



'WHAT WE HEARD' REPORT

Summary of key themes from
May 21 & 27, 2024 workshops

Community Engagement on Mass Casualty Commission and Desmond Fatality Inquiry Recommendations

With thanks to individuals from Community and
Government who participated and provided input



What We Heard Report

Overview of the community/government collaboration to build a Community Engagement Framework

The Government of Nova Scotia and Be the Peace Institute collaborated on an initiative to gather with government and community-based organizations to co-design a Community Engagement Framework for engaging on inquiry recommendations. Two workshops were held in May 2024 to identify:

- What are key elements for effective government-community collaborative engagements?
- What should be included in a Framework to foster meaningful and enduring change during the implementation of inquiry recommendations?
- Which topics should be prioritized for engagements?

Who We Heard From

On May 21 & 27, 2024 Two half-day engagement workshops were attended by:

- 45 representatives from 22 community groups with representation from Indigenous, African Nova Scotian, first voice, gender-based violence, women, and legal organizations
- 37 representatives from 10 government departments

See the end of this document for a list of organizations represented during the two workshops

Collaborative Co-Design Processes

Two small planning teams came together to co-design the workshops and the draft engagement framework. These planning teams were made up of volunteers from the following organizations:

- African Nova Scotian Justice Institute
- HRM Public Safety
- Transition House Association of Nova Scotia
- Be the Peace Institute
- NS Provincial Housing Authority
- Department of Justice
- Department of Health and Wellness
- Office of Equity and Anti-Racism
- Executive Council Office

What We Heard Report

Key considerations to include in a Community Engagement Framework to enable clear paths for enhanced collaboration

Designing Engagement

Community & Government Collaboration

- Build and maintain partnerships with community groups early in the engagement
- Foster trust and open communication
- Develop mechanisms for ongoing two-way communication throughout engagement

Contextual Understanding

- Analyze past engagement outcomes and recent report findings
- Understand the knowledge and expertise of community partners and how to partner with them in the engagement
- Gain knowledge of the communities to be engaged and the people in those communities to connect with

Co-Design Engagement Activities

- Reduce logistical barriers to participation
- Be aware of and plan for the sensitivity of topic areas
- Create questions that give space for community to discuss their needs and priorities

During Engagement

Authentically Sharing Roles & Responsibilities

- Share engagement responsibilities with community partners with expertise in the topic areas and/or in the community to be engaged
- For some topic areas, it will make sense for conversations to be led by trusted people in the community

Supporting Participation

- Prioritize first voice and underrepresented and underserved communities
- Engage people who have an interest in the matter
- Have professional resources and supports available during engagements
- Use trauma-informed facilitation
- Challenge euro-centric values
- Be responsive to the participation needs of people including providing different options for participation
- Build in sufficient time and flexibility to allow for meaningful and intentional conversations
- Compensate first voice participants for their expertise

Post Engagement

Accessible & Transparent Communication and Reporting Back

- Share findings of the engagement and associated results
- Provide information in multiple ways and formats (through meetings and written)
- Ask community how they want to receive the reporting back information
- Translate materials to different languages
- Describe next steps and plans for action
- Establish feedback loops to provide input and comments

Prioritizing First Voice and Experience of Underrepresented and Underserved Communities

- Directly quote unique insights and themes (with permission)
- Give equal or greater weight to perspectives of first voice and underrepresented and underserved communities
- Let participants know how their input is being used

Continuous Collaboration and Engagement

- Communicate actions and updates regularly
- Collaborate with first voice, community leaders, and service providers in the ongoing design of solutions
- Provide opportunities for ongoing input and communication

What We Heard Report

Collaboration Principles Co-Designed

The following collaborative community engagement principles were developed by the government-community co-design team based on input received during the May 21st and 27th workshops.

Collaborate and co-design at all stages of engagement

- **Work together closely** as government representatives and community leaders and organizations to design and implement the engagement
- **Focus on action and results** that build on community strengths and enhance community capacity

Build mutual trust through Government and community partnerships

- **Share decision-making** about purpose, expectations, and parameters of engagements
- **Deepen relationships** over the long-term to address issues, strategize solutions, and achieve meaningful outcomes together
- **Use transparent communication** through multiple channels for open, honest, and frequent communication

Prioritize engaging people with lived experience of the issues

- **Support and invest** in the expertise of first-voice participants
- **Foster healing**, create safer-enough spaces to acknowledge trauma, and use trauma-informed practices to promote healing and trust

Be ambitious about equity, inclusion, and anti-oppressive practices

- **Address barriers to participation** so those from underrepresented and underserved communities are included
- **Challenge oppressive practices** to minimize power imbalances, acknowledge biases, and challenge discrimination

Monitor and learn together

- **Develop continuous feedback mechanisms** to support adherence to these principles
- **Learn and improve** how we engage and implement recommendations, refining the approach as we go

What's Next



- This input will help guide how we engage on inquiry recommendations. It has already helped shape the following resources which accompanied the 'What We Heard' Report:
 - * Tips for Engaging on Gender-Based Violence Topics; and
 - * Community Engagement Framework.
- The co-design and collaborative process continues to help foster ongoing relationships and partnerships.
- Next phase - Engage on inquiry recommendations in the new year.

Thank you for collaborating with us throughout this process and for sharing your valuable insights!

Participant List for workshops held on May 21 and May 27, 2024

Transition House Association of NS
NS Association of Black Social Workers
Impact Organizations of NS
African Nova Scotian Justice Institute
Mi'kmaw Legal Support Network
Mi'kmaw Family Healing Centres
Elizabeth Fry Society, Mainland NS
Access to Justice & Law Reform Institute
YWCA Halifax
HRM Community Safety
St. Mary's University
Avalon Sexual Assault Centre
RCMP
Immigrant Services Association of NS
Maggie's Place
Persons Against Non-State Torture
Peer Outreach Support Services & Education
YMCA Gender-Based Violence Prevention
Unmah Masjid Mosque
Antigonish Women's Resource & Sexual Assault Centre
NS Hospice and Palliative Care Association
Survivor Advocates
Be the Peace Institute
Colchester Sexual Assault Centre
YMCA of Halifax
Dept of Justice
Office of Addictions and Mental Health
Dept of Community Services
Dept of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage
Dept of Education and Early Childhood Development
Dept of Health and Wellness
Office of Status of Women
Office of Equity and Anti-Racism
Dept of Labour, Skills and Immigration
NS Provincial Housing Agency
African Nova Scotian Affairs
Executive Council Office
Office of Priorities and Planning