



LA LOCHE FRIENDSHIP CENTRE

COMMUNITY PLAN

Aboriginal Friendship Centres of Saskatchewan

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LA LOCHE COMMUNITY PLAN

1. Introduction

The community planning process of the Aboriginal Friendship Centres of Saskatchewan (AFCS) is a province wide initiative of the AFCS which consists of several different engagement processes where the aim is to provide high level direction to the leadership of both the individual Friendship Centres and the AFCS on the areas of need in the community and options for some of options forward to meet these needs.

This process will allow the AFCS to see where there are synergies within members across the province, and where there could be joint action on specific areas of work, but also to see where innovation and individualized work within one or two members should be supported to help create capacity within these organizations as well.

The direction is obtained from engagement taken place over the last two years from various opportunities to meet with centres around topics such as MMIW2S, Infrastructure, Bill S2, and Indigenous Women's Economic Development and finally though direct drop into members over the last year.

This entire process is also designed to transform the relationship between the AFCS and its member organizations from one that was solely focused on the transfer of financial support and the monitoring of those resources to one that is designed to first provide support and then work though any concerns that may come up.

To focus and guide future support from the AFCS, a series of Community Strategic Plans (CSP) have been developed for participating communities in Saskatchewan. These communities include Battleford, Buffalo Narrows, Ile a la Crosse, La Loche, La Ronge, Meadow Lake, Prince Albert, Regina, and Qu'Appelle. These plans have also been designed to be easily connected to each other, and collectively to assist the AFCS in easily connecting themes to scale the voices of members for greater impact. The combined plans provide a Provincial picture of key priorities and project ideas and an indication of progress that is being made across Saskatchewan to increase the success of the member Centres communities. Thus, the CSP's provides a roadmap for the progress and success of Friendship Centres in Saskatchewan.

A Community-Based, Holistic Approach

Workshop participants in gathered together and engaged in a series of conversations about what community values exist in the community, what needs exist and what do you see for the future of your urban Indigenous communities and its success. Through these conversations, key priorities and ideas for supporting the community of La Loche and its community have been identified. With a common regional vision for Saskatchewan Friendship Centres that is purposeful and reflects a course of action that is possible, this Plan provides guidance for the Friendship Centres moving forward and to help guide further progress for the upcoming future.

Values

During engagement with the La Loche Friendship Centre, conversations occurred around what the overall values of the Friendship Centre were; the following table includes values that were agreed upon by the Friendship Centre and those that utilize its services - it was also noted that these values also had a significant impact on the overall success of the Friendship Centre and its associated programs and services to the Indigenous community of La Loche.

VALUES		
Welcoming	Friendship	Community
Supportive	Family Oriented	Safe Spaces
Commitment	Stability	Basic Needs

2. Community Priorities

The Community Strategic Plan (CSP) for La Loche is organized into three parts: vision, analysis of needs, and priorities for action. This plan presents an opportunity to better allocate resources, promote effective management, increase communication, build relationships and address needs. For this Community Plan to be an effective tool for increasing support for the community it should be referred to often in the development of projects and programs. This plan incorporates diverse views from communities and provides guidance for establishing holistic and sustainable partnerships and provides one of the 10 strategic components needed by the AFCS to connect individual Friendship Centres together and to advocate on their behalf to receive the resources they need.

The La Loche CSP takes a holistic approach and maintains a broad understanding of the needs of the community which means that individuals and communities are engaged, supported and fulfilled by whatever they endeavor to undertake. Success in this sense means youth are able to grow and develop their talents; that the basic needs of adults are met and support is available to acquire life skills, education and work experience necessary for success; and, that seniors and Elders remain engaged in their communities and can age without struggling.

Barriers to the urban Indigenous community are complex and need to be tackled from all sides. The holistic approach to this plan emphasizes the historical Friendship Centre wrap around service delivery approach that understands that all projects exist within a broader context. Each project addresses more than just a single need and that as many needs should be met as possible by one multi service organization. This plan can be used by Friendship Centres as a tool to help educate other service providers in understanding the broader context: their projects may have only one or two main objectives, but should be designed, implemented, leverage partnerships and be evaluated with and understanding of how this one project can affect the broader picture.

