

# I'taamohkanoohsin “Everyone Comes Together”

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Chelsey De Groot, ARCHES (Aids Outreach Community Harm Reduction Education Support Society)

David Gabert, Canadian Mental Health Association, Alberta South Region

Les Vonkeman, Lethbridge Police Service

Roger Hunt, Kainai Wellness Centre

Mark Brave Rock,, Peer Support



# Format of the Presentation

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- Introductions
- Background & History of Project
- Current Offerings
- Panel Discussion
  - Chelsey De Groot, ARCHES Lethbridge
  - David Gabert, CMHA Alberta South Region
  - Les Vonkeman, Lethbridge Police Service
  - Roger Hunt, Elder
  - Mark Brave Rock, Peer
- Questions & Answers

# A bit about Chelsey:

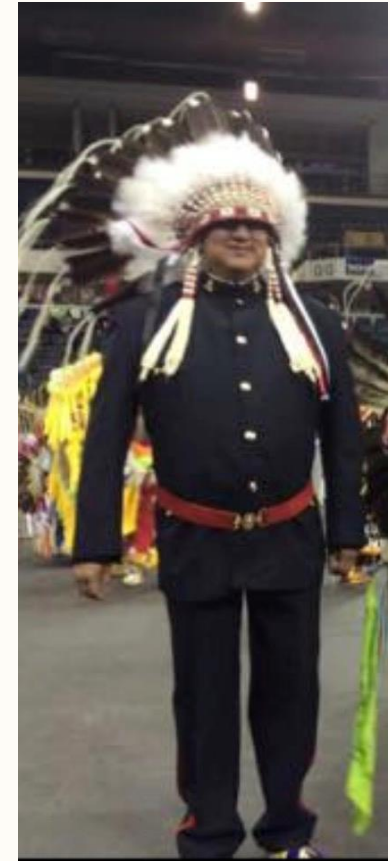
- Diploma in General Studies and Child and Youth Care, Bachelors of Applied Arts in Justice Studies.
- Worked with Child Protection for 6 years prior to working with individuals experiencing homelessness. Began at CMHA as a case manager, moving into Team Lead, and now ARCHES as the Indigenous Peer Coordinator.
- Her daughter is Blackfoot from Kainai (Blood Tribe).
- Passion for the Indigenous population and traditional ways of healing.
- Received her Indian Name in 2011. This name has played a huge role in what she does today.



# A bit about Les:

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- Diversity Officer, Lethbridge Police Service, 16 Year Member
- First ten years of service on patrol
- Spent the last six years as the Diversity Officer, and gained a better understanding of the Blackfoot way of life.
- Became a part of a Dutch Family during the Sixties Scoop
- Now a member of the Saa'mis Headdress Society
- Been a foster parent for the last twenty years.
- Has received an Indian Name at the Sun Dance two years ago.





# A bit about Roger:

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- Worked as an Addictions Counsellor helping members of the Blood Tribe for the last twenty years.
- Been sober for the last twenty-five years
- Respected former leader of the Horns Society; now considered a grandfather.



# A bit about Mark:

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- Former lived experience with homelessness.
- Advocate for individuals experiencing homelessness in Lethbridge.
- Blackfoot language and cultural liaison for public entities in Lethbridge.



# A bit about David:

- Communication and Project Lead for CMHA, ASR.
- Provides administrative support for the team in regards to funding application, reporting, resource development and communication support.
- Networks between the different community agencies and committees in Lethbridge to pool resources.
- Started work with Blackfoot Elders to provide cultural offerings to the public through the museum and tourism sector in 2006.
- Has a background in Administration, Theatre & Tourism





# Partners & Collaborators

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- Thanks to all of the agencies who made this program possible:
  - Canadian Mental Health Association, Calgary
  - Canadian Mental Health Association, ASR
  - Lethbridge ARCHES (Aids Outreach Community Harm Reduction Education Support Society)
  - Lethbridge Police Service
  - Blood Tribe Department of Health
- All of our community partners
- Feedback and input from individuals in the community.



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# Background

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- The journey to creating this program, began with a partnership between Canadian Mental Health Association, Calgary Region, and Canadian Mental Health Association, Alberta South Region to train facilitators in *The Art of Friendship* Peer Support Program.
- When CMHA, ASR began the planning and launch of Peer Support Programming, it was recognized that many individuals in Lethbridge lacked access to cultural components as a part of their recovery journey.
- With the largest reserve in Canada as Lethbridge’s neighbor, frontline staff in multiple programs across sectors have often heard of a desire from individuals to reconnect with their culture

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# How the Program Began:

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- Intrigued by trauma and traditional ways of healing.
- Noticed there was a service gap in the community for the Indigenous population.
- Consulted with an Elder and other First Nation members of the community.
- Created a survey with 5 simple questions:
  - 1. Age group (18-24) or (25 and older)
  - 2. Do you find cultural resources are lacking in the City of Lethbridge?
  - 3. Would you find having access to and Elder within the city limits beneficial?
  - 4. Do you have a desire to re-connect to your culture?
  - 5. What types of activities would you like to see in the city?

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# How the Program Began: (Continued)

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- Distributed the survey across the community over the course of three months, to all agencies serving the Indigenous population (Alberta Works, Lethbridge Correctional Centre, Housing First Agencies, Sifton Youth and Family Services, etc.)
- 93 surveys were completed, took the top three suggestions from youth and adults to focus on first.
- Presented survey feedback to the Aboriginal Interagency Committee, which is where the partnership with LPS began.



