



Community Care through Planning Panel

Host: Pam Shaw

Panelists: Chief Fred Robbins (Esketemc), Valerie O'Connell (Skwah), Jamie Pond

10:30am - 11:30am, October 22

Virtual BC Comprehensive Community Planning Workshop 2020

Topic Overview

Community Care through Planning is about communities caring for their members. Much of the stories from this session revolve around the incredible efforts of leadership in communities during the COVID Pandemic and experiences with Emergency Management for the Pandemic and more broadly.

Key learnings

Valerie O'Connell:

Exhaustion is common, very present during COVID.

Emergency planning is key. Often gets overlooked, passed to the next meeting over and over.

The Pandemic hit and approach has since been to:

- Ensure safety of staff. Went to essential workers only. Opened the Emergency Operations Center - two people plus a supporting team in office.

Started to participate in coordination calls with the Province, Emergency Management BC.

The beginning of the pandemic was frightening. Emergency plan went to Council and a state of emergency was entered. Looked at how to help the community navigate the pandemic.

Connecting with community was key - created a daily video - explaining what group was doing - every day at a certain time.

Working seven days a week, using a wellness worker, having daily table talk meetings.

Delivered help/okay signs to households. Complete community circuit to look at windows, checking if help the sign was up.

Food hamper prep right away.

Need to contain community, stay home as much as possible.

Drive-thru at community hall for hot meals on Friday.



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Coordination calls daily, looking at how best to help the community.

Lockdown was installed at one point. A problem is active drug trade - the lockdown interrupted this and the community felt safer.

Decided to provide supports for the homeless. Lack of soup-kitchen meant new approach was needed. A homeless individual acted as go-between, bringing food to the camp daily.

Valerie wrote a Return to Work action plan and the community re-opened on June 1st. Essential workers first but encouragement for other staff. Moved EOC from administration building to community hall boardroom. Gave easy access to community members to talk to Emerg. Management team.

It has been an exhausting 7 months.

In the first week or two, realizing a need to still deal with frechet. Built a 1.2 kilometer berm to prevent flooding and this prevented a flood, challenging in addition to COVID.

Election also was supposed to take place. Has been postponed to November 22/23. Being held virtually now. Internal (staff) changes mean adjustment in a different way.

Moving ahead with developing an emergency family guide - pamphlet with instructions for different emergency responses - what to do as a community member during different types of emergencies (flood, fire, COVID, etc.)

Cases of COVID-19 hit hard. Fortunately it was maintained to one family. Fraser Health helped with contact tracing. A satellite testing station was brought into the main hall and everyone in contact was tested. Family was quarantined and supported for 2 weeks. Great outcome with lots of learnings for future. Plans need to be in place to anticipate this happening again.

Jamie Pond:

Kitsoo Xai'xais experienced a lot of grief in the 1918 pandemic. COVID was an opportunity to be strong.

EOC was implemented in March - Jamie is chair. EOC is functioning well. Meetings and adaptive actions with leadership working together to seal off community from outsiders. This



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allowed for Elders to continue social activity together - including boat trips on the territory. Youth play basketball together.

The EOC minutes and notes were put together to create an emergency planning protocol. Previous emergency plans did not include a scenario for a pandemic without a vaccine. So emergency planning is happening on the fly. Focus on health, finance, leadership, financing, clean energy.

For health, options to include virtual counselling. Bear healing group has come into the community to do mental wellness sessions.

Zoom and Facebook Live being used for community planning - including governance and CCP planning, leadership updates. Food security - online ordering and delivery now happening. Community gardens flourishing. Monthly grocery gift certificates.

Construction of a temporary camp outside of the community. Bunkhouses for workers, kitchen and mess tent. With these protocols in place things have been moving relatively normally. As an island there is more control over who comes and goes. Security monitoring boats, ferries, planes coming in.

Community updating new CCP to cover 2020 - 2025. Won't be finished until the end of March, but a few practical items have been identified.

Focus as project manager is to put physical things in place. Implementing surveys through Survey Monkey. Ideas for governance updates, policy and bylaw creation.