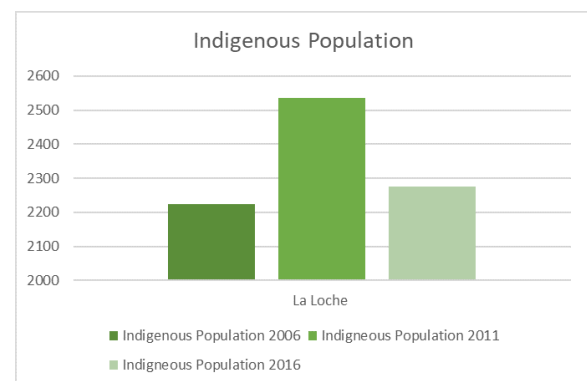
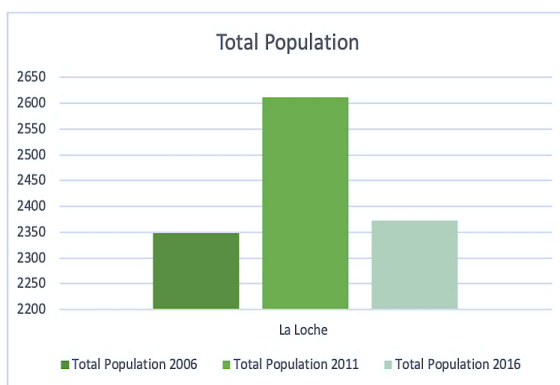
By identifying gaps between current and needed services, programs and supports, this plan can also act as a beginning for non-Indigenous service providers to connect with non-traditional partners like Friendship Centres to build long-lasting and productive relationships grounded in community. This plan recognizes the challenges faced by a diverse and often marginalized population and points the way toward a future where Indigenous people can thrive in the urban context.

The Indigenous population is diverse and dynamic, with wide-ranging challenges and needs that span demographic boundaries. While it is difficult to meet the individual needs of each member of the community, this plan focuses on the most common themes identified by participants and speaks to priority areas where change is most needed. By starting with fundamentals of access to and engagement in resources needed by the community, this Plan suggests that if the needs of those most challenged to success are met, opportunities for all community members will increase.

3. La Loche Context

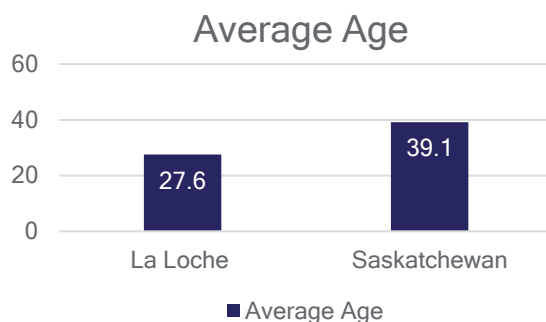
The term “urban Aboriginal people” refers to primarily to First Nations, Metis, and Inuit residing off reserve, Inuit territory, and metis homeland areas. While National Household Survey data describes the self-identified Aboriginal population, it has been suggested that this requirement for self-identification, coupled with the diverse backgrounds and rate of mobility among Aboriginal people may result in the under-estimation of the actual number of Aboriginal people who reside in these communities across Saskatchewan. This section is presented for context to understand the characteristics of the Aboriginal population in the La Loche area.

La Loche is in the northern region of Saskatchewan, with a population of 2611 with 2300 being Aboriginal. The La Loche Friendship Centres service population is made up of 1805 clients being Aboriginal in the 2018-2019 fiscal year.



As in many communities throughout the country, La Loche Indigenous population is increasing. The tables below show the increase between 2006 and 2016 based on data from Statistics

Canada. La Loche total Aboriginal population was approximately slightly lower than 2300 in 2016, compared with the community's population of 2350. On average, La Loche Aboriginal population is much younger than the province as a whole. The average age in La Loche is 27.6¹ while the provincial average age is 39.1² a difference of over 10 years.



4. Planning Process

This Plan is the result of a collaborative effort between the Aboriginal Friendship Centres of Saskatchewan, its member Friendship Centres and includes data obtained through the engagement processes from the province wide infrastructure study completed by Stantec and Praxis, the Indigenous Women's Economic Framework, and the CIIF engagement process. These engagements welcomed community, volunteers, employees and the collective leadership in the Friendship Centre and broader community leadership.

Participants engaged in a series of conversations about what the currently community looks like, the needs associated with this ecosystem and how to ensure the broader success of Indigenous communities as well as what the future looks like for them, and the paths that are possible to reach what community successes have been identified. Detailed notes were taken, which were subsequently synthesized and analyzed to support content development for this Plan.

Process Goals

Participants in La Loche engaged in three main conversations, with the goal of drafting the main components of the Community Strategic Plan by the end of the processes which included what the future vision was for the needs being met by a plan moving forward, the programmatic opportunities in the community of La Loche and both challenges and changes required to meet some of these opportunities moving forward³

¹ (Census Profile, 2016 Census La Loche, Northern village [Census subdivision], Saskatchewan and Division No. 18, Census division [Census division], Saskatchewan, 2019)

(Census Profile, 2016 Census Saskatchewan [Province] and Canada [Country], 2019)²

³ Infrastructure Engagement Sessions held February 2020 in La Loche

Future work in this area and implementation will build on this process by including other data collected during future engagement sessions prior to February and March 2020.

Unified Approach

A single, unified vision for the province of Saskatchewan allows for each of the ten communities to engage with and respond to this work within their own context. A single process recognizes the interconnectedness of the province and encourages member Friendship Centres to engage with one another and with external stakeholders beyond the context of their own community, to develop partnerships and build the capacity needed to realize a common future. The result will be a clear and bold expression of urban Indigenous people engaging and succeeding at all levels.

