

LABORERO CONSULTING – REPORT SUMMARY

Why the Report was commissioned

The Board of Directors commissioned the Indigenous Relations Report in February of 2021 after Siloam Mission heard concerns regarding its delivery of Indigenous spiritual and culture care. The report offered insight that was a snapshot in time and made recommendations that would help Siloam Mission develop an Indigenous Relations Strategy. Siloam Mission received the report in late June.

The Process

When gathering information for the report, significant efforts went into conducting an organizational and governance review. A multi-pronged approach was used, including one-on-one interviews, focus group sessions and a review of documents.

Several interviews were conducted with the vast majority of staff, board members and former employees. The Interviews were conducted with all the executive team and board members, program managers, Indigenous staff, and other key roles identified by others. Siloam documents, such as employee surveys and policies, were also reviewed. Focus groups were held with Indigenous patrons and community leaders.

What we heard

Indigenous Staff: The Indigenous staff are interested in being a part of the future of Siloam and would like to see the organization adopt a strategy that considers incorporating Indigenous practices, culture, and ways of being into Siloam's programs and services. None of the employees felt that they were discriminated against, but some felt that they were left out of conversations that relate directly to them and the community members they serve.

Indigenous Patrons: Overall, the patrons appreciate the programs and services and have a respect for Siloam. There was no complaints of religion or Christianity forced on individuals but almost all noted the lack of opportunities for Indigenous practices and/or cultural activities considering that a large number of patrons are of Indigenous ancestry. Some expressed a real longing for programs and activities that have been stopped due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Indigenous Community Leaders: Indigenous community leaders understand the role Siloam plays in the community and the important and needed services it provides. They feel there is a need for Siloam to better communicate with Indigenous organizations and community members. Some leaders reported that they are aware of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness who are choosing not to attend Siloam due to the fear of having Christianity forced on them. This is problematic when dealing with a community that has trauma stemmed from colonization and the inter-generational impacts of residential schools.

Most Indigenous community leaders are willing to help guide and/or support Siloam. They would like to see Siloam increase Indigenous representation on the board and amongst staff in order to help facilitate some of the change so Indigenous people are supported properly as they work on their healing journey. They feel Siloam needs knowledge keepers with proper training or work on building partnerships and relationships to bring expertise in this area. They acknowledge that all organizations are serving the same people so it would be in the best interest of the community members to work together and look at opportunities collectively.

Many hope Siloam is successful and does the true authentic and genuine work around reorganizing itself to be a community leader, grounded in Indigenous ways of being and doing, ensuring there are no anti oppressive practices, and lead by the community needs.

Key Recommendations to develop an Indigenous Relations Strategy

Siloam Mission's board of directors has accepted all of the recommendations in the strategy, and either already has, or soon will be implementing the following key drivers:

- Hiring an Indigenous Relations Director to join the Executive team
- Looking for Indigenous representation on our Board of Directors
- Recruiting and developing retention strategies for Indigenous staff within all levels of the organization
- Launching Indigenous education programs for both the Board and the staff
- Ensuring Indigenous community members have access to culturally relevant programs
- Developing stronger partnerships and relationships within the poverty and homelessness sector
- Fulfilling commitments made as part of Winnipeg's Indigenous Accord and as part of our commitment to the Truth & Reconciliation Commission's calls to action