# Survey Results:

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- Total numbers of surveys: 93
  - 32 youth, 61 adults.
- 90% of adults; 63% of youth said that cultural resources are lacking.
- 90% of adults, 84% of youth expressed a desire to be reconnected with their culture.
- 96% of adults, 88% of youth expressed the desire to have access to an elder within city limits.
- Top specific cultural activities requested:
  - Adults: Language (90%); Beading and Crafts (75%); History (72%)
  - Youth: Beading and Crafts (75%); Sweats (72%); Language (69%)





# Funding & Collaboration

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- One of the largest challenges faced by CMHA, ASR in the development of this program was funding a staff member to dedicate time and resources to the program. Staff who were involved in the survey, development, and vision had many other responsibilities that continually took resources away from developing the program.
- In order to overcome this, many key partners were engaged by CMHA, ASR and Chelsey De Groot to keep the project moving forward.
- In particular, local Elders, the Blood Tribe Department of Health, Lethbridge ARCHES and Lethbridge Police Service contributed key elements that resulted in the first successful gathering in January of 2017.
- In order to fund a position to oversee the program, arrangements were made to jointly fund a position by CMHA, ASR and ARCHES. This partnership has allowed greater time and resources by Chelsey to be focused on the project.

# *I'taamohkanoohsin* Cultural Activities

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- Our first gathering had approximately 100 individuals attend.
- Coffee and breakfast sandwiches provided by McDonalds.
- Indigenous and non-indigenous worked together to put up the tipi, and gathered for conversation.



# I'taamohkanoohsin Tipi Event

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- Weekly Event in Galt Gardens in Lethbridge
- Promoted through Agencies and Word of Mouth with Participants
- All are Welcome; Everyone is Accepted, Everyone is Equal
- Timeline of the Event
  - 8:00 AM –Set-Up of Tipi
  - 9:00 AM –Conversations & Ceremony in Tipi
  - 11:00 AM –Food & Conversations
- Other Activities often take place at the event including:
  - Smudging; Prayers; Hand Games, Crafts





# I'taamohkaanohsin

## Other Activities

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- Preparation Activities for the Event also engage participants:
- Cooking of Food (Fry bread; chili, stew, berry soup)
- Cutting of Tipi Poles
- Painting of Tipi
- Gathering of Supplies





# Hand Games

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# Hand Games & Cooking



One of the stews



# Naapi's Rock and the Women's Buffalo Jump

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# Tipi Rail Cutting

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# Tipi Rail Cutting (Continued)

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# Other Activities

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- Talking Circle
- Drumming
- Storytelling with Blackfoot Elders

# Some of the Team

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- Pictured here: Housing First Clinical Team (Registered Nurse, Housing Specialists), Diversion Outreach Team, and Mobile Street Outreach.
- Participation has strengthened relationships with individuals immensely.





# Feedback from Participants

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- “This is exactly what we needed in order to heal”
- “Powerful stories are shared here”
- “Created a safe place”
- “Sense of belonging”
- “The tipi is our home”







# Feedback from Participants (Continued)

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- “This sobered me up for the morning and kept me sober”.
- “This is building trust between us and the police”.
- “This is a great learning opportunity for me to learn about the culture and for my foster children to learn about their culture”.
- Elder made a connection with one of the youth who was in attendance for talking circle. He attended Residential School with the youth’s grandfather.
- Alberta Works now has time allotted to attend as it has strengthened relationships with individuals accessing their office for supports.

# Medicine Wheel Teachings

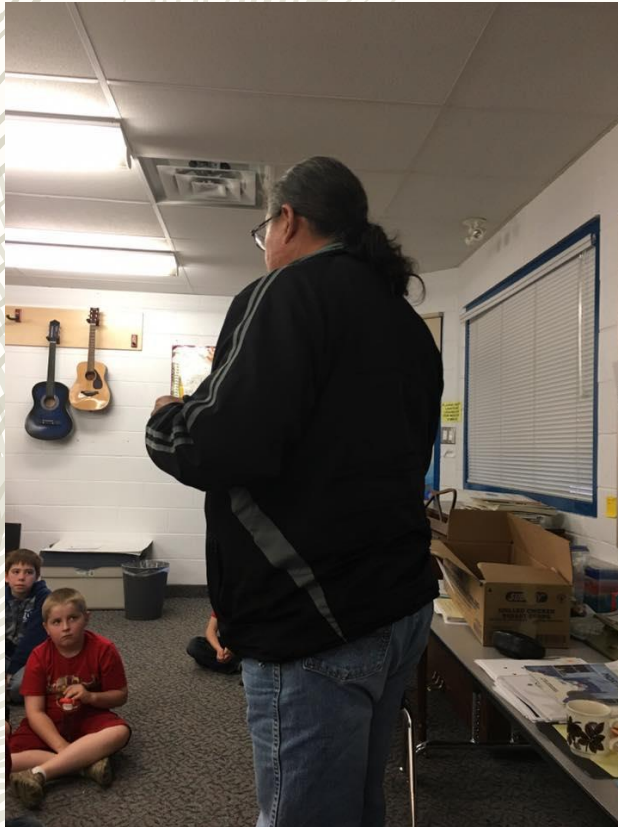
- “The circle is a sacred symbol of life...Individual parts within the circle connect with every other; and what happens to one, or what one part does, affects all within the circle”.
  - *Virginia Driving Hawk Shere.*



# “Culture is Prevention!”

~ *Lance Scout, Blood Tribe Department of Health*

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# Community Activities

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# Panel Discussion

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The Future: *Always a Work in Progress!*