Urban Indigenous People in Saskatchewan are:

Represented and **accepted** as important, wise, and integral to the success of the province of Saskatchewan and its future. Urban Indigenous people are important **decision-makers** and the future of Canada's economy and **Friendship Centres** seen as important supporters and advocates for all urban Indigenous people and as places to **discover and develop** their skills for life and **future opportunities**.

Vision:

A Centre that has programs that meet the needs of seniors, youth, those who require shelter, mental health support, healing and grieving supports and those who need support with domestic violence. All these needs can be provided while at the same time continuing the history of the Friendship Centre creating progressive positive change in La Loche.

5. Barriers and Opportunities

Exploring the barriers and opportunities for members of the Indigenous community in La Loche that is supported by the Friendship Centres programs and Services means understanding the challenges and possibilities that exist today and into the future. In order to move forward, a strong understanding of the present-day circumstances is essential.

The barriers and opportunities that workshop participants identified for the urban Indigenous population in La Loche are summarized below.

Program Opportunities

- Mental Health Wellness and Addiction support
- Court worker support
- Life skills training

- Suicide prevention
- Domestic violence programs

Barriers

- Limited number of professional employees
- More spaces to rent out to other organizations
- Office spaces - more office spaces as the center grows

Success

In relation to participant conversations around what makes the Friendship Centre successful the follow was noted across the different areas of the Friendship Centre in La Loche.

Programs

The programming that helps and provides the client with support.

Staff

The center's employees are friendly to clients and deliver exceptional services

Leadership

The board and executive team provide clear priorities for the organization

Flexibility

Ability to be nimble and make changes along the way

6. Needs and Gaps

The La Loche Community plan will provide a simple guide that can help the organization and the AFCS focus its efforts on meeting current and future needs in the community and also help orient organizations in areas of common interest with other member Friendship Centres to help elevate the voices and leverage individual resources to focus energy where it is needed to move communities forward. It will guide the decisions around which resources the Friendship Centre will put energy into obtaining and also which programs and services to work on developing over time. The next stage of this process will be for the Friendship Centre to prioritize which needs need to be met at which time.

It will help the Aboriginal Friendship Centres of Saskatchewan position the collective membership as all Friendship Centres and the National Association of Friendship Centres begin work on program renewal to ensure provincial interests are considered during the development of a new multi-year funding agreement.

By ensuring a strategic position is obtained before moving forward, La Loche can ensure that the main and most serious needs in the community are met as it begins to focus its energy on solutions of the following needs and gaps recognized in the community.

Gaps

- Limited number of employees trained in certain areas to support the community through programs in the community
- Anti-Violence programs for men
- Domestic violence programming for families as a whole
- Limited collaboration and some challenges partnering with other agencies especially when those agencies are located on reserve
- Youth specific space for youth to gather in a safe manner
- Lack of opportunity to create rental space to help create sustainability
- Employee confidential and secure office spaces
- Opportunities to create programs with built in ownership for community members

Community Needs

- Programs for seniors
- Programs for youth
- Supportive Housing
- Mental Health Wellness and Addiction support
- Healing and grieving support
- Domestic violence support for offenders

Space Needs

- Adequate parking for clients and staff
- Room to accommodate family visits, structured as a living room
- Youth center
- Washrooms with showers
- Food storage
- Wellness/healing center
- Fob access for security

8. Priorities

This Community Plan is rooted in the idea that governments and service providers can and need to come together to work with the La Loche urban Indigenous community to work toward the outcomes it wishes to see. The priorities in this plan are structured broadly with a broad

understanding of what is currently happening and what needs to happen in the future using a holistic approach to address the needs of the urban Indigenous community.

Friendship Center Four Main Priorities

1. Crime Reduction and Prevention
2. Infrastructure for Youth, Offices, Rentals and Community
3. Building Relationships with Potential Partnerships
4. Support for Cultural Activities

While this list is not exhaustive, it is broad enough that by focusing on a smaller number of themes, there will be an opportunity for the Friendship Centre to use its limited energy to work towards building capacity that meets areas which will help it future meet the needs of the community as outlined in community discussions.

It is with the spirit of community wellness, collaboration and action that will help ensure the success of the development of an implementation plan that can help piece together the broader needs picture and path towards a provincial effort to best serve some of the most in need individuals across Saskatchewan.

Indigenous Women Priorities

In cross referencing community voice with the Indigenous Women's Economic Framework, there were barriers that Indigenous women and their families shared. Continuing to address the following barriers is essential:

1. Cultural, intergenerational and lateral violence
2. Jurisdictional limitations for services providers and accessing services and goods
3. Language barriers, both verbal and generational
4. Lack of services in the community and region
5. Lack of safety and comfortability with accessing services when available
6. Lack of community interest and supports

Other priorities that Indigenous women and their families want to continue to focus on include:

1. Empowering Indigenous women and LGBTQ2+
2. Building self-confidence and self-awareness in Indigenous women and their children
3. Developing life skills
4. Ensuring that Indigenous traditions are weaved into society today and built into services accessed