Short term - hydro modernization project on the go. An item from a previous CCP that took lots of time and effort, grant writing, public meetings, etc. Succeeded in assembling 10m to update hydro (don't have BC Hydro). Goal to be independent and self-sufficient.

Mid-term goals - waste-water treatment plant. Currently on septic and outfall.

Community Hall ground being broken.

Major housing renovations (five being renovated due to cold temps). Funding from CMHC. Climate change at forefront.



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Another 18 houses needing major renovations - making an application for these. COVID makes bringing in contractors difficult. Meeting with ISC, FNHA to accept virtual proof of mould and validate this remotely. Going into application.

Long-term goals: new subdivision development - 20 houses, two phases. New road, services.

Long-term goals: Reconciliation negotiations - previously had gotten to phase 4, but stalled treaty process. Opted for reconciliation negotiation piece by piece. Currently focussing on governance and wellness.

Governance - strong leadership needed to move forward productively.

Wellness - Community's economic success means that people have economic wellbeing but not health wellbeing (mental, physical, addictions, etc.) Getting people healthy is a huge part of reconciliation. And then moving forward.

Chief Fred Robbins:

One of the biggest pieces after opening EOC was bringing in Chief and Council - regular meetings with health staff.

Complete lockdown - there was a funeral in the community for someone who had been in Van General. Once they got home, the pandemic was announced.

Went into emergency Chief and Council meetings, did some research and locked down immediately. Gave the community 24 hours notice to retrieve supplies.

Security was placed at the main road and a separate road junction. Nobody could leave. Some people continued to drive around within the community. After a week people were allowed to leave if given a pass - had a curfew. Notified people coming into the community - service providers - were notified not to come unless it was an emergency. Moved into food box planning. PPE was collected for security and health staff.

Help was provided for off-reserve membership. Off-reserve folks filled out a survey online to confirm community-membership.

Inventories were done for homes to assess which size of food boxes to provide.



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Sat with ISC, Province of BC, planning in case of medical emergencies in different areas with poor road access. Road upgrades were completed.

Planning for what to do in the case of a COVID case happening in community. One of 11 bands in BC that submitted an emergency plan.

Live streaming of updates took place. Many community members stayed home and participated through online formats. Shows trust in leadership, instills pride.

Phase two is underway for emergency planning, lots of work has been done. In case of need for another lockdown the community is more ready.

A significant issue during the pandemic was people passing away. Following culture and tradition in these moments was really not possible due to COVID. Young people wanted to participate in the funeral service, but community was still under quarantine. Hard discussion was had. "If you have a service, make sure it's just family". Two nurses did a temperature check and questionnaire for any members coming into community for the service. The service took place outside the home. It was different than usual., Families and the community circled the household. The service was held at a distance.

"Lots of difficult situations where strong community and community support was needed to make quarantine possible. I'm glad the community rallied behind me and supported the work we were doing to support our elders and our next generation."

Communities need to plan, and we should help one another and share information. Don't hesitate to call.

Amazing Quotes

Any advice:

Valerie O'Connal: "You get tired. We were praying really hard that we were making the right decisions. We recognized that decisions affected the whole community. So be kind to yourself and take help whenever it's offered."

Jamie Pond: "Stay adaptable and always focus on the greater good."



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Chief Fred Robbins: “Be adaptable, but plan for the worst and hope for the best. Many CCP’s we talk about, we tend to forget the pandemics and look for that brighter future. When you don’t reach that, reality hurts. Prepare for the worst but hope for the best.”

“When the community sees you getting your hands dirty and getting your feet wet, it goes a long way to show them that you care.”

“Within communities, many small conflicts were taking place. Those conflicts disappeared during the pandemic. Those issues got brushed aside for the protection of the community.”

Further Resources and Links

From Slack:

- Webinar Wednesdays: Wellness in a Time of Uncertainty - April 8, 2020 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFGILCrW3Wc&feature=youtu.be>
- The Hope for Wellness Help Line offers immediate help to all Indigenous peoples across Canada. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to offer: counselling crisis intervention. hopeforwellness.ca.

Notes by: Jake Rogger