

Stories from Piloting the Well-being Toolkit

# The Village: Supporting Staff in Seeing the Impact

December  
feature



*This month we feature Val Crosby, Executive Director of The High Level Toy Lending Library, which currently provides Mackenzie Family Resource Network (MFRN) services. The MFRN is an all-inclusive FRN providing the full continuum of service delivery to all ages. Within the FRN model, they have a Hub serving families in rural northern Alberta, and two spokes, Home Visitation and Parent Education. Val works with her staff to capture impact in a way that reflects the growth and journey that is unique and meaningful to each individual and family.*

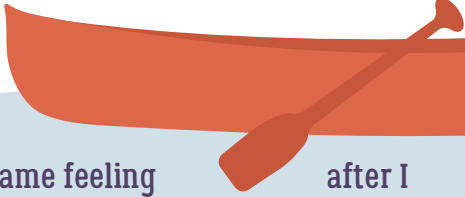
## How did you get started with using the ALIGN Well-being Toolkit?

When we first discovered the toolkit, we read it a million times and worked to figure out how to best use it incorporating it with what we already did. We have used it as a jumping off point to thinking about how our current data collection system can be tweaked and refined.

It can be as simple as getting my staff thinking about stories as an icebreaker at the beginning of each staff meeting. Recently, I've asked them to tell me two stories of what they saw in programming that speaks to a deliverable. It was really difficult for staff, really, really difficult. They thought they hadn't seen anything. So we thought together about: "Well, what about

this?" "Oh, yeah, I saw that. Okay, so that's what we're looking for." Or "What does that measure? If you saw a parent do this, what would that be showing you?" That was an opportunity for us as a group, to drill down on what they're observing and what that means for our outcomes and impact.

I think that this tool is going to be a very effective teaching tool with my staff to get them thinking about capturing impact and growth outside of the standard evaluation or survey forms by looking for experiences and stories.



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## How does the ALIGN Well-being toolkit fit with what you are doing at the Village?

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When I'm sitting here in this job, and I'm asking my staff to fill out forms that I need for reporting, the language in there isn't the language that the folks that are actually doing the work use. And I think one of the strengths of this toolkit is that it helps to bridge the gap in the language to help us

interpret what we need to report versus what folks actually need to capture. I think that part is really well done.

Also, the **videos in the toolkit** are very, very helpful. For example, in the video of Miskanawah's culture camp, there is one youth describing how uncomfortable they felt about embracing their Indigenous roots because of their pale skin, and how they weren't feeling like they belong. But coming to Miskanawah, they found a home and a place where they belong. The impact of that story, captured on video is more powerful than any text interpretation.

It makes such a huge difference to be able to capture their experience, which really is the true measure of how we are providing service to our families.

### How we Gather Stories at The Village

We have a Google form for staff where entries get pulled automatically into a spreadsheet. The form for staff asks, "What are the outcomes we are trying to support?" And then staff fill in their anecdotal stories. For reporting purposes, I have access to real-time interactions and reflections of staff on how their program measures up against their intended outcomes. I feel like the data collection portion of the toolkit will allow me to improve my system and be able to pull out the data in a cohesive and organized manner. I can put away my printouts and highlighters!



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

What I like about the toolkit is that it is a concrete framework, with concrete **indicators**. I love the language and the alignment with our FRN deliverables. And it helps shift our evaluation to a narrative format. I think the idea of Wayfinding with Lobsticks is brilliant and will make it easier for staff to understand.

As Agencies, we are doing the work - real, authentic, powerful work with families, but aren't confident about measuring it. We're experiencing a big movement away from the clinical piece, and toward plain language: *Is what we do working?* People who are using the services will tell us in their language. The toolkit creates the space to do that.

This is a tool that we can use, we can morph, and we can make very personal to our landscape. But it also has the ability to be the vehicle that enables us to respond in the way that our funders need us to respond.

When we think about colonization, it was the government coming in saying that they have a better way, and that Indigenous communities don't have a system and don't have a governance. I think that this tool speaks to the strength of the Indigenous people and the strength of being in relationship and of storytelling. It centers the knowledge gathering way of the Indigenous culture within a provincial framework and say, this format works great for Indigenous folk, and it works great for everyone else. We are now validating the fact that Indigenous people always have had a system, protocol, and a way of gathering information to understand at a much deeper level.

I feel like this toolkit helps us to get to the underlying intention: Why do we collect data? Why is this important? How do we tell the whole story, putting people instead of numbers at the heart of it?



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of Practice

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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](http://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](#)