

Stories from Piloting the Well-being Toolkit

Rainbow Literacy: Stories Sharing Each Client's Journey

July
feature



This month we feature Barbare Moore Coffey's experience of piloting the toolkit at a small FRN in rural southern Alberta. Barbara is the Executive Director of Rainbow Literacy and found in the toolkit a way to make storytelling fundamental to learning and understanding impact.

How did you get started with using the ALIGN Well-being Toolkit?

I met with our family navigator and all the facilitators of our different programs. I went through the slideshow about the ALIGN Well-being Initiative and showed them the videos from the Toolkit. Together, we had a conversation about how we could ground floor implement the well-being domains and the Wayfinding with Lobsticks self-reflection into our process for collecting stories. Each program has different assessments and tools to help clients reach their goals, so we

added the Lobstick questions for each well-being domain into the facilitator's daily logs. So now, every time the facilitators work with a family or parent, they have that reflection piece to collect their positive stories and challenges under each of those domains. Everything we do is client-led, so we want clients to be able to understand what we're trying to capture. This is super important because they can take that power and create their confidence at each level.

How does the Well-being toolkit fit with what you are doing at Rainbow Literacy?

I view this toolkit as a tool to intentionally embed reflective practices and story collection into our programs on a daily basis. This approach takes us back to the intention of why each individual is coming to our programs and what their needs are. It gives us a better understanding of the individual's outcomes through the many unique markers of well-being. Through stories, this reality gets translated into reporting. We have already gathered stories for other funders because stories reflect the impact better. Whether it's the board, volunteers, staff, or

funders, they need to hear something impactful for them. Not everyone gets excited about numbers like I do, but people want to hear how their time is spent helping the community. Our board has been requesting we collect more stories. We don't have the funding for a database per se to collect stories, but once a month, all facilitators come together over lunch or dinner to share stories about what they need, what works, and what doesn't. Then, we write it out and share those stories with the board or funder.

What did you learn from the first couple months of this experience?

When I went through the toolkit with my staff, I had to work through many questions. Some of the facilitators asked me how the Indigenous perspective fits when only a small portion of our clients are Indigenous. We have facilitators from Siksiká who deliver programs which meshes well with them because they teach through stories. If you understand that you can learn through story, you can collect through story. My response to the question was that an Indigenous perspective goes side by side with the cultural diversity of everyone we serve. Even though we may be looking at it through

an Indigenous lens, it lends itself to all cultures because if you go to the root of culture, storytelling is how our history and journey is shared. Indigenous people were the first people of Canada, and the rest of us came later, so why would we not lean towards the people who had the first knowledge here?

The key is that the individuals delivering programs and directly contacting the clients are also collecting the stories. It's vital that those facilitators fully understand what these stories can capture rather than just checking little boxes. You need that personal impact story because it resonates with the government and funders and captures clients' fluidity and journey.

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Join the Community of Practice

Learn from other agencies on how they are using the toolkit. Fill out this [form](#) to join the community.



Learn more about the Well-being Toolkit

Access the toolkit and its resources, videos, and Well-being Impact Portal at www.alignab.ca/well-being

How to gather and share stories of significant change?

For your Impact Self-Reflections and for the Winter Count, you will share stories of meaningful change and impact on well-being. There are many different ways to gather stories of significant change. Here, we outline a few examples, and encourage you to use what is helpful and feasible in your practice.

Collecting stories

Talking circles with youth and families

This involves bringing youth, caregivers, or staff together to share stories of change as a result of the program or support. You can involve an Elder to have the sharing validated with smudging. Each person in the circle responds to an open question such as “Looking back, what do you think has been an important change for you that was a result of coming to the program?”. If the participants are comfortable with it, you can record the audio or video.



Listen to a youth worker speaking about the ways youth share their story.

Visual storytelling with children and youth

Instead of verbal stories, consider inviting children to draw about their dreams for the future, their family or home, or their feelings. Photovoice is a visual storytelling methodology well-suited to youth. Youth receive a camera or use their cellphones to take pictures that answer a question, for example, ‘what does family mean to you?’. After the child or youth has drawn or taken their pictures, ask them to tell you about the pictures.

Reflective sessions with staff

Ask staff to gather together to share stories of impactful experiences with service users, whether as a success story or a learning opportunity. This could be incorporated into weekly team meetings.

Exit interviews

Many agencies have participants fill out surveys at the end of a program or service. Consider also having an in-person discussion with the family or individual to hear their story of how the program was for them in their own words.

[Download the full resource here](#)