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PROJECT BACKGROUND

The *Faith and Spiritual Leaders Dialogue Series* engaged more than 100 faith leaders over eight workshops.

Leaders from the following faith and spiritual communities were represented: Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian (Roman Catholic, Evangelical Lutheran, Pentecostal, Dutch Reformed, United Church of Canada, Anglican, Celebration Life Church, Baptist, Church of Jesus Christ of LDS, Mennonite, Pentecostal, Presbyterian), Unitarian, Jewish (Orthodox, Reform, Conservative), Hindu, Muslim (Sunni, Shi'a, Ismaili Shi'a, and Sufi perspectives) and diverse Sikh communities. Senior level Indigenous representation was also included, from Kwakwaka'wakw and Musqueam Nations.

Workshops were designed in two basic formats: first, four larger sessions with facilitated breakout rooms, followed by four smaller sessions in plenary with a diverse working group (involving a relatively consistent group of 20-30 leaders or their proxies). In most workshops, leaders met with Dr. Bonnie Henry and/or other provincial officials. In the later stages, the working group provided detailed feedback on various drafts of PHO guidelines, policies and health orders regarding clarity, respectful language and culturally appropriate accommodations.

Sustained participation and buy-in from senior decision makers

Guiding principle

For authentic and accountable public engagement, decision-makers need to be genuinely interested in the public's input and respond directly to what they hear in ways that are visible to participants. The direct presence of decision-makers in a role of deep listening can greatly increase public trust in the authenticity and meaningfulness of a process. Participation from decision-makers also ensures that their needs and constraints are communicated, leading to more sustainable and actionable recommendations.

- Dr. Henry joined the majority of the eight workshops, sharing updates and context with participants, taking and answering questions and perhaps most importantly, listening deeply to challenges, concerns and recommendations. In all the workshops a provincial official was present in each breakout room as a "deep listener". In the final workshop both Dr. Henry and Minister Dix facilitated breakout discussions. These manifestations of ongoing participation and commitment were frequently acknowledged with gratitude by participants in plenaries, post-event surveys and direct messages.
- This project benefited enormously from full support at the highest levels of the Ministry of Health, the Public Health Office and the Office of the Premier. Senior officials within all three offices directly participated in the project and avoided delegating engagement to less senior staff. This ensured that the engagement 1 (y hearis ensurartiang)1&(atitute bicipa)2 Prints

Guiding principle

Strong feedback loop with participant input directly shaping decisions and

Guiding principle

Authentic and accountable public engagement requires incorporating stakeholder feedback into the decision-making process. Engagement is conducted at a point when input can still make an impact and when the decision-maker is seeking answers to questions they don't already know the answers to, instead of engaging with predetermined conclusions. Providing transparency about the process of policy-building increases participants' trust that their contributions have a real potential to make a difference.

Project examples

- A major strength of the project was the direct feedback loop with participants and more specifically, the link between participant input, draft policies and health orders, participants' reviews and revisions and then ultimately final policies/documents. The openness of PHO to soliciting direct input from participants on drafts was incredibly powerful and transparent and in many cases, led to direct changes to the orders.
- Between the workshops, the Centre served as a 'go-to place' for participants to ask questions and provide feedback on the process, as well as offer important contextual information about their communities' concerns.

Guiding principle

Public engagement must create conditions for informed and actionable deliberation. Providing participants with reliable and credible information is essential. In addition, participants should be encouraged to be more inquisitive, recognize complexity and different perspectives and weigh trade-offs in relation to their values, interests and experiences, leading to relevant and strategic policy advice. In the end, engagement processes should contribute to en

Interactive, flexible project design

Guiding principle

In a long-term engagement process, it is particularly important to be able to adapt and respond to emerging needs and changing contexts. A flexible, iterative process allows organizers to learn from and improve on previous interactions to best meet the needs of decision-makers and participants, for instance by changing framings, communications, accessibility supports and process designs.

Project examples

- This project did not begin with a predetermined process. While there were core objectives, the multi-faceted process design was built through an interactive, iterative process, which involved deep consultation with faith leaders during and between formal engagements, in-depth conversations with senior government decision-makers, as well as expertise from the Centre.
- An exit survey after every workshop provided participants with the opportunity to evaluate their experience and provide additional input on the topics. Feedback related to agenda and key questions were considered carefully and informed subsequent workshops.

| AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

While this project had many unique strengths, there were also important learnings and areas for improvement, some of which are highlighted below to stimulate reflection.

Transparent final reporting for participants and/or public

Developing “What We Heard” reports at the conclusion of an engagement is increasingly becoming a standard practice to support transparency, accountability and trust in democratic processes. Ideally, reports should outline the outreach and engagement process, a summary of key points from the discussions and details about final outcomes or next steps. Final reports should be made available to participants and/or the public.

Indigenous representation

Because of the distinct constitutional status of Indigenous people as individuals and groups, including Nations, inclusive engagement in BC should not conflate Indigenous identities within a broad EDI+ spectrum. Well-intentioned “multiculturalism” must not replicate colonial patterns by treating Indigenous identity as merely another ethno-cultural-religious difference. Thus, guided by UNDRIP and related foundational documents and other factors, the province and Indigenous leaders meet within distinct frameworks following protocols negotiated on a government-to-government level.

At the same time, the fundamental principle of “nothing about us, without us” suggests that Indigenous knowledge holders should be part of critical conversations about public policy being formulated on their ancestral lands. Indigenous communities are also spiritual communities; a particularly destructive dimension of colonization was its assertion that Indigenous peoples lacked legitimate religions and spiritual traditions of their own. For these and other reasons, Indigenous leaders were invited to these workshops, because excluding Indigenous leaders from high-level gatherings of religious or spiritual leaders could be taken to suggest that Indigenous peoples do not have religious or spiritual traditions other than those imported to these lands by settlers – or that their religious or spiritual traditions are not as important. Of