



**PREPARING  
OUR HOME:  
WORKSHOP**  
Lessons from  
Siksika Nation





Preparing our Home is a community-based resilience planning program. The program enables Indigenous youth to reach their potential in becoming emergency preparedness leaders in their communities.

[preparingourhome.ca](http://preparingourhome.ca)

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# PREPARING OUR HOME

## WORKSHOP

### “ENABLING INDIGENOUS YOUTH AS EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS LEADERS”

APRIL 8-11, 2019

## SIKSIKA

The Siksika refer to themselves as Niitsitapi or “the Real People.” This is because they are equal partners to the universe with all the other Beings. Many Stories and legends have been passed down through generations about Creation and the early days.

## THE BLACKFOOT CONFEDERACY

The Blackfoot Confederacy, up until midway through the 1800’s controlled a vast area in the Northeastern Plains. This area reached from the North Saskatchewan River in present-day Alberta, extending all the way to the upper Missouri River in Montana. The Blackfoot Holding were flanked on the western side by the Rocky Mountains. The tribes of the Blackfoot Confederacy, Siksika, Piikani, and Kainawa.



## CLANS

We have three main clans:

The Kainai (Many Leaders, also called the Blood);

The Piikani (including the Amskaapikani in Montana and Apatohsippiikani in southern Alberta also called Peigan);

The Siksika (Blackfoot, also called northern Blackfoot).

We share a common language and culture. The Siksika are a unique First Nation unto themselves, with a cultural identify that is distinct from either the Kainai or the Piikani clans.

Like most Plains tribes, the Blackfeet were nomadic and lived in buffalo-skin tipis that could be moved easily. They had no interest in arts, such as pottery or basketry, nor in agriculture. Instead, they depended almost entirely on the buffalo and moved wherever the buffalo went. They used buffalo for their food, clothing, shelter, and equipment.



Buffalo meat was either dried for winter or used fresh. The Blackfeet also occasionally hunted other game, such as deer, moose, and elk. The women foraged the Plains and supplemented their diet with whatever berries, roots, and plants they could find. When the women were not foraging, they spent most of their time tanning the hides, a difficult and time-consuming task. The women also constructed and erected the tipis and did the cooking.

Siksika Nation is located 110 kilometers east of Calgary. The Nation covers a large geographic area (71,087.5 hectares). The Bow River runs through the length of the Reserve. The population of the Siksika Nation was 7,497, approximately 4,095 live on the Reserve according to 2018 membership. Nation members speak English and Blackfoot, and both languages are considered in service provision.

The Nation provides a range of health, social, learning, recreational service and economic development to Nation members through:

- Siksika Health Services
- Siksika Family and Child Services
- Siksika Board of Education
- Community Support Services which includes Recreational services (which has recently been moved to Siksika Health Services)
- Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park
- Siksika Resource Development Limited



## WHAT IS PREPARING OUR HOME?”

Preparing Our Home is a community-based program. The overarching goal of the Preparing Our Home workshop was to build the capacity of Siksika Nation Youth for the mobilization of Preparing Our Home across phases of Emergency Management such as Preparedness, Response and Recovery. The program is in line with Siksika Nation’s Mission Statement “Of Nurturing the Growth, Independence, Well-being of our Siksika Culture and Way of Life”.

The workshop engaged youth with experienced instructors and Elders to enhance culturally informed community preparedness through actionable outcomes. The Elders have a wealth of traditional knowledge and experience to teach and share with the youth. 6 – 9 Youth from the Siksika Outreach School participated in the workshop. Preparing Our Home workshop also involved Land Management, Councillor Eldon Weasel Child, Education Department, the Principal and staff of the Siksika Outreach School.

The Preparing Our Home workshop is a true demonstration of “Truth and Reconciliation” as it provides an opportunity to share community stories and experiences and look collectively for solutions to address challenges that we face today and into the future by reclaiming our strength from our ancestors.



## DAY ONE OUTCOMES/OBJECTIVES

1. The youth will gain knowledge on how to prepare your home in the event of a natural disaster.
2. The youth will gain knowledge and awareness of risks and hazards within their school area, home and surrounding community and will have the knowledge to share with other youth.
3. The youth will gain knowledge regarding natural disasters that have occurred within Siksika from the Elders.
4. Cultural teachings from the elders regarding the importance of making non-perishable traditional foods to ensure they have a food supply in the event of a natural disaster.
5. The youth will gain knowledge on how to make smoked meat.
6. The youth will be the next generation of Indigenous “Community Resilience Leaders.”

