



Reflections on the *Families in Canada Conference 2015*

If it is true that “many people walk in and out of your life, but only true friends leave footprints on your heart,” then many participants at the *Families in Canada Conference 2015* left the historic event with lots of new tracks on their hearts as a result of this unique experience. Over two days, we explored the stories behind the statistics, modelled diversity and inclusion, challenged our assumptions, examined our biases and imagined the future of possibility and potential for families in Canada.

Participants attended this conference to learn. People came from across the country, from 10 provinces and two territories, from all sectors and many industries. Our conversations were enriched with diverse perspectives from researchers, scholars, academics, writers and journalists, service providers, government officials and employers, as well as advocates and people with lived experiences.

In planning the *Families in Canada Conference 2015*, our goal was to be informative, memorable, insightful, inspirational and unique. We surpassed our goals and exceeded all expectations. The experience was enhanced by the gifts and talents speakers and panellists shared with participants, and the openness and engagement of all those present. We learned about Canada’s families through catalytic conversations, live music, poetry and videos.

We created an opportunity for all participants to reflect and to be inspired. We provided a platform for participants to take their new knowledge and fresh insights and integrate it into their work. We set out to understand poverty, homelessness, the early years and the golden years. We set out to understand the power of relationships and the importance of communications. We set out to understand the two sides of the

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technology coin – the pain and the exclusion that it sometimes creates, but also the power and the possibility of the inclusion that it can provide. We achieved these objectives and more!

As the *Families in Canada Conference 2015* drew to a close, the participants reflected on the experience and made a commitment to create a Canada where families engage and thrive in a caring and compassionate society, with a robust and prosperous economy, in an inclusive and vibrant culture, in a safe and sustainable environment.

Achieving this will require creativity, innovation, passion, intelligence, courage, commitment and collaboration. The bright minds at the conference, the catalytic conversations held and the diverse approaches to enhancing our understanding of Canada’s families have shown us that while there is much work to be done, the future is full of possibility and potential.

Thank you to all who attended, organized and inspired this event. To extend the reach of the conference and engage more Canadians in the conversation, we are posting videos and resources from the conference on our website, on the Vanier Institute blog and on our YouTube channel. ♡