each other. Participants also noted the need for unity and cultural connectedness.

Theme	<i>n</i>	Description
Love	24	The theme of love included unconditional love and kindness, caring, love for each other, and consideration.
Unity	14	Valuing peace, diversity and inclusiveness, unity, equality, and togetherness.
Cultural connectedness	8	Culture, healing, connectedness, connection to earth, and abundance.

Theme	<i>n</i>	Description
Family and community	8	The importance of family, and community, belonging, safety, and having a feeling that Surrey is home.
Leadership	7	Leadership values included guidance, strength, stability, consistency, and having a voice for the future.
Respect	5	Respect, respect for Indigenous peoples, and respect for the land.
Empathy	5	Having empathy and acceptance, true understanding.
Faith	3	The importance of believing, dreaming, and having faith.
Identity	2	People spoke about the importance of having pride and being yourself.