The youth participated in the mapping exercise identifying risks and hazards. The mapping exercise commenced with drawing a map from the Siksika Outreach School to the Ittasinnop Food Bank. Once the map was completed the youth commenced with identifying and mapping hazards and risks.

## PREPARING OUR HOME: SIKSIKA WAY

- Ispommitta** - The traditional way to help out, assist our family, friends and neighbors is the traditional Siksika Way of Life.
- Sopoksislotsi**- To have knowledge about an activity through one's experience.
- iiyika'kima** - To try hard to learn, is a word of encouragement used to tell each one to do the best we can at each task.
- Ittasinno'p** - Historically referred to as a place where food rations were given out to community members.



The youth also learned today that the Ittasinno'p Food Bank plays a huge role in addressing the issue of hunger and food insecurity. Emergency food hampers are provided to individuals, families and especially families with children who are in need of food. They had an opportunity to tour the warehouse to see the food is given to Siksika community members.

Once they completed the mapping, we walked around the Food Bank and area to identify risks and hazards. Once the walk around was completed we reviewed the map to verify if all risk and hazards were identified on the map.



## DAY TWO

### REVIEW OF HOMEWORK

#### “IDENTIFY RISKS AND HAZARDS AT HOME, YARD AND COMMUNITY.”

Youth identified the following risks and hazards that were present at their home, yard and community:

Laundry soap, hot stove, furnaces, microwave (dangerous to put metal or aluminum foil in microwave), laundry soap pods, pipes exposed in yard, nails, swords/knives, electrical outlets, electric saws – blades, old washer/dryer, old fridges, candles, bleach, medication, hot water, matches, carbon monoxide, glass, dogs, plastic grocery bags, barbed wire fence, old cars, and gopher holes.

#### Save the Children

(Lewis Archer and Carmen Barrientos Martinez)

Presented and overview of services they provide when there is a disaster. Informed the youth Save the Children were present in the Siksika community during and after the 2013 flood. A different group of their staff from Save the Children worked closely with Dancing Deer Disaster Recovery Centre (Team) in the provision of programs for the youth affected by the 2013 flood. They also informed the group that it is Save The Children’s 100th Birthday.

Lewis and Carmen assisted by involving the youth in mock disaster scenarios:

#### Scenario # 1 “What would you do if there is a flood, storms, tornado, etc.” ?

1. **How would you be feeling?**

**Youth Response** - scared, anxious, worried.

2. **Worries? Youth Response** - belongings, homes, animals, stuffies, family and friends.

3. **There is a flood outside** – what would you do?

**Youth responses:** Gather supplies, find first aid kit, check windows, make sure everyone is safe, grab all my toys, follow my mom, cry, look for food, find a safe place.

4. **How would a 5 year old react/feel?**

**Youth responses:** Cry, hide, cling, look for adult.

5. **All things in which children are different from adults are:**

**Youth responses:** children respond with emotions before thinking it through, children are smaller than adults, don’t have same strength as adults, children have to depend on adults most of the time, don’t have the same knowledge of natural disasters as adults, adults reassure them that everything will be okay.

6. **How are emergencies more dangerous for children?**

**Youth Response:** medication, panic, hide.

7. **One thing you can do to help children in an emergency?**

**Youth Response:** teach the kids about escape routes, bring the child with me, try to reassure them, get them out of situation.

8. **How has someone helped to make you feel better in a hard situation?**

**Youth Response:** distracting me, walk it off, contact (physical ie. hug)

#### Scenario # 2

1. Two children and their mom and dad are walking home from school.

2. A car crashes into one of the children.

3. The child is crying and bleeding on the floor. The mom/dad rush to pick up the child. All the bystanders rush to do the same.

4. Meanwhile, the second child sits alone and starts to cry.

5. First aider comes in.

#### What do you need to do to be effective in a scenario as outlined above?

#### Responses from Youth:

Be a good listener, observant, provide practical assistance, referral, look for signs of distress, caring, patient, calm, cause hurt to themselves or others, panic attacks, loss of loved one or injury.

#### STEPS

1. Look is it safe? Distress? Basic needs, weather, bystanders traumatized.
2. Listen – body language & verbal
3. Ask open questions for example: What happened?
4. Link to necessary supports, for example: police, church, social worker

#### Sharing Circle - How do we get other youth involved?

Astokomii Smith: “I became involved with the Preparing Our Home Program, my first involvement was at a conference in Montreal regarding disasters. There was a youth section of the conference which I attended and participated in. I also had the opportunity to attend the Preparing Our Home Workshop in Osoyoos, B.C. As a result of the knowledge that I have gained, I am here this week because it is important to be prepared and gain and share knowledge regarding preparing our home”.

#### Responses from Youth:

Youth can get involved in picking up garbage, start recycling, bigger youth group workshops, address youth mental health, more information regarding addictions, hands on traditional teachings such as smoking meat, elders teach our language as we do hands on teachings.

## DAY THREE

### PREPARING MEAT

The elders shared stories of how they learned how to prepare meat before smoking the meat. Pictures are worth a thousand words. The elders teaching the youth how to cut and prepare meat.

Lewis and Carmen from Save the Children also participated in the cutting and preparing of meat.

What a wonderful day of sharing stories of how the Elders learned how to cut and prepare meat for smoking, the Elders also spoke Blackfoot and encouraged the students to repeat the Blackfoot Word as it related to preparing and cutting the meat. The Elders explained that they learned by listening and their parents spoke Blackfoot at home and that is how they learned as well. If they were unsure about what a Blackfoot word meant, they would ask their mother what it meant. There was much laughter and many questions from the youth regarding our culture and preparing smoked meat. The youth expressed the need to do more hands on teachings, the youth expressed that by participating and actually preparing the meat was more meaningful and educational then reading about how to prepare smoked meat. What they have learned today has given them the knowledge and experience to be able to prepare smoked meat. The elders, shared stories of their father and brothers hunting Deer and how they prepared the deer meat, snaring rabbits, tanning hides and how our community is losing our language. They stressed the importance of learning our Siksika language and Siksika Way Of Life.



## DAY FOUR

### SMOKING MEAT

Today the Elders taught the youth how to start a fire and to always have a lighter or matches you never know when you may be stranded somewhere and may need a fire to keep warm and cook. The Elders demonstrated a scenario we are affected by a disaster we do not have paper to start a fire. The instructed 2-3 youth to get some dry grass, small twigs and dry wood, they provided guidance to 2-3 youth to dig the fire pit and prepare the pit to start a fire. The Elders then demonstrated how to start the fire using the resources that were available ie. Dry grass, twigs and wood. They were then told to watch the fire and the Elders will let them know when it is just right to position the smoker over the fire pit and start smoking the meat.

The Elders they guided the youth to hang the meat in the smoker. Now they must wait patiently as the meat smokes, in the meantime they must keep an eye on the fire, while a traditional lunch is prepared and more stories and questions from the youth. The Elders informed the youth that their parents would tell stories while they helped their parents with smoking meat and that is how they learned the history, Blackfoot legends, language and patience and so much more.

During the break and waiting for lunch, the youth had the opportunity to look at video from a drone's view and reviewed the map and identified any hazards and risks they may have missed from just walking around their school yard and the walk through the Ittasinno'p Food Bank area.

The youth and Elders enjoyed then enjoyed the lunch of meat cooked over an open fire, potato salad, bannock and fry bread. After waiting all afternoon and checking and turning the meat as instructed the day ended. The Elders then explained that the youth would have to continue to dry the meat at home and informed them of how the meat should feel when it is dry and ready to store. The youth then assisted with clean up and ensuring the fire was extinguished properly. Each student went home with their smoked meat.



Betty, Joan and Karen thank you for sharing your knowledge, meat cutting expertise and stories with the youth.

Thank you! To Siksika Outreach School Principal Mr. Bruce Dobbins, Colleen Sitting Eagle, Calvin Smith, Astokomii Smith, Save The Children (Lewis and Carmen) and Cody Munro for your assistance with the workshop. Thank you, Coleen for preparing the Certificates for the youth who attended the workshop.

Councillor Eldon Weasel Child encouraged and thanked the Elders for taking the time to teach our youth our cultural ways. The youth shared some of the smoked meat with Eldon. In closing, he encouraged the youth to continue to gain the knowledge about the Siksika Way of Life.

Thank you! To Preparing Our Home Group for providing the funding to ensure the success of the workshop.





